

# Peacebuilding: Toward a Global Ethic of Responsibility?

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My interest for Peacebuilding issues started during my undergraduate study at the Institut d'Etudes Politiques de Lille and the University of Münster. I wrote my final dissertation on the European Union Peace Policy in Kosovo from 1999 to 2003. I decided to specialise further and undertake a Master's of Arts Degree in International Conflict Analysis. I continued my study about peacebuilding and wrote my final dissertation on the Ethic of Peacebuilding. Especially the issues pertaining to the legacy of colonialism and the relationship between local populations and international interests me. I am currently working as an intern in a small NGO, *The New Defence Agenda* (Forum Europe) – in Brussels.

## **Abstract**

This paper is an extract from my Master Thesis, which I submitted in August 2004 at the University of Kent. Since the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, peace research moved from an instrumental discipline confined to practical issues, to larger critical debates about the legitimacy of international peace builders. This study adopts a critical and reflexive approach, based on discourse analysis, to investigate the discourse of legitimacy underpinning peacebuilding missions. In a historical perspective, peace builders draw upon arguments inherited from humanitarianism, similar to colonialists. But the international context of globalisation reinforces the ethic of responsibility—the duty to intervene—in dramatic ways. More than a modern rendering of the *Mission civilisatrice*, the recent international interventions might cause the emergence of a spectacle peacebuilding based on the power of words, images, symbols as a compensation to the deficiency of political legitimacy.

## Introduction

The recent proliferation of long-term United Nations (UN) Peace Support Operations in Bosnia, Kosovo, East Timor, Afghanistan or Iraq corresponds to the optimism of the peace decade which followed the end of the Cold War. The American rout in Somalia, the inability of the international community to avoid the genocide in Rwanda and the massacre in the safe area of Srebrenica suggested the need for a revision of the framework of international intervention according to the complexities of the post-cold war intra-state conflicts. Adopting an integrated approach, the United Nations conceived multifunctional peace operations, which combine both military and civil instruments, and involve a wide range of international actors.<sup>1</sup> If this new approach proves that the international community is concerned to a certain extent with the necessity to enhance the efficiency of international intervention, the concept of peacebuilding itself looks to remain unquestioned, especially the legitimacy of international intervention in long-term peacebuilding operations.

In reality, ‘peacebuilding is a far more complicated task than most of us had earlier assumed’<sup>2</sup>. The international actors constitute not simply a neutral *third-party*, but convey a liberal understanding of what peace implies through peace operations, which constitute nothing more than international interventions. Many scholars, such as Roland Paris, insist on the liberal ideological assumptions which underpin peace support operations based on the export of liberal democracy and market economy.<sup>3</sup> In the context of international relations, peacebuilding has to

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<sup>1</sup> See O. Ramsbotham, ‘Reflections on UN Post-Settlement Peacebuilding’, in: T. Woodhouse, O. Ramsbotham (eds.), *Peacekeeping and Conflict Resolution*, (London, Frank Cass Publishers, 2000), pp. 170.

<sup>2</sup> C. F. Alger, ‘Challenges for Peace Researchers and Peace Builders in the Twenty-First Century: Education and Coordination of a diversity of actors in applying what we are learning’, *The International Journal of Peace Studies*, Vol. 5, No. 1, January 2000, p. 6.

<sup>3</sup> R. Paris, ‘International peacebuilding and the “mission civilisatrice”’, *Review of International Studies*, Vol. 28, 2002, p. 637.

be understood in relation to globalisation, which accentuates the issue of identity and political legitimacy to achieve sustainable peace. The success of peacebuilding operations depends, therefore, not only on the elaboration of technical strategies for peace, but also on the capacity of the international peace builders to avoid fuelling the conflicts they try to solve or creating tensions with local actors. Since the end of the Cold War, many scholars gave their own definition of *peacebuilding*, but none really went beyond a technical or case-study approach that would have created a debate about the theoretical framework of peacebuilding practices<sup>4</sup>. There is a growing need to investigate more closely the ethical implications of international intervention in peacebuilding missions in a reflexive approach.

Does it represent, as Roland Paris argues, ‘a modern rendering of the *mission civilisatrice*—the colonial-era belief that the European imperial powers had a duty to “civilise” their overseas possessions’?<sup>5</sup> Or does the new interventionism of the international community, which contravenes the Westphalian principle of non-intervention, reflect a new ethic of responsibility inherited from the universalisation of human rights? The analysis of the global discourse on the ethic of peacebuilding will allow us to better grasp the legitimacy crisis of international peacebuilding and contribute to a reflexive debate on the role of international peace assistance.

## **1 The Politicisation of Peacebuilding**

Peacebuilding is a challenging practice, which requires, because of its ambitious goal—restoring sustainable peace in war-torn societies and avoiding a relapse into conflict—a constant renegotiation of the priorities according to each particular conflict. But international

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<sup>4</sup> For a review of the major scholars defining peacebuilding, see C.P. David, ‘Does Peacebuilding Build Peace?’, in: H.W. Jeong (ed.), *Approaches to Peacebuilding*, (New York, Palgrave Mac Millan, 2002), p. 20.

<sup>5</sup> R. Paris, *op. cit.*, p. 637.

peacebuilding missions seem to be conceived rather according to a liberal-biased standard, a ‘peacebuilding consensus’<sup>6</sup> more and more criticised.

### *Peacebuilding: Grasping the concept*

The current practice of peacebuilding reflects the broad definition of peace adopted by the UN since the 1990s. Boutros-Boutros Ghali argued in 1992 that ‘the Authority of the United Nations system to act in this field would rest on the consensus that social peace is as important or strategic as political peace’<sup>7</sup>. This acknowledgment of the political aspect of peacebuilding missions lies at the heart of the legitimisation crisis of peacebuilding practices.

