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# Beyond Failed States and Ungoverned Spaces: Hybrid Political Orders in the Post-Conflict Landscape

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## **Introduction: The Emergent Lens of Hybridity**

Dichotomies abound within discussions on peacebuilding. Following the onset of the ‘post-conflict moment’ (Moore 2000), analysts’ and practitioners’ attentions are conventionally turned to issues of governance, or more specifically, what kinds (and what degrees) of governance mechanisms are desirable in the given post-war landscape. And so follows a multiplicity of debates and proposed strategies rooted in dualistic organising concepts: formal/informal; state/non-state; traditional/modern; local/Western; legitimate/illegitimate. Since discourse cannot be untangled from practice (Hall 2001), but rather informs and permeates conventional understandings and the way politics is practised, we cannot treat these discussions as having no real-world impact. Policies – regardless of what course of action they intend to direct and to what ends – based on shaky empirical and theoretical foundations will invariably miss the mark at best and, at worst, exacerbate the very problems they purport to alleviate.

The concept of hybrid political orders has recently been developed by a group of researchers from the Australian Centre for Peace and Conflict, based on field research in several South Pacific countries. In their own words, ‘The concept [...] overcomes the notion of the state as being the superior and ultimate form of political order per se and frees the debate from its current state-centric bias’ (Boege *et al.* 2009a, p.88). While it could be argued that the concept is neither entirely novel nor analytically groundbreaking – indeed, it draws upon,

and shares various similarities with, neopatrimonialism, ‘twilight’ institutions (Lund 2006), ‘governance without government’ (Menkhaus 2006) and institutional multiplicity – it brings with it the potential to look beyond conventional perspectives on state collapse, state failure and state-building, and towards a greater appreciation of the empirical political realities of countries troubled by or emerging from conflict. Further, the concept also offers a means through which to escape deterministic and constraining analytical binaries, such as those mentioned above.

Interestingly, for a concept which has effectively surfaced over the last few years or so, there already exists a pool of critical literature – albeit a small one – largely thanks to a recent Berghof Handbook Dialogue issue dedicated to an exploration of hybrid political orders under the broad rubric of ‘challenging the discourse on state failure’ (Fischer & Schmelzle 2009). In addition, we have already begun to see the infusion of the concept, or at least the term, into parts of the grey literature and various working papers (for example, Beall & Ngonyama 2009 on South Africa; Cammack *et al.* 2009 on Malawi) – some more conflict-related than others – while an Overseas Development Institute (2009) approach paper on capacity development in fragile states last year cited hybrid political orders as being a key consideration and priority area for capacity development.

Given its novelty, it is perhaps unsurprising that the existing literature on hybrid political orders has tended to focus on a relatively small group of countries, notably including Somalia and East Timor. This paper intends to contribute to this limited yet growing body of literature by using a hybrid political order perspective to explore post-conflict political and institutional arrangements in Mozambique, and to consider whether such an approach does, in fact, enrich our understandings of post-conflict governance mechanisms and

contemporary peacebuilding. After providing a brief background note on war and peace in Mozambique, a discussion of hybrid political orders is grounded in a critique of the discursive practices surrounding failed states and ungoverned spaces, the latter of which is often overlooked in the literature. Through an analysis of the Mozambican situation, I will then argue two key points. Firstly, that the concept of hybrid political orders blurs the lines between many of the aforementioned dichotomies, in particular state/non-state and traditional/modern – in fact, such a perspective enables us to locate and elucidate the various connections that exist between supposedly non-state institutions and a central authority. And secondly, that whilst often presented so in the literature, overlapping layers of institutions – the ‘stuff’ of hybrid political orders – do not necessarily exist in competition with one another – a rejection of this deterministic model allows us to understand the diverse ways through which multiple institutions are locked in a continual process of (re)negotiation and transformation. The paper ends by drawing an important distinction between hybrid political orders as an *analytical* tool for helping us better understand post-conflict landscapes, and hybrid political orders as a *practical* tool for peacebuilding engagement. It is suggested that uncritically institutionalising the concept’s practical messages and implications into peacebuilding praxis would not only be short-sighted, but also potentially very risky: overcoming a romanticisation of the ‘local’ and recognising the often adverse motives and actions of ostensibly auspicious local actors are requisite for both robust analysis and good politics.

