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Conceptualizing Resistance in Post-Conflict Environments*

Abstract: While recent efforts to analyse resistance to post-conflict interventions have led to important insights into the nature of contemporary peacebuilding efforts, their failure to adequately problematize the concept of resistance itself and to adapt it to the specific realities of post-conflict neoliberalism has proven to be problematic. This article explores the internal tensions and inconsistencies that define the concept of resistance in post-conflict environments, focusing specifically on five topics: the interaction of structure and agency, the presence of intent, the role of power, the nature of markets and the possibility of emancipation. Key problems are highlighted, and, where possible, potential solutions are proposed. The issues raised by this article demand immediate attention if the conceptual viability and analytical value of resistance is to be maintained in post-conflict contexts.

Keywords: Resistance; Peacebuilding; Neoliberalism; Liberal Peace

The dominance of neoliberal¹ economic orthodoxy in post-conflict peacebuilding programs is widely acknowledged. So, too, are its effects. Common reforms—including trade and investment liberalization, the deregulation of labour and financial markets, the privatization of state assets and reductions in public spending—threaten the establishment of peace while undermining growth, worsening inequalities, removing social protections and increasing poverty. The universalist pretences of neoliberalism render it insensitive to context and popular opinion, causing it to view the issues confronting post-conflict societies as solvable through a standard set of technocratic reforms.² For societies emerging from conflict, such ideological blindness can prove costly.

Despite these failures, questions of how, why and by whom this neoliberal orthodoxy is contested have only recently attracted scholarly attention. While such work has performed the valuable task of balancing neoliberal triumphalism with commonly marginalized perspectives and experiences, it nevertheless possesses significant limitations. In particular, the failure to adequately problematize the concept of resistance itself threatens its conceptual coherence and, in some cases, results in the adoption of problematic theoretical positions that are internally inconsistent. A more complete exploration of the concept of resistance not only reveals these internal inconsistencies, but also points to special considerations that arise in post-conflict environments. To be of any use in analysing the nature of post-conflict neoliberalism, the

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concept of resistance must be critically engaged with and adapted to fit its specific context. This article is dedicated to taking early steps in this fruitful direction.

The remainder of this article is divided into two sections. The first offers a brief overview of the relevant literature on resistance, both in post-conflict contexts and to neoliberalism more generally. It acknowledges the value of this considerable body of work and the important insights that it is able to provide. Still, if the concept of resistance is to be of use for understanding contemporary peacebuilding processes, it must be suited to the realities of post-conflict environments and rid of its major internal tensions and inconsistencies. The second section of this article therefore explores major points of contention that define the existing literature while suggesting possible ways to overcome unresolved impasses. Five issues are particularly highlighted: the way resistance is shaped by the interaction of structure and agency, the role that intent plays in resistance, the nature of power, the understanding of markets and the possibility of emancipation. Each is fundamental to understanding resistance, both in post-conflict environments and more generally. All must be addressed if the concept of resistance is to have any theoretical or empirical value.

This article can be read within the vein of the ‘secondary critique’³ in current peacebuilding literature, as while it accepts many of the arguments put forward by critics of the ‘liberal peace’ framework and recognizes the important contributions that these have made to understanding contemporary peace processes, it also holds that this critical literature itself has significant shortcomings. Problematizing resistance provides an excellent lens through which to view some of these broader failings, making the arguments presented here relevant to contemporary peacebuilding debates more generally.

I. Theorizing Resistance

Analysing the role of resistance in post-conflict environments is a relatively recent scholarly undertaking. Oliver Richmond’s exploration of emancipatory forms of peacebuilding that are located at what he terms the ‘local-local’ level, which exists beyond the scope of liberal conceptions of society and politics, is a particularly notable example of this trend. For Richmond, subjugated knowledges, epistemologies, ontologies and perspectives that are marginalized by power, but nevertheless remain able to reformulate political realities through the empowerment of disparate and silenced critical agencies, involve everyday forms of resistance

that fundamentally undermine, and expose the weaknesses of, the local applications of power that characterize peacebuilding, providing space for a ‘post-liberal’ peace based on context, subjectivity, consensus and individual understandings of justice, welfare, rights and political organization.⁴ Roger Mac Ginty’s work is also relevant, particularly its recognition of the role that resistance plays in a complex web of international compliance methods and co-operation incentives, along with local subversion, co-option, non-compliance and alternatives to the ‘liberal peace’, that shapes the fundamental hybridity of contemporary peace operations.⁵ While Richmond and Mac Ginty adopt a broad approach to post-conflict resistance, other authors, such as Mark Duffield⁶ and Michael Pugh,⁷ more specifically locate resistance in (post-)conflict political economies that violate the tenets of the neoliberal international system and are more appropriately suited to local realities. For Pugh, as international actors disavow their governing functions, they create a lack of stability in which the subaltern is given space for agency and resistance, and this often takes the form of the informal and illicit activities that thrive in the absence of essential employment and welfare programs.⁸ Such work reflects broader trends in current peacebuilding literature. Critical approaches to the liberal peace have long turned to ‘the local’ in search of alternatives to flawed contemporary orthodoxy, and a number of scholars have examined the perspectives of local populations, highlighting the disconnect between these and the policies implemented by international actors⁹ as well as the ‘frictions’ that peacebuilding interactions entail.¹⁰ The normative goal of emancipation underlines all of these endeavours; the study of resistance, insofar as it is able to cast light on how emancipation is strived for or what it might entail, is seen as a valuable line of critical enquiry.

