12-1-2018

Lessons from the State of Nature: A Hobbesian Contribution to the Critical Debate on Liberal Peacebuilding

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Abstract

Liberal Peacebuilding has failed to realize the ambitious agenda set after the end of the Cold War. This paper contributes to the critical debate about liberal peacebuilding by introducing some fundamental ideas from Thomas Hobbes' state of nature. Within the state of nature, Hobbes's state of fear resembles the deep-rooted mistrust that haunts most post-conflict societies. The paper describes human desires as the foundation of political power. As such, political authority must necessarily reflect social dynamics in order to be of relevance for its subjects and, ultimately, effective. In the volatile and rapidly changing environments of post-conflict states, human desires must be treated as context-sensitive. Therefore, rather than rebuilding institutions and structures according to liberal ideals, peacebuilding shall consider human interest as a dependent variable. This calls for the inclusion of every subject into the governing process and requires the meeting of preconditions that foster a common social order capable of responding to all individuals' desires.

One need not be an expert to know that the history of assisting war-torn countries in fostering peace has been far from successful. Despite the lessons from various unsuccessful peacebuilding efforts after the end of the Cold War,[1] the international community remains committed to peacebuilding efforts centered around liberal ideals. Similarly, recent examples of peace operations in Afghanistan, Libya, and Iraq continue to highlight the limitations of peacebuilding efforts, as post-conflict states remain highly volatile.[2] In Afghanistan and Libya, the creation of state structures and the implementation of democratic systems of government did not manage to adequately integrate local tribal structures and therefore did not result in effective governing mechanisms that could pacify internal conflicts. Likewise, peace efforts in Iraq after 2003 gradually alienated the Sunni minority, which did not feel adequately incorporated into the newly constructed state. Measures to compensate for such missed opportunities are still met with substantial mistrust. In all such cases, newly created governing structures failed to incorporate all relevant people of a region or a state and thus could not restore a functioning and peaceful community.

Peacebuilding operations mostly aim to restore a functioning community along the concept of liberal peace, which has been the dominant paradigm in peacebuilding at least since the end of the Cold War. For the purpose of this paper, the term peacebuilding refers to the UN Capstone Doctrine as involving "a range of measures targeted to reduce the risk of lapsing or relapsing into conflict by strengthening national capacities at all levels for conflict management, and to lay the foundation for sustainable peace and development" (UN DPKO, 2008). Liberal peacebuilding assumes that societies comprising individuals whose freedoms are guaranteed and coordinated by a central government are less conflict-prone than other societies. Respective peacebuilding initiatives are typically shaped by the Washington Consensus of political and economic liberalization[3].

However, given the failures of international peacebuilding initiatives, most professionals and academics are critical towards the liberal peacebuilding measures. One group of experts defends the basic assumptions of liberal peace but blames poor implementation for its failures. That concerns the whole process. At first, adequate external assistance has to provide the foundation and guidance for local processes. Then, strong local institutions have to be established in order secure a basic social order to prevent a volatile environment from relapsing into conflict. On this basis, further interventions concern constitutional and educational measures to foster individual political autonomy and democracy.[4]

Another group of peacebuilding theorists blames the failure of peacebuilding operations on the concept of the liberal peace itself. They question the transformative potential of values like freedom, equality, and justice. They argue that instead of attempting to externally control or modify the local dynamics that led to violent conflict in the first place, consideration of those local conflict dynamics and relationships must be fundamental to any peacebuilding initiative. Rather than attempting to govern societal tensions and pressures according to liberal concepts, they say, governing should reflect those tensions and pressures. Eventually, such theorists assert, the local political conditions of fundamental relevance for the legitimation and functioning of institutional mechanisms. Consequently, governing shall reflect the current state of society.[5]

This paper contributes to this debate from a rather unusual perspective by adapting some thoughts about the state of nature by Thomas Hobbes.[6] While Hobbes' conclusion in *Leviathan* legitimates absolute authority, the premise of Hobbes' state of nature introduces the notion of human equality and autonomy as preconditions for the success of any governing body. Specifically, Hobbes characterizes the state of nature as absence of any kind of institutional or moral restriction on human behavior, a state in which every man fends for himself in pursuit of personal autonomy (and in which any means of doing so is fair game): "To this warre of every man against every man, this also is consequent; that nothing can be

