CENTRE OF INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

Creating Space for Emancipatory Human Security: Liberal Obstructions and the Potential of Agonism

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To negate the political does not make it disappear,
it only leads to bewilderment in the face of its manifestations
and to impotence in dealing with them
(Mouffe, 1993: 140)

Abstract

The human security agenda, as currently operationalized by the majority of powerful states and institutions, exhibits a distinct liberal character, simultaneously contributing to and legitimizing the dominant liberal peacebuilding approach. As such, there has been a crowding out of alternative conceptions of human security, including those which focus on emancipation. This latter approach to human security offers a more transformative vision through its focus on issues such as hegemony, power and freedom. Paths to such forms of human security have yet to materialize, largely due to the characteristics of a liberal-internationalist approach which has narrowed the political space in which challenges to the status quo can be imagined and realized. In its failure to allow for a genuine plurality of voices and in its insistence on creating false consensus, liberal peacebuilding blocks the emancipatory promise of a genuine shift from state to human security.   A potential starting point for imagining alternatives to liberal peacebuilding and thus the creation of emancipatory forms of human security is to consider the role and possibilities for agonistic modes of politics and peacebuilding. Transforming inevitable differences that are part of human society into agonistic relationships—where differences exist and are negotiated amongst adversaries (as opposed to enemies), opens up the political space required to challenge dominant liberal approaches to human security and enables a shift towards the emancipatory model.

Introduction

Broadly speaking, current work on the theory and practice of peacebuilding tends to follow one of two tracks. The first appears to accept the underlying premise of an orthodox version of the liberal peace and focuses either on the means by which some of the negative, short term impacts of peacebuilding practice can be reduced, or on increasing the efficiency of already existing processes. This body of work, while accepting the imperfections of the liberal system, nonetheless appears committed to it as an ideal, arguing that the failings of liberal peacebuilding can be found in the mechanisms through which it is delivered—a resequencing or reprioritizing of processes, often with increased levels of 'local participation', is presented as a potential solution to the failings of this project. An alternative track is taken by those who question the underlying theoretical premises, norms and values of the liberal peacebuilding project as it currently exists. Here, greater attention is paid to the role of power, ideology and hegemony. Solutions to the failings of peacebuilding are thus seen as requiring a confrontation between powers, and the creation of direct challenges to the hegemonic practices of liberal peacebuilding.

This paper travels along the second path and seeks to challenge the ways in which the human security agenda is both conceptualised and operationalised in current peacebuilding missions. Adopting the language of Critical Security Studies (CSS), working towards human security will be seen as an emancipatory project which focuses on conflict transformation as opposed to mere mitigation or resolution. In taking this perspective, the author confronts a supposed 'impasse' in security studies generally and the peacebuilding literature specifically, namely that while a move towards a more 'transformative' and 'emancipatory' approach is required, the practice and possibility for such a shift remains somewhat ambiguous

(Richmond, 2007b; Woodhouse and Ramsbotham, 2005: 152). This paper contributes to resolving such ambiguity. It argues that in order to move towards an emancipatory state of human security, the dominance and hegemony of liberal peacebuilding must be challenged. Critiques reveal that liberalism is itself a system which restricts the political space needed to make such challenges. Therefore, in order to directly challenge liberalism, political spaces must be opened, expanded. The concept of agonism will be presented as a device for imagining how political space can be altered in such a way as to challenge the dominance of liberalism and thus the hegemony of a dysfunctional mode of peacebuilding which prevents the realization of emancipatory human security.

Defining, critiquing and (re) engaging with Human Security

Commonly defined as "prioritizing the security of people rather than states" (Duffield, 2007: 111) by creating environments where individuals exist in a state of 'freedom from want' and a 'freedom from fear' (Acharya, 2001: 443), human security is often portrayed as a critical turn in international security theory and practice. With security traditionally approached in terms of the protection of states and their borders from external military threats, the growth of the human security agenda has been portrayed as a major paradigm shift. Emerging in the mid to late 1990s, the concept quickly became a central policy focus of many western governments (most notably in Canada and Japan), multilateral organizations as well as both international and local NGOs. Recently, there has been debate over whether human security could provide a useful framework for the creation of a common EU foreign policy (Kaldor, Martin and Selchow, 2007; Matlary, 2008) and whether this could potentially be enforced through some form of EU 'Human Security

Response Forces' (Vankovska, 2007). It is a concept that has spawned countless international meetings, commissions and reports and has been fundamental in movements toward the creation of an international legal norm of a 'Responsibility to Protect', which would formalize and legalize the right of the international community to defend the security of citizens when their own states fail to do so (for a good review of the history of human security see Acharaya, 2001; Bain, 2001 and Duffield, 2007).

A seminal article by Canada's former Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lloyd Axworthy, justifies a shift towards human security:

> Security traditionally has focused on the state because its fundamental purpose is to protect its citizens. Hobbled by economic adversity, outrun by globalization, and undermined from within by bad governance, the capacity of some states to provide this protection has increasingly come into question. This capacity is particularly obvious in war-torn societies. The state has, at times, come to be a major threat to its populations' rights and welfare.... This drives us to broaden the focus of security beyond the level of the state and toward individual human beings, as well as to consider the appropriate roles for the international community (Axworthy, 2001: 19).