In an attempt to seize the complexity of contemporary intrastate conflicts<sup>8</sup>, the concept of peacebuilding has been redirected toward the broad goal of positive sustainable peace beyond a simple phase of conflict management and the sole absence of violence.<sup>9</sup> This dynamic peacebuilding has been translated in the creation of multidimensional peace operations, as in Kosovo and East-Timor from 1999, or more recently in Afghanistan since 2001. Those ambitious missions involve a wide range of civil and military actors and entail not only traditional military peacekeeping, but also general tasks of security and confidence-building measures.<sup>10</sup> Especially the preventive aspect of peacebuilding and the necessity to address not simply the direct

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<sup>6</sup> O. Richmond, ‘The Globalisation of Responses to Conflict and the Peacebuilding Consensus’, *Cooperation and Conflict: Journal of the Nordic International Studies Association*, Vol. 39(2), 2004, pp. 129. See also D. Chandler, ‘The Responsibility to protect? Imposing the “liberal Peace”’, *International Peacekeeping*, Vol. 11, No. 1, Spring 2004.

<sup>7</sup> B. Boutros-Ghali, *An Agenda for Peace*, (New York, United Nations Publication, 1995<sup>2</sup>), p. 62.

<sup>8</sup> Edward Azar defines the so called *protracted social conflicts* along four variables: the communal content (e.g. identity), the deprivation of human needs, governance problems (e.g. state failure, Warlords Regime) and international linkages (e.g. the finance of rebels). H. Miall, O. Ramsbotham, T. Woodhouse, *Contemporary Conflict Resolution. The prevention, management and transformation of deadly conflicts*, (Cambridge, Polity Press, 1999), pp.71.

<sup>9</sup> See J.G. Cockell, ‘Conceptualising Peacebuilding: Human Security and Sustainable Peace’, in: M. Pugh (ed.), *Regeneration of War-Torn Societies*, (London, Macmillan Press Ltd, 2000), pp. 28.

<sup>10</sup> See W. J. Durch, J. M. Vaccaro, ‘The environment and tasks of peace operations’, in: A. H. Chayes, G. T. Raach (eds.), *Peace Operations: Developing an American Strategy*, (Washington DC, National Defense University Press, 1995), pp.23.

causes, but also the so-called ‘*root* causes of conflict such as poverty, political repression, and uneven distribution of resources’<sup>11</sup> is strongly advocated.

In peacebuilding however, lies not only the promise of sustainable peace, but also the risk of destabilisation because of the danger of disillusion among local populations. David Last insists, that ‘the international community is faced with a challenge that goes far beyond controlling violence. It must help to rebuild government and civil society to balance it’<sup>12</sup>. This imperative highlights that peacebuilding is more demanding than any other foreign policy, and also largely controversial despite a global ethical discourse, which constitutes, according to Dorothy Jones, a ‘Code of Peace’<sup>13</sup>. The risk of overstretch for the international community, and the problematic legitimacy of the actors involved more and more in activities of nation-building have to be critically taken into account, precisely as we observe ‘a widespread impression that the motivation behind peacebuilding can only be neutral, since it stems from such good intentions: preventing violence, rebuilding, restructuring, disarming and democratisation.’<sup>14</sup>

### *The “failed states” argument*

The major root cause of contemporary conflicts is often linked to the emergence of so-called *failed states*, or weak political communities. According to Mark R. Amstutz, these political entities are characterised by ‘the decline in the government’s perceived legitimacy’ and ‘the

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<sup>11</sup> See G. Evans, M. Sahnoun (et. al), ‘The Responsibility to Protect. Report of the International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty’, International Development Research Centre, Ottawa, December 2001, p. 22. (The Responsibility to Protect) URL: [www.dfait-maeci.gc.ca/iciss-ciise/pdf/Commission-Report.pdf](http://www.dfait-maeci.gc.ca/iciss-ciise/pdf/Commission-Report.pdf) (3 August 2004)

<sup>12</sup> D. Last, ‘Organizing for Effective Peacebuilding’, in: T. Woodhouse, O. Ramsbotham (eds.), *Peacekeeping and Conflict Resolution*, (London, Frank Cass Publishers, 2000), p. 84.

<sup>13</sup> D. Jones, *Code of Peace: Ethics and Security in the World of Warlord States*, (Chicago, The University of Chicago Press, 1989). Quoted in: N. Crawford, *Argument and Change in World Politics. Ethics, Decolonization, and humanitarian intervention*, (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2002), p. 68.

<sup>14</sup> C-P David, op. cit., p. 25.

growing demands by ethnic, religious, and political minorities for increasing political autonomy'<sup>15</sup>. According to the International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty (ICISS), established by the Canadian Government in September 2000, this is precisely the failure of statehood which justifies an intervention<sup>16</sup>.

To replace the most criticised concept of humanitarian intervention, they created the idea of *responsibility to protect*. It is meant to solve the traditional tension between the principle of non-intervention and the respect of sovereignty. It refers to the expression of the solidarist conception of 'right to interfere' linked to the third generation of human rights, 'the solidarity rights'<sup>17</sup>. Gareth Evan, co-chairman of the ICISS, describes the framework of legitimacy for the intervention of the international community:

*'The primary responsibility for that protection lies with the sovereign state. But if that state is unable or unwilling to protect its population, or is itself the cause of the threat, the responsibility to protect those people shifts to the international community of states.'*<sup>18</sup>

The international community takes over the responsibility of the failed state, which is unable to guarantee the respect for human rights on its territory, or fulfil the basic human needs of its citizens, in a context of violence and insecurity. The principle of non-intervention is not valid anymore, if a state fails to fulfil its responsibility to protect its population.

Parallel to the weakening of the principle of non-intervention, we notice paradoxically the new centrality of state-building in the international peacebuilding strategies to rebuild the au-

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<sup>15</sup> M. R. Amstutz, *International Ethics. Concepts, Theories and Cases in Global Politics*. (Lanham, Rowman & Littlefield Publishers Inc., 1999), p. 136.

<sup>16</sup> See *The Responsibility to Protect*, pp. 1.

<sup>17</sup> Article 28 of the UN Charter. Quoted in: T.G. Weiss, C. Collins, *Humanitarian Challenges and Intervention, Dilemmas in World Politics*, (Boulder, Westview Press, 2000<sup>2</sup>), p. 26.

