

# Drops of Peace

The role of water management in peacebuilding

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# Abstract

This thesis aims to develop a theory on the role of water in an intrastate peacebuilding process, which is an area of research that has not yet been explored. The notion presented and which drives the following argumentation is that water with its practical, essential, local and cooperative characteristics could be an important factor in a peacebuilding context. The theoretical discussions take as a starting point previous research on hydropolitics, which discusses water as a source of conflict or cooperation and hybrid peacebuilding, a theory which denotes the interaction between the international efforts and local level agency in a post-conflict society.

The role of water in a peacebuilding process can be divided into three areas; economic development, trust- and confidence-building cooperation on a local level and strengthening state legitimacy. Afghanistan is discussed as an illustrative example of water management in a peacebuilding process. The findings from the case study indicate that before water can generate larger peaceful relations the security situation needs to be stabilized. They also show that there is potential for water to act as an important driver in a peacebuilding process, thus paving way for further research.

*Key words:* hybrid peacebuilding, hydropolitics, water management and Afghanistan.

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# 1 Drops of Peace – an introduction

Water plays a vital and interesting role in a post-conflict society. Not only does war destroy the social and economic structure, it also causes great damage to infrastructure, which also includes irrigation systems, hydroelectric plants and other water related technologies. When rebuilding society after conflict or war, water is important for meeting basic human needs as well as the economically productive sectors' recovery (Weinthal et al 2011: 143). Ashton exemplifies; “[w]ater is recognized as the most fundamental and indispensable of all natural resources and it is clear that neither social and economic development nor environmental diversity can be sustained without water” (Ashton 2002: 236). This essential character gives water a special role, both as a technical factor on the path to recovery but also as an almost symbolic part of the peacebuilding project.

## 1.1 Exploring a void

Despite the importance of water as a source of life, Conca and Wallace argue that the environment is usually over-looked as a priority in a post-conflict society. The humanitarian aspects as well as economic reconstruction along with political reconciliation are deemed as higher priorities. The violent damage that conflict causes to the environment nevertheless has profound impacts for people's health and livelihoods (Conca & Wallace 2009: 485).

Cases from different post-conflict settings such as Afghanistan, Liberia and the Democratic Republic of Congo show how water management can empower communities. This contributes to other positive spin-off effects, such as the restoration of cooperation at a local, regional and national level of society, as well as economic revitalization and the improvement of public health (Burt & Keiru 2011: 232). Current debate has moved away from the more pessimistic predictions for water wars but the majority of the discussions regarding water still concern the possibilities of it acting as a trigger for either conflict or cooperation between states. What is still an unexplored area of research are what consequences water management can have for an intrastate peacebuilding process. The aim of this thesis is therefore to fill this academic black hole by attempting to develop a theory on the role of water management in peacebuilding.

Liberal peacebuilding on the other hand, has been a subject of considerable discussion and criticism, due to the destabilizing effects of its two main pillars – democracy and market economy. Similarly the inability to produce a locally anchored and sustainable peace has been criticized (Paris 2010: 337, Mac Ginty 2010: 391). This has led to a discussion to “move beyond” liberal peacebuilding,

and “post-liberal” approaches to peacebuilding. Another answer has been hybrid peacebuilding which emphasizes the interplay between internationally supported peace processes and local approaches to peacebuilding (Mac Ginty 2010: 391). Due to the focus of hybrid peacebuilding to build on local versions of peace and peacebuilding it will here serve as tool for developing a theory on how water management can affect peacebuilding.

## 1.2 The initial research conundrum

The driving notion for this thesis is that water, with its essential, practical, local and cooperative characteristics could be an important factor to take into consideration in peacebuilding contexts. As research on this subject has been scarce, this thesis will discuss a possible framework on how water could interact as a tool for peacebuilding. This framework will then be applied to Afghanistan as an illustrative case. By looking at the role of water management in Afghanistan through the lens of hybrid peacebuilding a different picture emerges, one where the cooperative and essential character of water issues can play an important role in contextualizing the peacebuilding.

### 1.2.1 The research question

The aim for this thesis is to outline a theory on water’s role in a peacebuilding context, which will be guided by the following research question;

*What role can water management play in intrastate peacebuilding?*

The purpose of this thesis is to broaden and deepen the discussions regarding both peacebuilding and the study of water resource management and beyond that to explore these two areas in relation to one another. The literature on water has mostly been dominated by either pessimistic water wars predictions or transboundary water governance and the possibilities for interstate conflict or cooperation, called hydropolitics. A shift of focus towards intrastate cooperation and peacebuilding is therefore in order. Hybrid peacebuilding will here be used as a tool for analyzing and critiquing water management, but also for hydropolitics to gain important understandings of its inherent political aspects.