Following this logic, human security has been operationalised in two distinct, though complimentary ways. The first, which some believe has been adopted by the Canadian government, maintains a focus on protecting individuals in zones of active conflict and obvious threats to the physical security of citizens in weak or failing states. While the individual becomes the central referent actor, the focus remains (primarily) on the protection of individuals in times of insecurity and war. A broader approach, taken by states including Japan and institutions such

as the UNDP, adopts a more holistic stance which emphasizes "the interrelatedness of different types of security and the importance of development, in particular, as a security strategy" (Kaldor, 2007: 183). Under this second perspective, human security becomes almost synonymous with international development and poverty reduction. Human security becomes a focus in times of violent conflict but also in instances where countries are at peace. While distinct, both of these approaches can be categorized as a liberal-operational approach in that actors seek to promote human security via current international mechanisms and institutions which operate under a liberal paradigm.[i] Both approaches largely concentrate on strengthening and creating regimes such as the Antipersonnel Landmines Treaty or the Rome Statute (which is the basis for the International Criminal Court). The focus remains on concrete operational issues and dilemmas such as coordination between civilian and military actors (Hasegawa, 2007; Hataley and Nossal, 2004), or making already existing foreign policy and international arrangements more 'human security focused' (Glasius, 2006; Kaldor, Martin and Selchow, 2007). While both attempt to expand the notion of security to some degree, neither directly challenge the ideologies and structures which have facilitated and in a sense tolerated international, national and human insecurity. Human security is thus not treated as an issue unto itself, but remains linked to traditional notions of security which focus on overt physical violence, and the role of the state in contributing to or preventing such violence— human and orthodox security are seen as intrinsically linked and considered 'mutually supportive' (King and Murray, 2001/02: 590). This does not represent a grand shift in security thinking, but rather an acceptance that current security concerns, while problematic for nation-states and the international system, can also have a negative impact on individuals—therefore

policies should be put in place to protect individuals from the dangers of state and international insecurity. The focus remains on fine tuning already existing international security relations in an attempt to protect individuals from the destructiveness of state insecurity. In these cases, human security does not actually represent a new security agenda or paradigm, but rather an affirmation of already existing security approaches with the addition of protection for individuals. It is therefore argued that in their adoption of human security, "policy-makers are inclined to graft it onto an existing, more traditional security agenda" (Kerr, Tow and Hanson, 2003: 93) as opposed to actually reconceptualising the meaning of security itself or entirely reformulating their approaches to achieving security.[ii]

Besides the concern that the human security agenda does not actually represent anything entirely 'new' in the field of peace and security studies, one finds a more concerning and, for the purposes of this article, most relevant arguments, namely that the (ab)use of the human security discourse serves to reinforce dominant power relations and structures within the international system and is therefore paradoxically itself a threat to human security. Through the human security discourse a multitude of 'new' threats have been identified by the worlds more powerful states and institutions, with the same actors then positioning themselves as the most capable of resolving said threats. This reinforces and in many way increases the power of these actors over weaker states and individuals in the international system. The central means through which this power is manifest and legitimized is through linking the concept of human security to practices of liberal peacebuilding. The language and concerns found within the former are congruent with the stated aims and processes of the latter. Both focus on poverty alleviation through access to markets, the necessity for formal elections, and individual freedom. Indeed, liberal peacebuilding uses the rhetoric of human security quite explicitly to justify the need for their programming. Of

course, there is nothing entirely new about this technique. The threat posed by poverty and human suffering has long been used to justify security policies of states and international actors. As Duffield argues, using poor human development as a justification for security and control mechanisms is a centuries old strategy— "while appearing to be new [human security] is... a view of security that can be found in nineteenth-century fears of social breakdown as well as the claimed link between poverty and communism at the time of decolonization" (Duffield, 2007: 115). While the existence of poor or otherwise disenfranchised group has historically led to advancements in social planning and humanitarian initiatives, there is an equally strong history of linking the poor and 'underprivileged' so threats such as crime, deviance, communism and now terrorism which in turn influences and legitimizes policies to 'deal with' these groups. Clearly, the promotion of human security has both historically and in current times serves as a way of legitimizing mechanisms of dominance and control. Political systems which appear to oppose liberalism, or which threaten the status quo in the international system are labelled as dangerous, requiring a strong response which in turn grants dominant actors even greater power.

This greater power stems from the reality that through the rhetoric and growth of the human security agenda, creating security now requires actors to make fundamental changes to entire socio-political systems. Reactions to insecurity, once focused simply on protecting state borders from external military threats, now includes intervention in the economic, socio-cultural and biological processes as they relate to individuals and communities. Health care and education policies (including interventions into curriculum and the writing of text books), cultural exchanges, legal reform—these are now all legitimate avenues for intervention as they serve to promote human security. And while improving access to health and education or facilitating inter-ethnic dialogue

are not in and of themselves problematic—that they are now unproblematically considered part of the security agenda is, as it increases the level of control of external actors over communities and societies without any democratic process or clear accountability between the interveners and those being intervened upon.   This is arguably a new form or imperialism or neo-colonialism.   Such critiques can be linked to the work on securitization which argues that by positioning an issue as a security problem the "democratic processes of consultation and accommodation and the legitimate expression of dissent give way to a climate of urgency that facilitates recourse to 'extraordinary measures', such as increases in executive power, secrecy and, ultimately, the threat and use of military force" (Ewan, 2007: 186).   Once something is labelled a 'security threat' (such as poverty, gender discrimination or inadequate health care) rapid and often undemocratic policies can be pushed through without facing the thought, scrutiny and standard of public debate that one would normally expect in relation to major policy initiatives and military undertakings. In other words, even more problematic than its tendency to confirm or reproduce dominant views and practices of security is that human security has also had the effect of *deepening and widening* orthodox practices of security. It has created a discourse and thus a justification for more invasive forms of intervention, allowing external actors to involve themselves in the very personal and even biological processes which support life. Pupavac (2005) uses the analogy of 'therapeutic governance' to describe these processes, contributing to similar critiques which suggest that the human security agenda is a form of 'bio-power' (Duffield, 2007), evidence of a growing 'bio-political tyranny' (Duffield and Waddell, 2006: 20) which uses the altruistic rhetoric found within the human security discourse to mask or legitimize

interventionist, neo-colonial and imperialist activities.