Recent work on post-conflict resistance can be usefully situated within the broader field of literature surrounding resistance to neoliberalism more generally. A number of theoretical trends can be identified here: neo-Gramscian analyses that aim to outline the contours of existing counter-hegemonic forces that can contest and provide alternatives to the cultural hegemony of the transnational capitalist class;¹¹ critical theory approaches that attempt to problematize the assumptions that define globalization and highlight the historical, social and political situatedness of its theories and knowledges for the purposes of transformation;¹² postcolonial theories that aim to (re)politicize and (re)historicize neoliberal globalization, emphasizing the inseparability of economic and cultural domination while acknowledging the importance of individual agencies for providing alternatives to the fundamental incompleteness of its

universalist logics;¹³ and feminist analyses that frame globalization in a gendered context and reveal the relationship that its functions have for perpetuating and spreading oppressive patriarchal hierarchies.¹⁴ These forms of resistance are commonly framed in terms of a broad-based ‘globalization-from-below’ that is sensitive to cultural diversity and a variety of social, economic and environmental issues, contesting neoliberal ‘globalization-from-above’ by providing alternatives to its failings.¹⁵ Karl Polanyi’s description of countermovements,¹⁶ Michel Foucault’s theories of biopower and governmentality, ‘subjugated knowledges’, ‘tactical reversal’, the ‘aesthetics of existence’, ‘self-care’ and ‘technologies of the self’,¹⁷ and James C. Scott’s emphasis on everyday forms of resistance¹⁸ are also useful for conceptualizing resistance to neoliberalism, and inform much of the broader literature on the topic. Resistance to neoliberalism is not a new concept, and it is important that analyses of how it occurs in post-conflict contexts do not treat it as such.

It is impossible to do justice to this broad field of literature in such a brief survey. Still, the purpose here is to highlight how the concept of resistance has been adopted by critical peacebuilding literature and how the project of exploring resistance to post-conflict neoliberalism fits into understandings of resistance to neoliberalism more generally. As evidenced, the concept of resistance is informed by a diversity of theoretical approaches, and these, from one perspective, contribute to its richness, complexity and flexibility. From a different perspective, however, and one that this emphasized here, this diversity threatens the coherence and usefulness of resistance as a concept, and therefore demands further scrutiny. The remainder of this article is dedicated to such a task.

II. Unresolved Issues

It would be intellectually problematic to assume that it is possible to combine a diverse collection of approaches to resistance without encountering notable points of theoretical contention. Like both neoliberalism and peacebuilding,¹⁹ the concept of resistance is not without its own internal conflicts and inconsistencies, while a notable lack of consensus exists surrounding several major conceptual points and, more fundamentally, underlying theoretical and epistemological questions. Considering these in a post-conflict context raises further difficulties. Five issues are particularly central here: the interaction of structure and agency, the

presence of intent, the role of power, the nature of markets and the possibility of emancipation. Each is considered in turn.

i. The interaction of structure and agency

The first major issue raised by the theoretical literature is the extent to which resistance is shaped by the interaction of structure and agency. Local agency is, of course, a central focus of critical peacebuilding literature, and is rightly viewed as a good that should be maximized by peacebuilding processes. The extent to which local agency can inform resistance, however, is unclear.

Scott and Gramsci offer particularly divergent perspectives on this topic: whereas Gramsci claims that the consciousness of the oppressed is dominated by a form of hegemony that renders them unable to recognize the revolutionary potential of their actions, Scott contends that hegemony involves little ideational permeation, with action constrained by power to a far more significant extent than thought. Scott's work therefore rejects accounts that neglect human agency in favour of structural factors, emphasizing the range of action and potential for self-definition—even if shaped, importantly, by economic and other circumstances—that all subjects of analysis possess.²⁰ Discounting the importance of structure, however, is intellectually hazardous as it effectively defers to a central tenet of neoliberalism: that human beings are free from socioeconomic constraints to pursue independent action in accordance with their interests.²¹ Structural factors are particularly important in post-conflict environments, as conflict, while not entirely limiting the possibility for agency,²² entails dramatic structural transformations of everything from individual livelihoods to the legal, institutional and regulatory apparatuses of the state. Agency is forced to operate within these structural constraints, and is severely limited by, for example, the forced adoption of survival strategies or coping mechanisms. Resistance may still be possible in such circumstances, but it is important not to romanticize its potential.

The interaction of structure and agency points to a more problematic issue that exists at the heart of critical peacebuilding literature as a whole: the dichotomization of 'the international' and 'the local' as distinct categories of analysis. The complexities of identity and the profusion of international linkages in (post-)conflict environments and beyond means that these categories are less discreet than is often suggested, and that the line that divides them constantly fluctuates through processes of negotiation and imposition. Attempts to maintain an international/local

dichotomy can replicate the essentialism inherent in the (neo)liberal accounts that critical literature seeks to oppose, circumscribing and characterizing ‘the local’ as a site of resistance that is separate from the power of ‘the international’. It is true that the concept of hybridity acknowledges the interaction and mutual influence of ‘the local’ and ‘the international’, and is employed to analyze how the two combine and coexist in specific contexts. In doing so, however, it still relies on the separation of ‘the local’ and ‘the international’ as distinct categories that precede hybridization, partially reaffirming, rather than escaping, their problematic dichotomization.²³

The presence of agency, furthermore, may be a necessary cause for resistance, but it is not a sufficient one. Scott’s theorization of how resistance can exist in spite of domination should not be extrapolated to the Foucauldian notion that resistance is necessarily present wherever power exists,²⁴ as such a claim could only be sustained through detailed empirical work documenting individual instances of resistance to power in all of its forms and possibly risks underestimating its coercive and co-optive capabilities. Again, this also risks adopting a core feature of the neoliberal understanding of agency: the assumption that, because power structures exist, they are necessarily resisted by those who encounter them, which depoliticizes the subjects of analysis by replacing a meaningful definition of agency with ideologically driven determinism. It is thus more appropriate to understand power as creating the potential for resistance wherever the former remains incomplete; agency is necessary for this potential to be realized, but agency must by definition involve the ability to navigate power as one sees fit. This, of course, will not always be possible, but in such cases, agency—and therefore resistance—cannot be said to exist.

ii. The issue of intent

The issue of intent involves two separate considerations: whether or not the intent of a person’s actions, regardless of their consequences, can sufficiently constitute resistance, and whether or not the consequences of a person’s actions, regardless of their intent, can do the same. Agency is central in the case of the former, as a person’s conscious decision to resist must be assigned due significance independently of the ‘success’ of any actions inspired by this decision. In many instances, power may be so pervasive, adaptive and durable that attempts at resisting its

application will experience little success. Such an attempt, though, is a form of resistance in itself, and merits due recognition.

