Illiberal Peace?
Authoritarian Modes of Conflict Management

Introduction

Attempts to develop a global consensus on how to respond to civil wars and inter-communal violence have failed. Ideas of liberal peacebuilding are increasingly contested in the international system. The UN Security Council has become deadlocked over questions of sovereignty, regime change, and intervention. In place of negotiations and peacebuilding, governments have increasingly resorted to authoritarian practices and state coercion to suppress armed rebellions (Baglione, 2008; Goodhand, 2010; Lewis, 2010; Piccolino, 2015; Russell, 2012; Smith, 2014). Internationally negotiated settlements, which became a common mode of civil war termination in the 1990s, began to decline in frequency in the 2000s. By the 2010s norms of peace and conflict were increasingly contested, and some argued that the historical norm of wars being resolved primarily through military victories was being restored (Kovacs and Svensson 2013). In cases such as Chechnya and Sri Lanka, military victories successfully ended long periods of armed conflict, posing a major political challenge to proponents of liberal peacebuilding. This shift towards authoritarian mechanisms of conflict management reflects significant changes in the liberal international order, including the increasing influence of authoritarian powers, such as Russia and China, on global governance (Gat, 2007; Mead, 2014). These trends in state responses to internal conflict are one aspect of a much wider process of contestation of liberal norms and practices in the international system (Acharya, 2011; Cooley, 2015; Wolff, Jonas and Zimmermann, 2016).

In this article we suggest that existing research has not yet sufficiently recognised this important shift in conflict management practices. Scholarship in peace and conflict studies tends to avoid hard cases of 'illiberal peace', or examines them through simplistic conceptual frameworks. A limited understanding of the nature of these authoritarian responses not only leaves an important lacuna in academic research on contemporary conflict, it also inhibits the development of adequate policy responses. Drawing on accounts of state responses to conflicts in Russia, Sri Lanka, China, Ethiopia, Rwanda and Turkey, we develop an alternative conceptual framework to understand what we term Authoritarian Conflict Management (ACM) as a form of wartime and post-conflict order in its own right. While ACM does not comprise a coherent normative and policy framework, we argue that there are certain shared theoretical premises and common practices across these cases. Conceptualising these similarities within a robust theoretical framework enables us to lay the groundwork for a more sophisticated typology of modes of civil war cessation and conflict

management. This article is therefore primarily an initial exercise in theoretical ground clearance and conceptual framing for an emerging academic and policy debate. It forms part of a much wider research agenda being undertaken by the authors.

The article proceeds as follows. The first part surveys the limitations of the liberal peace debate, in which neither proponents of the liberal peace nor its numerous critics are able to offer convincing explanatory frameworks to assess existing practices of contemporary conflict management. The second section outlines an alternative conceptual framework of authoritarian conflict management that analyses practices in three major categories: discourse (state propaganda, information control, and knowledge production); spatial politics (both military and civilian modes of producing and controlling new spaces); and political economy (the hierarchical distribution of resources to produce particular political outcomes). In conclusion, we propose a research agenda that moves on from discussions of liberal peace to examine hard cases of contemporary conflict and conflict management.

Liberal and Illiberal Peace

This 'illiberal turn' in conflict management is best understood in the context of a theoretical and political crisis in the 'liberal peace', the set of discourses and practices that governed international interventions in civil wars after the Cold War (Richmond, 2006; Heathershaw, 2008; Joshi et al, 2014). The theoretical assumptions and operational components of liberal peacebuilding are very familiar: internationally-brokered peace negotiations, often accompanied by peacekeeping forces or other forms of military intervention; internationally-monitored elections; a focus on human rights, gender equality, and protection for minorities; the promotion of rule of law and Security Sector Reform (SSR), and constraints on the use of force by parties to the conflict (Campbell et al, 2011; Newman, et al, 2009). Equally familiar is an extensive critique of the liberal peace, both a 'problem-solving' critique, which sought to improve the efficacy of these programmes, by discussing the timeliness of intervention or the appropriate sequencing of liberalisation policies (Paris, 2004; see Pugh, 2009: 88-89), and a 'paradigm-shifting' critique, which argued that the ideological underpinnings of liberal peace denied any agency to local actors and obscured sources of conflict resulting from an exploitative international economic system and a neo-colonial, Western-led international order (Pugh 2005; Duffield, 2007; Richmond 2012; Richmond and MacGinty, 2015).

This foundational critique offered a riposte to the hubris of liberal internationalism, but scholars failed to identify viable policy alternatives (Begby and Burgess, 2009; Paris, 2010). Critics argued

