Unsettled Peace or Peace in Unsettlement?: A Post-Liberal Approach to Conflict Transformation

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Political Settlement and Unsettlement

- ‘Stable Instability’: formalised political unsettlement
- International involvement: focus on stability
- Creates unsettled peace instead
- Potential for peace in unsettlement?

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Locating ‘Formalised Political Unsettlement’

- Saving Liberal Peacebuilding
- Formalised Political Unsettlement
- Rationalist Critique
- Post-liberal Peace

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Epistemological Limits of Liberal Peacebuilding

- Linear causality
- Root causes / trigger factors
- ‘greed vs grievance’
- Fragile states tautology

Relational solutions
- Addressing root causes will lead to peace
- Abstract normative claims: equality, justice
Engaging with ‘Formalised Political Unsettlement

- Political Settlements are complex systems – no proportional relation between inputs and outputs
- Probably no ‘building’ of political settlements, and no ‘solution’ to violent conflict
- Modes of engagement (out of current practice): bargaining inclusion, disrelation, undissolved space

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Negotiating Inclusion

• ‘formalised political unsettlement’ offers pathways
  • Perpetual reform, contestation, no default position wins, visions hold each other in check

• Fluid processes of accommodation, opportunity to move beyond identity-based consociationalism

• Diversity vs representation

• Liberal norms as process tools
Disrelation

- Liberal peacebuilding relies on relational solutions (the social contract)
- Disrelation vs exclusion
- Active disrelation: Communities actively avoiding participation in conflict (and solution)
- Passive disrelation: actors in settlement agree on disrelation (territorial, social, political)
Undissolved Space

• Undissolved space exists:
  • postponements in processes (e.g. Abyei)
  • overlapping practical arrangements (e.g. Moldova/Transnistria)
  • Impossible implementation (e.g. border arrangements)

• Need is not in invention, but in reframing
  • Not necessarily ‘unaddressed root cause’ that ‘risks regression’
Concluding Thoughts

• Conceptual challenge: positive vs negative peace misleading, rather unsettled peace (‘stability’) vs peace in unsettlement
• Practical challenge: acceptance of pragmatism, overcome causation/solution-logic
• Drawing on what is there, but understand it as an approach, not as hypocrisy or bad compromise
• Substantial political risk