For structural and theoretical clarity this thesis rests on a number of choices, choices which consequently creates delimitations. The vast academic field on liberal peacebuilding and its critique will not be discussed in detail here. What lies in focus are the discussions regarding the possible alternatives to the liberal peacebuilding and specifically hybrid peacebuilding.

Water is also a subject around which the academic research has proliferated in recent years. Most literature however revolves around interstate relations over water resources such as lakes and rivers. Though still an interesting topic it will

not be dealt with to any great extent here. Afghanistan, which will be used as an illustrative example, has a long history of protracted conflicts but the discussion here will be limited to its water issues in relation to peacebuilding. A discussion on the choice of Afghanistan will be further explored in the methodological chapter.

### 1.2.2 An epistemological and ontological frame of reference

Before moving on to presenting the theories it is important to reflect on the ontological and epistemological standpoint of this thesis. George and Bennett argue that “philosophical assumptions are unavoidable in everyday methodological choices at all phases of the design and execution of research” (George & Bennett 2005: 127). Different epistemological underpinnings can mean that ambiguities may arise despite similar theoretical standpoint. The section will however be kept to a minimum - as Brante argues; if meta-theoretical discussions adhere to simplicity, more time and energy can be spent on the main objectives of doing research (Brante 2001: 186). This introductory chapter therefore holds this short but hopefully comprehensible discussion exhaustive enough to serve as a starting point for further theoretical and methodological considerations.

Realism has opened up the philosophical debates in a move away from the antagonistic logical empiricism and interpretivism, or positivism and idealism. It states that there is a reality existing independently of our consciousness of it (Esaiasson et al. 2007: 17, Steinmetz 2004: 614, Shapiro & Wendt 1992: 197-198). The ontological premise of realism that there is a reality does not only concern the material world, but also the mental, giving reality a double dimension. The epistemological assumption of realism states that it is possible to obtain knowledge about this reality and also that this knowledge can be called an objective truth (Esaiasson et al 2007: 17, Brante 2001: 172). The advantages of an ontological and epistemological bedrock based on realism is its enabling character which the empirical focus entails. Through systematic and methodological observations and studies it is therefore possible to produce knowledge about the world we live in. As it also encompass not only that non-observable phenomena exists but also that they can be used as an explanation, it serves as a useful structure for the subsequent theorizing.

### 1.2.3 A short note on methodology

As the chapter which explains the methods used and its implications for the study will follow after the theories have been presented, a short note on methodology is therefore considered useful for the reader. The thesis has an exploratory approach in its aim to explore an area of research which has not yet been theorized. The development of a theory on water's role in peacebuilding will build on the theories presented in the following chapter, as well as the discussions on environmental peacebuilding. The thesis will also contain a case study, which will

be presented after the theoretical discussions. A deeper analysis of the methodological issues will be presented in chapter 3.

#### 1.2.4 Structure

This thesis is organized as follows: the introductory chapter will be followed by a presentation of the theories. Since the purpose is to develop a theory, the thesis will not rest on a theoretical framework to be tested, but instead hybrid peacebuilding and hydropolitics will be presented as starting points for the exploratory theory development which follows. The third chapter includes the methodological discussion which aims to clarify the methods used and questions regarding the choice of Afghanistan. The fourth chapter contains a discussion on environmental peacebuilding from which important parallels will be drawn, followed by a discussion on the similarities between peacebuilding and hydropolitics and the benefits that can produce. Further the theory on water's role in peacebuilding will be outlined, building on three paths; economic development, trust- and confidence-building cooperation on a local level and strengthening state legitimacy.

Lastly the case study of Afghanistan will be discussed, guided by the previously framed theory, ensued by an analysis of the findings, and their relation to hybrid peacebuilding. The thesis ends with a concluding discussion and outlook for future research.

## 2 Presenting the theories

The following chapter contains a theoretical overview of the literature on hydropolitics, concentrating on the cooperation or conflict conundrum. Next is a discussion on liberal peacebuilding and its critique, with a focus on hybrid peacebuilding.

Since the aim of the thesis is to develop a theory on water's role in peacebuilding, there is an importance in understanding the background of contemporary peacebuilding discussions. The theory of hybrid peacebuilding will resurface again in the next chapter where a longer discussion on the parallels between a technical versus political approach will be kept. Hybrid peacebuilding will also reappear in the case study, where it will be used as an analysis tool to critique and revise the possibilities of water as an instrument for peacebuilding in Afghanistan. The chapter will be ended with a glance at what previously has been written on water and peacebuilding.

