Engaging with the victor’s peace? Which role for outsiders in post-victory transitions?

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Abstract
Many countries have historically recovered from civil wars in ways that substantially deviate from the ‘liberal peace’ template (Weinstein 2005; Soares de Oliveira 2011). A particular case is represented by post-victory transitions in countries such as Rwanda, Angola, Sri Lanka and Côte d’Ivoire. It has been suggested that these countries might be engaging in processes of war-driven statebuilding similar to those that historically took place in Western Europe (Jones, de Oliveira, and Verhoeven 2012; Taylor and Botea 2008; Diaz and Mursched 2013). These processes are the product of ‘really existing political actors of consequence with really existing political agendas’ (Soares de Oliveira 2011: 309) and thus appear more credible than externally sponsored statebuilding.

While in the ‘90s the predominant attitude was the ‘condemnation of all violent conflict by liberal peace’ (Duffield 2001: 129) a more pragmatic approach towards victory in civil wars has gradually emerged (Kovacs and Svensson 2013). However, external engagement in post-victory countries is on several respects problematic. The ideological underpinning of post-victory statebuilding is often very removed from the liberal-democratic ethos, drawing from local ideas of (non democratic) statehood and authoritarian transformative ambitions (see for instance the case of Rwanda: Straus and Waldorf 2011; Reyntjens 2013), while outsider’s leverage is limited.

Peacebuilders often tend to be divided between those who see ‘strong, decisive leadership’ (Mazarr 2014) behind victors’ assertiveness and those who are alarmed by the exclusivist nature of many post-victory transitions. This paper explores the possibility for a constructive engagement, questioning how statebuilding projects – as opposed to pure consolidation of authoritarian rule – can be individuated and nurtured, and how the international community can advocate the inclusion of the popular constituencies of the defeated party in peacebuilding.

1. Introduction
Many countries have historically recovered from civil wars in ways that substantially deviate from the ‘liberal peace’ template (Weinstein 2005; Soares de Oliveira 2011). A particular case
is represented by post-victory transitions in countries such as Rwanda, Angola, Sri Lanka and Côte d’Ivoire. Although there is a burgeoning literature on post-conflict peacebuilding and reconstruction, we know still very little about the type of peace that follows victory. It has been suggested that these countries might be engaging in processes of war-driven statebuilding similar to those that historically took place in Western Europe (Jones, de Oliveira, and Verhoeven 2012; Taylor and Botea 2008; Diaz and Murshed 2013). These processes are the product of ‘really existing political actors of consequence with really existing political agendas’ (Soares de Oliveira 2011: 309) and thus appear more credible than externally sponsored statebuilding.

While in the ‘90s the predominant attitude was the ‘condemnation of all violent conflict by liberal peace’ (Duffield 2001: 129) a more pragmatic approach towards victory in civil wars has gradually emerged (Kovacs and Svensson 2013). However, external engagement in post-victory countries is on several respects problematic. Victory tends to favour the emergence of strong elites, who pursue statebuilding projects often very removed from the liberal values that inform international peacebuilders.

This paper maps what the literature says about the transition from war to peace after victory and looks at how victors of civil wars and international peacebuilders have engaged with each others. The paper is informed by recent calls about refocusing the debate on post-conflict reconstruction (Zaum, 2012; Heathershaw, 2013; Selby, 2013). In contrast with other recent work on peacebuilding (Richmond 2009; Roberts 2011), it does not discuss normative alternatives to the liberal peace. It looks at the ‘victor’s peace’ – or better, at many different variations of ‘victor’s peace’ – as an empirical, rather than normative, alternative form of peace. It is preoccupied with understanding what is happening in a number of countries that have often been neglected by the peacebuilding debate. Peace in these countries has often been described by orthodox and critical scholars alike rather for what it is not – not democratic, not liberal, not emancipative, not equitable – than for what it is. The paper also rejects ‘Foucauldian readings of liberal peacebuilding as a technology of power’ (Goodhand and Korf 2011, 4) that tend to downplay local agency. Instead, I contend that the peacebuilding and post-conflict transition literature should pay more attention to the role of local agency, in particular of national ‘power elites’ (Sesay, Ukeje, Osman and Olawale 2009; Jones 2014) in post-war transitions.