In the case of Canada, for example, it is suggested that the adoption of a human security approach has legitimized practices of "Boy Scout Imperialism" (Hataley and Nossal, 2004: 9, quoting Hay, 2000). As a middle power with little ability to impose its values through military means, this country has adopted the human security agenda, at least in part, to increase its power and influence over global affairs.   Political ambitions and interests can be masked and legitimized to its domestic population and abroad by speaking in the altruistic language of human security. Again, Canada's insistence that its involvement in Afghanistan is largely a humanitarian intervention based on the need to protect Afghan civilians from actors such as the Taliban, terrorists, warlords and drug smugglers acts as an example of the rhetoric of human security being used to mask or legitimize a deep, intrusive and often violent mode of intervention and control. While there are undoubtedly positive outcomes in terms of the protection of individuals stemming from many of Canada's activities in Afghanistan, its national security interests, its commitments to its most important ally and to NATO remain as the central driving forces in its willingness to protect human security in Afghanistan.   The use of the concept of human security in this way is paradoxically a threat to human security as it justifies violence (sometimes physical, but also structural in its tendency to justify unaccountable forms of dominance).   A further example of this is illustrated by Bonner (2008) who critiques the use of the concept of human security in Argentina given the historical (mis)use of the concept of 'security threat'. The notion of citizen security there, similar to the notion of human security, has been used to justify harsh responses from the state and security apparatus against citizens when issues were deemed 'security concerns'. This included increases in police

violence, the targeting of the poor as potential criminals and the occupation of poor neighbourhoods by the police (Bonner, 2008: 22).[iii] Another example of this problem can be found in the case of Kosovo, where the combined forces of the world's most powerful militaries were used to wage a violent campaign in the name of Kosovan-Albanian human security. Further, the eight year international mission that followed granted international administrators complete executive power, which allowed internationals to control nearly all aspects of economic and political life. The control over the judiciary, security services, privatization process, borders and the funding of reconstruction and development programs by UNMIK and the cast of international actors who have attempted to rebuild Kosovo, now in the name of human security for Kosovans of all ethnicities, can be seen as a form of dominance over domestic institutions, groups and individuals—a limiting of freedom through foreign executive control. Especially pertinent to this discussion is the reality that despite initial 'acceptance' of such control (at least on the part of part of the Albanian population), increasing and ongoing dissatisfaction with the international mission weakens and undermines the 'human security' justification for international actions. In the latter phases of the mission we witness (sometimes violent) frustration with the UN by a large proportion of the population including the Albanian majority (satisfaction levels dropped from nearly 65% at the end of 2002 to less than 30% by the end of 2004 [UNDP Kosovo 2009]). Growing discontent by the majority Albanian population who initially supported the NATO and UN missions is mirrored by continued feelings of resentment and frustration over such control by other ethnic groups in the area as well as the Serbian state who still argue for their sovereignty over the territory. This all reveals that what the UN and other actors portray as protecting and promoting human security, has actually been perceived as another form of dominance by a range of key stakeholders in the region. Frustration over the lack of accountability

between internationals and locals, the real and perceived class imbalances between these two groups and the stifling of discontented voices through crackdowns on dissident groups such as *Vetevendosje* expose flaws in the human security argument. One form of dominance has been replaced with another. And while the era of control presided over by the international community has proven to be considerably less *physically* violent—levels of violence between Serbs and Albanians have been drastically reduced since the immediate pre-conflict phase under Milosevic's rule, the international mission has not vastly improved the lives, the human security, of Kosovans. All ethnic communities continue to suffer from rates of unemployment unseen in North America and Western Europe—41.4% overall and 60.5% for women in 2005 (UNDP Kosovo, 2007: 20). Nearly 44% still live in poverty (ibid, 7), and freedom of movement for many minorities living in ethnic enclaves remains limited, all despite one of the largest and most well funded humanitarian *cum* development missions since the Marshall Plan. While some might suggest that the plans to bring human security to the people of Kosovo are simply operationally flawed or poorly implemented, given the expertise and hard work of both the domestic and international staff on the ground it is perhaps more feasible to argue that the explanation rests more generally with the dominant human security approach adopted by the international community. Issues such as resolving unemployment, inequality in the distribution of wealth between ethnic groups and genders was never the primary goal of the intervention, and thus staffers on the ground have never been fully equipped or granted the flexibility that would allow an alternative form of human security to be pursued. With the establishment of regional stability and physical security the penultimate aim, even the limited goals of the liberal human security agenda are pushed to the background *and* new forms of human insecurity in the form of external control and non-democratic processes are utilized.

While discussions such as those offered above are valuable in term of their analysis of the current use of the human security agenda, revealing both its practical and political flaws, these critiques stand up well only in their application to the narrow liberal-operational approach to human security. While some rightly critique human security as a rhetorical device used by dominant western liberal powers to impose, sometimes violently, a narrow vision of peace, others seek to rescue, or (re)engage with the concept—arguing that many of the critiques wrongly ignore the normative concerns and emancipatory potential of the concept and its concomitant agenda (Bellamy and MacDonald, 2002: 373). While human security is most visible in the way it has been defined and acted upon by mostly western, powerful states and institutions, other versions or perspectives on human security remain as useful analytical tools in imagining and creating alternative approaches to alleviating violence, both physical and structural (Galtung, 1969). These alternative perspectives on human security can be loosely categorized as *emancipatory approaches* (Richmond, 2007a; Bastian, 2004) and consider progress towards human security as being achieved through "'the freeing of people (as individuals and groups) from the physical and human constraints which stop them carrying out what they would freely choose to do'" (Richmond, 2008: 131 quoting Booth, 1991). In terms of the terminology that is used, this approach to human security actually appears quite similar to the liberal-operational approach, the key difference being that the emancipatory perspective recognizes that the very structures which claim to further individual (human) security and development may actually *be* a form of 'bio-political tyranny' (Duffield and Waddell, 2006) insofar as the liberal approach justifies deep and invasive control in the name of human security. Under this emancipatory perspective, the

dominance of the liberal peacebuilding agenda and their abuse of the term 'human security' would itself be seen as a threat to individuals' security.