### 2.1 Hydropolitics

Hydropolitics has as a field of academic research burgeoned during the last couple of years. The realization of water as a natural resource which life is basically impossible without illustrates its multifaceted structure and is also its driving force. The expansion of literature is also connected to the increasingly alarming reports on a growing global water scarcity (Turton 2002: 13). Despite the already vast amount of literature, the subject lacks a clear definition, which leads to confusion and does not contribute to the overall development of the field. Even though water by definition is connected to a specific context such as river basins, aquifers, ecosystems and landscapes, the subject stretches over its physical boundaries. This has led to the subject being rather dispersed (Mollinga 2008: 7).

One of the definitions of hydropolitics comprises both the risk for violence and conflict over transboundary water as well as the cooperative potential over water resources to be managed in a sustainable manner (Aggestam & Sundell-Eklund 2011: 1). However this definition seems to be only acknowledging states as the main actors and does not include other aspects of water-related issues such as water and development, social aspects of water, water and gender and water as an instrument for peace and peacebuilding (Turton 2002: 15-17). While Turton wants to extend the concept of hydropolitics to include all water politics, Mollinga proposes another classification. He divides water as a field of research into four domains with the linkages between them as the fifth (Mollinga 2008: 12). “The everyday politics of water resources management” concerns the small scale events

of water; “how access to local groundwater markets is negotiated between community members, how maintenance obligations connected to water rights are enforced in a farmer-managed irrigation system and many other examples” (*Ibid.*). “The politics of water policy in the context of sovereign states” highlights that water policies are negotiated and renegotiated at all levels and all stages of the formulation and implementation processes as well as between different state institutions and groups who are directly or indirectly influenced by the policies. The domain also comprises the context created by international development assistance and their strong or weak effect on national policies. “Inter-state hydropolitics” refers to the international water conflicts; “conflicts and negotiation processes between sovereign states on water allocation and distribution, particularly in relation to transboundary rivers or aquifers” (*Ibid.*). The fourth domain of interaction lies in “[t]he global politics of water”. It comprehends the international level of water discourse, policy and regulation, dominantly pursued by international institutions and organizations such as the World Water Forums, The World Water Council and the Global Water Partnership. It also entails the global advocacy of access to water as a human right, the World Trade Organizations dealings on privatization of water and the politics concerning the environmental and social effects of large dam buildings. The last arena is the relation and linkages between or across the four previous areas. An example of which could be how multilateral development funds a restructure of local water and power sectors with mixed outcomes (*Ibid:* 13). Mollinga's definitions show the broad scope of water issues. The advantage of having a wider perspective on water is the inclusion of other levels than purely the national, above all the local. It also acknowledges the important linkages between the levels. The focus for cooperation and the resulting peacebuilding benefits has however been concentrated to the domain of interstate hydropolitics. The next part will explore this subject more closely.

### 2.1.1 Water – a source of conflict or cooperation?

“Fierce competition for fresh water may well become a source of conflict and wars in the future” – Kofi Annan (quoted in Wolf 2007: 241). This contention has laid at the heart of many discussions concerning water. Homer-Dixon was one of the first to point to the connection between the scarcity of environmental necessities and conflict with water being one of the triggering factors (Homer-Dixon 1991: 78). Other researchers have drawn on the same neo-Malthusian arguments; that natural resource scarcity combined with social inequalities is directly linked to the probability of conflict (Gizelis & Wooden 2010: 444-445). Klare is one such researcher; arguing that simultaneously as the world resource consumption grows, shortages will occur, thereby forcing governments to take action, which will then increase the risk of states maximizing their control over conflicted resources. This environmental security dilemma will increase the risk of conflict between countries sharing important natural resources (Klare 2001: 23). While Klare's conclusions have been contested he is right in one aspect;

population and economic growth is putting an increasing demand on water. The total quantity of water remains approximately the same today as it has throughout history, therefore the average amount of water per person has dropped by 37% since 1970 (Wolf 2007: 242). The contribution of the neo-Malthusian arguments emphasizes the importance of the complex relationship between ecosystems and human interaction. Such arguments however downplay the role of policies and institutions in suggesting that adaptation policies will always be determined by the environmental context (Gizelis & Wooden 2010: 445).

While most research has moved away from water wars predictions (even Homer-Dixon himself, see Wolf 2007: 244), many still agree that there is a connection between environmental change and violent outcomes (Conca 2002: 1). Empirical evidence supports the notion “that environmental problems can trigger or exacerbate localized conflicts along existing social cleavages such as ethnicity, class, region, or relative deprivation” (*Ibid*: 5). In the absence of institutions which could mediate such conflicts, conflicts may be triggered or worsened (*Ibid*: 1). Gleick exemplifies four geographical and geopolitical features which affects whether water can cause rivalry or confrontation; “[t]he degree of water scarcity that already exists in the region, the extent to which a water supply is shared by one or more states or regions, the relative power relationships that exists between water-sharing states and the availability of alternative water sources and their accessibility” (quoted in Ashton 2002: 239-240).