The first paragraph discusses the concept of victory in the international relations and peace studies literature. The second paragraph summarizes the empirical findings of the literature and looks the ideational and discursive underpinning of these illiberal (or a-liberal)
peacebuilding projects. In the fourth and fifth paragraph, I focus on how victors and liberal peacebuilders have engaged with each other. I contend that, in the wake of the failure of international statebuilding in Afghanistan and Iraq, the influence of what I call the classical realist paradigm in peacebuilding and development is growing. Such paradigm is informed by the historical experience of European statebuilding: it downplays the role of democratic norms, views external intervention with suspicion and focuses instead on strong local leadership (no matter if democratic or authoritarian) as the main agent of statebuilding and peacebuilding. The ‘victors’s peace’ can gain international acceptance by being framed within this emerging paradigm. However, discourses of peacebuilding-as-democratization and peacebuilding-as-justice have not been displaced, and this leads to tensions and contradictions in the engagement of liberal peacebuilders with post-victory countries.

2. Victory in the international relations literature

In spite of its historical and contemporary relevance, the ‘victor’s peace’ has been very little investigated by the recent stream of academic studies dealing with post-conflict reconstruction, peacebuilding and reconciliation (Toft 2010; Lyons 2013). Oliver Richmond has used the concept, arguing that the most conservative strand of the liberal peace draws from the victor’s peace tradition and prioritize stability, security and order (Richmond 2006). However, he associates this strand with the ‘top down and heavily externalized approaches to peacebuilding’ (Richmond 2006: 560) that have prevailed in countries defeated and occupied by the US army such as Afghanistan and Iraq, while he does not discuss the ‘victor’s peace’ in cases where the victor is an internal party and international intervention is less prominent.

The literature on war termination does not provide a fine grained discussion of the concept of victory, but sets forward two arguments linking victory and peace. According to the first, military victory is supposed to lead to a peace that is self-sustainable by destroying the organizational structure of the losing side (Harrison Wagner 1993). While grievances within the society at large may persist, without an organizational and material basis opposition groups will not be able to channel them into a violent struggle. A more intriguing hypothesis postulates that negotiated settlements are unable to radically alter power relations within society and thus to destroy the power of groups that have vested interests in preventing institutional and social reforms (Licklider 1995). On the other hand, victories would bring to power a regime that has a free hand in pursuing its own political agenda. Such liberty may
allow the new rulers to address some of the root causes of war and favour the establishment of a political order that might represent an improvement with respect to the pre-war order.

Classic strategic studies approach victory in a more nuanced and complex manner. They argue that, although military victory is an act of violence, it is also much more than that. Military victory is void if it does not lead to strategic victory: the establishment of a sustainable political order aligned on the preferences of the victor (Machiavelli 1961, Clausewitz 2007; Mandel 2007). Strategic victory is, from the point of view of warring parties engaged in a violent conflict, the equivalent of the contemporary concept of peacebuilding for international agencies and donors: it is peace defined on the warring parties’ terms, according to their interests and ideological preferences. Belligerents typically aim to take and keep control of the central governments, but are committed also to a set of other goals – such as secession, independence from foreign rule, defence of their ethnic community, reform of the state.

In this sense, there are at least as many different variants of victor’s peace as there are victors. Each belligerent has its own goals, ideological preferences and political vision. Moreover, victory on the battlefield is neither a necessary nor a sufficient condition for strategic victory. Some elements of a ‘victor’s peace’ are present in a large number of countries, including where a peace agreement has been formally concluded. In conventionally defined peacebuilding successes, such as Namibia, East Timor and Mozambique, one of the warring parties has achieved its goals without winning militarily: the other warring party has left the scene or has been unable to compete successfully for power. In other countries, belligerents have won the war but failed to ‘win the peace’: the insurgent groups that defeated Charles Taylor in the second Liberian civil war and the opposition forces in Libya are prominent examples. They have failed to institutionalize a durable political order.

While acknowledging the contested character of victory, this paper is predominantly concerned with the ‘victor’s peace’ in a narrower sense: the condition of countries where a warring party has militarily won the war and – although the open-ended nature of strategic victory invites to caution – also won the peace. The two processes of military and political victory are here self reinforcing.