The role of agency in the latter, however, is more difficult to discern. This is primarily because of the fundamental complexity of the nature of intent. For example, actions that are commonly seen to fall into this category, such as theft or violence against an official, can be understood in two ways: in terms of their immediate benefits (or even non-rational causes), that is, the procurement of stolen goods or preventing what is seen as an abuse of authority; and in terms of what can be seen as their broader targets, such as established systems of economic distribution or political oppression. This second interpretation is especially significant for understanding resistance, as abstract concepts are commonly experienced in terms of their individual manifestations rather than as the sum of their parts, and are hence resisted as such. This is not to imply, of course, that all such actions can be understood in such a way, nor is it to justify those that can; instead, it is to acknowledge the complexities of understanding resistance as a phenomenon that is subject to the intricacies of human behaviour.²⁵

The issue of intent thus raises complicated epistemological and methodological questions surrounding the authority of an observer to (re)inscribe an action with meaning. Do scholars have the ability to signify observed actions as resistance? How does this authority relate to the significance ascribed to an action by the person(s) undertaking it? And to what extent can the immediate benefits of resistance be extrapolated to broader targets that the person(s) involved may not have considered? The ability to ‘speak’ for groups who are marginalized and/or oppressed by systems of power has been debated extensively,²⁶ and such questions should not be absent from discussions about resistance, whether in post-conflict environments or elsewhere. Resistance is not a neutral concept that can be objectively witnessed; intent, like agency, is central to its presence, and neither can be separated from the complexities of individual experience. Carefully documenting the nature of these experiences is one of the primary tasks of the researcher, who must always be aware of the inherent limitations of such an undertaking.

iii. The role of power

As power is the ultimate target of resistance, it is essential for any understanding of resistance to be informed by a complementary approach to power. While the role of power in both peacebuilding and neoliberalism is commonly highlighted, the way in which this power is

conceptualized is not entirely consistent. It is possible to identify a number of different approaches to power within the existing literature on peacebuilding, with the work of, for example, Foucault,²⁷ Gramsci,²⁸ Scott²⁹ and post-colonial theorists³⁰ all serving as common reference points for critical scholarship. Such approaches, however, are not necessarily complimentary. The above discussion of the interaction of structure and agency highlights a significant point of contention, and is related to a broader issue about power as, on the one hand, a productive force that is exercised through dominant discourses, ideologies and systems of knowledge, and, on the other, a negative force that limits the scope of action through the use of coercive measures or social, economic and political stratification.³¹ There is also a lack of consensus surrounding the relationships that power involves, with the view that these are diffuse and fluid contrasting with more binary, hierarchical understandings.³² Attempting to reconcile disparate theories of power has notable limitations, and if these are exceeded without adequate explanation, the conceptual viability and coherence of resistance is threatened.

Points of contention between these approaches to power do not present the only conceptual problem for critical peacebuilding literature. Significant problems also surround their use individually, the most notable of which concerns their applicability to the contemporary international system. While Scott's work and post-colonial theory seem applicable to international attempts to introduce neoliberal reforms in peripheral global spaces, the same is not necessarily true for the understandings of power presented by Foucault and Gramsci, neither of whom wrote about power at an international level but rather derived their respective theoretical insights from specific, and overwhelmingly European, historically situated structures and processes. Decontextualizing and dehistoricizing their arguments to provide insights into phenomena that they never themselves commented on is not without its dangers, and the limitations that such efforts entail deserve further commentary in critical peacebuilding literature.³³ Some scholars have further questioned the use of Foucault's work for analyzing such topics as power and contemporary neoliberalism; it has been argued, for example, that Foucault viewed economic liberalism as coherent with his anti-humanism, and therefore endorsed it for the brief period during which his related Collège de France lectures took place,³⁴ and that Foucauldian 'technologies of the self' have an ambiguous relationship with his understanding of technologies of power and cannot be understood in terms of resistance.³⁵ There is, obviously, a considerable amount of literature that implicitly rejects such criticisms, but still, they underscore

the importance of problematizing widely held understandings of power and resistance before applying them in critical endeavours.

This understanding of power must also be specific to the post-conflict contexts that it is used to analyse. Most contemporary theorizations of power were not designed to suit such circumstances, raising fundamental questions about their applicability to situations with drastically different social, political and economic realities—including varying levels of state legitimacy and capacity, social cohesion and international intervention, along with the possibility of alternative governance structures and forms of accumulation, dispossession and distribution that arose from conflict—than modern European states and societies. It is even difficult to argue that power takes the same form in such different (post-)conflict settings as Bosnia and Herzegovina, where the international community is seeking to (re)integrate a middle-income, formerly authoritarian state into Europe's 'core' from its 'periphery', establishing conditions for the abuse of public office through a lack of legitimacy, poorly designed political structures and economic liberalization efforts;³⁶ Afghanistan, where a highly militarized intervention influences and interacts with a decentralized conflict economy with regional dimensions in a weak state with high levels of poverty;³⁷ and Angola, where the state directs reconstruction efforts along lines that violate international orthodoxy.³⁸ Power, like resistance, takes many forms. It must be studied in its specific contexts and manifestations.

This emphasis on context does not prevent some general characteristics of power in contemporary peacebuilding projects from being outlined. As is widely acknowledged, power in such an environment can have several different loci, including the peacebuilding and development community itself, the state and non-state armed groups, traditional authority figures, the market, legal structures and social hierarchies and norms. Each of these can involve their own forms of co-optation and coercion. Critical peacebuilding literature has done an excellent job at exploring these forms of power and their problematic implications.

Power is not merely confined to formal channels, however, but is also a characteristic of informal forms of governance and economic activity that are often pervasive in (post-)conflict contexts.³⁹ The existence of these informal power structures complicates distinctions between power and resistance, because while they are often sites of resistance to external intervention, they are nevertheless characterized by hierarchies and forms of exclusion that can be tied to neoliberalism itself. Informal/shadow economies are an excellent example of this, as while they

are often seen as major impediments to peacebuilding efforts,⁴⁰ they rely on international markets, are shaped by global capital flows and divisions of labour, are often seen, in their more benign form, as a form of ‘local neoliberalism’ and are (re)produced by economic liberalization.⁴¹ These ambiguities raise two important points about the nature of power. First, international/local dichotomies are as inappropriate for understanding power in post-conflict environments as they are for understanding peacebuilding more generally. Informal/shadow economies are at once ‘local’ and ‘international’, with neither dimension fully comprehensible without the other. Second, there is no *a priori* distinction between the actors and methods involved in resistance and those involved in power. What serves as a form of resistance for some may—and commonly will—act as a form of power for others. Resistance often adopts the techniques and structures of power, blurring the lines between the two and rendering distinctions between them subjective.