### 2.1.2 Local water conflicts

Most studies on the nexus of water and conflict have focused on the propensity of interstate conflict while little attention has been paid to the impact of water scarcity in intrastate wars. Ironic, since it is also the most common type of conflict (Ashton 2002: 239-240). Natural reasons explain this approach; water flows without respect for state boundaries and 60 % of all the surface water basins are shared between two or more states. Consequently they cover almost half of the earth’s land surface area (Earle et al 2010: 1). Bencala and Dabelko highlight an often overlooked fact; even if water wars are rare, that does not mean that water cannot precipitate conflict. “If we move beyond the classic realist focus on states to analyze conflict at the subnational level, we find extensive violence surrounding water. While it does not involve armies on the move, these conflicts carry high stakes – and life and death consequences – for those involved.” (Bencala & Dabelko 2008: 22.) Such conflicts may arise due to the cost of the water itself or limited supplies of water causing competition between sectors and large projects such as dams (*Ibid*.). Uitto and Duda states that conflicts over water resources may increase due to the growing demand combined with the effects of climate change. These conflicts could take place “between countries, between sub-national governments within countries or between competing sectoral users or groups within countries” (Uitto & Duda 2002: 365). Conca agrees; “existing research suggests that when environmental stress makes a contribution to violent conflict, it is most likely to be at the subnational level” (Conca 2002: 231). He has

further categorized causes of local water conflicts into three categories; “capital-intensive water infrastructure projects, impacts on critical socio-ecological systems and changes in community access to water supplies” (quoted in Bencala and Dabelko 2008: 27). Ashton argues that there is a higher potential for intra-state conflicts which are smaller in scale, often related to concerns over water quality caused by upstream activities as well as problems of access to water during critical periods (Ashton 2002: 240).

These arguments point to an important lacunae in hydropolitics literature; empirical evidence points to the risk of sub-national conflict being more frequent or likely than intrastate, while most recommendations and research focus on international basins and cooperation. Uitto and Duda however emphasize that those basins which are shared between one or more nation are faced with a more complicated situation since water touches upon states sovereignty, which would explain the academic focus on transboundary water conflicts (Uitto & Duda 2002: 365).

### 2.1.3 The cooperative potential

Another underlying assumption of the water-conflict advocates is that the only logic or possible reaction to water scarcity is competition or violent conflict (Ashton 2002: 237). However, another school of thought argues that water is more likely to engender cooperation rather than conflict. Merrey concludes; “[a]lthough water can be an ‘irritant’, a striking finding is that nearly all interactions over water are cooperative.” (Merrey 2009: 188). Barnett agrees in that cooperation over water resources is a more probable outcome than conflict. Empirical evidence has showed that instead of disagreement and violence, water can be a focal point for dialogue and confidence building (Barnett 2001: 57). Cooperation over water can be manifest in different ways; the most common way of defining it is through an international agreement, treaty or other kinds of institutional arrangements (Zeitoun & Mirumachi 2008: 303).

Despite earlier discussions on the occurrence of water wars, Wolf claims that there has only been one interstate war fought over water – 4500 years ago, while there is a record of 3600 cooperative water treaties. Even the world’s most conflict-ridden national relationships; Israelis and Arabs, Indians and Pakistanis to name but a few, have or are in the progress of creating water-related agreements (Wolf 2007:245). Bencala and Dabelko argue that the possibility for nations with tense relationships to come together on issues of water management lies in the creation of a less threatening forum where they can make joint decisions (Bencala & Dabelko 2008: 24). While this does not say anything about the quality of those agreements, it still serves to highlight the cooperative potential of water.

#### 2.1.4 The conflict and cooperation continuum

The discussions concerning water's potential as a catalyst for either conflict or cooperation is usually depicted as a continuum ranging from conflict on one side and cooperation on the other. In these analytical models conflict and cooperation are operationalized into a measurable scale, where transboundary river basins and their interstate relations and interactions can be positioned (for examples of this see Zeitoun & Mirumachi 2008: 302). Despite the fact that the combined research on hydropolitics seems to agree that conflict and cooperation can co-exist, they are usually analyzed as distinctly separate phenomenon. However, the continuum becomes problematic as it deepens the perspective of "either/or", and does not represent any variations over time or changed political contexts. Instead the continuum gives a very one-dimensional picture of a highly complex relationship. An example is Israel and Palestine who are cooperating on data gathering on water issues, but continue to have a highly violent conflict in other regards (*Ibid*).