The next paragraph sums the findings of the empirical literature on post-military victory peace. Although it acknowledges that the possibility to generalize are limited, it tries to identify some common patterns exhibited by different cases of ‘victor’s peace’.
Table: Gradations of victory

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Military Victory</th>
<th>Political victory</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Uganda, Rwanda, Sri Lanka etc.</td>
<td>Liberia (second civil war), Libya, Kosovo etc.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>Mozambique, East Timor, Namibia etc.</td>
<td>South Africa, DRC, Burundi etc.</td>
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3. The victor’s peace in practice

Quantitative researchers have long debated the implications of victory versus negotiated settlements on the sustainability and type of peace built after conflict termination. Peacebuilding scholars have rarely engaged with this large body of literature which, although through a narrow perspective, gives some preliminary insights about the characters of the victor’s peace (Walter 2004; Quinn, Mason and Gurses 2007; Kreutz 2010; Toft 2010). Empirical findings are often contradictory and affected by methodological challenges, but they come to a certain consensus on several points. War seems less likely to recur after wars fought decisively, but victories appear also more likely to be followed by violent political repression and less conducive than negotiated settlements to the establishment of the formal institutions of liberal democracy (Dixon 2009).

Some of these findings, particularly the illiberal and repressive character of post-conflict reconstruction after victory, are also confirmed by more fine grained qualitative research. Moving from the case of Angola, Ricardo Soares de Oliveira proposes a definition of illiberal peacebuilding as ‘a process of post-war reconstruction managed by local elites in defiance of liberal peace precepts regarding civil liberties, the rule of law, the expansion of economic freedoms and poverty alleviation, with a view to constructing a hegemonic order and an elite stranglehold over the political economy’ (Soares de Oliveira 2011: 288). Terrence Lyons applies a similar perspective while dealing with four cases of insurgent victory (Ethiopia, Eritrea, Uganda and Rwanda) where the victors ‘re-created themselves into authoritarian parties that dominated post-conflict politics’ (Lyons 2013: 2). In these countries,
transitional justice, demobilization of former combatants and post-conflict elections have been subordinated to strategies of power consolidation and used to reinforce political authority and authoritarian statebuilding. Similarly to Lyons, Jones, Soares de Oliveira and Verhoeven have remarked the emergence on the African continent of a wave of ‘illiberal statebuilders’ emerged from decisive wars, ‘unified and well-organized movements that have, in the aftermath of conflict, captured the state and established durable political order, building a core of functional institutions’ (Jones, de Oliveira and Verhoeven 2012: 5). In Angola, Ethiopia, Rwanda and Sudan these illiberal statebuilders ‘rule in defiance of liberal peace precepts, having first used war and then the post-conflict situation to establish a hegemonic order and a stranglehold over the political economy’ (Jones, de Oliveira and Verhoeven 2012: 5).

Several causal mechanisms can be invoked for explaining the dearth of democratization after a military victory. First, since it grants to both parties a chance to gain power in the future, post-war democratization has been regarded as a way for the former warring parties to find a compromise on the post-war order (Wantchenkon 2004). Such need to compromise is obviously absent in post-victory transitions. Secondly, negotiated settlements offer a window of opportunity to international peacebuilders for introducing liberal principles and practices (Barnett and Zürcher 2009). However, the victor of a civil war is typically in a stronger bargaining position, both in material terms than in terms of legitimacy enjoyed in the eye of the population, with respect to a party to a peace agreement. Moreover, outsiders typically promote liberal ideas and practices by introducing relevant provisions in peace agreements (Joshi, Lee, and Mac Ginty 2014), a mechanism that does not hold for victory.

The way peace is achieved through victory also impacts on mechanisms to achieve retribution and reconciliation. Transitional justice is considerably more complicated in presence of a sharp asymmetry of power between the victor and the vanquished. Opening a debate on war time human rights violations, whether through classical judicial mechanisms or forms of ‘restorative justice’, is most often not in the interest of the victor, which would typically have been involved in such violations. The victorious elite could also pursue a ‘victor’s justice’, where the punishment of crimes committed by its opponents becomes a way to reinforce its power and to promote a narrative of the civil war that attributes most of the faults to the vanquished.