## **The Post-Conflict ‘Poster Child’: A Very Brief History of War and Peace in Mozambique**

According to Hanlon (2007), Mozambique suffered three wars over three decades. The first (1964–74) can be classified as a liberation struggle led by the country’s sole liberation movement, Frelimo, against Portuguese colonists, the result of which was the granting of Mozambique’s formal independence in 1975. The second war took place between 1976 and 1980 when Zimbabwe (then Rhodesia), ruled by a white minority government and feeling threatened by Frelimo’s Marxist-Leninist politics, aided the formation of and sustained a brutal counter-revolutionary movement named Renamo – with tacit backing from a number of Western (capitalist) countries (Moran & Pitcher 2004, p.510). Following Zimbabwe’s independence in 1980, the South African government, still resolutely committed to its apartheid vision, willingly assumed responsibility for the financing and arming of Renamo. And with Reagan’s election to US president in November 1980, and the subsequent entrenchment of a vehemently anti-communist US foreign policy, Mozambique’s third and final war took the shape of a protracted proxy conflict which ran into the early 1990s.

It is worth pointing out at this stage that despite intermittent moments of relative peace, even a cursory investigation of the situation tells us these three wars were closely interlinked; Mozambique did not experience three distinct and unrelated conflicts, but a drawn-out condition of spatially heterogeneous instability and political violence, shaped and mediated by various local, national and international forces and phenomena. Limited space here restricts a comprehensive overview of the multiplicity of complex causes that contributed to war. However, it is worth mentioning that the key drivers of conflict were by no means exclusively external. As an example, poorly implemented Frelimo national policies and resulting disenchantment among local

chiefs and communities, at least in central and northern Mozambique, helped bolster support for Renamo, and thus constituted a key factor in generating the conditions for political violence (Moran & Pitcher 2004, p.510).

Following the end of the Cold War, a peace accord was signed between Frelimo and Renamo on 4 October 1992, and elections held two years later which Frelimo convincingly won. But despite a ‘formal’ end to the fighting, Mozambique faced an abundance of daunting post-conflict challenges: three decades of war had left the country economically ravaged and politically fragile. An estimated 1 million people (7% of the population) had died, 5 million others had been forcibly displaced, 60% of all primary schools had been destroyed or closed, and the economic damage totalled \$20 billion (Hanlon 1996). Furthermore, UNICEF (1989) estimated that as a result of the war, Mozambique’s GDP was half of what it should have been.

A range of actors, domestic and international, have since been involved in facilitating Mozambique’s democratic transition to stability and sustained economic growth. Analysts have written variously about the transformative roles played by, *inter alia*, religion (Haynes 2009), community policing (Kyed 2009), and the re-establishment of traditional<sup>1</sup> authority (Buur & Kyed 2006). But while the country ‘has seen significant political maturity and gains in stability’ (Groelsema *et al.* 2009, p.vi), as well as an ‘impressive [economic] recovery’ (Jones 2006, p.6) since 1992 – indeed, it has been described by Manning (2003, p.32) as ‘one of the most successful cases of negotiated civil war

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<sup>1</sup> A brief caveat: the term ‘traditional’ often implies – unintentionally or otherwise – something which is fixed and unchanging. As culture is not a static phenomenon, but something which is in a constant state of flux, it is important to recognise that ‘traditional’ structures and discourses are as susceptible to change as anything else. In addition, there is a risk of ‘traditional’ being viewed as synonymous with developing countries. ‘Tradition’ or custom are universally applicable idioms, and, thus, as prevalent within the Global North as they are in the Global South.

settlement in the 1990s', and by Moran and Pitcher (2004) as the 'post-conflict poster child' – Mozambique presents us with an intriguing set of issues with regard to its post-conflict political community and institutional arrangement. Robust analyses of Mozambique's peacebuilding experience, and more specifically its various forms of post-war governance, are sometimes obscured by dominant discourses of failed states and, increasingly, ungoverned spaces. I will now show that framing post-conflict spaces in this way arguably conceals more than it reveals in terms of empirical political realities, and that an alternative conceptualisation of so-called 'failed states' is called for.