Unjust. The notions of Right and Wrong, Justice and Injustice have there no place. Where there is no common Power, there is no Law, where no Law, no Injustice" (Hobbes, 2011, p. 90). Thus, in a state of nature, human beings are free; they are autonomous to a maximum degree. The drive to satisfy human desires guides the actions of all individuals, including the potential use of violence to pursue or protect autonomy. As Hobbes observes, "Amid so many dangers therefore from men's natural cupidity, [which] threaten every man every day, we cannot be blamed for looking out for ourselves; we cannot will to do otherwise. For each man is drawn to desire that which is Good for him and to Avoid what is bad for him" (Hobbes, 1998, p. 27).

According to Hobbes, since the ends of the desires and their objects are limited, the intersection of interests in human actors' daily interactions is inevitable. It is therefore not surprising that Hobbes' ideas have been adapted to argue in favor of diversity and tolerance (Owen, 2005; Bejan, 2016), cosmopolitism (Gallarotti, 2008), or to provide new aspects for understanding conflicts (Abizadeh, 2011). This paper asserts that the Hobbesian concept of the state of nature may be most relevant for the support and stabilization of (post-) conflict environments. While conflicts are undoubtedly an integral part of every society, in this paper, the term (post-) conflict refers to societies facing imminent violence or those suffering from its immediate aftermath. In such cases, conflicts between societal groups are about to become violent or have the potential to relapse into violence. In *Leviathan*, Hobbes deduces his assumptions about humans' natural state from a conceptualized scenario that also applies to today's (post-) conflict situations and peacebuilding measures: Two actors find themselves in a situation of uncertainty about the other's behavior. The uncertainty is the result of a lack of social order to guide the actors' behavior in interaction. Despite the existence of formal agreements in post-conflict situations, cleavages below the surface still exist and foster mistrust among the communities. This sustains an ever-present possibility of the use of violence. Thus, Hobbes' thoughts on how to deal with the state of nature can indeed be of value for peacebuilding. Accordingly, the task of successful peacebuilding can be described as an effort to authentically incorporate every human being of a certain region into a common social order.

On this basis, the paper will elaborate on crucial deficiencies of liberal peacebuilding. In order to do so, the paper will first draw a line from the state of nature to (post-) conflict environments. Then, human desires will be introduced as an ontological foundation for social order. The third part relates the Hobbesian arguments regarding liberal theory and criticizes its presumptions of concepts as foundational for social order. Finally, the argumentation relates the philosophical account to the discourse of peacebuilding to emphasize its key arguments.

Overcoming the State of Permanent Fear

The initial task of international intervention is to stop violent interactions between conflict actors. However, the crucial challenge of peacebuilding lies beyond this initial step. Any (post-) conflict society is haunted by deep-rooted mistrust, fear, or hate among its members. These feelings often relate to divisions along group affiliations that are of relevance in conflict dynamics. In such situations, individuals often feel stronger allegiance to a certain group than to their society as a whole. Thus, the most important task of peacebuilding is to (re-)build the society as a whole through the integration of those groups along a single social order. The successful integration of groups depends on the social order's ability to reduce mistrust among its subjects, which makes the relapse into violent confrontation less likely in the long term. In the end, a single, unified social order must be more attractive and more inclusive than any other group order and must, thereby, foster trust among all societal groups. For example, in Iraq, the Shia-dominated Iraqi government must convince the Sunni population that a unified government — even a Shia-majority one — is of more use than any

other social order, such as the one implemented by the Islamic State militia from 2014 to 2017. Likewise, any Libyan central government must convince both Eastern and Western tribes alike of the advantages of a common Libyan social order (Lederach, 1999, p. 37-85; Hutchison & Bleiker, 2013, p. 81-90).