in favour of 'a sustainable, emancipatory, and empathetic form of peace' (Richmond 2016, 47), but struggled to define what this might mean in concrete situations. Duffield called for a Foucauldian 'solidarity of the governed' (2007) and Pugh advocated a new paradigm of 'Life Welfare' (2009), but the political content of such ideas was unclear. The idea of a 'hybrid peace' relied on post-colonial understandings of hybridity to argue for a fusion of local and international initiatives, and promised a peace that was negotiated, situational and context-specific (Jarstad and Belloni, 2012; Krause, 2012; Mac Ginty 2010, 2011; Richmond, 2012, 2015). However, the concept lacked analytical clarity, often being used as shorthand for almost any situation of political contestation between diverse social or ideological forces, or any interaction between the 'local' and the 'international'. Most significantly, the concept of hybridity occluded discussion of the most obvious lacuna in discussions of 'liberal' and 'post-liberal peace': situations in which cessation of armed violence is achieved in ways that are neither 'liberal' nor 'hybrid', but unashamedly authoritarian. The hybridity literature mentioned, but did not explore, 'a situation of peace... combined with predominantly illiberal norms, institutions, and practices' (Jarstad & Belloni, 2012: 2). Richmond saw a threat of 'negative forms of hybrid peace in which structural violence and inequality remain' (Richmond, 2015: 59), but there was no theoretical unpacking of such a form of 'peace'.

These existing debates in peace and conflict studies have proved inadequate to deal with the reality of many recent cases of civil war termination, which have often involved either an outright military victory, or the emergence of a post-war authoritarian political order after an initial negotiated peace. Although the immediate post-Cold War period witnessed a significant rise in negotiated peace processes, comprising 41 per cent of all civil war terminations in the 1990s (Toft, 2010: 6), Kovacs and Svensson (2013) argue that after 2009-10 there was a return to the historical norm of military victory as the most common mode of civil war termination. Even in wars that ended in negotiated settlements, the model of a 'war to democracy transition' was rarely achieved (Jarstad and Sisk, 2008). In a study of 130 civil wars, Toft (2010) calculates that a government victory typically results in an increase in authoritarianism by one-two points on the POLITY scale over a 20 year period. Negotiated settlements, however, fare even worse. Some short-term democratisation is typical after a peace process, but the data suggest that states evolve into significantly more authoritarian political orders between five and 20 years after the end of a civil war (Toft, 2010: 63-65). Power-sharing agreements typically served as an interim phase in a trajectory towards an authoritarian, one-sided outcome to the conflict. Deployment of a UN peacekeeping operation also did little to guarantee a democratic outcome. Of 19 major

peacebuilding missions in the post-Cold War era, only nine resulted in some form of democratic political system five years after a peacebuilding mission was initiated (Zurcher et al, 2013: 2-3).

We do not attempt here a definitive universe of cases of authoritarian modes of conflict management, but identify a range of cases where a shift away from liberal mechanisms of conflict resolution has been evident since 2000. These include not only cases of military victory, but also post-conflict orders following negotiated settlements, and modes of conflict management in so-called 'frozen conflicts'. The starkest shift in policy was in Sri Lanka, where an internationally-mediated peace process collapsed in 2006, to be replaced by a brutal counterinsurgency that defeated the rebel Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) in 2009 (Goodhand, 2010; Lewis, 2010, 2011). A shift from peace talks to counterinsurgency also took place in Eastern Turkey, as conflict resumed between the Turkish state and the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) after 2015. Russia rejected any international involvement or negotiation during the Second Chechen War (1999-2003), pursuing instead a military victory and a post-conflict authoritarian order inside Chechnya (Russell 2012). China's campaign against a low-level Uighur insurgency in Xinjiang also relied on authoritarian mechanisms and state coercion (Odgaard and Nielsen, 2014). Authoritarian dynamics were also evident in state responses to recent internal conflicts in Burundi, Ethiopia, Egypt, Myanmar, Rwanda, Sudan and elsewhere, and in moves to prevent conflicts occurring, as in Uzbekistan's June 2010 operation to pre-empt the spread of ethnic-based violence from neighbouring Kyrgyzstan (Khamidov 2015). Angola, Cambodia and Tajikistan all experienced internationally-mediated peace negotiations in the 1990s, but quickly developed non-democratic regimes, which managed further internal conflict or unrest through authoritarian practices (Soares de Oliveira, 2011; Heathershaw, 2009a, 2009b). Against this backdrop, an internationally-brokered peace agreement with the Farc rebel movement in Colombia in November 2016 appeared to be an exception rather than a reversal of a wider illiberal trend.

To some extent these shifts in norms can be traced to China and Russia's growing influence in the international system. Both states provided diplomatic, political and sometimes military support to governments involved in state violence and mass human rights abuses, including Myanmar, Sudan, Sri Lanka, Syria, and Zimbabwe, and began to undermine liberal peacebuilding norms in international forums, including the UN Security Council and the UN Human Rights Council in Geneva (Lewis, 2010). At the same time, many Western states - led by the US – failed to adequately condemn abuses perpetrated by state forces during conflicts, such as those in Egypt and Yemen. Even in circumstances where international peacebuilders were present - as Barnett and Zürcher (2008) have argued - international actors were often willing to acquiesce in a form of 'compromised peacebuilding', in which demands for political reforms were acknowledged in

symbolic terms, but seldom implemented. This 'virtual peacebuilding' (Heathershaw, 2009a) permitted the unimpeded development of authoritarian regimes in states such as Tajikistan, while the economic successes of authoritarian development models in post-conflict states such as Ethiopia and Rwanda encouraged donors to overlook a lack of progress in human rights and democracy (Jones, Soares de Oliveira & Verhoeven, 2012).