<sup>18</sup> G. Evans, 'Banishing the Rwanda Nightmare. The responsibility to protect', *Ghost of Rwanda*, Frontline – US Public Affairs Series, PBS Television, 2004. URL: [www.rand.org/publications/MR/MR1753/MR1753.sup.pdf](http://www.rand.org/publications/MR/MR1753/MR1753.sup.pdf) (3 August 2004)

thority of failed states. Thomas Weiss claims, for example, that ‘for those who chart changes in international discourse, the evolution toward reinforcing state capacity is key’<sup>19</sup>. Elizabeth Cousens goes further and argues that, to avoid confusions about the definition of peacebuilding activities, it should be acknowledged that the priority of peacebuilding is political: the creation of viable political processes, which are able to deal with conflicts without violence.<sup>20</sup>

But there is an inherent contradiction between the contention of the ICISS, that the responsibility to protect is ‘a principle designed to respond to threats to human life, not a tool for achieving political goals’<sup>21</sup>, and the obvious political component of peacebuilding. The ICISS fears by recognising the political nature of peacebuilding, that ‘humanitarian intervention may slide down the slippery slope to humanitarian occupations and state building’<sup>22</sup>. But, the recent interventions in Kosovo, Afghanistan or Iraq can be all considered as state building enterprises.

### *Local Ownership: a figure of style?*

The political aspects of peacebuilding lie at the core of the crisis regarding the legitimacy of international actors. There is constant tension between the strengthening of political institutions in failed states and the respect of the principle of local ownership, the key to long-term self-sustained peace. From the outset, peacebuilding missions can be considered as illusory because an international presence can represent paradoxically an obstacle to the creation of a responsi-

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<sup>19</sup> T. G. Weiss, ‘The Sunset of Humanitarian Intervention ? The Responsibility to Protect in a Unipolar Era’, *Security Dialogue*, Vol. 35, No. 2, June 2004, p. 138.

<sup>20</sup> E. M. Cousens, ‘Introduction’, in: E. M. Cousens, C. Kumar, K. Wermester (eds.), *Peacebuilding as Politics. Cultivating Peace in Fragile Societies*, (London, Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2001), pp. 10.

<sup>21</sup> The Responsibility to Protect, p. 43.

<sup>22</sup> N. C. Crawford, *Argument and Change in World Politics. Ethics, Decolonization, and Humanitarian Intervention*, (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2002), p. 400.



ble state, able to guarantee political autonomy and communal support.<sup>23</sup> This creates a dangerous disappointment among the local population, as in Kosovo where the problems between the internationals and the locals held political regeneration in check.

On the one hand, the international community seems reluctant to get involved in political peacebuilding, especially the Americans, traumatised from their negative experience in Somalia in 1993. But on the other hand, recent large-scale interventions entail more and more aspects of state-building, which would require far more consistent interventions. In this context, Robert Rotberg warns against state-building ‘on the cheap’<sup>24</sup>. A superficial involvement of the international community without a clear peacebuilding strategy, as in Iraq since the American occupation in March 2003, would only worsen conflicts.

The success of peacebuilding missions depends strongly on the relationship between the internationals and the locals, who have to build a partnership. The ICISS claims that if the internationals don’t want to be accused of neo-colonial imperialism ‘the responsibility to rebuild (...) must be directed towards returning the society in question to those who live in it and who, in the last instance, must take responsibility together for its future destiny’<sup>25</sup>. The practice of peacebuilding implies therefore the creation of local self-sustainable structures of governance.

But the shift between the practices of peacebuilding defined as intervention— a projection of power outside—and the discourse on *local ownership* underlines the ambiguities of the export of western forms of governance. For example, in the aftermath of the relapse into violence

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<sup>23</sup> Michael Walzer defines the legitimacy of a State, according to its viability and communal support, that is to say an independent existence and the community’s capacity for self determination. M. Walzer, *Just and Unjust Wars: A moral argument with Historical Illustrations*, (New York, Basic Books, 1977), pp. 59.

<sup>24</sup> R. I. Rotberg, ‘Herausforderungen and die Weltordnung. Staatenbildung in Zeiten des Terrors’, *Internationale Politik*, Nr. 11, 58. Jahrgang, November 2003,

in Kosovo in March 2004, the administration of the UN Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) failed to really question itself openly. Human Rights Watch criticises strongly the lack of self-criticism from the international actors involved in Kosovo, who blamed only the Kosovar leadership<sup>26</sup>.

## 2 The Contradictions of the Peacebuilding Consensus

This new international intrusion in the governance of failed states, as in Haiti, Kosovo, Afghanistan or Iraq, is particularly problematic, especially in the context of post-decolonisation, in which the norms of sovereignty and self-determination are strongly advocated.<sup>27</sup> The ICISS attempted to define the responsibility to protect as a moral apolitical imperative. However, it seems obvious that peacebuilding interventions that imply state empowerment constitute more than a positive moral enterprise, even if in the aftermath of the end of the Cold War the notion of peace was particularly praised.<sup>28</sup>

### *The liberal Agenda*

Roland Paris argues that post-cold war peacebuilding missions convey a particular ‘model of domestic governance – liberal market democracy’ as a ‘modern rendering of the *mission civilisatrice*’<sup>29</sup>. The European colonial enterprise in Africa was justified by missionary arguments. The export of free trade in Africa was considered as a way of bringing civilisation. Generally, European colonisers had a paternalistic conception, reflected in a system of *treaties of*

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<sup>25</sup> The Responsibility to Protect, p. 45.

<sup>26</sup> Human Rights Watch Report, ‘Failure to Protect: UNMIK and KFOR’s Inability to Protect Serbs and Other Minorities’, July 2004. URL: [www.hrw.org/reports/2004/kosovo0704/6.htm](http://www.hrw.org/reports/2004/kosovo0704/6.htm) (15 August 2004)

<sup>27</sup> See N. C. Crawford, op cit, p. 407.

<sup>28</sup> See M. Mandelbaum, *The Ideas that conquered the world. Peace, Democracy and Free Markets in the Twenty-first Century*, (Oxford, Perseus Books Group, 2002).

<sup>29</sup> R. Paris, op. cit., p. 638.

*protection*. The colonisation existed for the own good of the Africans, unable to govern themselves.<sup>30</sup> Contemporary peacebuilding missions rest similarly on a liberal humanitarianism and an ethic of responsibility to protect, but do not build upon theories of racial superiorities and forced labour as in colonial European enterprise.