The emancipatory approach addresses issues which are lacking in the liberal-operational approach to human security including the questioning of power asymmetries between and within states as well as the negative impact of markets (Bastian, 2004: 411). It also escapes several conceptual and ethical problems associated with the dominant approach. For example, it need not fall prey to accusations that human security privileges the individual over the group, or homogenizes differences between humans (Hudson, 2005) as both groups (social and political communities to which all humans belong) and a plurality of individual voices are granted space in an emancipatory project. Further while the dominant approach can be seen as having a western *cum* liberal bias, the emancipatory approach can be seen as universally applicable (in a pluralistic, not homogenizing liberal sense)—it need not rely on western values and norms as the dominant liberal approach has done. What is universal about the emancipatory approach is that all individuals are perceived as having the right to define human security—what security *is* and more importantly how it is achieved is neither prescribed nor dominated by a single actor or ideology. Inserting notions of power, ideology and hegemony into the concept and therefore plans of action, the emancipatory approach can be seen as superior to the liberal view of human security. It requires combating all forms of insecurity—the range physical, economic, social, political and ideological constraints to which humans are subjected. It is therefore argued that this emancipatory approach to human security offers possibilities and opportunities for building peace which do not fall prey to the homogenizing, self-interested and at times destructive liberal approach to

human security—which is both ineffective and often itself a security threat.

Impeding emancipator human security: The apolitical approach of liberalism.

Despite the conceptual and normative value of the emancipatory version of human security, the liberal-operational approach has emerged as the most dominant. The reasons for this relate to the strength of the liberal peace discourse which has become the prima facie foundation for current modes of intervention in weak and failing states. In order to understand *how* liberalism impedes the growth of the emancipatory human security approaches, a brief discussion of the growth, dominance and character of liberal peacebuilding is required. A concept found in classical liberal theory (see Paris, 2004 for a good review and history) the notion of 'liberal peace' was "rediscovered in the 1980s" (Paris, 2004: 37) and grew to become the prevailing model of intervention in post conflict states from the 1990s onwards, not coincidently, roughly the same time as the emergence of the concept 'human security. Since this time, different manifestations of liberalism have been identified. Within the realm of liberal peace implementation for example, Richmond identifies four graduations, from hyper-conservative through to an 'emancipatory' form of liberalism— which has yet to be practiced (2007b: 217-218). While different in the ways they are implemented and their sustainability in terms of bringing an end to physical violence, these different liberalisms rest on similar ideological values and foundations. Regardless of the specificities of implementation, in all modes of liberal peacebuilding the focus remains on ability of the individuals to reach a non-violent consensus through rational deliberation. The foundations of all of these modes remains on individual freedom (both in terms of politics and economics), rationality and consensus. Even the 'emancipatory' notion of liberalism ignores or at least forces to the background

other facets of human society such as collective identities or what liberals might classify as 'irrationality'. The adoption of the theoretical premises of liberalism by international development and security actors has translated into what some refer to as a 'peacebuilding consensus' (Richmond, 2007b) whereby a broad and general agreement has emerged between powerful liberal states, multi-lateral organization and NGOs regarding the nature of and means for achieving peace.

This peacebuilding consensus and the resultant governance depends on third parties imposing the choice of integration via very specific qualifying moves (the adoption of free markets, elections, human rights and so on) on all disputants. Actors which fail to accept this become economically and politically excluded (Richmond, 2004: 144).

International order has come to be governed by a particular set of policies, guided by liberal principles which are seen as the surest path to peace and security. However, as with human security, there has been a substantial critical response to the emergence and dominance of liberal peacebuilding (Cooper, 2005; Duffield, 2001; Pugh, 2007; Richmond, 2008).

Amongst these critiques, one finds a rather potent concern regarding a core assumption of liberalism that is central to understanding stagnation in movements towards emancipation. This critique, coming from those in the post-structural tradition notes that that with the emergence of a unipolar (uni-ideological) world, we have been left with "the illusion that we can finally dispense with the notion of antagonism" (Mouffe, 1993: 2). In the present era the value of difference and of contestation have been made to disappear and replaced with a belief that we have reached a 'consensus' (note the congruence with the peacebuilding literature) in regards to the ideal modes of human or social organization. Liberal peacebuilding and liberalism in general now "depends on evacuating the dimension of the political and conceiving the well ordered

society as exempt from politics....All controversial issues are taken off the agenda in order to create the conditions for a 'rational' consensus" (Mouffe, 1993: 139-140). As noted earlier, those who attempt to reinject the political by questioning the status quo are punished. They are marginalized economically and politically, in some occasions suffering formal rebukes through diplomatic measures or sanctions but also in more subtle ways through exclusion to international forums and debates or an inability to attract funding from major donors. Thus, it is not accidental that organizations lack the capacity to integrate politics, or challenge dysfunctional hegemonic practices. Actors who engage in peacebuilding operate in a system in which questioning the status quo and the ideological foundations on which it exists is neither encouraged nor tolerated. Opening up channels of political debate or creating mechanisms which would increase the scope for alternatives leads to exclusion from and by powerful international political and economic communities.