Despite this empirical record, scholars of peacebuilding and conflict resolution have seldom engaged in theorizing or conceptualising authoritarian responses to conflict. Indeed, Toft (2010: 150) notes that 90 per cent of academic work is devoted to negotiated civil war settlements rather than military victories. The idea of a 'victor's peace' – characterised by militaristic, state-centric approaches – has been in common usage, but remains under-theorised (Goodhand, 2010; Piccolino, 2015; Richmond, 2005). The term 'realist peace' was usually understood in terms of its contribution to international systemic stability (Newman, 2009), although Megoran has argued that the vision of realist peace held by early twentieth-century thinkers mirrored their commitment to internal policies of coercion (Megoran, 2013). Other analysis focuses solely on the use of military force: cross-national studies of civil war termination typically code such outcomes as 'military victories', without much attention to authoritarian political initiatives that accompany the use of force (Diaz & Murshed, 2013; Kovacs and Svensson, 2013; Toft, 2010). However, at the country level, several recent studies have begun to address this gap in the scholarship, offering a more detailed study of authoritarian practices, characterised as 'illiberal peacebuilding' in Indonesia (Smith, 2014), 'illiberal peace' in Sri Lanka (Lewis, 2010) and Chechnya (Russell, 2012), or 'authoritarian peacebuilding' in Angola and Chechnya (Baglione, 2008; Soares de Oliveira, 2011).

We build on this literature to conceptualise authoritarian approaches to conflict management, but also engage with new work on civil wars that draws from comparative work on authoritarian political orders. Similar to our own approach to political economy, North et al note that Limited Access Orders (LAO) are effective at 'manipulating the economy to produce rents, motivate stability, and reduce violence', and 'solve the problem of violence by using the political system to create and allocate rents' (2011: 6, 2). Elsewhere, a more micro-level and mechanism-based approach has gradually emerged (King 2004, Kalyvas 2006, Bennett 2013). Staniland (2014) and Driscoll (2015) have demonstrated the value of bottom-up approaches focusing on practices and inter-factional pacts. The lesson of this research is that political stability may emerge from inter-factional deals or negotiated political settlements; however, hierarchy often matures and is consolidated in an authoritarian polity, often on the basis of what Slater terms a 'protection pact' (Slater, 2010). Authoritarianism – defined classically by Linz as 'political systems with limited, not responsible, political pluralism' where 'a small group exercises power within formally ill-defined

limits' (1964: 255) – remains the most common mode of governance in post-conflict states. However, recent literature on authoritarianism goes beyond the traditional focus on institutions (Linz 1964) and psychological types (Adorno et al 1950, Altemeyer 1981) to a focus on 'practices', in the sense deployed by the practice turn in political science. These practices may be spatial (Adler & Pouliot 2011), discursive (Wedeen 1999) or political-economic (Hale 2015), a categorisation that we deploy in our own framework. In this article we build on these different literatures and further unpack the dynamics of authoritarian modes of conflict management in a way that frames an emerging comparative research agenda.

Authoritarian Conflict Management

Authoritarian Conflict Management (ACM) entails the prevention, de-escalation or termination of organised armed rebellion or other mass social violence such as inter-communal riots through methods that eschew genuine negotiations among parties to the conflict, reject international mediation and constraints on the use of force, disregard calls to address underlying structural causes of conflict, and instead rely instead on instruments of state coercion and hierarchical structures of power. Although ACM relies on state violence, it is not simply a military campaign of 'all-out war' (Diaz and Murshed, 2013). While we recognise the centrality of violence in these cases, the use of state coercion alone is not sufficient to achieve ongoing conflict management. The sporadic or egregious use of brutal force or military action against rebel forces, without accompanying political, social and economic policies, does not constitute a long-term strategy designed to *manage* conflict. Rather we seek to highlight the importance of a much wider range of authoritarian practices which contribute to wartime and post-conflict order.

  Theories of conflict are often roughly categorised in three groups, ascribing causal power to grievances, to economic greed, or to simple opportunity, arising from state weakness (Cederman and Vogt 2017). Proponents of ACM deny claims that grievances cause rebellion, rather ascribing conflict to the greed of political opponents, or as the result of opportunity arising from state weakness, in line with the work of Fearon and Laitin (2003) and Collier et al (2009). Policies within this authoritarian framework therefore attempt to reduce opportunities and resources for rebel mobilization by asserting hegemonic control in different social domains, here categorised as (i) public discourse, (ii) space, and (iii) economic resources. Not only does this model combine multiple practices and initiatives in different domains of state and social activity, it also acts as a sustained mode of governance that encompasses different phases of a conflict, including cessation

of armed violence, post-conflict settlement and reconstruction processes, and on-going conflict prevention mechanisms.