A viable theorization of resistance requires a similarly coherent and workable understanding of power. Critical literature has done a commendable job exploring the myriad ways in which power can become manifest in post-conflict environments, but important issues still need to be addressed before this work can provide a solid conceptual foundation for resistance.

iv. *The nature of markets*

Markets lie at the heart of the neoliberal project. For their proponents, markets possess a dual normative value by promoting both individual freedom and economic growth.⁴² In post-conflict contexts, of course, they are also assigned the normative function of promoting peace, and are seen as intrinsically connected to individual rights, democracy and the rule of law.⁴³ Critical approaches to peacebuilding have long questioned the desirability of market reforms in the aftermath of conflict, and, in the process, have usefully examined alternative local economic arrangements that coexist and interact with the formal economic power structures that define neoliberalism.⁴⁴ The problem, however, is that the critical literature lacks a coherent theoretical understanding of markets, and much of it fails to free itself from key neoliberal assumptions.⁴⁵ Literature on resistance that addresses the nature of markets further complicates this picture, and can be subjected to the same criticisms. Such a failing presents significant conceptual limitations

for understanding resistance to neoliberalism, both in post-conflict environments and more generally.

Two issues are particularly important in this regard. The first concerns the ontological status of markets. Specifically, framing neoliberal economic reforms solely in terms of deregulation, privatization, marketization and the large-scale curtailment of the economic functions of the state clashes with the Polanyian understanding of markets as politically constructed through the artificial separation of economic systems and structures from their social roots. Markets are not merely natural, universal phenomena that are uncovered by the retreat of the state; rather, they are profoundly shaped by—and wholly rooted in—their specific historical, social and political circumstances, and are actively produced and maintained by large-scale state intervention that ensures their function. Neoliberalism does not, as is often assumed, involve the surrender of state power to the mechanisms of an abstract system of production and exchange based on the interaction of supply and demand, but is instead characterized by the dramatic redeployment of state power around a regime of private accumulation, dispossession and distribution.⁴⁶ Critical approaches that dichotomize ‘the market’ with ‘the state’ therefore risk separating and reifying both concepts while removing them from specific contextual circumstances, and furthermore fail to challenge the principle that an apolitical, ahistorical ‘free market’ both exists and is what externally driven post-conflict reconstruction efforts seek, however successfully, to implement.⁴⁷ This is not to repeat the argument that contemporary peacebuilding processes do not in fact have significant (neo)liberal underpinnings,⁴⁸ but rather to argue that a significant distinction must be made between neoliberalism in its actual and idealized forms, and that the ‘free market’ exists solely in the latter.⁴⁹ Ignoring such a distinction involves implicitly accepting a highly ideological neoliberal market ontology, and is a major conceptual shortcoming.

The ontology of markets is particularly significant in post-conflict environments. Conflict has transformative effects on local, national, regional and even international economies, and these do not simply vanish with the official cessation of hostilities.⁵⁰ While markets should not be seen as natural phenomena that are merely uncovered through institutional and legal reforms, it is also important to avoid the idea that markets are constructed *ex nihilo* in post-conflict environments through neoliberal interventionism; instead, the constructive dimensions of post-conflict neoliberalism interact with existing economic realities shaped by the political economy

of the preceding conflict. Critical literature has certainly not neglected the political economy of conflict, and several studies have provided valuable empirical insights into how (post-)conflict economies function in particular cases.⁵¹ Still, as stated above, more focus should be given to how power and resistance interact in informal/shadow economies, with a special attention to how the economic processes and structures that emerge during conflict, as well as those that predated the conflict itself, are tied to broader aspects of global neoliberalism. The concept of hybridity is useful here, but, again, the international/local axis that it depends upon is problematic, and the power structures, hierarchies and forms of exclusion that characterize local political economies, many of which will indeed be shaped by neoliberalism, merit further exploration. All markets are constructed, and conflict has historically served as a prominent catalyst for their emergence and definition.⁵² ‘The local’ is not immune to these forces, and enquiring into how it is shaped by them in various specific contexts provides a promising route to a market ontology that theories of resistance can be adequately grounded in.

The second important issue is the role that knowledge plays in markets. From the ‘economic calculation problem’⁵³ to the notion of rational expectations⁵⁴ and the efficient-market hypothesis,⁵⁵ the idea that markets can aggregate, process and distribute information more effectively than any other form of social, political and economic organization is a central component of neoclassical economics.⁵⁶ Recognition of the extent to which knowledge is seen as a fundamental component of market activity by neoliberal epistemology, and the significance of this as an underlying assumption of the economic models that rationalize and legitimize neoliberalism as a desirable political and socioeconomic system, is largely absent within critical literature. Indeed, this understanding of markets is not only largely unquestioned in critical approaches to neoliberalism, but adopted by them as well. Foucault’s work is the most significant in this regard, as the Foucauldian concepts of biopower and governmentality both assume that markets function as they do according to idealized neoliberalism: as a medium for the efficient transmission and allocation of knowledge. For Foucault, of course, this view of markets is relevant not for distributive efficiency, but because of how the supposed impossibility of centralized state control over the complexities of a system dominated by rational economic actors historically resulted in new technologies of power to influence the characteristics of populations and regulate individual behaviour. It is the role of knowledge in markets, for Foucault, that presents the central problem from which the production and government of the

economic subject—*homo economicus*—emerges.⁵⁷ Accepting the neoliberal view of knowledge in markets severely circumscribes critiques of neoliberalism as a whole.⁵⁸ This is a major problem that critical literature must seek to overcome.