Especially in the case of conflicts with an ethnic or religious overtone, political hegemony of the victor and victor’s justice could aliment among the former constituencies of
the vanquished a feeling of marginalization and a revanchist mentality. While explicit policies of discrimination against social, ethnic or religious groups associated with the defeated enemy have not been common, in many cases the picture is one of unspoken exclusion, covered by a rhetoric of reconciliation and multi-ethnic harmony. In Sri Lanka and Rwanda, evidence suggests that, beyond enforced unanimity, divisions associated with the conflict have not disappeared (Höglund and Orjuela 2012; Straus and Waldorf 2011). In Côte d’Ivoire, a rhetoric of reconciliation, including the establishment of a truth and reconciliation commission, has been a cover under which pursuing a substantial ‘victor’s justice’, while local grievances pitting different communities against each other have yet to be solved (HRW 2013a).

Although there are some communalities among experiences of post-victory peacebuilding, it is important to stress that they are extremely varied. In their quest for legitimacy, post-victory statebuilders mobilize conceptions of peace and legitimate governance that are alternative with respect to the liberal peace but very different among themselves. Although often these actors claim that they are resorting to ‘indigenous’ or ‘locally owned’ concepts and practices, often their ideas are not ‘traditional’ in an obvious sense. A recurring theme is an emphasis on statebuilding and economic development at the expenses of freedom and justice.

In Sri Lanka, the discourse of Sinhalese nationalism appeals to the tradition, privileging ‘the rural sphere, but more specifically the peasantry, the ‘sons of the soil’ and village life, as the morally authentic and purified core of the Sinhala nation’ (Rampton and Welikala 2011, 96). However, this nostalgic discourse has been in reality forged in the context of Sri Lanka’s post independence governamentalcy and its distinctive economic policies, where the liberalization of the economy has not resulted in a roll back of the state or a cut of social spending but has left ‘welfare statism’ intact (Rampton and Welikala 2011; Venugopal 2011).

In Côte d’Ivoire, the heritage of first president Houphouët-Boigny, explicitly mentioned in the name of the ruling coalition, provides an alternative way to think about peace with respect to liberal peacebuilding. Peace is seen as based on the political virtues of a strong leader, an inclusive, but unequal, inter-ethnic pact and the promotion of economic development (Maddox Toungara 1990; Grah Mel 2010). Although dialogue and conflict management are seen as positive values, the dialectic between opposition and majority that is an essential part of liberal democracy is not contemplated and restraint and pardon, rather than individual rights, set limits to political repression. This vision of peace has influenced
president Alassane Ouattara’s approach to peacebuilding, although the fact that he has altered
the nature of the original inter-ethnic pact in favour of Northern Ivorians has attracted on him
the criticism of its most prominent political ally, the Parti Démocratique de la Côte d’Ivoire.

While Sri Lanka and Côte d’Ivoire’s post-victory elites emphasize historical
continuity, other would be statebuilders have ambitious agendas of social transformation. A
striking case is constituted by the RPF’s worldview in Rwanda, to which Straus and Waldorf
convincingly apply James Scott’s concept of ‘high modernist ideology’ (Straus and Waldorf
2011). Rwanda’s authoritarian tradition, the RPF’s Marxist-Leninist origins, their military
past, their sense of estrangement with respect to the population they were called to rule have
coalesced in producing an extreme version of developmentalist ideology. The RPF is imbued
of paternalism and contempt towards ordinary Rwandan peasants and their locally rooted
knowledge (Newbury 2011; Ansom 2011). It aims at to turn the Rwandan peasant into a
‘perfect development subject’, modelled on a militarized imaginary of loyalty, combativeness,
willingness to subordinate its interests to a wider goal (Purdeková 2011). In spite of the RPF
claim that, through initiatives such as the gacaca courts, they are revitalizing traditionally,
locally rooted peacebuilding practices, researchers have underscored that even these
initiatives have a top down, elitist character.

4. Legitimizing illiberal peacebuilding

Although they might be themselves opposed or indifferent to liberal norms, victors have to
engage with the liberal peace, which remains the predominant normative framework that
regulate peacebuilding at the international level. Achieving respect at the international level is
indeed an integral part of the quest for strategic victory (Mandel 2007). In practice, there are
no perfectly illiberal process (Soares de Oliveira 2011) and all experiences of peacebuilding
are to some extent hybrid (Mac Ginty 2010).