While the continuum per say is confining the analyze of hydropolitics in a very linear pattern, the hegemonic discourse on water as a trigger for either conflict or cooperation have an almost dampening role on the development of new theories on water. Existing literature on hydropolitics are mainly focusing on transboundary water interactions and leaving out important sub-national dimensions. The role of water management in a peacebuilding context is also yet to be explored. This chapter therefore takes a turn into contemporary discussions on peacebuilding.

## 2.2 Liberal peacebuilding and its critiques

The dominant framework for post-conflict peacebuilding has during recent decades relied on liberal pillars; the introduction of democracy, free and globalized markets, human rights, neoliberal development and the rule of law (Franks & Richmond 2009: 4). The underlying principle is that liberalism promotes peace and stems from the idea of what is usually called the liberal democratic peace – that liberal democracies do not go to war with each other (Hegre et al 2001: 33). However, the liberal peace and the liberal democratic peace are distinct in that the liberal peace comprises not just domestic political institutions, but also the characteristics of the peace in social, political, economic, civil and international matters (Richmond 2009: 559). Despite support from the UN and other international actors, liberal peacebuilding has been subject of considerable criticism due to the disappointing record of past peacebuilding attempts. Paris states that "efforts to introduce and promote liberal democratic governing systems and market-oriented economic growth [...] have been more difficult and unpredictable than initially expected, in some cases producing destabilizing side effects" (Paris 2010: 337). Sriram agrees and argues that marketization and democratization could even provoke a return to conflict. Many post-conflict states have little or no experience of market economy or democracy

and a focus on these may be inappropriate and destabilizing. The critique against liberal peacebuilding is generally not against its virtues in a broader sense but the paradox that the dominant tools for peacebuilding are more likely to promote destabilization than peace and security (Sriram 2007: 579-580).

Another part of the critique which has been directed towards liberal peacebuilding has been that it has ignored or failed to recognize the local dynamics of the conflict societies as it is a reflection of “the practical and ideological interests of the global North” (Mac Ginty 2010: 393, Richmond 2011: 115). Liberal peacebuilding has been accused of being ethnocentric and of only promoting Western values and having a belief that liberalism is universal (Mac Ginty 2010: 394). Richmond discusses how “[i]n many post-violence environments local perceptions of the liberal peace project and its statebuilding focus indicate it to be ethically bankrupt, subject to double standards, coercive and conditional, acultural, unconcerned with social welfare, and unfeeling and insensitive towards its subjects” (Richmond 2009: 558). Lidén points to the contradictions between the distance of liberal peacebuilding’s “global objectives” and the local conditions vital for its implementation, which fails to create a local ownership (Lidén 2009: 618). Paris and Sisk argues a similar case; external intervention is used to raise self-government, international control is required to create local ownership, while universal values are supported as a cure for local problems (Paris & Sisk 2009: 305-6).

An interest in indigenous, traditional and customary approaches to peacebuilding in the after-math of civil wars has therefore increased. Its supporters claim that indigenous approaches are participatory and more likely to produce peaceful outcomes than top-down “template-style international peace interventions effected through the liberal peace” (Mac Ginty 2008: 139). Mac Ginty claims that traditional and local forms of governance and dispute resolution may be more effective and connect on an intuitive level with the cultural expectations of communities. Through this customary interaction a more sustainable and legitimate peace can be created (Mac Ginty 2010: 408). Richmond critiques the liberal peace for having its main focus on security and institutions, built through force or conditionality rather than consent. It is therefore lacking an engagement with the everyday life of citizens and their local cultural norms and traditions. The inability of the liberal peace to have an impact on the everyday lives of people in the post-conflict societies has created what Richmond calls a “virtual peace” (Richmond 2009: 563). His idea is to focus on “everyday forms of peace”, a sustainable peace which focuses on culturally appropriate forms of individual and community life and care. As opposed to the liberal peace which policies usually are aimed at states, rather than communities or people (Ibid: 558, 566). Relating to the concept of everyday peace is the post-liberal peace, which can be viewed as a repositioning of the liberal peace (Ibid: 569). Post-liberal peace emphasizes “the importance of local voices and narratives (not just local elites), and enables self-government, self-determination, empathy, care and an understanding of cultural dynamics, contained within the everyday” (Ibid: 570).

