

# Liberal Peacebuilding and the Road to Hybrid Emancipatory Peace in Colombia

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## Liberal Peacebuilding and the Road to Hybrid Emancipatory Peace in Colombia

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Peacebuilding in contemporary times has become an all-hands-on approach. The complex realities of the world have necessitated a shift towards building peace from the bottom-up whilst drawing on the top-down resources at the international level. The liberal approach to peacebuilding has dominated for many years, and yet its crown has slipped due to its inability to comprehend cultural nuances. This essay explores the importance of cultural nuances in greater depth. It and argues that a universalist approach to peacebuilding is impossible because peace must be relevant to location in terms of customs and culture (Ramsbotham, Woodhouse, & Miall, 2011, p. 244). It goes on to argue against a technocratic model of peacebuilding that uses a one-size-fits-all approach, whilst claiming that traditions and culture must be central to peacebuilding if a durable emancipatory peace is to be achieved (Richmond, 2008, pp. 163-164). By using primary and secondary sources along with empirical evidence, this essay will critically evaluate the hegemonic liberal peacebuilding model in terms of its performance in Colombia. The evidence demonstrates that a hybrid peacebuilding model that includes liberal and grassroots civil society actors, without the liberal subsuming the indigenous, is imperative for durable peace. It is the combination of both liberal international status and grassroots legitimacy that embeds peace at the local, national, and international level.

Colombia was selected as a case study due to its recent peace agreement and the high number of grassroots peace initiatives (Peace Brigades International Colombia, 2012, p. 3). However, due to the limited remit of this paper, only 3 examples of grassroots initiatives have been selected for evaluation. On September 26, 2016, the 52-year civil conflict in Colombia ended with the signing of a peace agreement between the Colombian Government and the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC). Following initial plebiscite rejection in October, the agreement was ratified by Congress in November 2016, finally giving the people of Colombia a framework for peace (LaRosa & Mejía, 2017, pp. 243-246). First, this essay will begin by defining peacebuilding, noting its evolution and the emergence of a hegemonic liberal peace model. Secondly, this essay provides a critique of the liberal peace model and explores the concept of hybrid emancipatory peace. Finally, this essay critically evaluates the liberal peacebuilding model in Colombia.

Johan Galtung, an eminent peace scholar, originally defined peacebuilding as the process of building structures within states that exhibit the absence of both structural violence (dominance) and direct violence (war) (1976, p. 112). This section will explore how the concept of peacebuilding has developed from Galtung's (1976) structural top-down approach to Lederach's (1997) transformative bottom-up approach. It will introduce the hegemonic liberal peace model in order to understand the contemporary peacebuilding arguments that stem from it.

Galtung's understanding of peacebuilding excluded the aspect of peacekeeping, which he understood to be a dissociative approach that works solely on separating conflict parties (1976, p. 111). However, Galtung included peacemaking within his definition of peacebuilding, as it incorporated conflict resolution which addressed the root causes of conflict and is essential for building durable peace structures (1976, p. 111). Galtung argues that the structures of peace exist only when there is evidence of six factors. These six factors are: equity (where no party is exploited), symbiosis of shared decision-making, entropic array of actors (not solely elites), broad scope (with exchanges that promote interdependence), and superstructure (a strong example being the transnational over the international) (1976, p. 112). Evidently, Galtung was aiming to create a more complex understanding of the breadth

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and depth of peacebuilding which incorporated multi-level actors and win-win outcomes.