### **Situating Hybrid Political Orders: Failed States, Ungoverned Spaces and Peacebuilding**

The 2002 US National Security Strategy (NSS) is widely cited in discussions on contemporary paradigm shifts within international relations. It asserts explicitly that 'America is now threatened less by conquering states than [...] by failing ones' (NSS 2002, p.1), an idea which has permeated mainstream thinking on global terrorism and security, not just in the United States, but around the world. The Crisis States Research Centre defines a failed state as a condition of state collapse, whereby the state can no longer perform its basic security and development functions and has no effective control over its territory and borders (Di John 2008, p.9-10). Within the policy community state failure is commonly understood 'as a challenge to both development and security', and subsequently, 'statebuilding in regions of fragile statehood is presented as a central task of contemporary policies' (Boege *et al.* 2009b, p.13).

There are very clear and observable links here with conventional notions of peacebuilding insofar as many commentators conceptualise, and many practitioners practise, 'peacebuilding as

statebuilding’ (Manning 2003; Barnett & Zurcher 2009). According to Ottaway (2003, p.245), despite its novelty (from a historical perspective), the practice of reconstructing failed or collapsed states is now seen as very much a norm of peacebuilding operations: ‘collapsed states are now expected to rise again, as soon as possible, with international support. They are also expected to rise as democratic states’. Great expectations indeed, especially given that their Western European counterparts – the archetypal modern states – are the culmination of centuries of historical process and change.

Ottaway (2003, p.246-247) goes on to argue that, following Jackson (1990), the standardised donor’s model of state reconstruction necessitates a transition from the collapsed *de jure*<sup>2</sup> state to the Weberian *de facto*<sup>3</sup> state. That is, a state characterised by strong, stable and democratic institutions, an effective administrative apparatus and the rule of law. Thus, external statebuilders focus on establishing or reforming various (so-called) institutions linked closely to the state, such as electoral systems, executive financial agencies, parliament, a judiciary, and the military and police (Ottaway 2003, p.248). However, a key distinction must be made here between *institutions* and *organisations*. Douglass North (1995, p.23) contrasts the two: whereas organisations can be understood as bodies or ‘groups of individuals bound by a common purpose to achieve objectives’, institutions are somewhat more ambiguous and as such trickier to define. According to North (1995, p.23), they are the ‘humanly devised constraints that structure human interaction [...] composed of formal rules [...] [and]

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<sup>2</sup> A state whose existence, sovereignty and legitimacy are recognised by the international community, regardless of whether there is a government capable of effectively controlling its territory.

<sup>3</sup> A state in which an effective government exists. Ottaway (2003, p.247) makes a distinction between a *de facto* state which enjoys international recognition (i.e. it is both *de facto* and *de jure* – a Weberian state), and a *de facto* state which has weak institutions and no international recognition, but where power is enforced (i.e. a ‘raw power state’).



informal constraints’ – in other words, the ‘rules of the game’. This distinction is supported by Ottaway (2003), who argues that, in reality, international actors implant within collapsed states a standardised set of organisations based around liberal democratic principles – such as those mentioned above – rather than genuine institutions (which arguably cannot be externally ‘introduced’ in any case).

Thus, organisations cannot simply be replicated from one context to another and expected to function as planned; they are mediated and shaped by the multiplicity of institutions within a given society, and as such take on locally contingent forms (see, for example, Richmond & Franks 2007 on ‘virtual peace’ in Cambodia). Moreover, on occasions, newly introduced organisations can be ineffectual, or even exacerbate existing problems. For example, as part of security sector reform (SSR) efforts in Mozambique, community policing (*policiamiento comunitario*) was developed as a way to tackle violent post-conflict crime and societal disorder. Despite some success in terms of cutting down statistical crime rates, Kyed (2009, p.368-369) argues that community policing – or more specifically the way in which ‘historically embedded paramilitary policing cultures’ have mutated the local realities of community policing – has resulted in ‘reconfigured forms of symbolic and physical violence’, with police having to resort to illegal activities and coercion in order to enforce their power. Such an example illuminates not only the distinction between (implemented) organisations and (embedded) institutions, but also the way in which any given rule or law imposed by an organisation (or what is commonly referred to as a ‘formal institution’) is exposed to localised processes of ‘unmaking’ and ‘remaking’ (Moore 1978/2000) – a renegotiation which occurs arguably regardless of the context.