This intolerance to deviation is problematic on at least two front in relations to furthering the goals of human security. First, the unwillingness to allow for real disensus and difference in the political realm leads to tangible increases in human insecurity. When there is insistence on the removal of antagonisms, the outcome is often more violence. Differences cannot simply be removed, they remain, and more importantly, because they are given no 'outlet' in formal modes of liberal governance and institutions, they manifest themselves in dangerous and often violent ways. Liberal institutions, not set up to internalize and integrate such antagonisms are thus incapable of managing these manifestations, representing a 'fatal' contradiction within the liberal peacebuilding agenda. 'Fatalities', brought about by liberalism's fixation with order and consensus, are illustrated in many of the approaches to development and post-conflict

programming seen across the globe—where "despite evidence of increased global inequality and the acknowledgement of environmental problems associated with 'development' in international political circles, neo-liberal globalisation continues to be represented as though there is no viable political-economic alternative" (Langley and Mellor, 2002: 49). The same policies, often with 'fatal' outcomes continue to be used despite consistent evidence of the harms associated with such policies. Failures are blamed on poor implementation, corrupt officials, a lack of proper monitoring or other such externalities. The core beliefs which guide of liberal practices are rarely called into question much less altered. This inability or unwillingness to respond to serious contradictions within the liberal approach can be characterized as paralysis which inhibits actors considering or implementing alternatives with the eventual impact of ineffective or even counterproductive policy. At the root of this paralysis is the reality that the homogeneity desired and required by a consensus based model does not and arguably can not exist. The heterogeneity of values, systems and relationships in the global sphere clearly requires that alternative (and perhaps competing) approaches be considered, however, we are currently faced with a mode of peacebuilding that denies this. The result is policies and programs that not only fail to address all forms of insecurity including human insecurity, but also have the potential to paradoxically make matters worse. Such 'fatalities' are well evidenced in current peacebuilding strategies. The de-Baathification process in Iraq, and the unwillingness by some to involve Taliban in the reconstruction of Afghanistan reveal an inability or unwillingness to consider the role for alternative, albeit highly problematic, voices in the building of peace. While not denying the atrocities committed by either of these groups, the failure to at least engage

can be seen as fatal to peacebuilding and thus its goal of furthering human security.

While these fatalities can increase human insecurity by inducing increased levels of violence or inequality within society, a second and even greater threat to the potential of pursuing emancipatory humans security can be identified—namely liberalism's tendency to foreclose political space. This danger relates to the aforementioned fact that while liberalism as an ideology promotes freedom and diversity, it does so in a very narrow way and is actually opposed to a genuine plurality of voices and positions. Liberalism argues for equality and in turn attempts to remove the possibility for difference and deviation. It presents itself as a neutral, objective and most importantly, rational, model for social, political and economic organization meaning that those who oppose it are inherently irrational and thus dangerous. "Difference is not included, rather it is erased, and populations are included in the liberal project insofar as they are, or are made, the same." (Long, 2006: 216). Peace is seen as stemming from consensus and violent conflict arises from disensus. The ultimate goal therefore becomes one of homogenization of values and systems. However, the allowance for difference and deviation is *imperative* for an emancipatory approach to human security—as at the root of this approach is the ability to confront and question power, to challenge structures, contest their makeup and negotiate new relationships. Thus, the possibility for working towards an emancipatory project of human security is limited by liberal peacebuilders intolerance for difference and by the willingness of actors who aim to promote and install liberalism to, paradoxically, act illiberally to ensure the dominance of their system (Duffield, 2007; Martin, 2006). What liberal peacebuilding represents is a closure and diminishing of debate over the nature and path towards peace—under this paradigm "the political terrain of post-intervention is one of narrowing and closure" (Duffield, 2007: 29). This represents the opposite of what an emancipatory approach to human security requires, namely a broadening and opening of political space which is capable of accommodating difference.

Of course, there are those that would defend a system which attempts to create or work towards a standard and universally accepted set of rules and procedures. Working towards a global cosmopolitan ethic or system are indicative of this approach. Such a call is based on the idea that consensus and agreement are the only ways in which peaceful relations can be created and solidified—disagreement and conflict are ultimately divisive and lead to violence. But, *actual* consensus is impossible, and a focus on and desire for it is, in fact, debilitating. Mouffe, for example, argues that "the illusion of consensus and unanimity, as well as the calls for 'anti-politics' should be recognized as fatal... The absence of a political frontier, far from being a sign of political maturity, is the symptom of a void" (Mouffe, 1993: 5). Liberalism, with its fixation on 'rational consensus' aims to remove political contestation and difference from society—attempts are made remove to controversy, conflict and disensus (antagonisms) from socio-political life. By refusing integrate powerful dissenting voices and by excluding those who favour non-liberal practices, prospects for peace are weakened. A false consensus based on exclusion or forced assimilation will not lead to a just and sustainable peace. Thus, what is most dangerous in relation to liberal peacebuilding is not simply the negative, tangible impacts of some of structures and policies, although these are certainly problematic, but the process of depoliticization which masks the inevitable disensus which exist within society and the shutting out of alternatives which this entails. Simply questioning the specific processes and concepts related to liberal peacebuilding is necessary but not sufficient when attempting to counter this hegemonic project. The real challenge is to consider liberalism's power to shut out alternatives and to imagine how counter-hegemonic practices,

which create opportunities for emancipation, might be achieved.

Agonism and the possibility for counter-hegemonic space

As shown above, liberalism and liberal peacebuilding have worked to depoliticize public life and strip social relations of meaningful differences, with potentially fatal outcomes including threats to human security. What this author will further demonstrate is that within such critique exists a potential solution to the technocratic and hegemonic processes of liberal peacebuilding, one that could allow for the emergence of an emancipatory version of human security. Work stemming from post structural analyses of liberalism, particularly work on the concept of agonism, can be used to consider the ways in which the barriers created by liberal hegemony can be overcome. Some will resist or question the use of post-structural thought in this regard. Generally considered a tool of critique it is not meant to offer a set of principles to guide policies. In this regard, the conceptual tools of post-structural thought appear at odds with much of what is found in Critical Security Studies (CSS) where we find the basis for a notion of emancipatory human security. This is especially true when we consider calls by some elements of CSS for the creation of 'concrete utopias' (Jones, 2005). Yet, there is an overlap in these analytical schools, with both CSS and post-structuralism calling into question dominant norms and ideologies and with both exploring the concept of and possibilities for 'counter hegemonic forces'. While scholars such as Mouffe have historically worked towards moving the left away from the dogmatic and hegemonic aspects of Marxism, so too do elements of CSS attempt to move us away from the hegemony of another ideology, liberalism. Of course there are differences between these approaches. Many elements of CSS are