By 1992, the Cold War had ended and the liberal cultures and ideologies had triumphed against Marxist communism thanks to the global spread of technology, communication, and transport. Francis Fukuyama, author of *The End of History and the Last Man*, argued that the dominant liberal ideology and the democratic homogenous states sharing values of rights, equality, and justice, were destined to be altered to incorporate humanity's drive for individual superiority (1992, pp. 313-315). This means that a world dominated by a liberal ideology will inevitably exist within the tension between liberal democratic values of equality for all and capitalist individual ambition (Fukuyama, 1992, pp. 337-338). Furthermore, the concept of a liberal peace evolved from this idea that economic and political liberalisation would unify nations under shared democratic values. The concept of liberal peace espouses the value of competitive free-markets inspiring growth and complex interdependence, thereby making these interdependent countries less likely to wage war against each other (Hoffman, 2009, p. 10). Warring with a neighbour that a country's economy relies on for precious commodities can be viewed as cutting off the nose to spite the face. Also, there is little appetite amongst the civilian population for bloody and expensive wars, and democratic governments that wish to stay in power listen to the will of the people in such matters (Mintz & Geva, 1993, p. 490). Therefore, this growing domination of liberal democratic values, alongside the belief that such values sustain peace, has inevitably shaped the landscape for peacebuilding efforts.

Similarly, in 1992, the United Nations (UN) was developing a form of liberal peacebuilding based on its wish to fulfill its post-WW2 Charter. The Charter prioritised securing international peace and upholding the liberal values of justice, human rights, socio-economic development, and fundamental freedoms (Boutros-Ghali, 1992, pp. 1-2). In *An Agenda for Peace*, UN Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali, expressed the belief in a common moral thread across nations that would form the basis of international norms and laws with the UN as a key actor (1992, p. 4). A norm is widely understood to be "a standard of appropriate behaviour for actors with a given identity" (Finnemore & Sikkink, 1998, p. 891). In this context, the liberal values were being formed into a "shared moral assessment", where "norm entrepreneurs" operate at the domestic and international levels in order to institutionalise the norm (Finnemore & Sikkink, 1998, p. 893). This indicates that liberal values were becoming embedded within powerful international institutions, who were using them to guide their peacebuilding policies and practices. Boutros-Ghali (1992, p. 16) presented peacebuilding as a post-conflict effort for "the construction of a new environment." The aims were to prevent the return to conflict through disarmament and the destruction of arms, bolstering or creating democratic institutions, promoting human rights, advocating education as a means of cultural integration, and supporting political participation (Boutros-Ghali, 1992, p. 16). Political scientist, Roger Mac Ginty, defines liberal peacebuilding as "the concept, condition and practice whereby leading states, international organizations and international financial institutions promote their version of peace through peace-support interventions, control of international financial architecture, support for state sovereignty and the international status quo" (2008, p. 143). It is this form of liberal peacebuilding that was seen as heralding the secret to peace in its technocratic one-size-fits-all installation of democracy, good governance, rule of law, respect for human rights, an expanded civil society, and free-market economies (Hoffman, 2009, p. 10). This one-size-fits-all approach was seen as the most efficient way of creating what was assumed to be the ideal state (Bisarya et al., 2017, p. 253). Implemented in a pre-packaged form, liberal peace was perceived as being able to turn the chaos of conflict into democratic harmony.

However, by 1997, John Paul Lederach was advancing a new transformative concept of peacebuilding. Lederach describes peacebuilding as an idea that is "understood as a comprehensive concept that encompasses, generates, and sustains the full array of processes, approaches, and stages needed to transform conflict toward more sustainable, peaceful relationships" (1997, p. 20). This conception moved peacebuilding beyond the UN's post-conflict model and introduced an integrated framework represented by a durable yet flexible process-structure that addresses root causes, crisis management, prevention of conflict relapse, a vision for future generations, and culminates in conflict transformation (Lederach, 1997, pp. 79-84). A key feature of Lederach's conception is his peacebuilding pyramid, which he describes as a set of analytical lenses for viewing issues and connecting concepts via three societal levels: top (military, political, and religious elites), middle (civil society leaders), and grassroots (community leaders, indigenous NGOs, plus relief and development leaders) (Lederach, 1997, pp. 41-42). Over time, scholars and practitioners have identified the need to further evolve the concept of peacebuilding beyond the top-down approaches. The concept needed to evolve to incorporate complex realities, multi-actor situations, and the

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need for negotiated hybrid solutions to the differences between the universal and local-particular (Ramsbotham, Woodhouse, & Miall, 2011, p. 238). Boutros-Ghali recognised that development interventions are a potentially invasive force within individual lives that can be destabilising to communities (1992, p. 3). This demonstrates a shift towards an understanding of peacebuilding from within the state and a move away from the idea of international institutions as noble saviours acting as sole harbingers of peace. The highlighted criticisms will be addressed in the following section.