How, then, should markets be understood? Such a question is obviously difficult to answer, so it is perhaps understandable that the critical literature can be silent or internally contradictory on fundamental issues. Based on the critiques presented here, however, a few basic principles can nevertheless be outlined. First, all markets are constructed, and must be understood in terms of both the forms of power they involve and the specific historical, social and political conditions in which they emerge and evolve. In post-conflict environments, these conditions will be significantly influenced by violent forms of accumulation, dispossession and distribution that (re)insert conflict zones into national, regional and international economic systems, and that are themselves tied to the dynamics of global neoliberalism. Much of the critical literature has done an excellent job demonstrating this point.⁵⁹ Second, the state and the market do not exist in competition where the expansion of one involves the retreat of the other. Instead, they are rather mutually constitutive. Neoliberal markets depend on the state to function, and are supported by the refashioning of state power to serve such a purpose. In contemporary peace missions, the role of the state in this regard is often filled by international actors who oversee neoliberal reforms. Third, the disciplinary power of markets should not be overstated, or should be theoretically grounded in a way that questions the neoliberal understanding of the role of knowledge in markets. Interrogating the forms of power that markets involve and facilitate is of course an essential task, but it should not be done so in a way that reinforces the intellectual underpinnings of the system of power itself.

Until such issues surrounding the nature of markets are resolved, conceptualizing resistance to neoliberalism will be a difficult task.

v. *Emancipation*

Critical analyses of peacebuilding⁶⁰ and neoliberal globalization⁶¹ commonly assume that resistance possesses significant emancipatory potential. This, however, is not necessarily true. Even if one accepts the international/local dichotomy around which the contestation of neoliberalism is often framed, there are major practical and conceptual difficulties in viewing a disparate collection of specific movements and moments as representative of a form of unified

global agency that possesses the potential to transform the political economy of the international system.⁶² While it is true, as argued above, that ambiguities arise from the fact that power is frequently experienced in its individual manifestations rather than as a coherent whole, it is too large a conceptual leap to equate opposition to a particular manifestation of power with a complete rejection of power in all of its forms, let alone a broader consensus on how an emancipatory social, political and economic order would or should be structured. Of course, much of the critical literature on peacebuilding and neoliberalism—particularly the former—emphasizes subjectivity and contextual specificity over larger (pseudo-)Marxist narratives, but such a change of focus does not necessarily strengthen the case for emancipation. There are two reasons for this. First, such an approach risks idealizing ‘the local’ as a site of resistance, failing to recognize, as argued above, the existence of local power structures as well as the fundamental subjectivity and interconnectedness of power and resistance. Eliminating all problematic forms of power from a post-conflict environment requires more than altering or extricating ‘the international’; it can involve fundamental changes to ‘the local’ itself. Transforming local power structures will likely have a certain amount of support within the local population, but could also face stern resistance from those who benefit from their existence. Recognizing these divisions and the hierarchies and interests they reflect is crucial for (re)politicizing the subjects of peacebuilding interventions, and doing so significantly complicates understandings of emancipation.

Second, the theoretical understandings of resistance commonly employed in such a task are often at odds with emancipatory goals. The prominence of Foucault in contemporary understandings of resistance is particularly noteworthy here, as not only does Foucault’s anti-humanism render any positive claims about the nature of emancipation problematic, but Foucault himself was, at best, ambiguous about the emancipatory potential of resistance, suggesting that it is often co-opted in a way that masks domination.⁶³ Polayni, whose work features less in the critical literature on peacebuilding than it does in the literature on resistance more generally, similarly does not point to emancipation as an outcome of resistance, but rather a situation in which the effort to implement economic liberalization is met by and coexists with oppositional efforts to re-embed economic activity in its traditional social roots.⁶⁴ If critical approaches to peacebuilding seek to employ the concept of resistance in service of emancipatory goals, they must look elsewhere for a theoretical approach that understands resistance in such terms.

It is not only the relationship between emancipation and resistance that is problematic; the concept of emancipation itself suffers from a lack of normative and definitional clarity. The desire to refrain from prescriptive accounts of emancipation is understandable given the commitment to respecting context, local ownership and particular understandings of peace and justice that much of the critical literature adheres to. The problem, however, is that doing so fails to elaborate on exactly what emancipation might entail beyond a vague set of principles that can be rooted in Eurocentric understandings of rights and state/society relations.⁶⁵ Does emancipation merely mean trading one external social, economic and political model—neoliberalism—for another? What if local understandings of emancipation lack the commitment to individual rights, justice and freedoms that are often at the heart of critical approaches to neoliberalism? In short, will ‘local’ systems, processes and arrangements only be considered emancipatory if the outcomes they produce are judged as such according to distinctly non-‘local’ criteria? All of this, again, assumes that a ‘local’ understanding of emancipation, even in a single context, can be said to exist in the first place, and that competing interests and worldviews within ‘the local’ do not prevent coherent and shared understandings of emancipation from emerging at all. This is a significant assumption, and one that should not be taken for granted.

Studies of resistance must either delink the concept from emancipation or provide a specific theoretical justification for how it can be emancipatory. The conceptual leap from resistance to emancipation is too significant to simply be assumed, and where such a connection cannot be demonstrated, it must be abandoned.

III. Conclusions

The concept of resistance has significant potential to provide valuable insights into the nature of contemporary peacebuilding processes, particularly given the extent to which the neoliberal economic orthodoxy that dominates these has proven to be so unsuitable for post-conflict environments. If it is to do so, it needs to establish a certain degree of theoretical and empirical clarity. This article has sought to contribute to such a task by critiquing how resistance is employed to analyse the post-conflict environments, arguing that it is conceptually dangerous to combine a broad range of theoretical approaches to understand resistance without acknowledging the points of contention that inevitably arise from such a process. The interaction of structure and agency, the presence of intent, the role of power, the nature of markets and the

possibility of emancipation are all issues that lack consensus or remain unaddressed in existing approaches to resistance, particularly in post-conflict contexts, but that are nevertheless central to maintaining the coherence and usefulness of resistance and an analytical concept. This article has proposed tentative resolutions to each of these issues, but the divergences in the existing literature remain. Resistance, like any intellectual concept, must only be employed with due critical self-reflection. Anything less threatens to condemn it to irrelevance.

If resistance is to be maintained as a useful concept for analysing post-conflict environments, theoretical work such as this must be complemented by detailed empirical analysis that focuses on its specific interactions with power in a wide variety of contexts. Given the failures of the neoliberal economic orthodoxy that dominates peacebuilding, the potential value of this line of research should not be underestimated.