outwardly and unashamedly normative, some invoking notions of a 'universal good' or 'progress'—concepts which post-structuralist thought tend to resist due to their reliance on a belief of an objective or natural truth. However, progress narratives are not entirely absent in this tradition—"an idea of progress informs poststructuralist arguments more so than is generally recognized" (Booth, 2005: 264). Mouffe herself calls for "democracy to be radicalized" through the creation of new discourses and institutions (Mouffe, 2005: 33). Laclau has likewise integrated a 'progressive' notion of emancipation (Jones, 2005) into his work and Glynos (2003) integrates the work of both Mouffe and Zizek to show the notion of a radical democratic ethos could be realized. This suggests that despite claims that neither CSS or post-structuralist thought are 'policy relevant' they do both in fact share a common goal of creating counter-hegemonic discourses and also contain a notion of progress. The critiques offered by these schools of thought are not merely tools for deconstruction, but also contain the foundations for the construction of new paradigms and concrete practices. One set of concepts specifically, the notion of antagonism versus agonism offers insights into such alternatives. It sets out ideas and mechanisms that would allow for political space to be opened and re-imagined, providing an avenue through which we can conceive of an alternative to liberalism's firm grip over the practices of human security

Creating Space For Counter Hegemonic Practices: The Role Of Disensus And Agonism

To be clear, the call for greater political space to further an emancipatory approach to human security is not concerned with factors that would allow or encourage more actors to adopt a liberal approach to human security (though there are many studies which address this: Brysk, 2005; Fischer, 2005;

Hataley and Nossal, 2004; Kerr, Tow and Hanson, 2003). Nor is it concerned with simply increasing the role for civil society actors, as in their current forms, these actors tend to support the status quo, the mechanisms of liberal peacebuilding which are actually the technology through which space is controlled and narrowed. Neither should the call for increased political space and pluralism be confused or equated with simply increasing the inclusion of less powerful groups in already existing structures. This would be little more than a form of 'flat pluralism' which does nothing to redefine or expand political spaces (Wenman, 2003). A plurality voices constrained within a narrow formulaic space does little to promote the systemic change that would allow for emancipatory processes to occur. A heterogeneity of voices within a homogenous system can not alter the status quo. Alternatively, the call to open up spaces for emancipation via agonistic processes describe below adopts a more flexible conceptualization of space, bound neither by geography, already existing institutions or ideological dominance. While already existing actors will such as states, civil society and individuals would 'populate' this space the nature and parameters of their engagement would be altered.

Countering the hegemony of liberalism and its tendency to minimize and narrow the political space in which alternatives can be imagined and negotiated requires adopting mechanisms which support and facilitate agonism. In brief, this requires actors to begin distinguishing between "'antagonism' (relations between enemies) and 'agonism' (relations between adversaries) and envisaging a sort of 'conflictual consensus' providing a common symbolic space among opponents who are considered 'legitimate enemies'" (Mouffe: 2005: 52). While antagonisms will always exist—contra liberal perceptions and desires, the negative impacts of difference can be managed and transformed when they are reconceptualised as agonisms—here, diversity and conflict is

voiced, explored and tolerated. Agonistic politics counter the liberal project insofar as "conflict rather than consensus serves as the basis for social and political renewal" (Martin, 2006: 205, referring to the work of Gobetti, 1995). A shift from consensus to disensus serves as a way of preventing the prevalence of 'fatalities' discussed earlier, potentially reducing the possibility of antagonisms erupting in dysfunctional ways (such as through violence) as competing groups are offered alternative avenues for participation in global society. However, movement towards an agonistic approach offers an even greater advantage in terms of creating more emancipatory paths to human security, namely the transformation of political space that occurs through such an approach. The collision of difference through agonistic processes potentially allows for something unique, new and perhaps (currently) unimaginable to emerge. It is not just about the blending of competing views, but *emergent properties* stemming from such confrontations. When dissenting views engage in open confrontation, the emergent (unpredictable) outcomes alter the size and nature of political space allowing for the possibility of unconsidered practices, policies, relationships or institutions. This unpredictability is of course a cause for concern to some, especially those operating under a liberal paradigm where security is defined as stability. However, given mounting evidence regarding the flaws of current liberal peacebuilding approaches, alternatives are clearly required

But what is involved in this process of agonism—does the current liberal system not already allow for the inclusion and tolerance of competing positions? To a degree, yes. Liberalism contains elements of toleration for what can be included in political debate. But what is to be tolerated in politics is limited to liberal ideals. Peaceful political and social order is based on a specific notion of 'rationality' that is very narrowly conceived. Such rationality, and thus what is to be tolerated in the political sphere does not allow for what Mouffe (2005) refers to as 'passions',

peoples' desires, fantasies, and attachments (Langley and Mellor, 2002). 'Passions' might include but would not be limited to spiritual beliefs, ethnicity, or class identity. Under agonism, such 'passions' would not be excluded— positions based on passions would not be deemed illegitimate/irrational and actors who hold these positions and attempt to include them in the political sphere would not be classified as the 'enemy'. Given that agonism requires opponents not to be seen "as an enemy to be destroyed, but as an adversary whose existence is legitimate and must be tolerated" (Mouffe, 1993: 4), the opponents of liberalism need to be tolerated in the public and political spheres. This requires peacebuilders and intervening actors to reconsider their characterization of a range of positions and practices faced in areas of insecurity in ways that are not always congruent with the ideological foundations of peacebuilding. In liberal practices 'opponents' to liberalism (illiberal practices, the primacy of religion, social identities, a focus on collective over individuals rights) are seen as something that should be 'destroyed'—either literally through violence and coercion, or figuratively by being relegated to the private or other 'non political' realm (see Hoover, 2001 for further discussion). For example, the standard response of liberal democracies to religion generally and religious extremism in particular, is to invoke the public-private dichotomy: religious liberty is safeguarded in the private sphere whilst at the same time religion has no role in public reason or in the design of public institutions (Malik, 2008: 89-90).