We are already starting to notice the different kinds of institutions that at once shape – and manipulate – the nature of

governance within a country, whilst simultaneously constituting visible elements of its (post-conflict) political community. But before we move on to a more in-depth consideration of hybrid political orders, it is first necessary to discuss another increasingly prevalent discourse; one which is closely linked to, and in many ways an evolution of, failed states – ungoverned spaces.

Discussions of ungoverned spaces are often relegated in favour of failed states, despite their increasing resonance and legitimacy in international relations. This criticism applies also to the existing (albeit emerging) literature on hybrid political orders. So-called ungoverned spaces – ‘geographic areas where governments do not exercise effective control’ (Jacoby 2004, p.4; see also Clunan and Trinkunas 2010) – are being increasingly recognised as potential safe havens for terrorists, and thus sites which pose a considerable threat to homeland security and overseas strategic interests. Numerous territories have been identified (read: labelled) as ungoverned spaces over the past few years: the Pakistani-Afghan border region (Chalk 2007), the north Caucasus (Moroney & Karasik 2007) and the Sahel region (Whelan 2005) to name but a few. According to a recent RAND Corporation report, such areas, in addition to ‘breeding’ terrorism, ‘generate all manner of security problems, such as civil conflict and humanitarian crises, arms and drug smuggling, piracy, and refugee flows’ (Rabasa *et al.* 2007, p.iii).

Analysts are also starting to recognise parts of Mozambique as apparently ungoverned space. For example, Shillinger (2007) claims that northern Mozambique fits almost all the necessary criteria, including: long borders; large unpatrolled waters; substantial physical distance from the capital, Maputo; a sizeable Muslim population; and historic links with the ‘Muslim world’. His solution: ‘strengthen the

reach and character of the Mozambican government' (Shillinger 2007, p.9).

There is, in particular, one central and inescapable problem with the ungoverned spaces discourse. As the term unequivocally denotes, these are spaces – as opposed to 'places' with a history and identity (Tuan 1979) – deemed to be indubitably lawless vacuums where 'anything goes', and where 'shadowy networks of individuals' operate (NSS 2002, p.1). The not-so-tacit implication is that by lacking effective forms of government control, these spaces constitute not just a 'new threat paradigm' (Whelan 2005) to homeland security and the global borderland, but ahistorical entities devoid of their own politics. However, in such situations when effective state control is not being exercised, does it necessarily translate that the area in question is ungoverned *per se*? The reality is rather that there are often a number of *competing* governance mechanisms and localised forms of authority, which might even be connected to the state through complex means. Further, it is entirely possible that, particularly in fragile post-conflict countries, certain localised forms of governance might be more effective at administering an area of territory and enforcing rule than a central state authority. In other words, the notion of any given 'space' being truly ungoverned is both problematic and unlikely.

Moving forward then, an appreciation of hybrid political orders provides us with a way of: transcending the reductive failed states and ungoverned spaces discourses which so frame much of international politics; locating the often multiple and sometimes invisible governance mechanisms present in post-conflict or 'ungoverned' areas; and understanding their place and role within the broader political community.

**Hybrid Political Orders: ‘Actually Existing’ Governance**

War to peace transitions are inherently and fundamentally political. Peace agreements are reached through extensive political negotiation between a multiplicity of stakeholders; peace processes are underpinned by often conflicting sets of political relations; and it has been argued that ‘peacebuilding is nothing less than the reallocation of political power; it is not a neutral act’ (Bertram 1995, p.388). What’s more, international peacebuilders fervently promote a particular brand of liberal democratic politics in those countries emerging from conflict, which is rooted in the assumption that the path to internal stability, consolidated statehood and sustained economic growth is a linear one. While there are all sorts of problems associated with such an unproblematic and unambiguous vision of peaceable transitions (Pouligny 2005, p.506), rebuilding and strengthening state institutions is central to this particular path, and justifiably so. There is a compelling case for the necessity of a strong central state in countries undergoing war to peace transitions. Cramer & Goodhand (2002, p.886) argue that one of the reasons accounting for the prevalence of physical violence in many post-conflict societies – Mozambique included – is the inability of the state to secure an effective monopoly over the means of violence. Similarly, Paris (2004) insists that a more involved international intervention focusing on building up genuinely strong Western model state institutions – before capitalist practices are promoted – provides the most fertile ground for sustained peace and economic growth. Further, according to Roberts (2008, p.67), ‘this approach is probably the way most likely to achieve some of the desired goals [of peacebuilding]’.