¹ The term ‘liberal’ is often employed to describe the reforms implemented in post-conflict environments. ‘Neoliberal’, however, is perhaps more appropriate term because it more accurately captures the highly interventionist and disciplinary nature of the political, social and economic reforms being implemented. The latter term is thus employed in this article unless works that are being referenced instead use the former.

² For a brief introduction to these criticisms, see: Mark Duffield, *Global Governance and the New Wars: The Merging of Development and Security*, London: Zed Books, 2001; and Roland Paris, *At War’s End: Building Peace after Civil Conflict*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004.

³ This term is used in Oliver Richmond and Roger Mac Ginty, ‘Where Now for the Critique of the Liberal Peace?’ *Cooperation and Conflict* (forthcoming).

⁴ Oliver Richmond, *A Post-Liberal Peace*, Abingdon: Routledge, 2011.

⁵ Roger Mac Ginty, *International Peacebuilding and Local Resistance: Hybrid forms of Peace*, Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011.

⁶ Duffield (see n.2 above).

⁷ Michael Pugh, ‘Local Agency and Political Economies of Peacebuilding’, *Studies in Ethnicity and Nationalism*, Vol.11, No.2, 2011, pp.308-320; and Michael Pugh, ‘Reflections on Aggressive Peace’, *International Peacekeeping*, Vol.19, No.4, 2012, pp.410-425.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ See, in particular, Béatrice Pouligny, *Peace Operations Seen from Below: UN Missions and Local People*, London, Hurst & Co., 2006.

¹⁰ See, for example, Special Issue, ‘Frictions in Peacebuilding Interventions: The Unpredictability of Local-Global Interaction’, *International Peacekeeping*, Vol.20, No.2, 2013.

¹¹ See, for example: Stephen Gill, *Power and Resistance in the New World Order*, Abingdon: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003; and Stephen Gill, ‘Toward a Postmodern Prince? The Battle in Seattle as a Moment in the New Politics of Globalisation’, *Millennium—Journal of International Studies*, Vol.29, No.1, 2000, pp.131-140. Also see Antonio Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks of Antonio Gramsci*, ed. and trans. Quintin Hoare and Geoffrey Nowell Smith, London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1971.

¹² See, for example: Catherine Eschle and Brice Manguascha (eds.), *Critical Theory, International Relations and ‘the Anti-Globalisation Movement’: The Politics of Global Resistance*, Abingdon: Routledge, 2005; and Patrick Hayden and Chamsy el-Ojeili (eds.), *Confronting Globalization: Humanity, Justice and the Renewal of Politics*, Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005.

¹³ See, for example: Sankaran Krishna, *Globalization and Postcolonialism: Hegemony and Resistance in the Twenty-First Century*, Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2009; and Amy Skonieczny, ‘Interrupting Inevitability: Globalization and Resistance’, *Alternatives: Global, Local, Political*, Vol.35, No.1, 2010, pp.1-28.

¹⁴ See, for example, Mary E. Hawkesworth, *Globalization & Feminist Activism*, Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2006.

¹⁵ This follows Richard Falk, ‘Resisting ‘Globalization-from-Above’ through ‘Globalization-from-Below’’, in Barry K. Gills (ed.), *Globalization and the Politics of Resistance*, New York: St. Martin’s Press, 2000, pp.46-56. Also see: Louise Amoore (ed.), *The Global Resistance Reader*, Abingdon: Routledge, 2005; Jeremy Brecher, Tim Costello and Brendan Smith, *Globalization from Below: The Power of Solidarity*, Cambridge: South End Press, 2002; Robin Broad (ed.), *Global Backlash: Citizen Initiatives for a Just World Economy*, Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2002; James H. Mittelman, *The Globalization Syndrome: Transformation and Resistance*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000; Jackie G. Smith and Hank Johnston (eds.), *Globalization and Resistance: Transnational Dimensions of Social Movements*, Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2002.

¹⁶ Polanyi’s arguments are primarily advanced in Karl Polanyi, *The Great Transformation: The Political and Economic Origins of Our Time*, Boston: Beacon, 2001. Also see Naem Inayatullah and David L. Blaney, ‘Towards an Ethnological IPE: Karl Polanyi’s Double Critique of Capitalism’, *Millennium—Journal of International Studies*, Vol.28, No.2, 1999, pp.311-340.

¹⁷ Michel Foucault, *The Birth of Biopolitics: Lectures at the Collège de France, 1978-79*, by Michel Senellart (ed.), trans. Graham Burchell, Basingstoke: Palgrave MacMillan, 2008; and Michel Foucault ‘The Subject and Power’, *Critical Inquiry*, Vol.8, No.4, 1982, pp.777-795. Also see: Graham Burchell, Colin Gordon and Peter Miller (eds.), *The Foucault Effect: Studies in Governmentality*, London: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1991; Hoy, David Couzens, *Critical Resistance: From Poststructuralism to Post-Critique*, London: MIT Press, 2004, pp.57-100; and Brent L. Pickett, ‘Foucault and the Politics of Resistance’, *Polity*, Vol.28, No.4, 1996, pp.445-466.

¹⁸ James C. Scott, *Domination and the Arts of Resistance: Hidden Transcripts*, New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990; James C. Scott, *The Art of Not Being Governed: An Anarchist History of Upland Southeast Asia*, New Haven:

Yale University Press, 2009; James C. Scott, *The Moral Economy of the Peasant: Rebellion and Subsistence in Southeast Asia*, New Haven: Yale University Press, 1976; and James C. Scott, *Weapons of the Weak: Everyday forms of Peasant Resistance*, New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985.

¹⁹ Oliver Richmond, *The Transformation of Peace*, New York: Palgrave, 2005.

²⁰ Scott, *Weapons of the Weak* (see n.18 above), pp.314-318.

²¹ See, for example: Milton Friedman with Rose D. Friedman, *Capitalism and Freedom*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1962; and Friedrich A. Hayek, *The Constitution of Liberty*, London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1960.

²² David Keen, *Complex Emergencies*, Cambridge, Polity Press, 2008.

²³ Bruno Charbonneau, 'War and Peace in Côte d'Ivoire: Violence, Agency and the Local/International Line', *International Peacekeeping*, Vol.19, No.4, 2012, pp.508-524; and Meera Sabaratnam, 'Avatars of Eurocentrism in the Critique of the Liberal Peace', *Security Dialogue*, Vol.44, No.3, 2013, pp.259-278.