Peacebuilding missions build upon a set of liberal beliefs, that Michael Mandelbaum calls the ‘liberal Wilsonian Triad—peace, democracy and free markets’<sup>31</sup>. Since the end of the Cold War, the liberal consensus among peacebuilding agents expanded amazingly. The rapid development of European Integration, with the signature of the Maastricht Treaty in 1991, symbolises the success of democratic governance, free trade union and regional integration as a way to suppress war on the European Continent. The credibility of the European Model of conflict management after the end of the Second World War has been reinforced by the enlargement of the EU to 25 countries in May 2004. Robert Kagan argues that ‘the transmission of the European miracle to the rest of the world has become Europe’s new *mission civilisatrice*. (...) the Europeans have a new mission born of their own discovery of perpetual peace.’<sup>32</sup> In general, international organisations like the UN and the World Bank, large donors like the USA, UK, France or Japan, and even international NGOs to a certain extent, support the export of liberal peace.

Roland Paris distinguishes between four ways of transmission. The first channel of norms transmission is through the influence on the content of peace agreements, the second, through the advice of western experts, who convey western norms and governance forms. The third

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<sup>30</sup> N. C. Crawford , op cit, p. 247.

<sup>31</sup> M. Mandelbaum, op cit, p. 376.

<sup>32</sup> R. Kagan, ‘Power and Weakness’, *Policy Review*, No. 113, June 2002.  
URL: [www.policyreview.org/JUN02/kagan.html](http://www.policyreview.org/JUN02/kagan.html) (13 August 2004).

way of imposing liberal peace is more coercive, as it is through the system of political or economic aid conditionality. We focus, however, on the last mechanism of transmission, called ‘proxy governance’<sup>33</sup> or state-building missions, as in Cambodia, East Timor, Kosovo or Iraq. This is the form of transmission which is the most criticised, because it is the most direct way to influence war-torn societies. To describe this aspect of peacebuilding, Oliver Richmond uses the analogy with the ‘panopticon’ of Jeremy Bentham, a special architecture figure, which enables both individual and global surveillance: ‘peacebuilding entails reform, observation, and surveillance which endorse and simulate dominant forms of order’.<sup>34</sup>

### *The quest for legitimacy*

The ambiguity of proxy governance lies precisely in the difficult articulation between the global discourse on peacebuilding and the local practice of peacebuilding in countries more or less keen to accept liberal peace. In protracted social conflict, the first characteristic, the ‘communal content’ is especially problematic.<sup>35</sup> The issue of communal legitimacy lies at the core of conflicts in failed states, and consequently also of peacebuilding missions. The effect of the internationals on state-building depends largely on the perceived degree of legitimacy of the peacebuilding mission by the local population. The challenge for the international community is to address the issue of clashing transmitted norms, such as the right to self-determination and the concept of sovereignty as responsibility. Peacebuilding as state-building can appear as an impossible and controversial task, because it contradicts the essence of the liberal peace, based on the Wilsonian principle of self-determination and the decolonisation process. As Daniel

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<sup>33</sup> R. Paris, op. cit., p. 645.

<sup>34</sup> O. Richmond, op. cit., p. 140.

<sup>35</sup> H. Miall, O. Ramsbotham, T. Woodhouse, *Contemporary Conflict Resolution. The prevention, management and transformation of deadly conflicts*, (Cambridge, Polity Press, 1999), pp.71.

Warner argues, ‘state empowerment is not necessarily moral progress’<sup>36</sup> even if it is justified through the liberal peace.

Without denying its contradictions—especially the similarities with the colonial ruling, Michael Ignatieff all the same advocates international state-building, because if ‘nobody likes empires, (...) there are some problems for which they are only imperial solutions’<sup>37</sup>. But he doesn’t provide any alternative, other than a reinforcement of the American soft imperialism. He criticises the lack of American commitment, which he describes as ‘Nation-building lite’, especially in Afghanistan since the end of 2001.<sup>38</sup> The ICISS tried to find a balance between the principle of non-intervention and the necessity to intervene. It advocates that UN trusteeships should only be decided ‘on a very infrequent and ad hoc basis’<sup>39</sup> to avoid controversial long-lasting missions.

If peace builders and peace researchers don’t acknowledge the ambiguities inherent to peacebuilding missions, it is likely that, effectively, the international community will be accused of ‘arrogant paternalism’<sup>40</sup> similar to colonialism. Overall, the international community has to be aware that its intervention has an impact on a war-torn society, which is far more complex than the simple implementation of a consensual model of liberal peace. The diversity of opinions about the role of the international community and its legitimacy suggest the need to further foster an open debate about the future perspectives of peacebuilding. Peacebuilding can’t constitute a neutral activity, because it is a fundamentally political practice, which implies

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<sup>36</sup> D. Warner, ‘The Responsibility to Protect and Irresponsible, Cynical Engagement’, *Millenium: Journal of International Studies*, Vol. 32, No. 1, 2003), p. 117.

<sup>37</sup> See M. Ignatieff, *Empire Lite. Nation-building in Bosnia, Kosovo and Afghanistan*, (London, Vintage, 2003), p. 80.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid.

<sup>39</sup> The Responsibility to protect, p. 44.

the transmission of norms and therefore requires the redefinition of the international role in peacebuilding and its ‘responsibility to rebuild’<sup>41</sup>.

### **3 Peacebuilding as a Global Ethic of Responsibility?**

The process of globalisation facilitated the articulation of a global peace discourse, which prescribes the appropriate ways to answer to contemporary conflicts. At the same time, the process of globalisation accelerated the creation of new trans-national private or public actors and complicated peacebuilding practices. The dichotomy between an ideal global discourse, encouraging the dynamic of large-scale interventions, and the more and more controversial practice of peacebuilding, leads us to question the ethic of what we call a *spectacle-peacebuilding*<sup>42</sup>.

#### *The effects of globalisation*

The acceleration of the process of globalisation at the end of the Cold War constitutes a determinate element in the formation of a global peacebuilding consensus. The belief in a common humanity above the state enabled, in the 1990s, the rising of a global awareness of human rights abuses and the emergence of the concept of responsibility to protect. Globalisation played an important role in the institutionalisation of peacebuilding practice in the UN. Mary Kaldor argues, for example, that ‘the advent of globalisation gives rise to the possibility of global governance—not a world state—but a framework of rules involving overlapping compe-

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<sup>40</sup> N. C. Crawford, op. cit., p. 429.