Two caveats must be made with regard to ACM's scope and value. First, while many of the mechanisms discussed here are also characteristic of the political rule of authoritarian states in general, this mode of governance is aimed specifically at controlling armed conflict and - in theory - can be conducted by a democratic or semi-democratic state. It is worth noting that Sri Lanka remained a functioning electoral democracy throughout the 2006-09 conflict, and Russia still retained many features of a democracy during the Chechen Wars. Rampton and Nadarajah (2017: 446) argue that we should note 'the interweaving and therefore the mutual constitution of liberal and non-liberal social formations', rather than making sharp theoretical distinctions between liberal and illiberal orders. This is a useful warning against oversimplified binaries, but leaves us with limited analytical tools to make distinctions between very different political practices and political regimes. Nor is a combination of majoritarian democracy with authoritarian practices in one part of the state necessarily best understood as 'hybrid politics' (Richmond, 2015, p. 51) or even as a 'hybrid political order' (Smith, 2014). Instead, authoritarian conflict management seeks to demarcate a spatial and discursive distinction from other spaces in the state, creating a Schmittian state of exception in certain territories or in relation to certain groups in the population. This spatial, normative and discursive distinction is often unsustainable, since authoritarian modes of managing conflict in democracies -whether in Sri Lanka, Chechnya, Eastern Turkey or the Israeli-occupied territories – ultimately threaten to undermine the democratic order of the state itself.

Second, this discussion makes no normative judgement about whether such a mode of conflict management can be considered as 'peace'. The use of the term 'conflict management' is not designed to offer legitimation to authoritarian practices, but to highlight the extent to which they constitute a set of coherent policies and norms, rather than merely an aberration from liberal norms of conflict resolution. Recent scholarship has revived the interest of Peace Studies scholars in the interpretation of 'peace', and reinvigorated a debate over an expanded typology beyond a narrow definition of peace as 'absence of war' (Regan, 2014; Richmond, 2005, 2016; Diehl, 2016; Höglund and Söderberg Kovacs, 2010). Höglund and Kovacs (2010), for example, identify multiple variants of post-conflict peace, including a concept of 'fearful peace', in which the 'absence of large-scale violence' is 'due to political control and repression from the side of the regime in power' (Höglund and Söderberg Kovacs, 2010: 384). Such a 'peace' clearly does not represent what Johan Galtung termed, following Martin Luther King, Jr, 'positive peace' (King, 1956), but it is possible to conceive of situations where many citizens view a top-down, violent imposition of state order as the only realistic, temporary alternative to a grim, all-out civil war

(Smith, 2014: 1512). However, authoritarian approaches to managing conflict are not necessarily sustainable in the long term nor do they offer a possible means to 'resolve' a conflict, as understood in the traditional schools of 'conflict resolution', implying that 'the deep-seated sources of conflict are addressed and transformed' (see Ramsbotham, et al 2011: 31). Indeed, ACM does not presume that conflicts can be 'resolved' in the way understood in the traditional Peace Studies literature, by addressing underlying needs for security and recognition, articulated by communities as common grievances, an approach that strongly influenced the liberal peacebuilding frameworks of the 1990s (Azar, 1990; Burton 1990). Instead, following Collier et al (2009), authoritarian approaches seek merely to limit the opportunities and economic incentives for rebellion. Policy responses aim only to achieve the constant 'management' of the conflict, understood here in the narrow sense used by Ramsbotham et al. as 'the settlement and containment of violent conflict' (Ramsbotham et al 2011: 31). Such a mode of conflict management ensures an ongoing necessity for repressive policies of illiberal governance, and rejects attempts to achieve 'a radical transformation of society away from structures of coercion and violence to an embedded culture of peace' (Keating and Knight, 2004: xxxiv), viewing such policies as both utopian and destabilizing.

Shifts in discourse and practice at both the global and the local level have produced a serious challenge to the dominance of the liberal peace in global governance. However, the nature of emerging illiberal alternatives to liberal peace is poorly theorised and often miscategorised, either as a variant of hybrid peace, or simply as a military victory; or they are discussed primarily in normative or legal terms, in relation to human rights abuses or war crimes. In the final sections we attempt to understand the functioning of authoritarian modes of conflict management in a different way, by assessing practices within three fundamental categories of social life: firstly, discourse, and then, space and economy.

Discursive practices

Although liberal peacebuilding has been criticised as forming a dominant discourse, which promoted its own hegemonic meanings of 'peace' and 'conflict' (Autesserre, 2014; Kühn 2012; Lewis, 2017), in practice liberal approaches to conflict resolution usually relied on informal negotiation strategies or formal peace processes to attempt to reconcile different narratives and discourses regarding the nature of the conflict and the most appropriate path to peace (eg Zartman, 2008). However, authoritarian approaches to conflict view such attempts to open up space for discussion and communication as counter-productive and potentially dangerous, offering opportunities for potential rebels to articulate grievances and mobilize both internal and external support. Instead, authoritarian conflict management constrains dissenting voices and promotes a

hegemonic discourse that seeks to achieve the delegitimization of armed opponents of the state as potential partners for negotiation.