In the late 1990s, the Bush administration's interventions in Iraq and Afghanistan brought a critical focus to the motives behind liberal peacebuilding. Motivated by the 'war on terror', the Bush administration intended to install regime change and introduce democracy in a bid to bring liberal peace to the Middle East (Hoffman, 2009, p. 10). What they failed to predict was the onslaught of internal violence that occurred when these peacebuilding measures were rushed through in countries where such individualistic values were alien (Hoffman, 2009, p. 10). Such individualistic values promote autonomy, personal choice, equality, and diversity, therefore prioritising the welfare of the individual over the social group (Karstedt, 2006, pp. 57-58). However, in countries like Iraq and Afghanistan, the family and community are prioritised above the needs of the individual, thus becoming a factor in causing friction when opposing values are imposed (Hoffman, 2009, p. 11). Liberal peace is further criticised for being pro-Western. In particular, the liberal model is seen as universalist, neo-liberal, and grandiose, and yet it fails to provide long-term capacity building due to a focus on short-term measures (Mac Ginty, 2008, pp. 142-144). Therefore, despite the weight and power of international norms behind it, the failures of liberal interventions in bringing durable peace mean that the liberal model has lost its lustre. However, this has opened the door to more complex and tailored models of peace that move away from top-down imposition and promote bottom-up growth. The proceeding section further critiques the liberal peace model and evaluates the arguments for hybrid peacebuilding that combines liberal (top-down) and indigenous (bottom-up) approaches.

Arguments against the short-term prescriptive approach of liberal peacebuilding describe how conflict affects all levels of social and political life. Therefore, peace measures will need to provide long-term support to all actors across social, political, and economic structures (Kumar & De la Haye, 2012, p. 13). This pervasive approach is needed to ensure inclusion and consensus, whilst also incorporating linkages between international norms and domestic practices (Kumar & De la Haye, 2012, p. 13). Similarly, there is agreement amongst certain scholars that conflict is both deep and pervasive. However, whilst some scholars highlight the impact of conflict across and within structures, others address how various victim groups are impacted differently. For example, women experience more incidents of sexual violence and children may lose entire families, highlighting the importance of factoring in different needs within peacebuilding approaches (Mukherjee, 2011, p. 333). For this reason, a multi-faceted plan rather than a one-size-fits-all approach is essential for successful peacebuilding. However, the implicit impact of liberal norms is evident when the same author introduces a contradiction, arguing that reconciliation is possible when "both parties are able to work together toward a common goal of peace" (Mukherjee, 2011, pp. 334). Yet, the very complexity and pervasiveness of conflict amongst structures and victim groups demonstrates how shared visions are a liberal misnomer. This tension between the seemingly contradictory goals of respecting differences whilst creating sameness is a feature of liberal peace critics and their arguments. In his article *Saving Liberal Peacebuilding*, Roland Paris points out that most critics base their arguments on the fact that liberal peace is not liberal enough, voicing concerns over its illiberal implementation rather than its principles (2010, pp. 349-360). Paris argues that, despite being tarnished by aggressive interventions in the name of 'war on terror' and accusations of imperialism, liberal peacebuilding has the potential to adapt and make space for alternative peacebuilding models. Having its roots in Western plural and consociational politics gives liberal peace this power to adapt (Paris, 2010, pp. 349-360). Therefore, these arguments suggest that liberal peacebuilding can evolve beyond the tensions and the limited vision of universally shared values, with a top-down approach meeting grassroots initiatives in the middle. Such initiatives will be evaluated in the following section.

