Creating Frankenstein States: The Persistent Quest for the Ideal Modern Polity

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ABSTRACT

The current paper argues that examining Mary Shelley's Frankenstein provides a good analogy for understanding the current development of the international state-building agenda, particularly the underlying principles guiding intervention. In particular, the paper analyzes the Enlightenment Project's quest for progress and perfection and how those ideas still thrive in the international organizations involved in post-conflict state-building interventions. The paper begins by analyzing the key characteristics underlying the Enlightenment's search for global progress and peace. Subsequently, it identifies how modern international organizations have operationalized the principles and assumptions of the Enlightenment to promote world peace, particularly emphasizing its relationship to contemporary state-building operations.

Key-words: Enlightenment, liberal peace, modern state, rationality, state-building

> "Mingled with this horror, I felt the bitterness of disappointment; dreams that had been my food and pleasant rest for so long a space were now become a hell to me; and the change was so rapid, the overthrow so complete!" *(M. SHELLEY, Frankenstein, p. 53)*

INTRODUCTION

In a recent reflection on the dynamics of state formation, Oliver Richmond (2014) argues that contemporary international state-building endeavors have created hybrid political entities that embody both quasi-liberal and authoritarian features. According to Richmond, through its post-cold war peacebuilding enterprises, the international community seeks to create "good" states modeled on a liberal template that emphasizes the security and financial dimensions of the contemporary neoliberal state. However, these endeavors usually

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encounter significant resistance and incite widespread backlash from the indigenous actors. As a result, Richmond (2014, p. 2) employs a common literary analogy to highlight the contemporary paradox in which "International statebuilding should produce a 'good' state (Jekyll) whereas the state's local contestation produces a predatory or backward state (Hyde)".

Richmond's text argues that contemporary state-building endeavors in places such as Cambodia, East Timor, Bosnia, Kosovo, Palestine, and Afghanistan have failed to construct robust state institutions and deliver on the promise of human development – i.e., they have failed to "convert Hyde into Jekyll" (RICHMOND, 2014, p. 4). Instead, international state-building missions have produced weak institutions which are incapable of promoting effective development and governance strategies and inclusive citizenship. According to Richmond, the main source of this paradox is the international community's incapacity to encourage and harness the potential of local agency. As a result, "the states being built reflect neither local, sociohistorical frameworks for legitimacy nor identity, and so command little loyalty." (RICHMOND, 2014, p. 16).

The current paper does not dispute the outcomes of recent state-building interventions. Many of Richmond's evaluations and concerns are shared by the author. However, the premises of Richmond's analysis are questioned. In particular, the current paper argues that Richmond's use of Robert Louis Stevenson's *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* to describe contemporary international state-building endeavors is rather misguided. Richmond's general argument does not fit well with Stevenson's theme. We can frame Richmond's work in what Belloni (2007) designates as the autonomist approach to international intervention. Autonomists are highly critical of exogenous efforts to build state capacities and promote a sustainable peace. More precisely, Richmond's more radical version of autonomism views international state-building interventions as subjugating local actors due to its "overbearing, perhaps even colonial" approach (RICHMOND, 2011, p. 13) which "maintains a global hierarchy and inequality rather than addressing the causes of conflict" (RICHMOND, 2013, p. 773). Therefore, Richmond's critique focuses on the motivations involved in state-building as well as the outcomes of the interventions.

However, Stevenson's novella is the unrivaled gothic doppelganger tale of the inner human conflict between good and evil. While Henry Jekyll personified the civilized Victorian virtues, and Edward Hyde the voracious and evil essence of Man, Jekyll and Hyde were one and the same individual. In fact, the book's central thesis rests on the duality of human nature. As Jekyll claimed, "Man is not truly one, but truly two" (STEVENSON, 1964, p. 52). Therefore, "good" and "evil" are both intrinsic characteristics of individuals and societies. There is, however, no attempt in the story to ever produce any "good" Hyde. Quite the contrary, Jekyll delights in sparking Hyde's mischievous nature: "Men have before hired bravos to transact their crimes, while their own person and reputation sat under shelter. I was the first that ever did so for his pleasures" (STEVENSON, 1964, p. 56). Physically separating these two distinct existences was Jekyll's ultimate desideratum:

> If each, I told myself, could be housed in separate identities, life would be relieved of all that was unbearable; the unjust might go his way, delivered from the aspirations and remorse of his more upright twin; and the just could walk steadfastly and securely on his upward path, doing the good things in which he found his pleasure, and no longer exposed to disgrace and penitence by the hands of this extraneous evil. It was the curse of mankind that these incongruous faggots were thus bound together – that in the agonised womb of consciousness, these polar twins should be continuously struggling. (STEVENSON, 1964, p. 52-53)

Hyde offered Jekyll the freedom to submit to his primordial impulses and derive pleasures with virtual impunity. Throughout his life, social expectations had impeded Jekyll from indulging in his reckless desires. The development of a potion allowed him to embrace his most intimate desires without shame or consequence. And the mischief was indulged by Jekyll who "now with the most sensitive apprehensions, now with a greedy gusto, projected and shared in the pleasures and adventures of Hyde" (STEVENSON, 1964, p. 60).