Authoritarian actors achieve these aims in three ways. First, they coerce or repress alternative sources of information and interpretations of events, and seek to control news dissemination and knowledge production. Traditional modes of censorship have become more difficult to maintain in an era of technological change, but governments remain highly adept at restricting access to conflict-affected areas for journalists and researchers. In Ethiopia journalists required special permission to visit the conflict-affected Ogaden region, but such permission was routinely denied. At least one foreign journalist found themselves detained as a result (Blair, 2008). After the renewed Turkish counterinsurgency against the Kurdish PKK in 2015, more than 70 'security zones' were established in parts of Eastern Turkey that prevented easy access and movement for journalists (RSF, 2016). In 2016 in Myanmar the military blocked access for journalists, academics and aid workers to large parts of the province of Maungdaw, where '[r]eports have emerged of mass arrests, torture, the burning of villages, killings of civilians and the systematic rape of Rohingya women by Burmese soldiers' (Economist, 2016). Journalists who overcome restrictions to report on conflicts face more serious repercussions, including physical attacks and extrajudicial killings. According to the Committee to Protect Journalists, at least 19 journalists were killed in Sri Lanka between 1999 and 2015, primarily because of their reporting on the conflict (https://www.cpj.org/killed/asia/sri-lanka/). Many of the 56 journalists killed in Russia in 1992-2016 covered the conflict in Chechnya, including, most famously, Anna Politkovskaya, who was assassinated in Moscow in October 2006.

Second, authoritarian regimes act through the production of official discourse. Typically, authoritarian discourses in conflict zones aim to delegitimise opponents and undermine claims that rebel campaigns are motivated by legitimate grievances. Existing ethnic divides may be mapped onto the discourse of the War on Terror in order to legitimise a securitised response. Russia rejected claims by Chechen rebels to be the legitimate representatives of the Chechen people, and instead portrayed them solely within the discursive frame of Islamist terrorism (Russell, 2011). After 2006 the Sri Lankan government portrayed the LTTE as a purely terrorist organisation, rejecting their status in the peace process as equal negotiating partners with the government, despite both sides' participation in peace talks in 2001-04. President Mahinda Rajapaksa claimed that '[t]here is no ethnic conflict in Sri Lanka - as some media mistakenly highlight. Sri Lanka's security forces are fighting a terrorist group, not a particular community' (Rajapakse, 2009). In China Uighur nationalist activists were portrayed primarily as nationalist 'splittists' before the 9/11 attacks, and as 'religious extremists' after 2001. It was only in 2002 that the government began

referring widely to 'terrorists' in Xinjiang and began linking their domestic crackdown on Uighurs to 'the international struggle against terrorism' (Dwyer, 2005).

'Terrorism' is not the only discursive device that legitimises extreme responses to opponents of the state. Rwanda's use of a wide-ranging and poorly defined offence of 'genocide ideology' ostensibly aims to overcome the legacy of inter-ethnic violence, but is used to justify harsh measures against opponents and to justify government policy (Beswick, 2010; Thomson, 2011). Friend/Enemy discourses also allow the identification of internal 'fifth columns', which are portrayed as aiding and abetting the enemy. In such situations, not only political opponents, but non-governmental organizations (NGOs), human rights groups, and international organisations are portrayed as antagonistic to the state. In Sri Lanka a range of NGOs and other 'neutral' actors, which broadly supported the peace process, were labelled as sympathetic to the LTTE, so much so that many NGOs refrained from using terms such as 'peace' or 'peacebuilding' because of the ways in which their meaning had been recast in official discourse (Walton, 2008). In a similar mode of discourse, the Ethiopian government used the epithet 'anti-peace elements' to justify its own brutal counterinsurgency in the Ogaden region in 2005-07. This modern formulation was a contemporary reworking of historical discourse in Ethiopia, which drew on stereotypes among settled highlander Ethiopians about Somali pastoralists as 'violent' and 'uncivilised' and portrayals of the Somali borderland as 'a largely empty space, devoid of civilization, waiting to become civilized by Orthodox Christianity and the Amharic language' (Hagmann & Korf, 2012: 206-207).

As this last example suggests, the most successful discursive strategies both produce and reflect social attitudes and opinions. In doing so, they attempt to construct a 'hegemonic discourse', reflecting what Gramsci refers to as 'common sense', the philosophy of non-philosophers, the world view shared among the majority of the ordinary population (Gramsci, 1971: 321-331; Buttegieg, 2011: 56). Such mechanisms of discourse dissemination acknowledge Van Dijk's argument that 'dominance may be enacted and reproduced by subtle, routine, everyday forms of text and talk that appear "natural" and quite "acceptable"' (Van Dijk, 1993, p. 254). Such popularised discourses often reference and exacerbate already existing social or ethnic cleavages in society, or reinforce latent demarcations into 'in'- and 'out'-groups. Rampton (2012) argues that in Sri Lanka the post-2006 government's new narrative that promoted a military solution to the conflict resonated with the nationalist sentiments of the majority Sinhalese community, in contrast to unpopular international discourses, which promoted a compromise resolution of the conflict. The circulation of official narratives, tropes and metaphors into everyday conversation and discourse produces a kind of 'deeper hegemony' that reinforces the official hold over discourse (Rampton 2012). Elites use techniques such as 'recontextualisation' (Van Leeweun, 2008),

whereby 'hackneyed formulations [are] transferred from the areas of politics and the media into semi-public and quasi-private areas' (Wodak, et al. 1999) to ensure that official ideas and interpretations become part of everyday discourse, an accepted view of the world among a majority of the population. Although violence is an essential mechanism for maintaining a hegemonic discourse in most conflict and post-conflict situations, authoritarian actors are unable to rely solely on coercion to maintain discursive stability.