The integration of various actors into a single social order despite existing frictions and factions aligns with Hobbes' argumentation in *Leviathan* concerning the structure of society and legitimate governments. The task, he argues, is to convince people to subject themselves to a common order despite their reservations. Ultimately, Hobbes' basic argument also applies to a (post-) conflict situation, in which two or more groups find themselves in an uncertain interaction that might lead to violence at any given moment. The uncertainty about the possibility of violence in interaction creates tension and distrust. Hobbes describes this situation as permanent state of fear—a situation that every human being naturally seeks to avoid or overcome. Therefore, the task of sustainable peacebuilding is tantamount to overcoming the state of permanent fear.

Given the state of nature's absence of restrictions on human autonomy and every individual's maximum degree of freedom, every interaction between humans represents an uncertain situation in which anything can happen. Hobbes describes two overarching strategies that guide behavior in such interactions: the strategy of cooperation and the strategy of violence. Hobbes says, "Man is a God to man, and Man is a wolf to Man" (Hobbes, 1998, p. 3). While the cooperation strategy rests on mutual trust, the wolf strategy takes no such gamble. After all, a sudden change of strategy will always reward the use of violence. Consequently, Hobbes's instrumental and pragmatic conception of human rationality recommends the wolf strategy: "And therefore, if any two men desire the same thing, which nevertelesse they cannot both enjoy, they become enemies, and in the way to their End,… endeavor to destroy, or subdue one an other" (Hobbes, 2011, p. 87). Nevertheless, the state of nature does not describe a state of permanent war. Rather, it refers to the permanent struggle of human beings to satisfy their desires in uncertain situations. Thus, Hobbes's *homo homini lupus* ("man is wolf to man") refers to the ever-present possibility of the use of violence in interactions among humans. Every actor is equally confronted with the possibility of dying in any such situation. (Note that Hobbes's notion of natural differences in individual constitutions concerning physical strength, experience, reason, and passion does not contradict his notion of natural human equality.) Thereby, Hobbes refers to an equality of vulnerability (Hoekstra, 2013, p. 76-112):

Nature has made men…equall, in the faculties of body, and mind. …For as to the strength of body, the weakest has the strength enough to kill the strongest, either by secret machination, or by confederacy with others, [who] are in the same danger with himselfe. (Hobbes, 2011, p. 86-87)

Consequently, as every individual equally faces the possibility of his own death in any such situation, a permanent state of fear arises: "So the nature of War, consisteth not in actuall fighting but in the known disposition thereto, during all the time there is no assurance to the contrary" (Hobbes, 2011, p. 88-89). In defining peace as the opposite of the state of permanent fear, Hobbes transcends the narrow understanding of peace as the absence of physical violence. To him, peace refers to a societal state in which individuals and societal groups have no disposition toward violence in interaction. Still, Hobbes's understanding does not extend to the non-physical forms of violence that are included in Johan Galtung's (1969) definition of positive peace.[7]

Hobbes understood that the state of permanent fear could be overcome. He believed, further, that the state of fear lays the ground for overcoming it. He explains: "The Passions that encline men to Peace, are Feare of Death;… And Reason suggesteth convenient Articles of Peace, upon which men may be drawn to agreement" (Hobbes, 2011, p. 90). Thus, the human drive to satisfy one's own desires provides the foundation for overcoming the state of

fear. In a feat of logical syllogism, Hobbes concludes that since it is individuals' pursuit of autonomy that leads to the ever-present possibility of being confronted with violence, individuals could be rationally convinced to give up their autonomy (*i.e.*, submit to societal order or governance) in order to circumvent this unpleasant state.

Satisfying Human Desires as Prerequisite for Political Power

The Hobbesian conclusion that waiving autonomy curbs violence, however, is not the basis upon which sustainable peacebuilding should be built. The suppression of individuals' freedom and autonomy would only temporarily halt or postpone conflict by preventing its effects from unfolding. In such a scenario, the foundations of conflict would remain beneath the surface. As such, simply preventing individuals from pursuing the "wolf strategy" by suppression would only postpone the use of violence and sustain its every-present possibility. Instead, in order to actually overcome the state of fear without the need to permanently suppress individuals' autonomy, autonomy itself must become the foundation of any sustainable outcome.