The first challenge, for the victor, is to gain international acceptance for its decision to
end a war with military means, as opposed to negotiations. In this process, international
discourses such as counterinsurgency, rebel greed and defence of democracy are mobilized.
The ‘victor’s peace’ becomes possible when these narratives are credible and gain consensus.
This process is facilitated when the losing side is seen as having itself violated key liberal
norms: the prohibition of genocide, such as in the extreme case of Rwanda, or the legitimacy
of free and fair elections, such as in Angola and Côte d’Ivoire.
The extensively analysed case of Sri Lanka provides an interesting example about how a government can build wide international alliances and use the discourse of counter-insurgency to legitimize ‘alternative tenets of conflict management, including a focus on state-centric economic development and political processes, an avoidance of democratic and liberal political prescriptions… and the use of force to repress insurgency and dissent’ (Lewis 2010, 662). Sri Lanka successfully reframed its campaign within the geopolitics of global security, eventually pushing the West to ‘accept the sovereign state’s right to deploy military forces against an internationally banned terrorist organization’ (Stokke 2011, 22). Similarly, in Angola and Colombia, governments exploited the international discourse about ‘rebel greed’ in order to justify their decision to pursue ‘total wars’ against insurgents (Díaz and Murshed 2013; Péclard 2008). One particular case is provided by those victors that have successfully attracted the military support of the West. In Côte d’Ivoire and Libya, belligerents have done so by appealing to the Responsibility to Protect (R2P) and the defence of democracy (Bellamy and Williams 2011). While external support has been in these cases key to winning the war, it has also posed problems in terms of the legitimacy and sustainability of the victory in the afterwards.

After the end of the conflict, some post-victory countries have continued to engage in complex ‘strategies of extraversion’, aiming to maximize foreign support while at the same time preserving a considerable political margin of manoeuvre (Straus and Waldorf 2011; Jones, de Oliveira and Verhoeven 2012). In this process, they have sometimes appropriated the criticism of exogenous liberal peacebuilding for their own sake, emphasizing ideas of local ownership, ‘Institutionalization Before Institutionalization’ and sequencing. Rwanda, which has been particularly adrift to playing this game (Hayman 2008), has gone even further, presenting its experience as a model for other post-conflict countries. In November 2011, the Rwandan authorities convened with the support of the African Development Bank (AfDB) a High-Level Meeting on Post-Conflict Peacebuilding in Kigali. The meeting saw the participation of representatives of other post-conflict countries, notably president of Burundi Pierre Nkurunziza and Prime Minister of Côte d’Ivoire Guillaume Soro, together with delegates of the UN, the AfDB, the EU and the World Bank. The outcome document argues that Rwanda represents a success story built on the ability to revive and adapt ‘traditional practices and culture’, to ensure to all the population, particularly women, access to basic services, and to achieve ‘unity and reconciliation’ through ‘national dialogue and community based justice’ (Republic of Rwanda 2011a). The document also insists on the effective management of aid, thanks to a relationship of ‘mutual accountability’ between donors and
the national government and to the fact that ‘donors used country mechanisms, aligned with national priorities and supported the Government as the primary service provider’ (Republic of Rwanda 2011a).

4. Engaging with the ‘victor’s peace’
The case of Rwanda can be used to illustrate the tensions and dilemmas that peacebuilders experience in their encounter with the victor’s peace. At the Kigali meeting, European Union Head of delegation Michel Arrion endorsed the narrative of the Rwandan government, praising Rwanda’s ‘extremely committed leadership… to the stability and security of the country… but also to its development’ (Republic of Rwanda 2011b). However, the Rwandan government’s relations with a range of other international peacebuilders, such as the International Tribunal located in Arusha and human rights NGOs, have been punctuated by tensions and conflict.

Western peacebuilders have long held the view that democratization is the most secure avenue to achieve lasting peace and that no statebuilding project outside the Western-promoted project is possible (Weinstein 2005; Jones, Soares de Oliveira and Verhoeven 2012). In this sense, the victor’s peace is a challenge to them. Oliver Richmond and John Heathershaw however make a case that the liberal peace project can be broken down into several different gradations and that a conservative model, heavily informed by the victor’s peace and a concept of hegemonic, state-led peace, is embedded into the genealogy of peacebuilding (Richmond 2006; Heathershaw 2008). Such a conception of peace can be tracked down to classical realistic thinkers, such as Niccolò Machiavelli, Thomas Hobbes and Carl Von Clausewitz. The process of state formation in Europe constitute the key empirical referent for this literature. More recently, the classical realist paradigm has been reinvigorated by Samuel Huntington and Charles Tilly. Huntington famously advocated renouncing liberal reforms and relying on military strongmen in societies experiencing tumultuous change (1967). Tilly emphasized the role played by war and military violence in the emergence of the state in Europe (1990). Notably, the moderate critique of peacebuilding, expressed at best by the work of Roland Paris (Paris 2004), heavily draws from Huntington’s work.