²⁴ Foucault, 'The Subject and Power', (see n.17 above).

²⁵ For a similar discussion of the importance of intent in resistance, see Scott, *Weapons of the Weak* (see n.18 above), pp.289-303.

²⁶ Perhaps the most important critique of the ability to 'speak' for the oppressed is presented in Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, 'Can the Subaltern Speak?' in Cary Nelson and Lawrence Grossberg (eds.), *Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture*, Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1988, pp.271-313.

²⁷ See, for example, Duffield (see n.2 above).

²⁸ See, for example, Ian Taylor, 'Liberal Peace, Liberal Imperialism: A Gramscian Critique', in Oliver Richmond (ed.), *Palgrave Advances in Peacebuilding: Critical Developments and Approaches*, Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010, pp. 154-174.

²⁹ See, for example, John Heathershaw, 'Seeing like the International Community: How Peacebuilding Failed (and Survived) in Tajikistan', *Journal of Intervention and Statebuilding*, Vol.2, No.3, 2008, pp.329-351.

³⁰ See, for example, Vivienne Jabri, 'Peacebuilding, the Local and the International: A Colonial or a Postcolonial Rationality?' *Peacebuilding*, Vol.1, No.1, 2013, pp.3-16. Hybridity is itself a post-colonial concept. See Homi K. Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*, London: Routledge, 1994.

³¹ The former understanding is best exemplified by Foucault's work, which has had a significant impact on the field of post-colonial studies. See Michel Foucault, *The Foucault Reader: An Introduction to Foucault's Thought*, by Paul Rabinow (ed.), Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1991; Edward Said, *Orientalism*, London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1978; Robert Nichols, 'Postcolonial Studies and the Discourse of Foucault: Survey of a Field of Problematization', *Foucault Studies*, No.9, 2010, pp.111-144; and Foucault, 'The Subject and Power', (see n.17 above). The latter understanding is more characteristic of Scott's work. See Scott, *Domination and the Arts of Resistance* (see n.18 above).

³² This point is made in relation to Foucault and Gramsci in Asli Daldal, 'Power and Ideology in Michel Foucault and Antonio Gramsci: A Comparative Analysis', *Review of History and Political Science*, Vol.2, No.2, 2014: 149-167.

³³ Randall D. Germain and Michael Kenny, 'Engaging Gramsci: International Relations Theory and the New Gramscians', *Review of International Studies*, Vol.24, No.1. 1998, pp.3-21; Vivienne Jabri, 'Michel Foucault's Analytics of War: The Social, the International, and the Racial', *International Political Sociology*, Vol.1, No.1, 2007, pp.67-81; Jan Selby, 'Engaging Foucault: Discourse, Liberal Governance and the Limits of Foucauldian IR', *International Relations*, Vol.21, No.3, 2007, pp.324-345; and Owen Worth, 'The Poverty and Potential of Gramscian Thought in International Relations', *International Politics*, Vol.45, No.6, 2008, pp.633-649.

³⁴ Michael C. Behrent, 'Liberalism Without Humanism: Michel Foucault and the Free-Market Creed, 1976-1979', *Modern Intellectual History*, Vol.6, No.3, 2009, pp.539-568.

³⁵ Henry Martyn Lloyd, 'Power, Resistance, and the Foucauldian Technologies', *Philosophy Today*, Vol.56, No.1, 2012, pp.26-38

³⁶ Boris Divkaj and Michael Pugh, 'The Political Economy of Corruption in Bosnia and Herzegovina', *International Peacekeeping*, Vol.15, No.3, 2008, pp.373-386.

³⁷ Jonathan Goodhand, 'From War Economy to Peace Economy? Reconstruction and State Building in Afghanistan', *Journal of International Affairs*, Vol.58, No.1, 2004, pp.155-174.

³⁸ Ricardo Soares de Oliveira, 'Illiberal Peacebuilding in Angola', *Journal of Modern African Studies*, Vol.49, No.2, 2011, pp.287-314.

³⁹ The importance of paying closer attention to the informal sphere in post-conflict environments is also emphasized in Dominik Zaum, 'Beyond the "Liberal Peace"', *Global Governance*, Vol.18, No.1, 2012, pp.126-129.

⁴⁰ Francesco Strazzari and Bertine Kamphuis, ‘Hybrid Economies and Statebuilding: On the Resilience of the Extralegal’, *Global Governance*, Vol.18, No.1, 2012, pp.57-72; and Achim Wennmann, ‘Resourcing the Recurrence of Intrastate Conflict: Parallel Economies and their Implications for Peacebuilding’, *Security Dialogue*, Vol.36, No.4, 2005, pp.479-494.

⁴¹ A significant body of literature exists surrounding informal economies and neoliberalism. For contrasting perspectives, see: Hernando de Soto, *The Other Path: The Invisible Revolution in the Third World*, trans. June Abbott, New York: Harper & Row, 1989; and Alejandro Portes, Manuel Castells and Lauren A. Benton (eds.), *The Informal Economy: Studies in Advanced and Less Developed Countries*, Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1989.

⁴² A brief genealogy of the economic dimensions of contemporary neoliberalism reveals three dominant strands of thought: classical liberalism, neoclassical economics and the so-called ‘Austrian School’. Each adheres to the concept, in different ways, that markets promote both individual freedoms and economic growth. For the association of markets with individual freedoms from, respectively, a classical liberal, a neoclassical and an ‘Austrian’ perspective, see: Adam Smith, *An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations*, Petersfield, Harriman House, 2007; Friedman and Friedman (see n.21 above); and Hayek, *The Constitution of Liberty* (see n.21 above).

⁴³ A similar point is made in Toby Dodge, ‘Intervention and Dreams of Exogenous Statebuilding: The Application of Liberal Peacebuilding in Afghanistan and Iraq’, *Review of International Studies*, Vol.39, No.5, 2013, pp.1189-1212.

⁴⁴ Mac Ginty (see n.5 above), pp.117-133; and Pugh, ‘Local Agency and Political Economies of Peacebuilding’ (see n.7 above).