Hobbes presents human autonomy as a means of preventing violence. He explains: The immediate cause of violence is not autonomy but individuals' inclination to satisfy their own desires. Every society consists of individuals seeking to satisfy a vast diversity of desires by any possible means. While the intersection of interests in those interactions provides the basis for the possibility of violence, the satisfaction of those desires decreases it. Consequently, satisfying those desires in a coordinated manner would avoid the likelihood for the use of violence in any given interaction. Human autonomy would therefore not be an obstacle to peace but its very foundation: Autonomy provides the condition to evaluate the satisfaction of desires. In turn, a framework with the capacity to respond to the vast diversity of desires and coordinate their satisfaction would dramatically decrease the likelihood of violent interaction. In such a context, human autonomy would constitute a framework that responded to individuals' desires as useful. The framework would be evaluated for its effectiveness until eventually, an optimally effective framework would coordinate human interaction and establish a social order because its subjects would consider it to be beneficial. In Weberianterms, the legitimacy of authority would provide for its effectivity.[8]

Peacebuilding measures in post-conflict states often aim to establish institutions that are meant to create and maintain a social order. Such institutions are then tasked with coordinating the people's interactions to prevent the use of violence. Yet often, those institutions do not have the ability to do so, as they are of no purpose or use to the people they are meant to serve; they constitute the skeleton of a "virtual state" (Richmond, 2005, p. 150). As a consequence, the people within such a state adhere to other orders, which prolongs the fragmentation of society and thereby sustains the basis for violent conflict: The citizens of Iraq's majority Sunni areas did not feel represented by the Shia-dominated government and decided that a social order maintained by the Islamic State militia would better respond to their desires (ICG, 2017). The people of Western Libya did not perceive their interests as being represented by a government that was dominated by the tribes of Eastern Libya, which is why many Western Libyans defected to tribal militias that challenged the central government (ICG, 2014).

Tapping into the desires of local communities and responding to them is the essential foundation — the *sine qua non* — of any effective social order that is capable of significantly decreasing the likelihood of violent interaction. After all, the integration of fragmented and alienated parts of society into a common social order requires good reasons for every actor to do so. The converse — *i.e.*, not preserving actors' autonomy while instituting a skeletal state meant to "enforce" peace — means that disenfranchised individuals and groups within such contexts maintain their own allegiances; importantly, their resistance to the problematic social

orders do not cease. Hobbes' contemporary, Baruch de Spinoza, remarked critically: "No one transfers his natural right to another so completely that he is never consulted again, but each transfers it to a majority of the whole community of which he is a member. In this way, all remain equal, as they were before in the condition of nature" (Spinoza, 1958a, p. 137).

Bernard Williams describes the necessity for a social order to respond to the people's desires as the first political solution. It is first not in a chronological sense but an ontological and foundational way: Socially responsive solutions represent the pre-condition for the effectiveness for any social order, and therefore, devising socially responsive solutions should be the core task of politics. Thus, any authority, in order to maintain effective power, must respond constantly to the desires of its subjects (Williams, 2005, p. 3-6). In such a context, "absolute sovereignty, if any such thing exists, is really the sovereignty held by a whole people" (Spinoza, 1958b, p. 371). The community itself must decide on the desires that are to be satisfied and the ways and means to do so.

Preventing the Exclusion of Human Interest in Ideal Concepts

Following the paper's Hobbesian argumentation, an adequate response to human desires is the core of any peacebuilding initiative. Alasdair MacIntyre reflected on the definition of desire as a general human longing that does not necessarily relate to particular needs. In interactions, an individual will articulate his desires only in the case in which doing so is directed towards a certain good and if the individual believes he has good reasons for the desire to be satisfied (MacIntyre, 2016, p. 11). In that sense, MacIntyre's understanding of desires reflects the Hobbesian understanding of desire as a driver of human behavior. Therefore, the term human desire will be used synonymously with the term human interest. This allows us to bring the theoretical Hobbesian account closer to the realm of peacebuilding and related discourse.