In contrast with the emphasis on statebuilding through external military intervention after 11 September 2001, scholars of the process of state formation in Europe, such as Machiavelli and Tilly, are wary of external intervention. Statebuilding is achieved through a Darwinian competition between states. External intervention would ‘false’ the competition
and make the achievement of stability more difficult. Machiavelli, for instance, makes the case that foreign armies are poor allies for would be statebuilders (Machiavelli 1961). In contrast with the ideas expressed by contemporary authors such as Stephen Krasner (Krasner 2004) and Michael Ignatieff (Ignatieff 2010), local elites, not benevolent imperialists, are seen as the drivers of statebuilding.

This tradition of thinking about statebuilding has remained very strong among scholars of developing countries, particularly in African studies. Its influence can be seen in the work of otherwise diverse authors such as Jeffrey Herbst (Herbst 2000), Jeremy Weinstein (2005), Pierre Englebert and Denis Tull (Englebert and Tull 2008), Alex De Waal (De Waal 2009) and Morten Bøås (Bøås 2010). A common theme is that institutions should emerge endogenously, and might even be the by involuntary byproduct of conflict and violence. Misguided external attempts at imposing peace and building institutions lead to unsustainable outcomes and superficial institutional isomorphism.

The disillusion generated by the mixed outcome of peace agreements concluded in the 1990s and, even more, the disastrous experiences of externally sponsored statebuilding in Afghanistan and Iraq, has given again vitality to classical realist ideas focused on the role of strong, often authoritarian, indigenous statebuilders. Less peace agreements have been concluded in the last decade and there have been claims that a paradigm shift is ongoing and peacebuilders are becoming more supportive of military victory (Söderbergh Kovacs and Svensson 2014).

This evolution is paralleled by a recent turn in the literature on the political economy of development. A new trend, inspired by the work of British-Asian scholar Mushtaq Khan and embraced by prestigious British think tanks, such as the Crisis State Research Institute of the London School of Economics and the Oversea Development Institute, downplays the role of good governance in its classical, liberal and technocratic form, for statebuilding and development. On the other hand, it emphasizes the importance of ‘decisive’ and ‘visionary’ leadership (no matter if liberal or authoritarian) for statebuilding success. The mission of this leadership would be to drive the ‘organic, grass-roots process that must respect the unique social, cultural, economic, political, and religious contexts of each country’ which leads to statebuilding success’ (Mazarr 2014). Work in this mould has been produced by authors such as David Booth and Tim Kelsall, who have reconsidered the role of the state in promoting development and heralded authoritarian post-liberation countries such as Rwanda and Ethiopia as a prime example of developmental regimes (Booth and Golooba-Mutebi 2012; Booth and Cammack 2013; Kelsall 2013).
However, the discourse of peacebuilding is not a uniform one. While the classical realist paradigm is influencing the peacebuilding-as-statebuilding discourse, many Western actors, particularly NGOs, remain committed to ideas of peacebuilding as democratic reforms and peacebuilding as justice (Heathershaw 2008). Thus, they face a difficult dilemma when confronted to post-victory countries. Peacebuilders can either relinquish the whole peacebuilding enterprise, by withdrawing peacekeeping missions and financial aid, or have to some extent to compromise on their values. It has been argued that the provision of positive incentives – additional resources – make little difference when elites are uninterested in liberal values (Barnett and Zürcher 2009). On the other hand sanctions, although theoretically applicable, raise practical and ethical concerns and are rarely employed (Barnett and Zürcher 2009). In practice, the labelling of a country as ‘post conflict’ and ‘fragile’ has usually the effect that the rules regarding political conditionality – encompassing the suspension of financial support for authoritarian governments – are not deemed to apply. In the end, some form of ‘compromised peacebuilding’ eventually emerges (Barnett and Zürcher 2009).