It was only in recognizing that the evil Hyde was overtaking Jekyll that apprehension grew. As Jekyll succumbed to ill-health, Hyde exhilarated in life and malice. Even then, however, Jekyll admired his alternate existence. Despite Hyde's disfigurement and less developed stature, Jekyll still marveled at the talents and astuteness of Hyde who, in the most despairing moments, had the ability to "[rise] to the importance of the moment" (STEVENSON, 1964, p. 64). Only the assured demise of Jekyll spawned the need to find a definitive solution

to this double existence. To permanently vanquish Hyde, Jekyll also had to perish. Ultimately, *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* reinforces the worldly belief that "there is a split in man's psyche between ego and instinct, between civilization and 'nature,' and the split can never be healed" (OATES, 1988, p. 607). This is a far stretch from Richmond's (2014) account of the dynamics of contemporary international state-building. Besides providing a catchy title for an article, any resemblance between Stevenson's literary work and the dynamics of contemporary state-building is a matter of chance that does not stand up to rigorous analysis.

A more appropriate and valuable comparison for understanding the current development of the international state-building agenda would be achieved by examining Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein, or the Modern Prometheus*. Throughout the years *Frankenstein* has been interpreted as an allegory of a plethora of themes. Yet, as Levine (1982, p. 3) has pointed out, Frankenstein "has tapped into the center of Western feeling and imagination". In particular, Shelley's novel provides a vibrant metaphor of Enlightenment thought and the limitless ambition of modern reason and rationality. No ambition or venture was impossible for the enlightened Dr. Victor Frankenstein. The application of scientific thinking and knowledge allowed Frankenstein not only to uncover "the cause of generation and life", but to bestow "animation upon lifeless matter" (SHELLEY, 1963, p. 45-46).

Similar beliefs and ambitions survive to this day. The following pages will demonstrate how the views held by Frankenstein in creating his monster imbue contemporary international organizations. An unrelenting confidence in reason and rationality drive the vision of progress espoused by these institutions. More precisely, the contemporary state-building endeavors, with their achievements and shortfalls, can only be effectively understood when we appreciate the underlying principles guiding intervention, namely the pursuit of an ideal political entity. Thus, the next section will analyze the Enlightenment project's quest for progress and perfection, highlighting its main ideas. The subsequent section will illustrate how the ideas of the *philosophes* of the Enlightenment still thrive in today's societies and in particular in the international organizations involved in post-conflict state-building interventions. Finally, the concluding section offers a reflection on the current challenges and future facing international state-building endeavors.

FRANKESTEIN AND THE ENLIGHTENMENT'S QUEST FOR PROGRESS

Frankenstein or The Modern Prometheus was originally published in 1818. It marks a transition between the Enlightenment and the Romantic periods.[2] While the virtues of the natural world, typical of Romanticism, are evident in the novel, *Frankenstein* echoes many of the ideas underlying Enlightenment thought. In particular, it embraces the key assumptions of *critical rationalism* which combines "the application of reason to social, political and economic issues with a concern with progress, emancipation and improvement" (HAMILTON, 1992, p. 20).

The Enlightenment has been characterized in many different ways throughout the past two centuries. However, in its most basic sense it represented "the creation of a new framework of ideas about man, society and nature, which challenged existing conceptions rooted in a traditional world-view, dominated by Christianity" (HAMILTON, 1992, p. 23). In other words, Enlightenment thinkers sought to break with the past and its emphasis on tradition, faith, and religious authority. While the *philosophes* of the Enlightenment focused their writings and reflections on different subjects and issues, Peter Hamilton (1992) provides a list of core ideas and values which united them under a common "paradigm":

- Emphasis on the importance of reason and rationality as a way of organizing human knowledge;
- Insistence on empirical facts to validate all forms of knowledge;
- Reliance on science and the scientific method to produce knowledge;
- Claim to the universal value of reason and rationality;
- Belief that progress – i.e., the improvement of the human condition – could be derived from the application of science and reason;
- Prominence of the individual (over the community);
- Focus on freedom – e.g., beliefs, economic, social;

[2] The Enlightenment is generally accepted as the period in European intellectual history spanning from about the 1680s to the 1790s (KRAMNICK, 1995), whilst the Romantic era is usually identified with the literary and artistic spirit of the first half of the 19th century.

- Conviction that the main characteristics of human nature were always the same;
- Rejection of religious tradition in favor of secular knowledge.

These ideas provided the cornerstone for what many have designated as the Project of Modernity – i.e., a deliberate intellectual endeavor aimed at transforming the existing institutions of society and creating a new and perfect world (HARVEY, 1992; HABERMAS, 1981). Enlightenment *philosophes* such as Condorcet, Priestley, Turgot, and Voltaire celebrated the inevitable march towards unbounded progress and human perfectibility. Mary Shelley's novel mirrors this vision as Dr. Victor Frankenstein, like most of his enlightened contemporaries, sought to penetrate the secrets of nature and overcome the limits of scientific knowledge of his time. However, Frankenstein's ambition was nothing less than the (re)creation of life:

> Under the guidance of my new preceptors I entered with the greatest diligence into the search of the philosopher's stone and the elixir of life; but the latter soon obtained my undivided attention. Wealth was an inferior object, but what glory would attend the discovery if I could banish disease from the human frame and render man invulnerable to any but a violent death! (SHELLEY, 1963, p. 31).

However, the most distinctive feature of Enlightenment thought is "its immanent relation to a criterion of rational validity which acts as a standard against which opinions and convictions can be upheld by rational examination" (HONNETH, 1987, p. 693). No longer would man be subjected to the whims of tradition and superstition. Quite the contrary. The *philosophes* vigorously sought to abolish and supplant traditional forms of knowledge reliant on religious authority, particularly the authority of the Christian churches. The astronomic discoveries of Kepler, Copernicus, and Galileo in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth centuries provided the scientific and empirical foundations for challenging Christian-based cosmologies. Accordingly, science was the supreme form of knowledge and "was the basis for an unbounded faith in progress, a belief in perfectibility and the imminent elimination of pain and suffering" (KRAMNICK, 1995, p. xiii). Rational scientific laws established by experimentation and empirical observation would catalyze human progress.