Hidden dynamics in (post-) conflict societies often make it impossible for uninvolved observers to keep track of shifting interests in volatile and dynamic contexts. Nevertheless, liberal theory assumes that human interest always relates to ideal principles that are universal, independent of any specific context or process and that accordingly, all human beings would prefer a societal order that reflects those ideal principles. However, Charles Mills argues that any ideal concept is a construction from an individual point of view. Ideal concepts represent generalizations of individual characteristics, predispositions, and capacities. They presuppose a related ideal social ontology that also derives from the same context. Yet, in the end, these concepts are nothing more than abstractions of distinct perspectives that thereby exclude other particular perspectives from other realities. This exclusion leads to the idealization of their creators' perspective on the status quo (Mills, 2005, p. 166-177).

Ronald Dworkin's remark on the principle of equality is a paradigmatic example of the idealization of a particular perspective:

> The principle is too fundamental, I think, to admit of any defense in the usual form. It seems unlikely that it can be derived from any more general and basic principle of political morality that is more widely accepted. Nor can it be established through one or another of the methods of argument popular in political theory, for these already presuppose some particular conception of equality. …The best, perhaps the only, argument for the egalitarian principle lies in the implausibility of denying any of the components that make it up…. (Dworkin ,1983, p. 32)

Charles Mills elaborately demonstrates the shortcomings of ideal theory by analyzing John Rawls' conception of justice. Rawls' abstract principles of justice aim at an equal distribution of certain social goods. However, as Mills argues, the interpretation of what those social goods are depends on the dominant narratives of a certain society; there is no actually existing ideal ontology. Therefore, in a white supremacist society, race inequality might not

necessarily relate to injustice. Indeed, in such a context, racial inequality would perpetuate injustice, and injustice itself would be rendered coherent with the local translation of the ideal principles of justice. Some would argue that the ideal of justice would nevertheless serve as a corrective for any unjust situation. Yet, as Mills argues, with the ideal not at all corresponding with everyday life, the normative seems to be oddly detached from the prescriptive. In such cases, why should someone comply with the norms of a framework that seem both unjust and unfavorable? (Mills, 2005, p. 166-177). This is the case to the extreme within (post-) conflict areas, where the status quo might fundamentally relate to the conflict. Thus, particular ideals might exclude parts of society and formalize and institutionalize discrimination. As such, injustices that led to the violent confrontation in the first place might be institutionally sustained in the end.

In Iraq, the Sunni community feared not having an adequate say in the constitution drafting process in 2005 and therefore boycotted the process altogether. They then perceived the final constitution as discriminatory towards their interests. Indeed, the constitution did not prevent the marginalization of Sunni officials and their community, and this marginalization ultimately led to a military takeover of Sunni areas in Iraq by the IS militia. (Mansour, 2016; Jawad, 2013). Critically, the local process that leads to the democratic governing framework is of more importance than labels like equality, justice, and democracy. The issue of minority protection represents such an example. Even more so in cases in which societal diversity exceeds that found within Europe or the United States, which makes it difficult for Western actors to grasp factual plurality, like in the Levant or in many areas in Africa.

Often, tribal structures are of more relevance to a country's people than the feeling of belonging to a national society. Thus, innovations like democracy, which presuppose a certain amount of cohesion, might lead to outcomes that are in direct contrast with the outcomes intended by the peacebuilders: In Libya, following nation-wide elections in 2012, various presidents within a short period of time were barely able to extend their sovereignty beyond their palaces. Instead of involving the country's tribes, current peacebuilding efforts focus on elected individuals in order to reconcile Libya's divisions (ICG, 2018). While most African countries put significant effort into fostering a common state identity in order to uphold the integration of the post-colonial state borders, bad governance has often led and continues to lead to fragmentation along lines of tribal affiliation. In Somalia, Siyad Barre's cleptocracy, military defeats, constant insurgencies, and starvation had, by 1990, ultimately rendered the president of the state the "mayor of Mogadishu" (Meridith, 2006, p. 466-484). The leadership of Somalia is but one example of a virtual state that maintains little relevance to its citizens because of its inefficiency and as such, the signficance of political units like villages and the authority of tribal leaders remains primary. In contrast, Ghana's various peaceful democratic government transitions from 1996 might be due to the country's dual legal system consisting of a traditionally local as well as a modern national framework (Bond, 2008).