Several factors further limit the influence of peacebuilders in a post-victory setting. Victors are typically stronger than parties to a settlement. In some cases, such as in Sri Lanka, the decision to pursue total war has been taken against the framework of an internationally promoted liberal peace, and with its victory the government has demonstrated its ability to challenge outsiders. When victory has been achieved with substantial international support, such as in Côte d’Ivoire, such support is typically spurred by the international perception that the defeated party was an illegitimate actor and, as a consequence, international peacebuilders might not be well placed for advocating power-sharing or reconciliation.

A modicum example of the application of conditionality has been seen in Rwanda, although the country has been sanctioned not for its own authoritarian record but for its role in fuelling the conflict in the DRC. However, although a number of donors cut budget support, only Sweden and the Netherlands have been consistent in not resuming it. In Côte d’Ivoire, although ostensibly trying to protect political pluralism, international peacebuilders have in the end helped legitimizing the regime’s victor’s justice when the International Criminal Court (ICC) has made the controversial choice to concentrate its action on former president Gbagbo and his associates (HRW 2013b).

Perhaps, the most pernicious consequence of the alignment of peacebuilders to the agenda of the victorious elite is the delegitimization of liberal peacebuilding in the eyes of those who feel excluded by the post victory social contract – most commonly the civil constituencies of the losing parties. When victors appropriate and manipulate international
discourses, international peacebuilders are often slow at recognizing that, although they are speaking the same language, local elites do not want the same thing as them. Cultivating the illusion of authoritarianism as a transitional phase, which would give way to future political liberalization, is often easier than making thought choices.

5. Conclusion
Ricardo Soares de Oliveira has written that the literature on processes of ‘autonomous recovery’ ‘often has a celebratory quality to it, with ‘indigenous statemaking’ positively compared with intrusive, and blundering, foreign attempts to create a liberal order’. Such literature is ‘seldom explicit about the normative content, or developmental impact, of such domestic political projects’ (2011: 289). In a similar vein, David Lewis (2010) has noticed that the critical literature on the liberal peace has tended to downplay the illiberal character of some potential alternatives.

This paper has examined the experience of countries that are building peace in the aftermath of victory, with the aim to understand real existing alternatives to liberal peacebuilding, rather than to develop normative ideas of emancipatory peace. The image that emerges is highly ambivalent: the victor’s peace might be a ‘revolutionary’ peace and present potentialities in terms of statebuilding, institutional innovation and economic recovery. However, it might also verge towards authoritarianism, militarism, securitization, and to show little consideration for human rights.

Experiences of post-conflict reconstruction after victory draws from ideas of peace uphold by the ruling party or the ruling coalition, such as the state-driven developmentalism of former Marxist Leninist parties in Rwanda, Uganda and Angola, Côte d’Ivoire’s ‘Houphouetism’ or Sinhalese nationalism in Sri Lanka.

Victors of contemporary civil wars rarely share the liberalization agenda of international interveners. However, they have learned how to employ the discourse of peacebuilding and appropriate the criticism against internationalized, exogenous attempts at forging peace. Both moderate and radical critics of peacebuilding might have been inadvertently play the game of illiberal peacebuilders. The first have done so by popularizing Huntingtonian ideas about the risks of rapid political liberalization and the importance of institution building; the second ones by celebrating the hybrid and the local and by emphasizing the importance of socio-economic welfare over political freedom.
The dynamics of the ‘peacebuilding bargaining’ make international peacebuilders extremely reluctant at using coercive instruments, such as aid conditionality. Very often, they tend to underestimate the gap between the vision of peace that victorious elites have in mind and the liberal peace. This paper argues that the ‘victor peace’ should not be demonized, but should not be seen through the lenses of wishful thinking. The priority for peacebuilders should be at minimum to ‘do no harm’ and to show sensitivity to the fact that a post-victory environment is shaped by a marked asymmetry of power between the winning and the losing side. Ideas of peace as conflict management and peace as justice are difficult to advance in a post-victory environment but should not be dismissed. One possible way of doing so is by acting as advocates for the rights of the weakest party, such as the civilian constituent of the former loser or socially disadvantaged people excluded by top-down, state driven experiments of post-conflict reconstruction.
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S/2013/228 Security Council, 17 April.