The scientific method could be applied to all aspects of human society. In fact, *philosophes* such as Diderot and D'Alembert believed in the unity of knowledge and sought to collect all the cumulative scientific information of their time in their *Encyclopédie*. By applying scientific knowledge, nature could finally be controlled for the benefit of Man (HAMILTON, 1992). For instance, science could provide for more efficient and productive agriculture, eliminating poverty and famine. It could also contribute to reducing infirmities and eradicating diseases. Science could even be employed for industrial purposes, namely by inventing new machines and processes which could increase productivity and benefit all of society. It should then be of no surprise that Frankenstein's (re)creation of life resulted from careful scientific examination and experimentation.

Ultimately, the progressive quality of science would help individuals achieve a good life. John Locke had long determined that men were relentlessly determined in the "pursuit of happiness" (ST. JOHN, 1901, p. 301). The *philosophes* of the Enlightenment, however, sought nothing less than the universal promotion of happiness amongst all individuals and groups (ZAFIROVSKI, 2010). From this perspective it follows that nothing could fulfill human happiness more than the eradication of conflict and war. Once more, the Enlightenment's faith in human progress anticipated the end of war and the foundation of an era of sustainable peace. Unencumbered by the tyranny of tradition and superstition, reason would ultimately release societies from the perils of war:

> …how truth, in spite of the transient success of prejudices, and the support they receive from the corruption of governments or of the people, must in the end obtain a durable triumph; by what ties nature has indissolubly united the advancement of knowledge with the progress of liberty, virtue, and respect for the natural rights of man; how these blessings, the only real ones, though so frequently seen apart as to be thought incompatible, must necessarily amalgamate and become inseparable, the moment knowledge shall have arrived at a certain pitch in a great number of nations at once, the moment it shall have penetrated the whole mass of a great people, whose language shall have become universal, and whose commercial intercourse shall embrace the whole extent of the globe. This union having once taken place in the whole enlightened class of men, this class will be considered as the friends of human kind, exerting themselves in concert to advance the improvement and happiness of the species. (CONDORCET, 1796, p. 19)

Immanuel Kant best articulated this rationale in his *Perpetual Peace: A Philosophical Essay*. According to Kant (1917 [1795]), the establishment of peace requires a conscious effort since Man's natural state is the state of war. In order to surpass this inherent state of conflict, Kant identified three definitive articles of peace which would guarantee the establishment of a Perpetual Peace: 1) the civil constitution of every state should be republican, 2) the law of nations should be founded on a federation of free states, and 3) the law of world citizenship should be limited to conditions of universal hospitality. Kant's first two articles are particularly revealing of how we might achieve a state of lasting harmony. To begin with, due to its representative character, a state with a republican constitution depends on the consent of its citizens for the prosecution on war.[3] In other words, when "the consent of the subjects is required to determine whether there shall be war or not, nothing is more natural than that they should weight the matter well, before undertaking such a bad business" (KANT, 1917, p. 122). Furthermore, Kant argues for the foundation of a federation of republican states which would guarantee the individual rights of each nation, just as civil society guarantees each individual his own rights. However, Kant's republican federation is more than a traditional peace treaty among nations. It is an ever-growing commitment to an international system based on the law of common reason:

> Hence there must be an alliance of a particular kind which we may call a covenant of peace (*foedus pacificum*), which would differ from a treaty of peace (*pactum pacis*) in this respect, that the latter merely puts an end to one war, while the former would seek to put an end to war for ever. (...) The practicability or objective reality of this idea of federation which is to extend gradually over all states and so lead to perpetual peace can be shewn. For, if Fortune ordains that a powerful and enlightened people should form a republic, – which by its very nature is inclined to perpetual peace – this would serve as a centre of federal union for other states wishing to join, and thus secure conditions of freedom among the states in accordance with the idea of the law of nations. (KANT, 1917, p. 234-235)

The Enlightenment idea of a perpetual peace has endured into the Twenty-first century in the guise of the Democratic Peace theory. The theory refutes realism and

[3] Kant distinguished between a republican and democratic constitution. Providing a conceptual distinction quite different from the one employed today, Kant (1917) considered democratic regimes to be necessarily despotic due to their emphasis on majority rule. Only republican regimes guaranteed representativeness and by separating the executive and legislative powers.

neorealism's assumptions regarding the unregulated competition amongst states. Realists and neorealists generally discard the possibility of any meaningful cooperation among states due to the anarchic structure of the international system. Some realists, such as Robert Gilpin (1984; 1999), do acknowledge that humans require rules for mediating their interactions. Consequently, states also require a common set of rules or regimes in order to inform interstate behavior. However, at its core, realism embraces the unwavering belief that international affairs are conflictual in nature and that power and security are the driving motivations of political life (GILPIN, 1984). According to Waltz (1979, p. 105), "Even the prospect of large absolute gains for both parties does not elicit their cooperation so long as each fears how the other will use its increased capabilities". Consequently, peace is fleeting phenomenon at best. In contrast, the Democratic Peace theory posits that due to the intrinsic features of democratic systems, democratic nations tend to show restraint, namely regarding the employment of lethal violence, in their interactions with other democracies (DOYLE, 1983a, 1983b; RUSSETT, 1993). Notwithstanding the criticism, as Jack Levy (1988, p. 662) has assertively acknowledged, the fact that democratic nations rarely, if ever, engage in war against each other "comes as close as anything we have to an empirical law in international relations". In fact, the Democratic Peace's theoretical elegance and rational logic has a great appeal for society (particularly Western nations), political organizations, and even academia.[4]