Spatial Practices

A second priority in non-liberal approaches to managing conflict is the political, physical and symbolic dominance of space. The spatial turn in social science, which had long been overlooked in peace and conflict studies, has informed an important body of recent work (Björkdahl and Buckley-Zistel, 2016; Björkdahl and Kappler, 2017; Duffield, 2010; Heathershaw and Lambach, 2008; McConnell, Megoran, and Williams, 2014; Nordstrom, 2003; Smirl, 2008; Walker, 2013). Spatial theory – particularly as developed in the 1970s by Henri Lefebvre (Lefebvre, 1991) – insisted that space was always a contested rather than a fixed category, shaped by conflictual political, economic and social forces. Space in turn impacts on social processes in what Edward Soja termed a 'socio-spatial dialectic' (Soja, 1989: 78). Whereas traditional security thinking viewed space as the inert 'theatre' or 'terrain' on which more fundamental processes happen, spatial theory highlights how actors have actively sought to shape space to provide them with advantages in conflict (Coward, 2004), to comply with their own normative understandings of political and social order (Legg, 2007), and to promote particular dynamics of post-conflict settlement (Toal and Dahlman, 2011).

 At least in its ideal type,[1] liberal peace-building views space as a potential public sphere – a modern-day *agora* , in which conflict resolution through dialogue may take place. Indeed, spaces for negotiation are sometimes deliberately created: a short history of international conflict resolution is replete with a string of metonymic place-names: Camp David; Dayton; Rambouillet; Oslo; Geneva; Bonn. Peace processes seek ways of removing actors from contested, conflictual space to an alternative global archipelago of online and offline space, in which international media, institutions and NGOs are dominant and where, it is presumed, complex conflicts may be amenable to solution (Henrikson, 2013). More fundamentally, in peace agreements, liberal peacemakers often support reconfigurations of political space in ways that address alleged

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[1] As Graham (2010) shows, liberal societies are increasingly militarising and securitising their own urban spaces.

grievances, particularly of ethnic minorities, through mechanisms such as territorial autonomy or even secession.

Authoritarian conflict management, on the other hand, views space as a resource that can be used by would-be rebels, to organise, to recruit, and to extract resources, but also to impose their own normative order on a part of the population, potentially strengthening their discursive appeal to a wider community. Authoritarian regimes therefore seek to penetrate, close or dominate space through military patrols, encampment and occupation, and by the forced re-settlement of civilians, and also through major infrastructure projects and urban reconstruction. This re-centring of political space in the state is a central objective of conflict management, but is challenged by spatial linkages across scales – for example, flows between local and global economies, or online media shared by minority groups and their diaspora. Where transborder groups lack such autonomy and political representation beyond borders, diasporic rebellion is weak or non-existent (Salehyan 2009; Checkel 2013). Authoritarian actors aim to centralise and homogenise spatial politics: the alternative, a decentred and heterogeneous spatial politics, with significant pockets of diasporic, trans-border or local space, threatens a state's capacity to maintain political control.

Military counterinsurgencies result in spaces of exception, where state actors both constrain armed rebellion and produce new forms of insecurity among the population. In this space law is either formally suspended, or the exceptional nature of the counterinsurgency effectively constitutes a *de facto* state of exception, even in the absence of a declaration of martial law (Agamben, 2005: 32-35; Hagmann & Korf, 2012: 210). The state of exception produces variegated spaces, in which different practices and norms are observed in diverse formally or informally demarcated spaces within the state, or in extraterritorial spaces. Hagmann and Korf provide an example from Ethiopia:

> 'In times of political and humanitarian crisis, the Ethiopian army and other government agencies transform the Ogaden into what resembles a camp, effectively cordoning off the region from foreign observers, journalists, NGOs, international organizations and researchers. Concomitantly the movement of local Somalis was regularly restricted in a bid to control both persons and information that enter and leave the region.' (Hagmann and Korf, 2012: 211).

Typically such measures require both outer boundaries of control and inner mechanisms of penetration of 'places'. This micro-control is imposed through military tactics such as the Russian *zachistka*, a concept 'linked to the cleansing of space' (Gilligan, 2009: 52), which 'designates an operation when a village or town is blocked and, without any sanction from the public prosecutor or any witnesses, soldiers search houses one after another and detain all suspicious people' (Human

Rights Centre, 2007). Forced resettlement produces similar effects: in the Ogaden in 2005-08 villagers were deported and resettled as part of a militarised policy of spatial control (Hagmann and Korf, 2012). Such tactics are familiar in other counterinsurgencies, and project state power in ways that transform communal and private places, ensuring that there is no potential safe space in which power is not exerted over the local population. The results of such policies is a constant – but not always successful - attempt by different communities to negotiate safe spaces in conflict zones (Ismailbekova 2013; Walker 2013, p. 74).