Further arguments draw on the importance of the local and indigenous or traditional peacebuilding methods, which are essential in supporting a durable peace. One perspective emphasises the importance of the indigenous voice and argues for a bottom-up and top-down peacebuilding hybrid which does not conceal or dominate the indigenous (Richmond, 2008, pp. 163-164). This concern over the impact of liberal dominance is echoed by fears that a form of 'liberal peace-lite' is being offered as a culturally sensitive alternative (Mac Ginty, 2008, pp. 143-158). However,

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grassroots actors are potentially co-opted into adopting liberal practices and advocating liberal methods. Within local communities, grassroots actors are often dependent on funding and other resources from powerful actors (Mac Ginty, 2008, pp. 143-158). The concern here is that, despite liberal peacebuilding expanding to incorporate bottom-up approaches, the liberal model still dominates. Consequently, indigenous voices are at risk of being obscured and potentially subsumed by the well-funded and internationally-backed liberal model.

However, it may be tempting to see the indigenous approach as the 'Beauty' to the liberal 'Beast', and yet neither approach is without its flaws. In promoting the inclusion of indigenous peacebuilding, it is important to address the temptation to 'romanticise the local'. Local communities can fall prey to corruption or be persuaded by hegemonic donors to espouse the views of the powerful (Ramsbotham, Woodhouse, & Miall, 2011, p. 244). Similarly, emancipatory peacebuilding should not be romanticised as this approach can also be overly prescriptive (Richmond, 2008, pp. 163-164). During a review of new peacebuilding conceptualisations, John Heathershaw argues that the debate against the one-size-fits-all liberal peace model has not reached a satisfactory conclusion. He argues that this is due to misconceptions about the tensions and competition between the international and the local (Heathershaw, 2013, pp. 280-281). Furthermore, he argues that the international-local can often be intertwined, with indigenous peacebuilding actors making use of international resources whilst international actors take advantage of local knowledge (Heathershaw, 2013, pp. 280-281). This suggestion for a hybrid approach is a relatively consistent solution amongst scholars to resolve the tension between liberal and indigenous peacebuilding efforts. This composition of liberal and indigenous peacebuilding is important since potentially all forms of peacebuilding will be hybrids of some kind. However, due to the hegemony of Western international norms, the indigenous and traditional will be altered and minimised in order to fit into the liberal framework (Mac Ginty, 2008, pp. 156-157). Once again demonstrating the overarching dominance and power of the liberal model as an international norm. It is this hybrid model that will be evaluated in the following section, looking particularly at liberal peacebuilding and its impact on indigenous approaches in Colombia.

With a peace agreement in place, the Colombian people must now continue their decade's long pursuit of peace – an endeavour they wish to bring to their communities and their country as a whole (Delgado, 2004, p. 24). It is within these communities, at the grassroots level of Lederach's peacebuilding pyramid (1997, pp. 41-42), that the performance of liberal peacebuilding will be critically analysed. Due to the limited scope of this essay, three empirical examples will be discussed, paying particular attention to grassroots utilisation of international resources, indigenous uniqueness that defies liberal blueprints, and the risks of liberal actors obscuring indigenous voices.

The Peace Community San José de Apartadó is a peasant community of non-combatants in a region besieged by drug trafficking, guerrilla groups, and paramilitaries (Naucke, 2017, p. 456). This community formed into an autonomous group of approximately 1,000 members who adhere to three (liberal) principles: the respect for human rights and international humanitarian law, the protection of the community's property rights, and justice for crimes against members (Naucke, 2017, pp. 460-461). The Peace Community serves as a prime example of hybrid peacebuilding, as they use external resources for their own gain without relinquishing authority for decision-making (Heathershaw, 2013, pp. 280-281). By utilising the Inter-American Court of Human Rights, the Peace Community can bring cases against combatants to raise awareness and deter future attacks (Naucke, 2017, pp. 461-463). The methods that the Peace Community employ developed organically due to their location, culture, and circumstances. Therefore, such projects defy liberal blueprints and demonstrate the local capacity to build their own peace (Naucke, 2017, p. 465). This example highlights the potential power of grassroots initiatives in being at the forefront of their own effective peacebuilding efforts. However, the very fact that the Peace Community is so unique and grew organically means that only so much can be learned from such a project. For if these initiatives are taken and applied elsewhere, it will become nothing more than the one-size-fits all approach that is so lamented by critics of the liberal model.