Like the Democratic Peace, the Enlightenment project anchored its vision on political liberalism. Only intellectually, politically, and economically free individuals could reach true enlightenment and take advantage of their whole potential. As Kant (1995, p. 6) acknowledged, "Men work themselves gradually out of barbarity if only intentional artifices are not made to hold them in". Many of the key ideas underlying the Enlightenment's political

[4] While the main assumptions of the Democratic Peace theory are amply accepted and disseminated by many policy-makers, organizations, and academics, it has received a considerable degree of contestation. For instance, Sebastian Rosato (2003, p. 599) argues that the Democratic Peace is a recent phenomenon and "is in fact an imperial peace based on American power". In a similar vein, while Gates et al. (1996) do not deny a relationship between democracy and peace, they do insist that the relationship has not been adequately demonstrated since the theory does not adequately identify and explain the causal mechanisms. Christopher Layne (1994) provides a more assertive assault on the Democratic Peace theory. As a realist the author emphasizes the anarchic, competitive, and self-interested characteristics on international relations, arguing that the Democratic Peace theory espoused by liberal theorists is "based on hope, not on fact" (LAYNE, 1994, p. 49).

views were presented in John Locke's *Second Treatise of Civil Government* published in 1690. Locke sought to put forward an account and justification for the restraint of government. He, therefore, argued that man's natural condition is one of "perfect freedom" in which he is free to carry out his goals without depending or requiring the consent of any other man. In addition, Locke (1971, p. 4) claimed that all individuals were equal, i.e., "born to all the same advantages of nature, and the use of the same faculties". Therefore, men would organize themselves politically and surrender some of their liberties only with the sole purpose of preserving their own individual livelihood and property. More precisely:

> If man in the state of nature be so free, as has been said, if he be absolute lord of his own person and possessions, equal to the greatest, and subject to no body, why will he part with his freedom, this empire, and subject himself to the dominion and control of any other power? To which it is obvious to answer, that though in the state of nature he hath such a right, yet the enjoyment of it is very uncertain, and constantly exposed to the invasion of others. For all being kings as much as he, every man his equal, and the greater part no strict observers of equity and justice, the enjoyment of the property he has in this state is very unsafe, very unsecure. This makes him willing to quit a condition, which, however free, is full of fears and continual dangers; and it is not without reason, that he seeks out, and is willing to join in society with others, who are already united, or have a mind to unite, for the mutual preservation of their lives, liberties, and estates, which I call by the general name, property. (LOCKE, 1971, p. 4).

However, Locke was steadfast in identifying the limits of the commonwealth's authority over the individual. The legislative power, onto which men have yielded their natural freedoms, is confined to promoting the "common good". It does so by establishing laws which enshrine the approval of its constituents. In other words, the legislative body is chosen and appointed by the enfranchised public who is the ultimate authority and over which no law can exist without its consent. Locke further developed his limited conception of government in his *Letters on Toleration*. Here he was particularly critical of any intention of the state to infringe on an individual religious beliefs. For, according to Locke (2010), "the power of civil government relates only to men's civil interests, is confined to the care of the things of this world, and hath nothing to do with the world to come". Locke's writings and ideas on liberty provided the rationale for limiting the role of government and the state in other areas such as economic activities. Whereas Anne Turgot (1995, p. 504) declared that

"*all* branches of commerce ought to be free, equally free, *entirely* free", Adam Smith offered an extensive and elaborate reasoning for economic freedom. In *An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations*, Smith attributes man's pursuit to satisfy self-interest to human nature. Rather than condemning this behavior, Smith argues that an individual's pursuit of economic self-interest can yield greater benefits to the whole society. Statesmen's attempts at regulating individual economic endeavors are counter-productive. Restricting freedom of trade is, therefore, prejudicial to a state's own interests considering that every town and country that "opened their ports to all nations, instead of being ruined by this free trade, as the principles of the commercial system would lead us to expect, have been enriched by it" (SMITH, 1904).

Accordingly, the Enlightenment's liberal ideal provided individuals with the reasoning and the tools to create a new world of intellectual, political, and economic freedom. And just as Frankenstein professed that "A new species would bless me as its creator and source; many happy and excellent natures would owe their being to me" (SHELLEY, 1963, p. 47), so too the *philosophes* believed that they would be treasured for their genius and their gift to mankind. Liberal states would provide the ideal to which all people of world aspire to because "till they become civilized, as in the natural progress of things they necessarily must, they [the people] will be sufficiently overawed by the superior power of nations that are so" (PRIESTLEY, 1791).

OPERATIONALIZING THE ENLIGHTENMENT PROJECT OF WORLD PEACE

While the Enlightenment as a specific historical period ended with the dawning of the Nineteenth century, its main intellectual postulates were disseminated globally and survive to this day. New forms of communication were responsible for the spread of Enlightenment project. The growing number of regularly published books, journals, and newspapers circulated the *philosophes* ideas (HAMILTON, 1992). These ideas fueled many of the innovations we usually associate with Modernity – e.g., capitalism, industrialization, and democratization. In particular, Modernity also witnessed the birth and consolidation of the modern state.