As it is, hybrid political orders are not about sidelining the role of the state (although they can be understood as a step in the direction of usurping the seemingly immutable paradigm of state-centrism). At

their conceptual core is the notion of viable political community, of which states constitute a key element. Instead, a hybrid political order approach is concerned with challenging dominant understandings of political community, and recognising so-called ungoverned space as intrinsically political space – a *polis* (Agamben 1998). It is about a rejection of narrow models of political community, at once reinforcing the importance of the state in post-conflict landscapes, while recognising both the existence of and political functions associated with other actors and institutions (Boege *et al.* 2009c, p.600). Proponents of hybrid political orders frequently point to resilient customary ‘non-state’ institutions and authorities – including clan chiefs, village elders, religious leaders, and ‘bigmen’ – which determine the local experience of the state, and are thus instrumental for the effective operation of state institutions (Boege *et al.* 2009c, p.603).

With hybrid political orders the emphasis is placed on ‘actually existing’ governance (Boege *et al.* 2009b, p.14; de Waal 2009). It involves analysts and practitioners looking at what *is* there, rather than identifying (and subsequently inserting) what is *not*. For some years now, there has been increasing recognition – among the more critical circles at least – of the legitimacy and viability of alternative modes of governance. Dahl (1961) spoke of political pluralism and the presence of various competing actors in the political sphere,<sup>4</sup> while much work has been carried out into the ostensibly ‘non-Western’ phenomenon of neopatrimonialism, a system of redistributive patronage-based politics whereby ‘a central political elite captures resources from economic actors and redirects these to individuals and groups on the basis of political allegiance’ (Sandbrook 2005, p.1120-1121). (Incidentally, neopatrimonialism raises some challenging questions regarding cultural

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<sup>4</sup> While Dahl wrote with reference to North America, his ideas have been applied to conceptualisations of the state more generally.

heterogeneity: at what point does clientalism become corruption; is this particular political configuration central to the existence and operation of certain societies, or is it the cause of economic inequality, even conflict; is it perhaps both these things?).

The concept of hybrid political orders not only sits comfortably with these existing theories, but also, I would argue, goes further in understanding the realities of post-conflict political community and institutional set-up. While concepts such as institutional multiplicity are useful in terms of drawing our attention to the co-existence and overlap of different rule systems (Hesselbein *et al.* 2006), hybrid political orders incorporate and build on this by revealing the *connections* and *associations* between these different institutions. Through now focusing on Mozambique, I will demonstrate how hybrid political orders help us understand the realities, histories, problems and contradictions of a post-conflict political and institutional landscape.

### **Making Connections, Blending Institutions**

Peace rarely immediately follows protracted periods of conflict in a straightforward way. In Mozambique, despite the many retrospective proclamations of the country as a ‘success story’ – accurate in many ways – the political landscape has, for a long time, remained muddled and difficult to navigate. Using Reisinger’s (2009) analytical framework, it is possible to understand post-conflict statehood as a ‘hybrid form of governance’, in which authority is made up of multiple social groups and actors. Reisinger breaks these down into three categories: government, informal powers, and external actors. Thus, in the case of Mozambique, comprising the post-conflict ‘polity’ was not only Frelimo and Renamo, but multiple ‘informal’ players – ranging from religious groups to local strongmen and ‘barefoot entrepreneurs’ (Chingono 2001) – as well as the UN Operation in Mozambique

(ONUMOZ), ‘one of the most comprehensive peacekeeping missions of its time’ which had completed its goals after just two years of engagement (Costy 2004, cited in Reisinger 2009, p.488-489).

A hybrid political order perspective enables an appreciation of the way in which Mozambique’s post-conflict institutional structure was shaped by the UN mission (i.e. external actors) (Reisinger 2009, p.488). It was not simply the two national parties that constructed and drafted the constitution; the peacebuilding operation was closely involved in the process, the outcome of which allocated significant power to Frelimo. So even during the early stages of Mozambique’s post-war period, there are signs that external actors influenced the make-up of the country’s political institutional framework. In this sense, the national-level political community – or at least the way in which the actions of various elements of the national political community were either enabled or constrained – was produced by a mixture of ‘external’ and ‘internal’ actors, thus creating a hybridised set of political relations. As Putzel (2005, p.8) observes, often interventions of external actors ‘simply add a new layer of rules, without overriding others’.