⁴⁵ This is tied to the broader failure on the part of the critical literature to adequately escape its fundamental (neo)liberal underpinnings. Different analyses of this problem can be found in: Roland Paris, ‘Saving Liberal Peacebuilding’, *Review of International Studies*, Vol.36, No.2, 2010, pp.337-365; and Sabaratnam (see n.23 above).

⁴⁶ While initially advanced by Polanyi (see n.14 above), this argument has been subsequently been adopted—in whole or in part—by authors from a variety of theoretical positions. See, for example: Ha-Joon Chang, *Bad Samaritans: The Guilty Secrets of Rich Nations and the Threat to Global Prosperity*, London: Random House, 2007; Noam Chomsky, *Profit Over People: Neoliberalism and Global Order*, New York: Seven Stories Press, 1999; and Philip Mirowski, *Never Let a Serious Crisis Go to Waste: How Neoliberalism Survived the Financial Meltdown*, New York: Verso, 2013.

⁴⁷ A similar argument about neoliberalism in non-post-conflict environments can be found in Mirowski (see n.46 above).

⁴⁸ The argument that critical literature overemphasizes the (neo)liberal nature of contemporary peacebuilding is advanced in: Jan Selby ‘The Myth of Liberal Peace-Building’, *Conflict, Security & Development*, Vol.13, No.1, 2013, pp.57-86; and Zaum, (see n.39 above), pp.121-132. Other literature suggests that such a criticism is invalid. See, for example, Madhav Joshi, Sung Yong Lee and Roger Mac Ginty, ‘Just How Liberal Is the Liberal Peace?’ *International Peacekeeping*, Vol.21, No.3, 2014, pp.364-389.

⁴⁹ See n.46 above.

⁵⁰ See, for example, Karen Ballentine and Jake Sherman (eds.), *The Political Economy of Armed Conflict: Beyond Greed and Grievance*, Boulder: Lynne Rienner, 2003.

⁵¹ See, for example: Carolyn Nordstrom, *Shadows of War: Violence, Power, and International Profiteering in the Twenty-First Century*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004; Michael Pugh and Neil Cooper, with Jonathan Goodhand, *War Economies in a Regional Context: Challenges of Transformation*, Boulder: Lynne Rienner, 2004; and Michael Pugh, Neil Cooper and Mandy Turner (eds.), *Whose Peace? Critical Perspectives on the Political Economy of Peacebuilding*, Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008.

⁵² Christopher Cramer, *Civil War is Not a Stupid Thing: Accounting for Violence in Developing Countries*, London: Hurst & Co., 2006.

⁵³ See, for example: Ludwig von Mises, ‘Economic Calculation in the Socialist Commonwealth,’ in Friedrich A. Hayek (ed.), *Collectivist Economic Planning*, London: George Routledge and Sons, 1935, pp.87-130; Friedrich A. Hayek, ‘Economics and Knowledge’, *Economica*, Vol.4, No.13, 1937, pp.33-54; and Friedrich A. Hayek, ‘The Use of Knowledge in Society’, *The American Economic Review*, Vol.35, No.4, 1945, pp.519-530.

⁵⁴ See, for example: Robert J. Barro, ‘Rational Expectations and the Role of Monetary Policy’, *Journal of Monetary Economics*, Vol.2, No.1, 1976, pp.1-32; and Robert E. Lucas Jr., ‘Expectations and the Neutrality of Money’, *Journal of Economic Theory*, Vol.4, No.2, 1972, pp.103-124.

⁵⁵ See, for example, Eugene F. Fama, 'Efficient Capital Markets: A Review of Theory and Empirical Work', *The Journal of Finance*, Vol.25, No.2, 1970, pp.383-417.

⁵⁶ Again, the economic edifice of neoliberalism involves a combination of classical liberalism, neoclassical economics and 'Austrian' economic theory. While the 'economic calculation problem' is primarily associated with the heterodox 'Austrian School', it has nevertheless, like many other 'Austrian' ideas, entered the neoclassical mainstream to the extent that it is seen as a foundational critique of what is regarded as state intervention in the market. Both rational expectations and the efficient-market hypothesis emerged from the 'Chicago School' of free-market thinking, and have become two of the defining tenets of neoclassical economics since the late twentieth century. It is perhaps significant that some of the primary critiques of the neoliberal view of market knowledge come from within the neoclassical school itself. See, for example: Bruce C. Greenwald and Joseph E. Stiglitz, 'Financial Market Imperfections and Business Cycles', *The Quarterly Journal of Economics*, Vol.108, No.1, 1993, pp.77-114; Sanford J. Grossman and Joseph E. Stiglitz, 'On the Impossibility of Informationally Efficient Markets', *The American Economic Review*, Vol.70, No.3, 1980, pp.393-408; and Robert J. Shiller, 'Do Stock Prices Move Too Much to be Justified by Subsequent Changes in Dividends?' *The American Economic Review*, Vol.71, No.3, 1981, pp.421-436. These views, however, do not dominate neoclassical economics, particularly the form that informs neoliberalism.

⁵⁷ Burchell, Gordon and Miller (eds.) (see n.15 above); and Thomas Lemke, "'The Birth of Bio-Politics': Michel Foucault's Lecture at the Collège de France on Neo-Liberal Governmentality", *Economy and Society*, Vol.30, No.2, 2001, pp.190-207.

⁵⁸ A similar criticism of Foucault is presented in Mirowski (see n.46 above), pp.89-102.

⁵⁹ See n.51 and n.52 above.

⁶⁰ Richmond (see n.4 above).

⁶¹ See, for example: Gill, *Power and Resistance in the New World Order* and 'Toward a Postmodern Prince' (see n.11 above).

⁶² Matthew D. Stephen, 'Alter-Globalism as Counter-Hegemony: Evaluating the 'postmodern Prince'', *Globalizations*, Vol.6, No.4, 2009, pp.483-498; and Matthew D. Stephen, 'Globalisation and Resistance: Struggles Over Common Sense in the Global Political Economy;', *Review of International Studies*, Vol.37, No.1, 2011, pp.209-228.

⁶³ Hoy (see n.17 above), 81-87.

⁶⁴ Polanyi (see n.16 above).

⁶⁵ Sabaratnan (see n.23 above).