Whereas societies have always organized themselves politically, pre-modern states – e.g., empires, city-states, feudal states, absolutist states – differed significantly from their modern counterparts. The modern state originated from the European state system founded in the Sixteenth century and incorporates several distinctively modern features. More specifically, Held (1995) identifies several distinguishing characteristics between the modern and pre-modern state. To begin with, the modern state is territorially defined. Whereas modern states have borders, pre-modern states had frontiers (GIDDENS, 1985). This naturally implies that their administrative capacity was unevenly distributed throughout their territory. In contrast, the modern state encompasses a highly concentrated administration of all things within its borders. This administrative competence allows for the second major innovation of the modern state – i.e., the monopoly of the means of violence. The control by the state of the means of coercion was simultaneously the result of the pacification of the people and a form of maintaining them internally pacified (TILLY, 1985). In addition, the modern state is characterized by an impersonal structure of power. Only when the traditional and sometimes overlapping claims to power from religion, tradition, or property rights were eliminated could a single impersonal administrative power govern over a legally circumscribed territorial jurisdiction. Lastly, the modern state rests on the concept of legitimacy. In other words, the state gained its right to govern over its people by giving its citizens an active voice in the political process. Therefore, we may conclude that all Modern states are "nation states – *political apparatuses, distinct from both ruler and ruled, with supreme jurisdiction over a demarcated territorial area, backed by a claim to a monopoly of coercive power, and enjoying a minimum level of support or loyalty from their citizens*" (HELD, 1995, p. 87).

However, the modern nation state can only be truly understood in the context of a wider system of equivalent political entities. As Giddens (1985, p. 4) suggests, "The internal administrative coordination of nation-states from the beginnings depends upon reflexively monitored conditions of an international nature". Thus, over the past two centuries the nation state has become the central political actor in the international system. Several factors contributed to the consolidation and triumph of the modern nation state in international politics. Its capacity to organize and mobilize the means of coercion and economic resources

and consolidate its legitimacy as the supreme form of political organization were essential to its success:

> They won at war because as warfare became more extended in scale and cost, it was larger national states which were best able to organize and fund military power; and as these states expanded overseas this ability increased. They were economically successful because the rapid growth of their economies from the late sixteenth century, and particularly after the mid-eighteenth century, sustained the process of capital accumulation: as the economic basis of the centralized state expanded, it significantly reduced the war-making ability of smaller states (often with fragmented power structures) and traditional empires (which depended above all on coercive power for their success). And they gained legitimacy because as they extended their military, organizational and coordinating activities, they came to depend more and more on the active cooperation, collaboration and support of their peoples, especially well-organized civil groups. (HELD, 1995, p. 103-104).

As mentioned above, the global diffusion of the modern nation state is at the heart of the contemporary quest to promote a liberal peace (RICHMOND, 2008). Inspired by the Enlightenment project's confidence in building a better world, efforts to create and strengthen liberal states have pressed forward since the post-war era. Despite some setbacks in the second half of the Twentieth century, the liberal ideal gained a renewed emphasis after the Cold War ended as many prophesized that the end of history had arrived and that no other ideology was in a position to challenge liberal democracy or the legitimacy of popular sovereignty (FUKUYAMA, 1992). Therefore, just as Frankenstein sought to create a greater being in his image, so too do liberal states and the international community seek to fashion other states in the semblance of their ideal model. In particular, the international community's increasing concern with issues of governance has led to the new emphasis on international state-building. International state-building refers to the actions carried out by international organizations to (re)create, restructure, or strengthen the governmental institutions of a state (CALL & COUSENS, 2008; PARIS & SISK, 2009). In the long run, the contemporary state-building project espoused by the international community seeks to create a sustainable peace by promoting liberal institutions and practices (WESTERN, 2012).

While the practice of state-building has a long lineage, the 1992 the United Nations (UN) report *An Agenda for Peace* issued by Secretary General Boutros-Ghali paved the way

for a new perspective on promoting international peace and stability. In order to effectively curtail conflict and war the report emphasized the need to address many of the sources of conflict, namely economic despair, social injustice, and political oppression. Accordingly, the UN's report envisioned a wide assortment of tools at the disposal of the international community to achieve these goals: peace-keeping, peace-making, and post-conflict peace-building. In particular, *An Agenda for Peace* placed a fresh emphasis on strengthening states' capabilities to "balance between the needs of good internal governance and the requirements of an ever more interdependent world" (BOUTROS-GHALI, 1992). The latter was particularly relevant to the post-Cold War world due to its focus on the rebuilding of the institutions and infrastructures of post-conflict nations. As Paris and Sisk (2009, p. 5) argue, "peacebuilding in its post-conflict form became the UN's principal peace and security activity after the Cold War".

State-building has come to assume an ever-greater role in the international community's peace-building agenda. Without the political constraints inherent in the bipolar Cold War confrontation, numerous multi-lateral state-building operations have been organized and carried out throughout the globe in the last three decades. These initiatives have sought to tackle the conventional assumptions regarding the root causes of international conflict, i.e., state weakness and failure. And just as Victor Frankenstein understood that "To examine the causes of life, we must first have recourse to death" (SHELLEY, 1963: p. 44), international organizations have also devoted considerable resources to identifying the causes and consequences of state weakness and failure. While there is some dispute as to how to define weak and failed states, we can identify some common features that are strongly associated with them such as economic malperformance, lack of social synergy, authoritarianism, militarism, and environmental degradation (GROS, 1996). The terrorist attacks of 11 September 2001 placed failed states at the heart of the global security agenda (CALL, 2008b; FUKUYAMA, 20014; ZOELLICK, 2009). In particular, weak and failed states have been identified as the source of many of the world's most serious problems. Due to their lack of capacity and will, they pose multiple threats to the international community such as terrorism, proliferation of weapons of mass destruction (WMD), transnational criminality,

pandemics and global health issues, energy insecurity, and regional degeneration (PATRICK, 2006).