But perhaps more interesting are the connections that exist between so-called ‘traditional’ or ‘informal’ authorities and institutions and the ‘formal’ political community. Much work has been carried out into the value of informal institutions in relation to democratisation (Bratton 2007), conflict management and resolution (Zartman 2000), and economic development (Williamson 2009). Such informal institutions as kin-based networks, reciprocity and clientelism arguably serve even greater functions in the African context where, Bratton (2007, p.97) argues, ‘state institutions are usually weak [...] and unwritten rules are much more influential’. However, the various informal-formal connections are frequently overlooked by political

analysts. Even the architects of hybrid political orders occasionally fall back on a tendency to draw sharp distinctions between ‘non-state informal communal and customary actors’ and ‘formal state actors’ (Boege *et al.* 2009a, p.88).

According to West & Kloeck-Jenson (1999), in post-war Mozambique, it is impossible to untangle the notion of ‘traditional authority’ from Renamo and Frelimo party politics; perhaps unsurprising given that Renamo has historically presented itself as the party of ‘tradition’ (Hanlon 2007), fighting against Frelimo’s transformative agenda and the concomitant ‘juggernaut of modernity’ (Giddens 1999). However, the construction of tradition was also influenced by Frelimo insofar as their political agenda was formed against the backdrop of anti-colonialism. Active efforts were made to distance Frelimo and its identity from all things associated with the colonial system, including the powerful governing role played by *regulos* (small kings) and traditional leaders (Buur & Kyed 2006). Consequently, after independence the chieftainship system was replaced by *grupos dinamzadores* (dynamising groups) and party secretaries, and chiefs were excluded from participating in the new state hierarchies (Buur & Kyed 2006, p.850). However, with increasing acknowledgement, both internally and externally, of the fact that the substitution of the chieftainship system had been damaging for both Frelimo’s image and the legitimacy and effectiveness of (particularly rural) governance (Geffray 1990), Decree 15/2000 was passed which formally recognised certain manifestations of ‘traditional authority’. Thus, state structures and non-state modes of governance combine through an iterative process to produce the political community. Each is defined and formed in relation to the other to the extent that their very survival is based on a mutually dependent or symbiotic relationship. As Buur & Kyed (2006) put it, Mozambican state



sovereignty is reclaimed through the formalisation of culturally embedded ‘traditional’ institutions. At the same time, the continued relevance and function of such institutions depends, to some degree, on the actions of the state.

### **Reconceptualising Institutional Multiplicity**

Underlying many discussions on state-building and nation-building is the argument that ‘institutional multiplicity needs to be replaced by one common institutional framework’ (Helling 2009, p.13). The implication and fundamental reasoning here is that different institutional universes are necessarily in competition, even conflict, with one another: consolidated governance structures cannot take shape unless a unified institutional framework is first worked out (see, for example, van Bijlert 2009 on Afghanistan). I argue that this represents an unhelpful conceptualisation of the relationships both among different institutions and between institutional arrangements and prospects for internal stability. It is not the type of institutional set-up *per se* that determines political outcomes, but the ongoing interactions between the various institutions and organisations (Giddens 1984). Indeed, institutional heterogeneity is in itself no bad thing and does not necessarily infer social fragmentation, as different institutions often operate at different scales (Srivastava 2004). This is not to deny, however, the fact that institutions can be, and often are, in conflicting relationships, vying against one another for legitimacy and power. In other words, institutional multiplicity involves a continual and dynamic process of reordering and renegotiation of the institutional arrangement – of circular and cumulative causation (Myrdal 1957) – resulting in complex outcomes which are neither exclusively detrimental nor beneficial.