To maintain relevance, governing bodies must avoid both intentional and unintentional exclusions of perspectives and people. Ideal concepts necessarily exclude particular perspectives and presuppose ideal ontologies that do not exist in the real world. Such concepts translate into a context with distinct narratives. In order to ensure that a certain ideal does not translate into its opposite, local knowledge must be the basis of any generalized concept. Therefore, every perspective of every human being and group that shall be incorporated into a social order must be considered relevant, independent of the size and type of the group, no matter whether the social order pertains to a local community or a society within a state. The larger a community, the more they rely on general — not ideal — concepts as the framework for the functioning of governing institutions. Yet, those general concepts must be related to all individuals' evaluation and must therefore be open to adaption.

Chantal Mouffe assumes that only a framework that properly articulates the desires of every actor has the ability to coordinate actors' interactions and thereby prevent the use of

violence. Human diversity and symbolic differences represent the *conditio humana*. Thus, individuals and groups will articulate their interests—often against each other—and will seek to realize them. Society is fundamentally antagonistic, Mouffe writes. Nevertheless, a framework that allows for common identification will likewise allow for the sublimation of the antagonism and lead to what Mouffe calls agonism. Agonism describes a state that allows for the expression of human diversity and the pursuit of a diversity of desires yet makes the use of violence unlikely in doing so (Mouffe, 2013, p. 1-42).

In Tunisia, a comprehensive dialogue among various factions of different ideological backgrounds led to a constitution that all parties agreed to. Tunisian leadership managed to bring together the contradicting perspectives of the secularist and the Islamic fundamentalist factions. The Tunisian government does not seek to homogenize or idealize distinct views or make particular views mutually exclusive of one another. Rather, it represents a vast diversity of perspectives that reflect existing societal antagonisms. The constitution that was ratified in 2014 acknowledges the secularists' desire for autonomy within the political sphere and equality among citizens regardless of their lack of religious affiliation. The constitution simultaneously expresses the Islamists' desire for Islam to be the foundation of the political community by including a reference to Islam in its first article. The first article states, "Tunisia is a free, independent, sovereign state; its religion is Islam, its language Arabic, and its system is republican."[9] In order to emphasize the political system's secular character, the second article declares, "Tunisia is a civil state based on citizenship, the will of the people, and the supremacy of law."[10] This solution represents the concept of *dawla madaniyya*, the (Arab) civil state. It was introduced into the Arab world's discourse to reconcile the deep frictions between secular and religious forces that foster tensions in many majority-Muslim countries. The concept of *dawla madaniyya* is about religion and politics acknowledging their basic respective demands: Religion respects democratic prerogatives, while politics accepts the legitimate role of Islam as a public religion. Thus, the civil state provides a concept that fulfills the central demand of the secular state (autonomous sphere of politics)[11] while not rejecting the primal and fundamental role of Islam.[12] Although it is too early to predict the future, the Tunisian solution has thus far prevented major conflicts between religious and secularist parties and provides an effective foundation for ideologically diverse people to work together.

Hobbesian Context Sensitivity in Peacebuilding

The above sections described the relevance of the Hobbesian conception of the state of nature for the implementation of an effective and sustainable social order. This final part will relate those ideas to the peacebuilding discourse. John Burton (1998) and Edward Azar (1990) emphasize, like Chantal Mouffe does, the necessity of adequately responding to human interest in order to prevent violent conflict. While their human needs-based theories of conflict management represent a pioneering paradigm to understand protracted conflicts (Rogers & Ramsbotham, 1999, p. 748), they nevertheless have a significant blind spot. Burton and Azar introduce human needs and wants as two separate categories that drive human behavior. Yet both reflect human desires (MacIntyre 2016, p. 1-7). According to Alisdair MacIntyre, the term desire encompasses both needs and wants under the more general umbrella of longing. (Needs may be neglected depending on goals that one wants to achieve.) However, following Abraham Maslow, both Burton and Azar emphasize the behavioral differences between wants and needs. They say, the deprivation of needs is more likely to cause violent conflict than the deprivation of human wants, as needs are related to physical survival. Furthermore, they define groups of needs and wants. Still, while such highly detailed rankings might be more or less accurate, it is difficult to tell what the actual desires of the people within a volatile and permanently changing environment are. Therefore, the more

general notion of human desire, which drives human action, might be a more appropriate umbrella when seeking to understand the motivations and drivers of human behavior.