<sup>41</sup> The Responsibility to Protect, pp. 39-47.

<sup>42</sup> Expression inspired from the second type of new warfare described by Mary Kaldor as ‘spectacle warfare’. See M. Kaldor<sup>b</sup>, *Global Civil Society. An answer to war*, (Cambridge, Polity Press, 2003), p. 123.

tencies among international organisations, local and regional government and states'<sup>43</sup>. Recent multifunctional peacebuilding missions can be considered as an example of global governance because they associate different military and civil type of actors, from international organisations to national donors and non-governmental organisations.<sup>44</sup>

The normative aspect of multilateralism, considered as a source of legitimacy for international intervention has been reinforced by globalisation. Compared to the strategic multilateralism of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century, peace support operations are 'organised according to and in defence of "generalized principles" of international responsibility and the use of military force'<sup>45</sup>. The UN plays an important role in the institutionalisation of the peacebuilding consensus and is considered as a source of legitimacy, precisely because of its inherent multilateral character. The ICISS defines the UN as a moral institution with comparative advantages like 'universal membership, political legitimacy, administrative impartiality, technical expertise, convening and mobilising power, and dedication of its staff'<sup>46</sup>. The positive moral connotation of the global over the national is also reflected in the concept of *international community*, which suggests a trans-national solidarity and identity.

This globalist idealism is particularly embodied by the *global civil society*, which emerged after 1989. Mary Kaldor explains that 'a new form of politics, which we call civil society, is both an outcome and an agent of global interconnectedness'<sup>47</sup>. The emergence of a global civil society originates from the emancipation movements of the 80s in Eastern Europe and in Latin

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<sup>43</sup> M. Kaldor<sup>b</sup>, op cit, p. 110.

<sup>44</sup> The organisation of the UNMIK in Kosovo since June 1999 is a good example of proxy-governance involving the UN, the EU, the OSCE and a large number of NGO's.

<sup>45</sup> M. Finnemore, 'Constructing Norms of Humanitarian Intervention, in: P. Katzenstein (ed.), *The culture of national security. Norms and Identity in World Politics*, (New York, Columbia University Press, 1996), p. 182.

<sup>46</sup> The responsibility to protect, p. 52.

America against communist or military dictatorships accused of oppressing the private sphere. This phenomenon spilled over to the European Pacifist Movements and American Human Rights groups to form ‘horizontal trans-national global networks, both civil and uncivil’<sup>48</sup>. This dichotomy between the *civil* and the *uncivil* underlines the new border between movements sharing a common liberal vision of peace and trans-national organisations, like Al Qaida, who preach a culture of violence.

Whereas the development of civil society is often described as the manifestation of a crisis of the Westphalian State, Roland Paris argues, on the contrary, that the myriad of transnational NGOs contributes to the diffusion of the Western model of governance.<sup>49</sup> The Westphalian State is, however, not anymore considered as the holder of ‘a relation of men dominating men, a relation supported by means of legitimate violence’<sup>50</sup> but rather as an incarnation of democratic peace. Peace isn’t anymore a synonym for inter-state negative peace—the absence of inter-state war—but associated with respect for human rights: ‘(...) the coming together of peace and human rights gave rise to the new humanitarian discourse that is challenging the geopolitical discourse of the centralized war-making state’<sup>51</sup>.

The new wave of post-Cold War interventionism led to intense discussions about the legitimacy of the use of force for the implementation of peace and human rights, but less about the period after the military intervention. Oliver Richmond argues that it is the consequence of the predominance of a peacebuilding consensus which provides a useful source of legitimacy for long-term and large-scale interventions. At this stage of the analysis, it is important to make a

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<sup>47</sup> M. Kaldor<sup>b</sup>, op cit, p. 2.

<sup>48</sup> M. Kaldor<sup>b</sup>, op cit, p. 6.

<sup>49</sup> R. Paris, op cit, p. 654.

<sup>50</sup> M. Weber, *Politics as a vocation*, (Philadelphia, Fortress Press, 1972<sup>3</sup>), p. 2.

<sup>51</sup> M. Kaldor<sup>b</sup>, op cit, p. 77.



distinction between peacebuilding as dominant or dominating discourse, as the implications are different.

*From a dominant to a dominating discourse*

The contemporary peacebuilding approach is often accused of being ‘an attempt to generate a universal blueprint and mechanisms for peace implying a universalist view of international society’<sup>52</sup>. The main accounts criticising the peacebuilding consensus draw upon neo-colonial arguments. The moral ground of peacebuilding discourse would be only a cover for the ‘darker dynamics of hegemony’<sup>53</sup>.

Vivienne Jabri, for example, argues that the language is not simply a neutral way of communication because it has social and political implications. The structures of signification are interrelated to structures of legitimisation and domination. She distinguishes three main levels of reproduction for dominant modes of discourse: the Universalist argument, the denial of contradictions and the naturalisation of the present.<sup>54</sup> According to this definition, the peacebuilding discourse can be considered as a dominant discourse because it conveys indeed universalist norms, such as democracy or liberal economy. Secondly, as we analysed, it rests upon clashing principles—the responsibility to protect and the principle of self-determination. And finally, some authors, like Roland Paris, argue that it encourages the preservation of the Westphalian state system and prevents the development of alternative structures of governance which would maybe fit in better with the new international environment.<sup>55</sup>

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<sup>52</sup> O. Richmond, op cit, p. 141.

<sup>53</sup> O. Richmond, op cit, p. 132.

<sup>54</sup> V. Jabri, *Discourses on violence: conflict analysis reconsidered*, (Manchester, Manchester University Press, 1995), pp. 94-97.

<sup>55</sup> See R. Paris, op cit, p. 654.