In Mozambique, the collaboration of supposedly conflicting institutions was embodied by the dual function of local chiefs. Alexander (1997) shows how even in some Frelimo-administered territories, state officials tended to have more contact and cooperation with chiefs than they did the new party secretaries. Thus, chiefs were not only important in terms of representing their communities and resolving social conflicts; they served also as agents of the state, collecting taxes and policing communities (Buur & Kyed 2006). In this sense, the chieftainship system can be understood as a twilight institution – an ostensibly non-governmental form of public authority (Lund 2006) – while chiefs themselves take on a Janus-faced quality. Drawing out the broader implications of this example, we note a convergence between the three elements of Reisinger’s analytical model – informal powers, government and external actors. As Muriaas (2005, p.6) argues, under the rubric of democratic decentralisation, international donors frequently consider chiefs as both powerful partners in rural development projects as well as important parts of the country’s formal institutional set-up. Furthermore, Haynes (2009, p.63-65) has shown how religion, or more specifically an international Catholic NGO (Sant’ Egidio), contributed to mediation of the Mozambican conflict through promoting dialogue between the warring factions and utilising the skills of other (principally external) institutions, such as the UN.

However, on this point of institutional ‘collaboration’, Boege *et al.* (2009, p.604) suggest that when traditional leaders assume a dual role, they are in danger of losing their customary authority as their communities – from which they derive their legitimacy in the first place – become disillusioned and alienated. This serves as a point of departure for the concluding section of the paper.

**Conclusion: (Material) Spaces for Exploitation, (Theoretical) Spaces for Progress**

This article has argued for a hybrid political order perspective when analysing post-conflict political community and institutional set-up. As we have seen, such an approach helps us get to grips more effectively with the political and institutional realities of post-conflict landscapes, to recognise complexity and to locate connection. Hybrid political order theory thus constitutes a powerful analytical tool.

Yet, while this paper supports many of the concept's core tenets – a focus on 'actually existing' governance structures; an appreciation of resilient local, socially embedded institutions; institutional multiplicity; and an acceptance of the diverse and heterogeneous outcomes associated therewith – it takes issue with the possibility that hybrid political orders might be uncritically promoted by pragmatically-oriented researchers and indiscriminately institutionalised into peacebuilding praxis by practitioners. This is a valid concern, even in the face of Woodward's (2009, p.48) claim that the audience the proponents of hybrid political orders are trying to reach is not listening anyway. Indeed, such a criticism could quite easily be construed as a reason not to challenge dominant discourses and practices, in any subject or discipline.

The concept of hybrid political orders is built on a recognition of alternative modes of governance which do not fit neatly into dominant state-centred models. There is perhaps something of a tendency in these situations to go too far in the opposite direction; to take a reactionary position which ends up romanticising the 'local' to the extent that *all* local actors and cohorts of civil society are seen as inherently good. As Lemarchand (1992) points out, in reality many groups within (un)civil society are just as, if not more, illegitimate as a discredited state. In the Mozambican context, we can find aspects of

this in relation to the militarisation of culture and politics – an embedded legacy of three decades of war. Practitioners should be wary of extending legitimacy and power – at least in the first instance – to ex-combatants, for example, many of whom are, or have been, heavily involved in drug trafficking networks (UNODCCP 1999, cited in Shaw 2001, p.65). In this situation efforts should rather be focused on creating livelihood opportunities for ‘unintegrated’ ex-soldiers lacking the relevant employment skills.

I would like to end by making two brief points. Firstly, Hofmann (2009) has argued that the concept of hybrid political orders will not significantly challenge dominant approaches to peacebuilding, and that what is needed is a more fundamental reconceptualisation of statehood. Reiterating what was said near the beginning of the paper, I would argue that something as seemingly ineffectual as altering discourse – the way we think and talk about things – represents an important, arguably necessary step towards changing praxis. Reframing failed states and ungoverned spaces as hybrid political orders goes some way in achieving this. Moreover, Hofmann’s call for better reconceptualisations of the state are welcome, and should go hand in hand with further theoretical work on hybrid political orders. Indeed, an appreciation of hybridity provides a vehicle to advance these very reconceptualisations.

Secondly, and finally then, any future work into hybrid political orders would do well to situate the concept within the broad theoretical matrix informing discussions on institutions. Incorporating analyses and critiques of existing theories of, *inter alia*, neopatrimonialism, cultural hybridity (see Bhabha 1996) and, in particular, institutional multiplicity (Beall & Ngonyama 2009, p.1) is essential not only for the development of the concept of hybrid

political orders, but also to ensure the Emperor's new clothes are kept safely in the wardrobe.

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