Ron Hassner assumes that the personal mindset of peacebuilders and mediators is crucial for detecting the actual desires that are at play. He blames a traditionally religiously illiterate diplomatic community for various failures of peace initiatives. No matter how irrational and unimportant human desires might appear to the peacebuilder, they remain desires that are to be articulated in any solution: The secularization of the holy esplanade in Jerusalem will not solve the conflict between the Jewish and the Muslim community regarding access to their holy places. In his book about conflicts over sacred space, Hassner blames the disregard of religious desires for the failure of the Oslo process at the Camp David summit in 2000 (Hassner, 2009). Considering that more than half of all conflicts worldwide involve religion, the acknowledgement of its importance in peacebuilding will be vital (Tusicisny, 2004).

The Hobbesian state of nature does not underestimate any distinct desire. It encompasses a vast diversity of unspecified desires that are all equal in their significance (Owen, 2005, p. 147). They are all responsible for fostering a state of permanent fear and are thus all important for successful peacebuilding. Underestimating the importance of local realities has always been a major shortcoming of international peacebuilding. For many years, critics have been raising concerns about the inadequacy of liberal measures for peacebuilding in non-western contexts.[13] Accordingly, theorists like Oliver Richmond, Mike Duffield, and Roger Mac Ginty emphasize the importance of the local context and frame the task of peacebuilding as fostering a hybrid-peace (Mac Ginti, 2010) or a post-conflict subjectivity (Richmond, 2011, p. 186-190). While such criticism about the need for greater focus on the local context might be justified, it nevertheless loses sight of the people that such peacebuilding efforts are meant to assist, as Meera Sabaratnam (2013, p. 263-264) remarks. In turn, as Sabaratnam describes, approaches that appear to focus on local contexts remain oddly tangential; descriptions of the target communities remain empty, and the communities' (everyday-)local contexts are portrayed as "Other," presupposing a "European" norm in the end (Sabaratnam, 2013, p. 270).

Bringing Hobbes into the peacebuilding debate necessarily raises suspicions about Eurocentrism. In the end, Hobbes does present a contractarian argument that presupposes a Eurocentric subject that is guided by an instrumentalist rationality. However, this paper's argumentation seeks to minimize assumptions by presupposing nothing more than the existence of individuals that bear a vast diversity of desires that drive them in their daily actions. In doing so, the target of peacebuilding is not predefined or prescribed, yet neither is it "empty." Finally, even if we assume the existence of desires and individuals' inclination to satisfy them, human interest remains a variable that depends on the processes of interaction. As such, the paper's Hobbesian approach is inherently context sensitive.

Hobbes' state of nature — in which the pursuit and satisfaction of human desires are fundamental drivers of human behavior — is similar to the notion of human security: It defines the response to human desires as crucial to preventing violence and armed conflict. In 1994, the UNDP's human development report declared that the search for security "lies in development, not in arms" (UNDP, 1994). However, critics of the concept have remarked that a focus on human security in (post-) conflict countries mostly translates into goods provision and fails to foster local means of producing and distributing those goods. This creates dependencies on external support and neglects any sustainable perspective. Critics like David Chandler describe such a tendency as the depoliticization of peacebuilding. In contrast, the good-governance approach to human security focuses exclusively on (re-)building such an infrastructure. This approach, too, is often not capable of detecting or responding to the desires that cause the permanent state of fear and thereby prolong the volatile situation (Chandler, 2006, p. 490).

The paper's Hobbesian argument provides a middle way between those two flawed interpretations of human security. It binds the governing mechanisms as responses to the desires of the ones that are to be governed. The governed themselves articulate their desires and provide a generalized conception as a governing paradigm. In doing so, this approach fosters local means of governing that adhere to the local desires. Finally, this link between desires and responses as the foundation of local governing structures can foster an effective (and therefore sustainable) social order that has the ability to overcome the state of permanent fear. Such a social order overcomes the state of fear through its effectivity, which means that it credibly obliges its subjects to adhere to it and minimizes the fear of being confronted with unexpected violence in daily interaction. Eventually, this Hobbesian approach brings together both top-down and bottom-up measures. Thus, to establish a common social order as a goal of peacebuilding means much more than the implementation of the rule of law: The social order does not have to be upheld by a security apparatus. Rather, it is self-sustaining, as it appeals to the desires of those that are incorporated in it.