Peacebuilding can be defined therefore as a dominant norm. Neta Crawford distinguishes between ‘behavioural norms’, defined as dominant practices with or without ethical legitimisation, and ‘normative beliefs’ as a set of prescriptive ideas about what is good and right to do. Both behavioural norms and normative belief generate expectations as well as regulate and legitimate international practices.<sup>56</sup> The ambiguity of the concept of peacebuilding stems precisely from the confusion between peacebuilding as a behavioural norm and peacebuilding as a set of normative beliefs. The majority of accounts in peace research ignore the normative beliefs, whereas, for example, the support for elections, human rights monitoring and promotion, the reform of the security and economic sector, all build upon liberal normative beliefs. This can undermine the legitimacy of peacebuilding missions, because it leaves out the ambiguities of multilateralism.

### *The ‘neocolonial’ argument*

Multilateral coalitions, even under a UN mandate, are not automatically legitimated. Recent international interventions in Kosovo, East Timor, Afghanistan or Iraq, led many analysts to draw historical parallels with the colonial enterprise. Thus, the peacebuilding consensus wouldn’t constitute simply a dominant discourse, but a dominating or hegemonic discourse. Robert Fisk, who will publish *The Great War for civilisation: the conquest for the Middle East* in early 2005, warns the international community, and especially Great Britain and the United States, against historical amnesia. In 1917, when Great Britain conducted its Mesopotamian Campaign, it also used a humanitarian rhetoric filled with:

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<sup>56</sup> N. C. Crawford, op cit, p. 88.

*'noble aspirations and presentiments of future tragedy; with the false promises of the world's greatest empire, commitments and good intentions; and with words of honour that were to be repeated in the same city of Baghdad by the next great empire'*<sup>57</sup>

The parallel between peacebuilding and neo-imperialism is also drawn by Michael Ignatieff. He argues that 'in the new humanitarian empire, power is exercised as a condominium with Washington in the lead, and London, Paris, Berlin and Tokyo following reluctantly behind'<sup>58</sup>. According to him, especially the United States tries to maintain an international order based on the notion of nation state and free trade, which serves its own national interests. But as mentioned previously, Michael Ignatieff doesn't criticise the liberal bias of nation-building imperial missions, but the weakness and inconsistency of the American *Empire Lite*.

The superficial commitment of the actors involved in humanitarian intervention is also denounced by the realist Mandelbaum, who argues that 'the post-Cold War interventions were on the whole noble but half-hearted; they were half hearted because they were noble'<sup>59</sup>. Humanitarian peace movements tend to criticise the key role assigned to nation states, considered precisely to be the root cause of the failure of peacebuilding missions.<sup>60</sup> If Ignatieff acknowledges the existence of colonial continuities like the asymmetric relationship between locals and internationals, he seems not to question the export of the Western model of governance. Oliver Richmond argues that 'tensions continue to arise as approaches to dealing with conflict are rooted in territorially sovereign frameworks that reproduce discourses of majoritarianism and exclusive national identities'<sup>61</sup> The terrorist attacks of 11 September 2001 highlighted the

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<sup>57</sup> R. Fisk, 'Iraq 1917. How we ignored the lessons of history', *The Independent*, Review, Thursday 17 June 2004, p. 2.

<sup>58</sup> M. Ignatieff, *Empire Lite. Nation-Building in Bosnia, Kosovo, and Afghanistan*, (London, Vintage, 2003), p. 17.

<sup>59</sup> M. Mandelbaum, op cit, p. 195.

<sup>60</sup> M. Kaldor<sup>a</sup>, 'A Decade of humanitarian intervention: the role of global civil society', in: H. Anheier, M. Glasius, M. Kaldor (eds.), *Global Civil Society 2001*, (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2001), p. 130-31.

<sup>61</sup> O. Richmond, op cit, p. 146.

blurry distinction between a civil peaceful world and the uncivil world of failed states—between internationals and locals.

The peacebuilding consensus proved to be inadequate in putting an end to the artificial division between a Western core and a non-Western periphery. The negative effects of globalisation, such as the growing economical, political and social fragmentation, cannot be addressed with a hegemonic peacebuilding discourse, which may actually worsen conflicts. Neta Crawford argues that decolonisation, defined as ‘the end of formal political, economic, and military control of colonised territory by another power’ is a ‘fiction or at least an unfinished program’<sup>62</sup>. Colonisation would have been replaced by more subtle forms of neo-colonial exploitation, even if the United States—major global power and strong advocates of decolonisation—denies it.<sup>63</sup> She defines neo-colonialism as ‘the informal penetration and control of weaker states by great powers and multinational corporations based on the formal colonial powers’<sup>64</sup>. In this sense, peacebuilding missions can be considered to a certain extent as neo-colonial enterprises, as they impose a liberal agenda to bring peace, which sometimes has nothing to do with the local dynamic of conflicts.

Neta Crawford suggests the transformation of the responsibility to protect in ‘an ethic of care’ which could lessen the gap between the population designated as victim and the international community, often accused of ‘arrogant paternalism’<sup>65</sup>. Granting self-determination to Africans has been only one aspect of decolonisation. There is a need to achieve *positive decolonisation*, indispensable for the realisation of positive peace. The scholar Adebayo Adedeji claims,

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<sup>62</sup> N. C. Crawford, op cit , pp. 136-37.

<sup>63</sup> M. Ignatieff, op cit, p. 122.

<sup>64</sup> N. C. Crawford, op cit, p. 397.

<sup>65</sup> N. C. Crawford, op cit, p. 429-30.

that ‘the real positive decolonisation will only arrive when Africans are effective participants in the world economy and have commensurate share in global power’<sup>66</sup>. The international community’s promotion of a particular model of sustainable development, based on the liberal market economy and the implementation of the ethic of care, is not yet fulfilled because of the high complexity of peacebuilding, and in particular of the multitude of actors involved.

#### **4 Spectacle Peacebuilding?**

The international community has been often criticised for its lack of long-term commitment to peacebuilding missions, and for merely doing conflict management and not transformation. Krishna Kumar argues that the international actors often only have ‘a compilation of sectoral targets and plans without an overarching conceptual foundation’ and often with ‘the characteristics of quick fixes’<sup>67</sup>. At the end of the 1990s we observed the emergence of spectacle peacebuilding, a peacebuilding which privileges the ‘power of awe’<sup>68</sup>. The terrorist attacks of 11<sup>th</sup> September 2001, broadcast live by the media all over the world, can be interpreted as a tragic symbolic distortion of what Bernard Kouchner calls ‘la loi du tapage’<sup>69</sup>, or the strategic use of mass media to convey a political message or arouse the attention of public opinion on a particular humanitarian issue.