Western critics of liberal peacebuilding have accused it of being state-centric (Rampton and Nadarajah 2017), but non-Western states have often viewed liberal practices as fatally undermining the state, through the assertion of minority rights, territorial autonomy and even outright secession in the cases of Kosovo, East Timor and South Sudan. Authoritarian conflict management, on the other hand, opposes political autonomy or decentralisation for ethnic minorities, viewing such arrangements as destabilising and likely to fuel rather than resolve conflicts. China has labelled 'separatism' as one of the 'three evils' (along with terrorism and religious extremism), a trope adopted by other members of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (Ambrosio, 2008). In the Russian Federation new legislation adopted in December 2013, and stiffened with longer potential sentences in 2014, outlawed 'public calls for actions violating the territorial integrity of the Russian Federation'. Russia, China and other states have argued that conceding the demands of separatist movements tends to prolong conflict rather than resolve it: autonomous institutions, such as regional parliaments, provide a spatial resource for further development of secessionist demands, allowing ethnically defined political parties to develop patronage and resources to support ongoing campaigns for secession.[2]

Authoritarian regimes also view the transformation of space through urban planning and architecture as means to cement in place new hierarchies of power. The importance of town planning for managing conflict in contested and divided cities is increasingly recognised (Gaffikin and Morrissey. 2011; O'Connor, 2014). Whereas liberal models advocate a 'new localism' of devolved, participatory planning (Gaffikin 2015), authoritarian models such as those used in Colombo during the civil war militarise urban life to control armed opposition (Pieris 2011; Economy and Political Weekly 2013). Such policies are most evident in post-conflict reconstruction in urban areas, designed not only for commercial success but also for political ends, where newly planned cities are designed 'to construct, communicate and normalize a particular sense of identity to the citizenry' (Moser, 2013: 39).

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[2] For more on this discussion, see D. Brancati (2006).

In the once ruined Chechen capital of Grozny, the Russian government funded a vast reconstruction of the city, under a programme entitled 'No Traces of War', effectively obliterating physical reminders of conflict and constructing a new narrative of Chechen modernity that served to legitimise the post-conflict authoritarian leadership (Mydans, 2011; Gilligan, 2009: 211). In Rwanda post-conflict spatial politics included changing place names and holding officially sponsored rituals of memorialisation (Thomson, 2011: 443). In the southern Kyrgyzstani city of Osh, following inter-ethnic violence in 2010, the Kyrgyz authorities asserted symbolic, spatial control over this city with a historically Uzbek cultural core through the construction of statues to ethnic Kyrgyz national heroes at the main entrances to the city (Harrowell 2015). The city authorities also promoted plans – ultimately unsuccessful - for urban reconstruction that would undermine traditional Uzbek patterns of living in courtyard houses (Megoran 2012). The Chinese authorities did succeed in carrying out a reconstruction of Kashgar, through the so-called 'Kashgar Dangerous House Reform', in which traditional Uighur quarters were destroyed and replaced with modern apartment blocks or artificial reconstructions of traditional buildings, designed for touristic consumption. The result has been a major displacement of ethnic Uighurs by incoming Han Chinese (Clarke, 2016). Such efforts both assert a top-down view of identity that valorises Chinese views of modernity over Uighur cultural norms and living patterns and also permit the penetration of the state (in all areas, from sanitation to security) into the once private or communal areas of Uighur housing.

Economic Practices

The third significant category of activity for authoritarian modes of conflict management involves patterns of intervention in business and the economy that differ significantly from liberal frameworks of post-conflict reconstruction. Typically, liberal economic programmes under peacebuilding involve poverty reduction programmes to reduce perceived socio-economic grievances among the population and economic liberalisation to boost private sector business, and overall economic growth, with the aim of producing a 'peace dividend'. In practice, rapid liberalisation of economies and sharp cuts in state spending have sometimes been destabilising (Paris, 2004), and post-conflict international interventions have often resulted in informal, criminalised and corrupt political economies (Pugh, 2005).

In authoritarian conflict management, economic interventions are conducted primarily with the aim of political stabilisation, with overall economic growth an important, but secondary concern. Authoritarian modes of economic governance in conflict-affected societies have two primary aims: firstly, to deny rebels access to economic and financial resources; and, secondly, to ensure that

loyal clientelist groups control are the main beneficiaries of financial flows through the conflict zone. Following Hale (2015), we use a distinction between 'single-patron' and 'multiple-patron' orders. Established autocracies have a single-pyramid of patronal politics and are sustained by the pervasive expectation that this network will endure (Hale, 2015: 36-7). 'War-time political orders' (Staniland 2014) are often multiple-pyramids, however; therefore a post-conflict process of consolidation can often be characterised as the transformation of a multiple-pyramid patronal order into a single-pyramid system. Such measures of economic control and co-optation often provide the most durable practices of conflict management. Effective modes of authoritarian conflict management aim to construct something close to a single-pyramid system, but complex, open, and highly diversified economies make such an outcome more difficult to achieve.