The Latin American concept of *Buen Vivir* — loosely translated as "good living" but having more to do with notions of wellbeing — represents a theoretical and practical framework resembling the Hobbesian approach to peacebuilding presented in this paper. *Buen Vivir* explicitly rejects external blueprints for societal prosperity, justice, and development and ideals like democracy as alien to the local traditions. This does not mean, however, that it rejects the idea of justice or prosperity. Rather, *buen vivir* seeks to locally translate the intentions of ideas in a way that responds to the desires of local communities and individuals. Accordingly, it holds a local expression of well-being against a "capitalist [notion of] living better." Finally, without adapting European models of democracy, it intends to foster local manifestations of autonomy and self-government in support of inclusion, equality, and respect for diversity (Villalba, 2013, p. 1431).

Conclusion

This paper's examination of the Hobbesian approach reveals the constraints of liberal peacebuilding that prevents it from realizing its transformative intentions: Its universal and ideal concepts that serve as foundations for a peaceful social order fail to connect with the life-worlds of the individuals in post-conflict environments. Therefore, respective concepts of governance do not translate into effective governing measures in post-conflict states. Instead, peacebuilding must tackle the primary concerns of people in such environments. Those primary concerns resemble what Hobbes described as permanent state of fear. Following Hobbes's premise, a framework that responds to the desires of individuals is likely to reduce the possibility of violent interaction, thereby overcoming this permanent state of fear and create a single social order. Taking into consideration the vast diversity of desires and the varying contexts and circumstances to which humans are subject, only the subjects themselves of any given social order can determine how the governing body ought to address and respond to the desires of the subjects. In this way, local knowledge becomes the foundation of any effective governing measure.

Notes

[1] See the UN general secretary Boutros Boutros-Ghali's (1992) *Agenda for Peace*.
[2] For a full account, see Marshall (2017).
[3] See e.g. Waltz (1954), Doyle (1986) or Buchan (2002).
[4] See e.g. Paris (2004), Chandler (2006) or Lemay-Hébert (2013).
[5] See e.g. Mac Ginty (2010), Duffield (2007), Richmond (2011) or Roberts (2012).
[6] Hobbes' state of nature, articulated in the 17th century philosopher's *Leviathan*, is a concept in political philopsohy that is used to explore the nature of human existence before the time of civil society; it serves as a

frame for imagining the hypothtetical conditioms under which society might first have developed and why humans may have entered into societies and nation-states in the first place.

[7] Galtung defines peace as the absence of violence. His crucial innovations concern the understanding of violence as including "structural violence," which he described as being present "when human beings are being influenced so that their actual somatic and mental realizations are below their potential realizations" (Galtung, 1969, p. 168).

[8] Max Weber describes power as one actor's ability to enact its will upon another one. He names the realization of that ability authority. In order to institutionalize authority, authority must be based on a belief in its legitimacy, whereas authentic legitimacy simply defines the belief of people that a specific sort of political exercise of power enacted upon them is legitimate (Weber, 1978, p. 212-213).

[9] See the Tunisian Constitution, adopted on 26 January 2014 by the Constituent Assembly of Tunisia. Translated by UNDP and reviewed by International IDEA.

[10] Ibid.

[11] Here we apply a very basic definition of a secular state in line with John Locke. In his Letter Concerning Toleration, he writes that it is important "to distinguish exactly the business of civil government from that of religion and … settle the just bounds that lie between the one and the other." J. Locke, A Letter Concerning Toleration (Indianapolis, IN: Hackett, 1983), p. 26.

[12] R. K. Feder, 'The "Civil State" in Political Discourse after the Arab Spring,' Tel Aviv Notes, 8:10 (2014), issued by the Moshe Dayan Center, May 24.

[13] See e.g. Chandler (2000), Chesterman (2008), Zaum (2007), or Richmond (2011).

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