One of the main features of globalisation after 1989 is indeed the acceleration of the development of mass communication and the expansion of its geographical scope. Trans-national networks, such as Al Qaida or other extremist, nationalistic or fundamentalist movements, took

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<sup>66</sup> N. C. Crawford, op cit, p. 137.

<sup>67</sup> K. Kumar, ‘The nature and Focus of International Assistance for Rebuilding War-Torn Societies’, in : K. Kumar (ed), *Rebuilding Societies After Civil War. Critical Roles for International Assistance*, (London, Lynne Rienner Publishers, 1997), p. 35.

<sup>68</sup> M. Ignatieff, op cit, p.

<sup>69</sup> ‘The law of uproar’. Quoted in E. Dachy, ‘L’action humanitaire: réalité et représentations’, *Les Temps modernes*, No. 627, April-May-June 2004, p. 24.

advantage, like international NGOs, of new communication technologies. In the American *National Strategy for Combating Terrorism*, the structure of terror is described as a network which operates on three levels: national, regional and global, and Al Qaida itself as a multinational organisation. ‘The terrorist threat is a flexible, trans-national network structure, enabled by modern technology and characterized by loose inter-connectivity both within and between groups.’<sup>70</sup>

But the answer of the Bush administration to the new global terrorist threat has been to launch a *war on terror*, which built upon similar symbolic discursive practices as Al Qaida, and reinforced the traditional conception of a war-making state. In his State of the Union Address in January 2003, President George W. Bush justified the war in these terms: ‘The war goes on and we are winning.(...) We seek peace. We strive for Peace. And sometimes peace must be defended. A future lived at the mercy of terrible threats, is not peace at all.’<sup>71</sup> Mary Kaldor defines this new type of warfare as *spectacle war* or ‘casualty-free war’, waged from a distance using high technology, as the two wars in Iraq, and the ones in Kosovo and Afghanistan. She describes it as an ideology, a form of political legitimisation to thwart the weakening of national mobilisation in global world.<sup>72</sup>

If we consider, as Oliver Ramsbotham argues, that the greatest challenge of peacebuilding is to address the phenomenon of *Clausewitz in reverse*—the fact that ‘post-war politics is a continuation of the conflict, albeit transmuted into non-military mode’<sup>73</sup>—there is a risk of the development of *spectacle peacebuilding* as continuation of *spectacle war*. The recent peacebuild-

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<sup>70</sup> National Strategy to combat Terrorism. The Nature of the Terrorist Threat today. URL: [www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2003/02/counter\\_terrorism/threat.pdf](http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2003/02/counter_terrorism/threat.pdf) (22 August 2004).

<sup>71</sup> G. W. Bush, ‘State of the Union Address’, Washington, Tuesday 28 January 2003. URL: [www.washingtonpost.com/wp-srv/onpolitics/transcripts/bushtext\\_012803.html](http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-srv/onpolitics/transcripts/bushtext_012803.html) (22 August 2004).

<sup>72</sup> See M. Kaldor<sup>a</sup>, op cit, pp. 123.

ing missions in Bosnia, Kosovo, Afghanistan and Iraq, all originated in a spectacle-war conducted by multinational coalitions. The intense presence of the media during the war and during peacebuilding missions creates a pressure, which increases the gap between the local population and international agents of intervention. David Campbell's article about the Bosnian conflict insists on the perverse consequences of the centrality of the media in conflict management. He explains that the core of the problems lies in the universalisation of what Jean Baudrillard calls 'la victimalité assortie'<sup>74</sup>.

The ethic of responsibility to help the victims of failed states would be in fact nothing else than an ethic of compassion, which nourishes arrogance and indifference and sharpens the distinction between us and *other*, between a western core and non-western periphery. In contrast to the ethic of care, the ethic of compassion lasts only for a short time. It is shaped by the media, which try to arouse the interest of public opinion by sensational staging of violence and peace. The perceived legitimacy of peacebuilding missions appears really fragile and the local population is often disappointed by the so-called 'one size fits all' mentality, which doesn't take into account the specifics of each war-torn society. Robert Rotberg insists on the advantage of concrete actions to gain the support of the local population, over superficial Advertisement and Public Relations.<sup>75</sup>

### *The Impact of September 11*

It is difficult to assess the impact of September 11 on the peacebuilding consensus and on the involvement of major international actors. Since 2001, the United States seems to endorse

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<sup>73</sup> O. Ramsbotham, op. cit., p. 172.

<sup>74</sup> Quoted in D. Campbell, 'Violence, Justice and Identity in the Bosnian Conflict', in: D. Campbell (ed), *National Deconstruction: Violence, Identity and Justice in Bosnia*, (London, Minneapolis, 1993), pp. 21.

the ethic of responsibility, but on the other hand a merely unilateral ethic of compassion. Some scholars like Andrew Natsios argue that the answer to complex emergencies can only be efficient if there is enough American political will and a strong American leadership, but that ‘US unilateralism will fail’<sup>76</sup>. Although the United States was determined to launch a military campaign in Iraq in March 2003 without the agreement of the UN Security Council, by October 2003, they returned to the UN to obtain the resolution they needed to legitimate the post-war reconstruction in Iraq. The adoption of Resolution 1483 on 22 May 2003<sup>77</sup> proved, eventually, that the responsibility to protect encouraged the Security Council members to find a consensus. Especially France, which refused to participate to the war in Iraq and was considered as the leader of the pacifist opposition, but which finally gave its vote to the Resolution.

Despite the apparent clash between the United States and France on the use of force in Iraq, Marie-Hélène Aubert, spokesman of the French Green Party, argues that both countries conduct similar foreign policies which build upon the defence of universal human rights and strategic national interests at the same time. The two countries would instrumentalise public opinion through the media to justify their foreign policy, but without really caring about the public points of view.<sup>78</sup> This debate about the transatlantic divorce overshadowed the necessity to discuss the peacebuilding strategies in Iraq. In the context of post-September 11, there is a fear about the development of a strategic spectacle-peacebuilding which would distort the ethic of care into an ethic of compassion. The integration of peacebuilding as *nation building* in the

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<sup>75</sup> R. I. Rotberg, ‘Herausforderungen an die Weltordnung. Staatenbildung in Zeiten des Terrors’, *Internationale Politik*, No. 11, Nov 2003, p. 4.