However, by identifying weak and failed states it assumes that there are "normal" or "successful" states. As Charles Call (2008b, p. 1494) has pointed out, the concept of state failure "contains culturally specific assumptions about what a 'successful' state should look like". Therefore, if weak and failed states are defined as political entities that are either unable or unwilling to provide certain fundamental political goods, then it goes without question that state–building should direct its energies to (re)creating, restructuring, or strengthening the governmental institutions of a state and enable them to provide the crucial political goods traditionally associated with statehood. In other words, international state-building endeavors to give life to lifeless polities and establish modern liberal states in their place.

Considering that a state embodies the exercise of power by imposing order on a specific territory (CALL, 2008a; SPRUYT, 2007), the liberal state provides a template for what the international community aspires to accomplish. More precisely, the modern liberal state reveals several characteristic features (PIERSON, 2004). Some of these elements have been previously presented above – e.g., monopoly of the means of violence, territoriality, internal and external sovereignty, rule of law, constitutionality, and legitimacy. The latter is particularly relevant because, while all regimes claim to be legitimate, the liberal state emphasizes its commitment to democratic institutions and processes through citizenship. In fact, according to some scholars, there can be no democracy without the existence of the state. As Linz and Stepan (1996, p. 28) have pointed out, "Without a state, there can be no citizenship; without citizenship, there can be no democracy". Democracy is also understood as an essential feature of the modern liberal state since it is one of the principal means of limiting state power (LAKE, 2010). We should recall the importance Locke and other *philosophes* placed on limiting government involvement in an individuals' pursuit of happiness. However, whereas citizenship guarantees individuals with certain rights, it also is complimented by obligations where the individual must also comply with and carry out the will of the state.

An additional characteristic of the modern state is the existence of a public bureaucracy. These highly hierarchical and specialized organizations allow the state to maintain administrative control and provide political goods. Bureaucracies were also features of pre-modern states. Nevertheless, the scale and breadth of the modern bureaucracy is unrivaled since it exercises authority over most aspects of human life. Max Weber pointed to the overbearing role bureaucracy played in democratic regimes. For Weber (1991, p. 224) bureaucracies were particularly well-suited for democracies due to their distinctive focus on "the abstract regularity of the execution of authority, which is a result of the demand for 'equality before the law' in the personal and functional sense – hence, of the horror of 'privilege,' and the principled rejection of doing business 'from case to case'". This bureaucratic element of the modern state is a key component in supplying a host of other public goods typical of liberal democracies such as sound management of public finances, investment in human capital, provision of infrastructure services, formation of a market, management of public assets, and effective public borrowing (GHANI & LOCKHART, 2008).

These elements serve as the reference for a "successful" state and guide international organizations in their state-building initiatives. More precisely, these features provide the international community with the key elements of the standard quick-fix state-building blueprint employed in strengthening weak states and (re)building failed states (OTTAWAY, 2002; SUHRKE, 2007; WESLEY, 2008). By assuming that all states should possess the same basic features and perform similar functions, international state-building operations converge on several key activities (DOBBINS ET AL, 2007; OTTAWAY, 2002; ZOELLICK, 2009). These initiatives tend to focus on three dimensions of the state: security, political, economic. Establishing a safe and secure environment through peacekeeping (e.g., disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration), law enforcement, and/or security sector reform is a critical factor in the initial stages of state-building. On many occasions, guaranteeing security also involves providing humanitarian aid, namely by responding to imminent epidemics, famine, and lack of shelter and dealing with the return of refugees.

Measures aimed at political restructuring and reform are particularly standard. In the attempt to create liberal institutions and practices international state-builders strive to swiftly establish a legal and constitutional framework for elections. This inevitably involves

promoting a system based on the rule of law and in which the institutional and procedural elements characteristic of democratic regimes are guaranteed. The task is complex and involves, according to Marina Ottaway, a wide assortment of concurrent and complementary reforms such as:

> …elected parliaments must be strengthened, and so must executive agencies; the judiciary must be built up into an independent body; organizations of civil society must be supported financially and provided with training so they will become more effective advocates for policy reform; and political parties must learn how they can correct their deficiencies. In other words, rule of law must be instituted with all its institutional and procedural elements, which include "a representative government in which the executive is accountable to the elected legislature or to the electorate; the duty of the government to act in compliance with the constitution and the law; a clear separation of between the state and political parties; accountability of the military and the police to civilian authorities; consideration and adoption of legislation by public procedure; publication of administrative regulations as the condition for their validity; effective means of redress against administrative decisions and provisions of information to the person affected on the remedies available; an independent judiciary; protection of the independence of legal practitioners; and detailed guarantees in the area of criminal procedure". (OTTAWAY, 2002, p. 1006-1107)

Political initiatives also encompass strengthening the states governance functions, i.e., the multiple institutional means of coordinating and creating collective social rules and providing public goods (BÖRZEL & RISSE, 2010). The restoration of public administration and the (re)establishment of basic public services such as transportation, power, water, health, and education are particularly important for the international community. The economic measures promoted by the international community are directly related with a state's governance role. In particular, the sound management of public finances is considered indispensable for a state to be able to carry out its objectives and provide for its citizens. Moreover, the international community also insists on macroeconomic policies which it deems most appropriate for promoting economic growth and development. Several policies are commonly endorsed such as stabilization of the national currency, control of inflation, reform of the banking system, and formation of a market through the liberalization of commercial activities and the promotion of private enterprise (GHANI & LOCKHART, 2008). The emphasis placed on these three key areas is essential to (re)building the legitimacy of the

state. As the former president of the World Bank, Robert Zoellick (2009), stated, the legitimacy of a state is determined by its performance, namely its capacity to deliver the basic public goods demanded by society.