A similar assessment can be made in terms of historical responses to aboriginal traditions. Ceremonies such as the Potlatch, which were practiced by several indigenous tribes in western North America, were seen as a fundamental means for redistributing wealth in their communities, contributing to internal peace and justice. In the 19th and 20th centuries these practices were banned

by colonial powers and successive Canadian and American governments in an unsuccessful attempt to assimilate the aboriginal population.[iv] Now allowed by these 'liberal' governments, they have nonetheless been relegated to the place of 'tradition' or 'culture' as opposed to being taken seriously as a means of governance which could reduce inequality and poverty within the remaining Aboriginal populations or even more broadly within society. Such social and spiritual practices were banned or removed from the formal political sphere in order to ensure a smooth transition to the desired vision for a future 'Canada' or 'United States'. This can be usefully compared to current exclusions of the social or religious to formal global political practices which seek to create a global liberal *cum* cosmopolitan reality through the destruction of the 'enemies of freedom'.

In accepting the alternative agonistic approach—the enemy/opponent (things deemed 'irrational' in the liberal tradition) would not be destroyed (literally or figuratively) but would be granted a role in the negotiation and shaping of discourses, space and institutions. In relation to agonism, this means that 'religion' for example would not be conceived of as an 'enemy' to be destroyed, via relegation to the private sphere, but rather an opponent which must be tolerated within the realm of the political. Class struggles would not be seen as something to be quashed, its leader labelled as 'leftists', 'socialists' or other such pejorative titles, but would be treated as a legitimate political movement and not merely an enemy of the modern liberal order. Part of this process would involve breaking down the seemingly inescapable binaries into which the world is often classed and recognizing that practices which do not mirror liberalism are not necessarily *il*-liberal but simply and less problematically *non*-liberal. This agonistic process is much more than a utopian notion of dissenting voices all 'agreeing to disagree'

or other such platitudes. It is not simply a kind of Habermasian deliberative process—it involves an open confrontation of dissent, and the allowance for the creation of something new from such confrontations.[v] In accepting these non-liberal politics, new possibilities, such as emancipation, could be imagined and worked towards. While sceptics might argue against the possibility of such a fundamentally different approach to politics, Mouffe would counter that it "is certainly no more unrealistic than the cosmopolitan vision. In fact, the emergence of China as a superpower testifies that such a dynamic or pluralisation, far from being unrealistic, is already at work" (2005: 117-118). Evidence suggests that movements towards an as of yet undefined post-liberal order in which the non-liberal alternatives and liberal hegemonic order collide is already occurring. Whether such collisions take the form of a violent antagonistic mode of politics or a less violent mode of agonistic relations depends largely on the reaction of the dominant liberal actors. In sum, the political space required to challenge the hegemonic practices and concepts of a liberal inspired approach to human security, could be achieved by a shift to agonistic politics which is premised on and finds its strength in conflict, and not a false belief in consensus that characterise the liberal approach. The potential opportunities for making this shift to a conflict based (agonistic) form of politics from the apolitical, consensus based liberal approach is explored in greater detail elsewhere (Peterson, 2007), however, in general terms opportunities for increases in and modification to the nature of political space can be created through engagement and challenges to institutional channels, political discourses and specific social and political practices (Engberg-Pederson and Webster, 2002).[vi] What is central, regardless of strategy, is that attempts to modify responses to insecurity adopt and value conflict over consensus. Consensus is a utopian ideal whilst disensus, a non violent mode of conflict, is not only a reality but may also lead to progress as the collision of dissenting views can lead to

unique and creative alternatives. While some might fear that such a shift, and the opening up of political space in this way is inherently dangerous insofar as it encourages and opens up new avenues of competition, one should be cognisant of the fact that it is this very fear itself that has made liberal institutions themselves incapable of managing such manifestations of *real competition*. The world's dominant liberal actors' (states and institutions) inability to fully comprehend or respond to manifestations of disensus is evidenced in their response to Islamism, the anti-globalization movement and the new 'left' in several Latin American countries. The strategy to deal with such acts of disensus through force, invasion or demonization reveals liberalisms inability to peacefully co-exist or adapt to difference, seriously limiting the ability of this paradigm to support peace and contribute to emancipatory human security.

Overcome the limitations of emancipation and agonism

It has been argued that the emergence of a more useful emancipatory approach to human security detailed by some scholars in the Critical Security Studies tradition, is hindered by the dominance and practices of liberal peacebuilding, which actively discourage plurality and disensus— both of which are needed to create and further emancipatory goals. Critiques of the current liberal order, confirm that the technologies of liberalism mitigate against the growth of emancipatory approaches due to their insistence and fixation on consensus. Reliance on consensus is shown to be a fatal weakness of liberalism as opposed to a strength. These weaknesses can arguably be overcome through agonistic practices which offer mechanisms for countering the hegemonic liberal practices that prevent the goal of emancipatory human security from being achieved. However, the shift towards an agonistic mode of peacebuilding is not straightforward. There are several practical

and conceptual problems that prevent an easy transition to an alternative model. Primarily, the power and dominance of the technologies of liberal peacebuilding continue due in part to the fact that the uncontested hegemony of liberalism has resulted in an "incapacity to think politically" (Mouffe, 2005: 10). Liberalism in its current form actually diminishes our ability to imagine alternatives to it. In order to allow for a system whereby conflict and insecurity could be managed *via* agonistic processes, the ability to think and act politically is necessary—liberal hegemony has worked hard to strip society of this capacity making a shift to agonism and thus a possibility for emancipatory alternatives to emerge nearly unimaginable. Political imagination is lacking. Despite this, actors still have a degree of agency and do act in ways that counter hegemonic norms. Examples of emancipatory progress can be found in small doses in Sri Lanka where the human rights and human security discourses have been instrumental in challenging the commodification of natural resources, land, labour and culture and the global debate over the price of aids drugs (Bastian, 2004: 413). Others point to the Zapatista movement in Mexico, rubber tappers in Amazon and Self-Employed Woman's union in India as other examples of counter hegemonic practices (Bhavnani and Foran, 2008). And while none of these on their own represent a powerful counter-hegemonic process, they do indicate the progress and movements towards emancipatory notions of human security that can be achieved when politics is based on agonism and conflict as opposed to consensus. More research is necessary to understand these cases, to understand the conditions which allow actors to operate with a greater degree of agency and successfully challenge the hegemonic practices of liberal peacebuilding.