Constructing a single-patron order often involves active engagement in what scholars have termed a 'political market place' (De Waal, 2014). Patrons may bid for the loyalty of militias, who auction their services to the highest bidder, although state agencies may also use coercion to 'fix' the market in its favour. Meanwhile, central flows of funds from budgets, oil revenues or international aid are channelled to close allies and loyal patronage networks. Post-conflict regimes develop 'secretive formal or informal structures for running the reconstruction process', which distribute the benefits of post-war reconstruction to loyal insiders and allies' (Soares de Oliveira, 2011). According to Hale, such patronal political economy is 'the *norm* throughout all recorded human history' (Hale, 2015: 28). Certainly, these hierarchical patronal systems are characteristic of post-conflict environments. In Cambodia Roberts argues that 'political change has been superficial and remains … dominated by informal, socially-ruled systems of patronage and clientelism, rather than determined by impartial, independent and impersonal institutions' (Roberts, 2009, p. 149). In Angola Soares de Oliveira notes 'the overtly political manner in which the state apparatus is used to provide insiders with opportunities for accumulation of vast fortunes' (Soares de Oliveira, 2011).

Although often viewed as detrimental to long-term peace, certain forms of corruption may be intrinsic to post-war settlements and help glue the peace together (Leenders 2012, Zaum & Cheng 2011). In North's conceptual framework of the Limited Access Order, corruption and rent-seeking are central elements in the creation of a system that limits the potential for violence (North, et al, 2013). Elites eschew violence because it reduces the income elites receive from 'extortion and corrupt payoffs, […] land rent, natural resource royalties, and monopoly profits' (North, et al. 2011: 2). In Chechnya, for example, the Russian government has invested at least 14 billion dollars in post conflict reconstruction since 2001 (Yaffa, 2016, 75). Although such funding is primarily directed through state agencies, there is little doubt that it has also been personally controlled by

members of local elite patronage networks, contributing to the construction of a single-pyramid order (Schwirtz 2011; Zabyelina 2013). What is labelled corruption by outsiders (almost $700m in 2003 and $600m in 2004 were reportedly lost from Russian budgetary allocations to Chechnya due to 'financial violations' [Hughes 2007: 126]) is primarily a way of rewarding political loyalty in an informal vertical hierarchy of power, or – as Zabyelina (2013) frames it, a way of 'buying peace'.

In response to a political economy of control, potential and actual rebels seek alternative sources of funding, including organised crime, diaspora funding, and international aid. State actors in conflict zones therefore seek to control not only licit business, but also assert control over criminal enterprises and illicit trafficking, if necessary by subcontracting such activities to loyal criminal structures or taking them over directly. In post-conflict Tajikistan, for example, the conflict over trafficking in drugs from Afghanistan has been an important part of a process of regime consolidation and state-building (De Daniele, 2011). Diaspora funding – a major source of rebel funding - is more difficult for political regimes to control, even where they control banks and other financial institutions. Rebel movements are adept at both collecting informal taxation from diasporas and also transmitting it to fund rebellions at home (Adamson 2013). Humanitarian aid offers a third source of funding. International humanitarian agencies are willing to deal with armed non-state actors in ways that may provide access to economic resources for rebels as well as the wider population (Hilhorst & Jansen, 2010). In response, states such as Sri Lanka or Rwanda co-opted some aid agencies, while expelling or silencing others (ODI, 2010).

Conclusion

In this paper we have argued that the emerging alternative to the discourses and practices of liberal peace is not a more emancipatory or hybrid form of peacebuilding, but a form of conflict management characterised by authoritarian practices and illiberal norms. Authoritarian conflict management seeks to prevent, de-escalate or terminate violent conflict within a state through the hegemonic control of public discourse, space, and economic resources rather than by the liberal model of compromise, negotiation and power-sharing. Although international institutions and transnational civil society remain at least nominally committed to liberal peacebuilding models (with declining support from some Western governments), many emerging powers and authoritarian regimes facing rebellions are dissatisfied with the internationalisation of their internal conflicts or the constraints on sovereignty and on the use of force that the liberal peace involves. Instead, they have invoked sovereignty norms to enable the pursuit of authoritarian modes of conflict management inside the state. These policies aims to end or pre-empt armed rebellion not

only through military action, but through a broad range of political, economic, social and symbolic practices. Through these authoritarian practices the state seeks to achieve a hegemonic discourse that delegitimises opponents, control of space – physically, politically and symbolically, and a form of political economy that approximates as far as possible to a hierarchical, single-patron order.

Examining conflict management through these three categories of discourse, space and economic resources provides a framework which allows us to understand better the main dynamics of authoritarian approaches to internal conflict in different political contexts. Authoritarian modes do not always succeed and an evaluation of their effectiveness in achieving discursive stability, centred space and a single-pyramid patronal economy is for future research. Moreover, we do not downplay the level of coercion and state violence employed in these methods of conflict management: these will rightly remain the most important focus in ethical assessments of such policies. The widespread abuses and violence against civilians that accompany authoritarian modes of conflict governance are only too evident in recent conflicts. ACM often entails the deployment of morally unacceptable practices which are unlikely to be successful in containing conflict over the long-term if structural violence and enduring grievances remain unaddressed. However, to advocate viable alternatives to this 'authoritarian turn' in conflict management requires an understanding of these modes of conflict management that goes beyond a moral condemnation of excessive use of violence or abuses of human rights. Instead, a focus on discourse, spatial politics and political economy opens up a new agenda for conflict research that offers critical insights into non-liberal norms and policies, but also lays the theoretical groundwork for new thinking on the nature of peace and peacebuilding in the 21st century.

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