Just as the Enlightenment *philosophes* highlighted the value of specialized knowledge based on scientific inquiry, so too does the international community's state-building project exhibit a technical veneer. In much the same fashion as Priestley (1791) presaged Burke that "The empire of reason will ever be the reign of peace", the international community employs the technocratic tools at its disposal to allegedly build "successful" states and sponsor a sustainable global peace. Embodied in the spirit of Enlightenment rationalism, the international community reveals great confidence in the power of reason and technical knowledge based on precisely formulated rules and techniques. For the technocrats of today share the Enlightenment's emphasis on solving problems based on a scientific approach to problem analysis, policy formulation, and policy implementation. This technical knowledge is valued due to the appearance of certainty it acquires by being codified through the formulation of rules, principles, and maxims which are easily transferable (OAKESHOTT, 1991). Thus, by adopting this problem-solving approach, the technocrats involved in designing and implementing state-building operations acts much like a policy engineer which, according to Michael Oakeshott (1991, p. 9) "is controlled throughout by the appropriate technique and whose first step is to dismiss from his attention everything not directly related to his specific intentions".

The technocratic approach espoused by the international community is assumed to be value-free and objective (CENTENO, 1993; OAKESHOTT, 1991). This semblance of neutrality is the ultimate power of contemporary technocratic knowledge since, as Mac Ginty (2012, p. 291) points out, "technocratic approach[es] to peacebuilding posit that scientific and rational approaches to dispute resolution are superior as they are not influenced by arbitrary or potentially discriminatory decision-making based on historical bias or identity claims". In other words, by espousing policy "solutions" formulated on legal-rational and evidence-based approaches, the international community's interventions are believed to be free of the distortions inherent in politics. More importantly, by embodying a rationalist outlook, the technocratic approach assumes that there is a "perfect" solution to any problem. In his

reflection on rationalism in politics, Oakeshott (1991) has detailed the long-standing fixation of rationalists in employing reason to the assessment of political issues and their persistent quest for policy standardization. His writings, while posing a devastating critique to the main tenets of Enlightenment thought, seamlessly highlight the spirit of the rationalist *philosophes* still enduring today:

> And the "rational" solution for any problem is, in its nature, the perfect solution. There is no place in his scheme for a "best in the circumstances", only a place for "the best"; because the function of reason is precisely to surmount circumstances. (...) And from this politics of perfection springs the politics of uniformity: a scheme which does not recognize circumstances can have no place for variety. There must in the nature of things be one best form of government which all intellects, sufficiently roused from the slumber of savage ignorance, will be irresistibly incited to approve (...) there may not be one universal remedy for all political ills, but the remedy for any particular ill is as universal in its application as it is rational in its conception. (OAKESHOTT, 1991, p. 10)

This technocratic vision has permeated the main institutions of contemporary state-building. In particular, international organizations such as the International Monetary Fund (IMF), North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE), UN, and World Bank are the core instruments of international technocratic governance. This trend towards technocratic approaches to state-building was enhanced by the demise of the Cold War and the new focus on peace-building. Several documents drafted by international organizations have accentuated the technical élan of these interventions. The fact that in *An Agenda for Peace* mechanisms such as peace-keeping were considered "techniques" naturally implied an obligation for "timely and accurate knowledge of the facts" and a "new requirement for technical assistance" (BOUTROS-GHALI, 1992). Since then, according to Mac Ginty (2012), a host of other official documents and initiatives have consecrated the technocratic approach to international state-building interventions is post-conflict situations – e.g., *An Agenda for Development* (BOUTROS-GHALI, 1994), *Supplement to an Agenda for Peace* (BOUTROS-GHALI, 1995), the establishment of the Peace-building Commission (1995), *Agenda for Democratization* (BOUTROS-GHALI, 1996), the *Brahimi Report* (BRAHIMI, 2000), the establishment of The High Level Panel on Threats,

Challenges and Change (2004), Kofi Annan's report *In Larger Freedom* (ANNAN, 2005), and the Review of the UN Peace-building Architecture (2010).

International organizations, such as those identified above, are highly complex bureaucratic institutions that are increasingly involved in making rules and prescribing the behavior of states (BARNETT & FINNEMORE, 2004; RITZER, 2008). The authority and power of these international organizations derives from an assortment of inter-related and complementary sources. To begin with, the technical and depoliticized claim of these bureaucratic organizations provide them with a tremendous amount of authority. As Barnett and Finnemore (2004, p. 23) state that, international organizations "frequently claim to be the representative of the community's interests or the values of the international community". Who exactly is the international community and what their precise interests are tend not to be a matter of intense debate. Another claim to authority stems from the organizations' expert status. Most international organizations provide specialized knowledge and services in one or more policy areas. The complexity involved in problem-solving and policy formulation favors institutions that possess a significant amount of technical information and professional personnel able to generate knowledge and feasible policy options from it.