### 2.2.1 Hybrid peacebuilding

Mac Ginty's contribution to the discussion is the theory on hybrid peace, which emphasizes that peace as well as security, development and reconstruction is likely to be a hybrid between the external and the local (Mac Ginty 2010: 391). He argues that the critique of liberal peace as being an all-powerful liberal internationalism tends to be a misrepresentation. Instead of viewing peacebuilding from the international community as monolithic and hegemonic it is more correct to picture it as a combination of exogenous and indigenous forces (Ibid: 391-392). Hybrid peace is created in a process where different actors come together or disagree on different issues and to different extents, thereby producing a fusion. An example can be how local traditions are used in respect to issues of reconciliation, while the structure of the economy is built on international norms and practices.

The use of the term hybrid and hybridity is not novel to anthropological, social, organizational, institutional or post-colonial studies but has only since recently been applied to peace and conflict studies. The term of hybridity may be associated with a pure object being diluted by another object and by that process contaminated or weakened. In this framework the term is more focusing on hybridity as a part of a constant lending and borrowing between cultures and societies (Ibid: 397). Hybrid has in the context of peacebuilding been used as a prefix, noting a combination of international and domestic, traditional or local factors. Two exceptions can be found in the literature, first Bellamy and Williams discussions on hybrid peace missions, which is a peace operation that is set up with both UN as well as other Western troops (Bellamy& Williams 2009: 44). Secondly Mandell's definition of hybrid peacekeeping, a model for third-party peacekeeping that emphasizes the combination of different peacekeeping practices (Mandell 1996: 261).

Boege et al. discusses hybrid political orders and the possibilities of looking beyond liberal constructions of the state to create a political community embedded in the local life-world (Boege et al 2009: 611). Sriram mentions the use of hybrid courts in the context of transitional justice meaning a combination of international and domestic trials and courts (Sriram 2007: 591). Richmond frequently uses hybrid as a prefix to a number of related concepts; hybrid forms of governance, hybrid justice systems, hybrid form of polity and hybrid localized identity (Richmond 2011: 117, 121, 124 and 2009: 567). He also uses the term liberal-local hybrid as in the meaning of a contextualized peace that bridges the gap between bottom-up and top-down or a “transmutation of both the liberal and the local” (Richmond 2011: 115-116). Richmond's and Mac Ginty's meanings of the word are very similar but Mac Ginty puts his emphasis on the process in which a hybrid is created, it may be peace but can also be for example development, security, civil society or governance (Mac Ginty 2010: 392).

Hybrid peace is much more complex than the fusion of two categories of norms, practices or actors, there can simultaneously be groups engaging with the liberal peace in positive and negative ways (Ibid: 406). The plurality of actors and the different ways in which they interact creates an astatic process of

hybridization, as no single actor can singlehandedly impose its agenda on the whole context (Mac Ginty 2011: 8-9). In order to clarify Mac Ginty has outlined a four-part conceptual model on the process of hybridization in societies experiencing international peace-support interventions. The four factors denote the interplay among the actors, sometimes conflicting and sometimes cooperating, from where in between the hybrid peace is created. These are; “the compliance powers of liberal peace agents, networks and structures, the incentivizing powers of liberal peace agents, networks and structures, the ability of local actors to resist, ignore or adapt liberal peace interventions, and the ability of local actors, networks and structures to present and maintain alternative forms of peacemaking” (*Ibid.*). In summation “hybridization is how individuals, groups, structures and ideas evolve and adapt” (*Ibid*: 73). Combined the four actors give the picture of the plurality of “peaces”, as a critique of the monopolizing view of the liberal peace (*Ibid*: 11).

## 2.2.2 Problematizing hybrid peacebuilding

Paris raises an important cautionary note by arguing that traditional or bottom-up approaches should be an important part of peacebuilding but not to be considered a cure-all (Paris 2010: 359). The interest in traditional or indigenous peace-making should not be conflated with a perception of them as being “good” or having a higher normative value. Neither should liberal peacebuilding automatically be dismissed as “imposed, harmful and culturally inappropriate” (Mac Ginty 2008: 149-150). There is however a danger in romanticizing the traditional and customary practices just for the sake of them being local – that does not always make them right or just. Richmond agrees; “context should not be essentialised, or be perceived as necessarily benign. Emergent hybridities must be treated with caution, both in their liberal and local version” (Richmond 2011: 132). As an example he mentions the system of chiefs in the Solomon Islands, even though a traditional form of governance it is still problematic from a liberal point of view. Chiefs are not elected, and in some contexts it is impossible for a woman to become a chief (*Ibid*: 129). Chopra raises a similar example of how local methods for resolving conflicts in the arid lands in northern Kenya have proved to be counterproductive to statebuilding, as some of its characteristics are opposite to the official laws of Kenya (Chopra 2009: 531). This causes problems for the synthesis of local and international peacebuilding. Even though it may have the capability of producing more locally resonant forms of peace it might not fit perfectly within the international ideals of the liberal peace or state (Richmond 2011: 125). Mac Ginty therefore sees the importance in exposing all peace-making techniques to rigorous tests to evaluate their relevance and whether they are fit for the purpose (Mac Ginty 2008: 149). However if liberal peacebuilders remain able to choose from amongst the various local peacebuilding approaches, dismissing those which are deemed too far from the liberal ideals, does not the power over the peacebuilding process still lie in the hands of the internationals? Paris believes that if a traditional method is to be used, be it peacemaking or