<sup>76</sup> A. S. Natsios, *US Foreign Policy and the four horsemen of the Apocalypse. Humanitarian Relief in Complex Emergencies*, The Washington Papers/170, Center for strategic and international Studies, (Westport, Praeger Publishers, 1997), p. 161.

<sup>77</sup> See Res/Sec/1483. URL: [www.globalpolicy.org/security/issues/iraq/document/2003/052\\_2resolution.htm](http://www.globalpolicy.org/security/issues/iraq/document/2003/052_2resolution.htm) (16 August 2004).



anti-terror strategy of the Bush administration led both to the reinforcement of the peacebuilding consensus and to the militarisation of peacebuilding.

The American involvement in Afghanistan and Iraq shows that there is no real commitment to peacebuilding, except for the increase of military budget. ‘Twelve years of reluctant nation-building and the US still hadn’t spawned an effective civilian corps of aid workers, agronomists, teachers, engineers—a real peace corps—to take charge of post-war reconstruction in Afghanistan or anywhere else’<sup>79</sup> assesses Dana Priest. Whereas the proliferation of the terrorist threat and of protracted social conflicts should have fostered a debate on peacebuilding beyond the peacebuilding consensus, the Bush administration underestimated the difficulty of peacebuilding in Afghanistan and Iraq and focussed essentially on the development of military capabilities. The United States spent during the fiscal year 2004 about 466 billion dollars, which represents half of global military expenditure.<sup>80</sup>

The impact of September 11 on the ethic of peacebuilding is controversial, as the recent new commitment of the United States to their ‘responsibility to protect’ stems more from their military leadership than any form of moral legitimacy. The missions in Afghanistan and Iraq, more than Kosovo or Bosnia, build merely upon spectacle peacebuilding and a caricature of the peacebuilding consensus, reduced to quick fix and superficial commitment.

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<sup>78</sup> M-H. Aubert, ‘La France est-elle véritablement une “colombe” ?’, in : P. Boniface (ed), ‘Numéro Spécial : Après la guerre d’Irak : L’image de la France dans le monde’, *La revue internationale et stratégique*, No. 53, Spring 2004, p. 31.

<sup>79</sup> D. Priest, *Waging War and Keeping Peace with America’s military*, (London, W.W. Norton & Company, 2003), p. 390.

<sup>80</sup> See GlobalSecurity.org, World Wide Military Expenditures. URL: <http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/world/spending.htm> (22 December 2004).

## **Conclusion**

The global discourse on peacebuilding is full of contradictions and ambiguities. The traditional accounts on peacebuilding try to address this crisis of legitimacy experienced by international actors through instrumental discourses, focusing on the development of new flexible tools, and insist on multilateralism and the participation of the global civil society as source of legitimacy. But a reflexive approach is more adequate to articulate alternative understandings of peacebuilding because it acknowledges its normative nature.

The new focus on state-building sharpened the public mistrust of international humanitarian interventions, often considered as imperial enterprises. Historically, peacebuilding missions represent, however, more than simply another challenge to the non-intervention principle formulated since the Treaty of Westphalia. Compared to the aggressive colonial humanitarianism of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, peacebuilding missions are the symbol of a recent humanitarian imperative, reinforced since the end of the Cold War. In the context of globalisation and decolonisation, the rise of a global awareness of common humanity led both to the reinforcement of the notion of sovereignty, granted now to all people, who have the right to self-determination, and a change of its nature toward sovereignty as responsibility.

The international community justifies peacebuilding missions as a legitimate expression of the duty to protect people living in failed states that do not take on their responsibility to provide economic well-being, security, justice and good-governance to their people. This ethic of responsibility has, however, complex implications and it raises again the issue of controlling the consequences of the expansion of international intervention. Too often the discourse on peacebuilding remains in the framework of a peacebuilding consensus, which promotes the ex-

portation of liberal peace without acknowledging its inherent contradictions. If the liberal model enabled Europe to be liberated from the ghost of war, the transmission of liberal values to war-torn societies provides no automatic guarantee of sustainable peace and entails false promises and risks of disillusion.

The international community has in a reflexive process to recognise its own responsibility in protracted conflicts and the shortcomings of the peacebuilding consensus. The global dominant discourse on peacebuilding can easily be perceived as hegemonic discourse, if peacebuilding becomes spectacle-peacebuilding. The development of mass media and the process of globalisation reinforced the peacebuilding consensus by limiting the debate to the practice of peacebuilding and not to its normative aspect. Especially since September 11, a symbol of the crisis of legitimacy of the Western world, the United States hasn't seized the opportunity to rethink the role of peacebuilding in international relations and has started large-scale operations in Afghanistan and Iraq without really measuring the impact of international intervention on war-torn societies, which can be far more negative than imagined.

Michael Ignatieff regrets that 'Nation-building could be an exercise in solidarity between rich and poor, the possessors and the dispossessed. [But] Too often, it is an exercise in mutual betrayal'<sup>81</sup> This relational aspect of peacebuilding structured around the transmission of liberal norms often reveals a hegemonic agenda—often even unconsciously—which because of an ethic of *good intentions* often compromises the success of the operations. In Spectacle peacebuilding, local populations in war-torn societies are considered as passive recipients of an international peace expertise. Whereas the ethic of responsibility draws an artificial line between the

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<sup>81</sup> M. Ignatieff, op cit, p. 25.

international actors and the population to protect; the ethic of care suggested by Neta Crawford<sup>82</sup> is an attempt to end asymmetric relations and opens space for dialogue.

One way of contributing to a new relationship between rich and poor, between the core and the periphery, between humanitarian actors and victims, peace builders and peace researchers, is to break the peacebuilding consensus based on dual categories and launch a reflexive debate on our global responsibilities.

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<sup>82</sup> N. C. Crawford, *Argument and Change in World Politics. Ethics, Decolonization, and Humanitarian Intervention*, (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2002), p. 429-300.

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