Similarly, both the Peace Community San José de Apartadó and the NASA project of Torbio in the Cauca region have self-sustaining economies. The Peace Community relies on working groups who export crops locally and redistribute the profits into community projects to support the young and the elderly (Naucke, 2017, p. 464), an endeavour that would surely be destroyed by exposure to the free-market. Many such grassroots actors surfaced in Colombia during the 1980s and are creating new peacebuilding approaches that are based on "organizational

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processes at the community level, they aim to build new social relations on the basis of solidarity, cooperation and reciprocity” (Delgado, 2004, p. 24). The NASA project aimed to enable participation, peacefully resist conflict, and create a self-sustaining economy. They also seek the attention, resources, and support of the international community in order to gain protection (Delgado, 2004, p. 27). This again demonstrates the indigenous community’s willingness to call for international support when such resources can be life-saving (Kumar & De la Haye, 2012, p. 13). Therefore, it is evident here that the indigenous need not be romanticised but can be seen as savvy and assertive in using liberal resources to meet their own needs.

Conversely, a project headed by the Sustainable Development Goals Fund (SDGF) provides an example of one-size-fits-all liberal peacebuilding and how it dominates the indigenous. The SDGF adopted a strategic approach in the department of Nariño, focusing on conflict prevention, installing rule of law, and promoting economic development (Sustainable Development Goals Fund, 2017, p. 1). Within its collection of UN agencies, the SDGF aimed to achieve these goals by bolstering institutions, establishing good governance, and protecting human rights within the department of Nariño and its indigenous and Afro-Colombian inhabitants (Sustainable Development Goals Fund, 2017, p. 1). The project report is somewhat self-congratulatory, with only partial recognition of the importance of local inclusion (Sustainable Development Goals Fund, 2017, p. 9), and yet without a sense of deep-rooted indigenous essentialism (Ramsbotham, Woodhouse, & Miall, 2011, p. 244). Notably, out of the seven lessons learnt by the report, only one of them mentioned the importance of including local participation in the planning process, whilst the other six outlined aspects of strategy, design, and inter-agency communication as means of improving delivery (Sustainable Development Goals Fund, 2017, p. 8). This evidence suggests that local planning involved working with the SDGF to determine how initiatives should be implemented, but it appears that the local community did not have a say in what those initiatives were. This provides an example of liberal peacebuilding obscuring indigenous voices (Richmond, 2008, pp. 163-164).

There is clear evidence of grassroots initiatives in Colombia including some hybrid success with liberal peacebuilding efforts. However, Lederach points out that the grassroots level is where conflict is not only generated by discrimination, disadvantage, and exclusion, it is also where violence is experienced at its worst (1997, p. 43). This vulnerable level of society will hopefully benefit from a peace and conflict impact assessment (PCIA) which performs a micro-appraisal of the outcomes of low-level programmes, offers guidance for future projects, and forms part of the assessment on the wider conflict impact (Ramsbotham, Woodhouse, & Miall, 2011, p. 243). For it is through reflecting on the outcomes of the existing peacebuilding approaches that Colombia will be able to assess the impact of hegemonic liberal dominance on meaningful grassroots participation.

In conclusion, post-Cold War peacebuilding has been dominated by the top-down technocratic liberal approach. Emboldened by victory in an ideological war, liberal values have become embedded within international institutions who have shaped peacebuilding models around them. However, despite mounting criticisms over illiberal implementation of the hegemonic model, liberal peacebuilding remains the dominant paradigm that has merely made room for hybrid alternatives. Originally depicted as a structural concept, peacebuilding is now understood to be emancipatory and transformative. This new concept of peacebuilding connects the grassroots populations to the national and international in peacebuilding efforts. Ultimately, this combines the voice of the local with the liberal values of the international. As shown in Colombia, liberal peacebuilding is very much present. However, the local-particular has demonstrated its strength in implementing its own peacebuilding initiatives whilst utilising the resources of liberal institutions. Due to the limited scope of this essay further research is needed. Evaluating liberal peacebuilding in Mexico would offer a comparison and would help towards determining the potential for hybrid success or liberal dominance in other conflict situations.

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*Date written: 12/2017*