governance, there still needs to be a recognition that foreign peacebuilders will still need to make choices, whether they wish so or not. He continues; “[c]onsequential decisions must therefore be made to privilege some structures and not others – and, as much as peacebuilders might view themselves as referees in such decisions, in fact they will always be ‘players’ simply by virtue of their relative power in the domestic setting of a war-torn state.” (Paris 2010: 359).

The crucial point remains that the traditional or indigenous peace-making methods have proved unable to prevent the conflict, due to a number of reasons. Changes in the traditional society as a consequence of development processes, population movements and the introduction of modern weapons have altered the moral authority as well as the environment in which local peacemaking traditions function. It is also important to note that many traditional societies were anything but peaceful and ascribed a high value to warfare and were disdainful to the idea of pursuing peace (Mac Ginty 2008: 150). There is a need for external influence – had the post-conflict society been able to manage on their own, there would be no need for an international presence in the first place (Paris 2010: 359).

A related issue is the problem of viewing traditional and western peacemaking as separate and isolated categories. The notion of the Western rational sphere versus the non-Western emotional sphere might seem like a neat and appealing construction. It however has little resemblance to reality, which is much more complex. When discussing hybrid peacebuilding it is therefore important not to picture it as the “pristine pre-encounter traditional society versus the Western uber-rational model”. Instead it needs to be taken into account that within each category there exist a wide range of diversity (Mac Ginty 2008: 151). Just as the “international community” is comprised of a spectrum of states, organizations and actors, “the local” is also composed of a wide array of actors, communities, organizations, state functions and other groups that may not always agree on either goal or means to get there. Mac Ginty argues that the concept of hybridity is a useful tool to take down the binary combinations that are usually applied to explain the social and political world “modern versus traditional, Western versus non-Western, legal-rational versus ritualistic-irrational”. Everything is already hybridized – “local”, “indigenous”, “liberal” are composites from long-term processes of social negotiation and adaptation – everything is a hybrid (Mac Ginty 2010: 397-398). Hybrid peace is therefore not to be considered the merging of two entities, but rather the acknowledgement that they are also subject to prior hybridization (Mac Ginty 2011: 8). Such a relative standpoint can if drawn to its limit be fatal for discussions on hybridity, as nothing can be stated with certainty. But it is possible to recognize degrees of hybridization as well as the fact that some actors, networks or structures are less hybridized than others - there exists points of fixation (Mac Ginty 2010: 407).

Lastly it should be noted that Mac Ginty does not promote hybridity as such. Just as the context in which it emerges, it can be far from peaceful and just at the same time as it can be seen as promoting tolerance and inclusion. It is therefore worth denoting the difference between hybridity and hybrid peace (Mac Ginty 2011: 210).

## 2.3 Previous research on water management and peacebuilding

An article by Burt and Keiru is one of few discussing the role of water management in an intrastate peacebuilding context. They state that “equitable and sustainable management of water resources can contribute towards peacebuilding in post-conflict environments” (Burt & Keiru 2011: 231). By presenting three cases of post-conflict settings; Liberia, Democratic Republic of Congo and Afghanistan, they conclude that effective water management has contributed to improvements within in a number of different areas. They include public-health, economic revitalization as well as the restoration of a lasting peace. Their examples show how participation of local communities in the planning as well as implementation of water projects contributed to peacebuilding at the local level but was also conducive to the larger state building and development process (Ibid).

Stec et al discusses post-conflict peacebuilding over the Sava River, which after the war that divided Yugoslavia became transboundary. Their analysis state that the reconstruction of the river basin was important from an economic point of view, but it also became an opportunity to foster cooperation in the region (Stec et al 2011: 193).

Tignino takes a right-based approach in stating that water and sanitation is a right and also a mechanism to achieve durable peace by analyzing international criminal tribunals, regional human rights mechanisms and truth commissions. She asserts that access to water and sanitation “can help to produce more equitable short-term results and more sustainable longer-term development goals”. This also mitigates some of the causes of conflict at a local and national level (Tignino 2011: 243). A different but interesting aspect is raised by Palmer-Moloney, where water is used as a proxy observable for operations related to security, governance and development in the Afghani province of Helmand (Palmer-Moloney 2011: 214). She argues that “water must move beyond resource management if it is to advance post-conflict peacebuilding efforts” (Ibid: 211).