Another potential limitation for a shift to agonism are concerns related to moral relativism. The concept of agonism which calls for 'conflictual consensus' and difference to be integrated and openly contested within society, for some, verges too closely to the dangers of a moral or political position where all views and actions are seen as potentially legitimate given the social construction or norms, values, laws and culture. Indeed, it is problematic and perhaps impossible to argue with any degree of credibility that all voices should be accepted and tolerated within society. Mouffe's work on agonism helps manoeuvre this supposed impasse, arguing that the agonistic process does not suggest that one

> should consider as legitimate all the demands formulated in a given society…. The agonistic approach does not pretend to encompass all differences and to overcome all forms of exclusions. But exclusions are envisaged in political and not moral terms. Some demands are excluded, not because they are declared to be 'evil' but because they challenge the institutions constitutive of the democratic political association. To be sure, the very nature of those institutions is also part of the agonistic debate, but for such a debate to take place, the existence of a shared symbolic space is necessary (2005: 120-121).

The debate over what is permitted in political space is now ruled by morality as opposed to politics—a problematic development which again depoliticizes life by shifting the focus from what is required for a secure and just political existence to an unproductive debate concerning good versus evil. Agonistic politics reframes questions regarding inclusion from 'is their position right or wrong?' to 'does engagement with their positions create opportunities for better forms of human security'. Positions and actors can still be excluded if they do not contribute to the debate regarding how peace can be

furthered, if they have no interest in furthering the aim of human security. However, they can not be excluded simply because they are deemed by some to be 'immoral' or 'evil'. While they might indeed be these things, their being 'evil' or 'immoral' to many is not synonymous with 'useless'. Engagement, at least on a political level may be productive in the long run, should those actors themselves also be willing to engage politically with their adversaries. Indeed, calling for a reinsertion of the political and a public sphere which accepts and values disensus and conflict over a false hope in consensus does not equate to a world without values, norms or rules. Agonism does not call for anarchy, nor does it allow for an equality of all voices. What it does suggest is that exclusion is permitted in cases where actors refuse to engage in a negotiation of the rules—where they refuse to accept plurality and conflict over how institutions and rules will be shaped.

The shift towards an emancipatory mode of human security, which not only improves individuals physical well being but challenges the international political and ideological structures that allow for domination and limitation on human agency requires a fundamental modification to our approach to peacebuilding. This requisite change, however, is not congruent with the dominance of the liberal peace perspective and its concomitant practices. With liberalism resting on a firm and unchanging notion of what is good, it wrongly assumes global society can and should do without fundamental clashes of values and perspectives—peace being achieved through conforming to a natural and unalterable state. To escape this, actors need to accept the reality of and need for continuous conflict which entails abandoning the notion of an achievable end. A grand metanarrative does not exist; there is no natural end point for human society but a better existence can be constructed and negotiated. In this sense, emancipation while impossible to *achieve* can be *furthered* through the spaces created through agonistic pluralism. If human security remains in the operational realm of liberal peacebuilding, the required transformations of economic and political power asymmetries which create and facilitate the suffering of groups and individuals will remain unchallenged. The possibility of creating the counter-hegemonic voices which would allow for this has been constrained by liberalism itself which has decreased societies' potential to imagine alternatives— to paraphrase Mouffe, 'negating the political has left us bewildered and impotent', incapable of mounting serious challenges to the status quo. This is problematic given that current suggestions on how to move towards counter hegemonic and emancipatory processes include 'conceiving of doing the impossible' (Glynos, 2003), and "engage[ing] in unscripted conversations.... opening ourselves to the spontaneity of unpredictable encounters" (Duffield, 2007: 234). These are tall orders at a time when peacebuilding and human security programming are so carefully scripted, monitored and controlled, but perhaps could be achieved if the weaknesses of the apolitical consensus based model are more fully realized and actors learn to encourage, work within and value a model which sees opportunity and progress in disensus.

[i] This dominant approach to human security both theoretically and practically supports a liberal perspective of peace and thus has become a rhetorical and practical tool in the liberal peacebuilders arsenal. For a thorough review of the links between the dominant mode of human security and liberal peacebuilding see (Richmond 2007a, Richmond, 2007b, Thomas, 2001; Willett, 2005).

[ii] For more detailed analysis regarding the concern that there is little that is 'new' in the new human security agenda and associated critiques see Bonner, 2008; Ewan, 2007; Hudson, 2005; Kerr, Tow and Handon, 2001; Khong, 2001; McDonald, 2002; Nuruzzaman, 2006; Paris, 2001.

Similar analyses of security institutions in Berlin have been noted by Eick (2003), where crackdowns on poor and marginalized groups were made for reasons of 'security'.

[iv] Of course despite attempts by colonial regimes and newly formed governments in Canada and the US to ban these practices, historical analyses has revealed challenges to such suppression by Aboriginal populations, offering a historical example and potential case study for the opening of political space to challenge liberal hegemonic practices. See Miller, JR (1990).

[v] For a full comparison and analyses of Habermasian type deliberative theories and alternative democratic theories based on the work of scholars such as Mouffe and Laclau, see Honig, 2007 and Kapoor, 2002.

[vi] The utility of these avenues in terms of transforming political space are influenced by the work of thinkers such as Gramsci, 1971 and Foucault, 1976.

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