As mentioned above, the emphasis on technical knowledge and criteria, also affords international organizations the power to regulate the behavior of states. Three mechanisms intrinsic to these organizations are particularly important in this aspect: 1) the classification of the world, 2) the fixation of meaning, and 3) the articulation and diffusion of norms (BARNETT & FINNEMORE, 2004). More accurately, international organizations organize and classify information and knowledge. For decades, international organizations have been active in classifying countries in terms of their political, economic, social, and environmental performance. For instance, every year the World Bank monitors and provides a List of Fragile and Conflict Affected Situation Countries, determining which states are "fragile". In a similar fashion, the IMF also regularly surveys fragile states in accordance with their capacity to deliver on many of the public goods identified above.[5] However, by classifying countries

[5] For examples see http://www.worldbank.org/en/topic/fragilityconflictviolence/overview#1 and http://www.imf.org/external/pubs/ft/survey/so/2015/pol070115a.htm.

international organizations are also able to attribute meaning by "framing" the situation. This capacity to frame issues and events allow international organizations "to fashion a shared understanding of the world, to galvanize sentiments as a way to mobilize and guide social action, and to suggest possible resolutions to current plights" (BARNETT & FINNEMORE, 2004, p. 33). Thus, states classified as "weak" or "failed" are deemed a threat to international security and, consequently, require "fixing". And as we have discussed above "fixing" states necessary implies implementing the standard state-building template formulated and promulgated by these same institutions. In this sense, while Barnett and Finnemore (2004, p. 33) argue that international institutions are the contemporary equivalents of missionaries, their "notion of progress" and "idea of how to create a better life" also echo the spirit of the Enlightenment.

CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

In recent years several scholars and commentators have pronounced the death of the contemporary international state-building project. Many believe that "the obsession with weak states was always more of a mania than a sound strategic doctrine" (MAZARR, 2014, p. 113). Besides the emergence of new challenges to the international community, the shortcomings of many of the international organization's state-building operations have tempered some of the initial enthusiasm in favor of intervening in war-torn states.

As stated in the introduction, the author shares many of the concerns of the critics of contemporary state-building. It is true, as several critics have highlighted, that the international community reveals a tendency to repeat the same mistakes due to the recurrent employment of "an unimaginative, uncritical, and template-driven approach to state-building" (KAPLAN, 2010, p. 89). Few would question the fact that the technocratic patina of state-building is deceptive and that the judgments regarding international intervention are always the result of political considerations and decisions (WESLEY, 2008). It is also undeniable that the international community's emphasis on technocracy seeks to create a politically homogenous world (MAC GINTY, 2012). However, rather than merely faulting the international community, it is much more important to understand the ideas driving their

behavior. For, while acknowledging that there has been too much optimism regarding the capacity to (re)build states, this spirit will not be moderated in the near future. Optimism is an essential feature of Enlightenment thought. Therefore, the international community will continue to actively seek to create a sustainable peace by promoting liberal institutions. This is especially true because initiatives involving internal state reconstruction have not produced the outcomes it desires – i.e., democratic regimes (OTTAWAY, 2002; KARL, 1990). Nor will the international community "give war a chance" as some academics have provocatively proposed (LUTTWAK, 1999).

The current paper argues that Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* presents itself as an exceptional analogy for understanding and appreciating the current state-building dilemma. The novel highlights the Enlightenment's optimism and faith in reason. In particular, it calls attention to the implications of the unconstrained belief in freedom and individual self-realization. As Thomas Vargish (2009, p. 336) clarifies, Frankenstein's power "appears to be inseparable from the freedom to achieve it and this freedom depends upon the ability to conceive of oneself as socially unfettered, a free creative spirit, someone paradoxically licensed to transgress ethical boundaries in the name of social progress". However, due to its Romantic inspiration, Shelley also attests to the limits of rationality and the power of human emotion. Victor Frankenstein ultimately rejects his creation. Rather than a superior being, Frankenstein regarded his endeavor as a failure. Disgusted by the results of his experiment he forsakes the creature. That is not to say that the international community forsakes the countries in which it intervenes. However, Richmond (2014) is correct in claiming that the international community does fear the results of the indigenous forces of state formation (i.e., a Hyde persona).

Hence, we might yet gain a lesson from Richmond's cherished Jekyll and Hyde. Whilst the analogy regarding the current predicament of international state-building is flimsy, Dr. Jekyll does embody a key element of modern rationalist thought – i.e., the unwavering belief in human capacity to move beyond the unknown. More precisely, even knowing that Hyde personified evil, Jekyll never questioned the moral implications of his experiment. Rather, in failing to control his transformations prior to his demise, he faulted the ingredients used in his potion for his unsavory situation. More precisely, faced with imminent death, Jekyll

confessed, "I am now persuaded that my first supply was impure, and that it was this unknown impurity which lent efficacy to the draught" (STEVENSON, 1964, p. 68). Thus, Jekyll does not question his ultimate intention, but rather the means in achieving them.

In a similar vein, even the most critical voices of contemporary state-building denote similar persuasions. For most of these critics target the instruments and means of the interventions, not the desired outcome. Seth Kaplan's (2010) condemnation of international state-building is illustrative of this fact. While placing considerable responsibility on the international community for the failure of contemporary state-building operations and the ensuing chaos, he, nevertheless, espouses the Enlightenment Project's ultimate aim – the establishment of a liberal peace. For Kaplan and other critics, empower local actors and strengthen traditional local structures and peace will come. More precisely, "Over time, greater trade, education, urbanization, and wealth would break down the barriers between clans while transforming traditional systems of governance into more Westernized forms, but such a process would be internally driven and shaped by the needs of the local population, not those of the international community" (KAPLAN, 2010, p. 91). Critics' calls for endogenously-driven development are truly generous. Yet, self-enlightenment was the *philosophes* final goal. We may celebrate the many criticisms of state-building put forward by academics and commentators over the last two decades. However, if their denunciation only focuses on the means and the mechanisms of international state-building and not on its final objective, we can be sure the Enlightenment's project of creating a global liberal peace will live on for the foreseeable future.

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