The articles all share a lack of ambition in creating any broader generalizing theories on water’s role in peacebuilding; they mostly conclude with individual recommendations for the selected cases, or an affirmation that water is an important factor to take into consideration in peacebuilding. What the articles however demonstrate is that water touches upon many issues; public-health, development, law and justice, security and cooperation on a local as well as regional scale. This has to be taken into consideration when creating the ensuing framework.

# 3 Methodological considerations

Before moving on the interesting development of the theory on water's role in peacebuilding, a deepened discussion on methodology will first be presented. This chapter will contain the methodological considerations related to the choices and methods used, starting with theory development and case study methodology. The chapter ends with a note on sources.

## 3.1 Exploratory theory development

While this thesis will contain a case study, the case will be more of an illustrative discussion in relation to the heavier theory developing and exploratory parts. The purpose is to highlight a subject for research - waters role in peacebuilding, an area which has not yet been theorized. The academic field on water issues in general is under-theorized and would therefore benefit from a merge with a more theorized subject, such as peacebuilding. The methodological discussion useful for the thesis is therefore focused on theory development and exploratory case studies. Although the aim is to try and find and explain any causal effects between water and peacebuilding through the developed theory it is due to lack of empirical data difficult to say anything with utter certain, in relation to the case study. This would require a larger study, preferably in the field. However, the ambition here is to try and develop a theory, which maybe could pave the way for such future research projects.

Berg identifies the exploratory case study as a research in which studies, fieldwork or data collection is carried out before defining the research question. However the study must have some sort of "organizational framework that has been designed prior to beginning the research" (Berg 2007: 292). This thesis resembles the exploratory case study in its emphasis on theory exploring and the view that it can be seen as a prelude to larger empirical studies. The organizational framework Berg discusses will here be interpreted as the hypothesis formulated in the introductory chapter and which serves as the guiding light for the more detailed theorization in the following parts. This thesis however differentiates from the exploratory case study as it will not be based on empirical data collection before defining the research question.

Esaiasson et. al acknowledges the fact that literature on methodology rarely mentions the procedure for developing theories. The reason for being so is that scientific method is usually more interested in testing theories validity, than looking at the discussions leading up to the idea of a new approach. New theories

can of course also originate when testing a hypothesis or theory which turns out to be false or inconsistent with reality and therefore by modification or alteration new ideas develop. But when entering a field of little or no theories, these rules do not apply. Esaiasson et al also has a point in arguing that the value of a theory lies in its applicability and usability for empirics, not in the circumstances of its formation (Esaiasson et al 2007: 123).

## 3.2 Case study methodology

Even though the thesis will be of a theoretically driven nature, it will also contain a case study. A case study is defined by the focus on a single case or episode to test or develop explanations that could also be generalizable to other cases or events (George & Bennett 2005: 5). The case study can also be defined in relation to other methods of social research, namely the experiment and the social survey. Related to the character of a single focus is the dimension of the amount of detailed information that is collected about the chosen case. A social survey gathers relatively little information from a number of cases, while the case study research only investigates one or a few cases, but in considerable depth. Even though academic debate seems to agree on the nature of the case study, there is a wide debate over the aim of the case study. Some argue that the case study can only portray the unique character of that particular case and should not have any goals of generalizing (Hammersley & Gomm 2000: 2).

Since the aim of this thesis is to try and outline a theory that can be generalizable to other cases of water management issues in peacebuilding, the discussion is worth exploring. Those researchers not interested in generalizing from a case study find a scientific content in gaining an understanding of one case or event, called an “intrinsic case study”. Evaluation research could be an example of research that has intrinsic value (Gomm et al 2000: 99). Others find that it is possible as well as desirable to make generalization from a single case to similar cases (Berg 2007: 295). Some researchers argue that generalizability is even a cornerstone of research and a methodological criterion (Denscombe 2002: 171, Teorell & Svensson 2007: 68). The argument for generalizing from one case is that a case study which is “properly undertaken” can provide understandings of other similar cases or events, although it cannot produce a theory strong enough for explaining all cases. But it can provide a likely explanation for most cases (Berg 2007: 295). From such a standpoint the case study can also serve as a basis for future inquiries as it can open up for divergent findings and explanations and by that moving the research frontier forward.

### 3.2.1 Choosing the case

To illustrate the theoretical discussion of the possibilities of water management and hybrid peacebuilding, Afghanistan will be used as a case study. It may be

controversial to use Afghanistan as an example of a peacebuilding as parts of the country are still experiencing war like situations. Afghanistan has however been exposed to the internationally concerted peacebuilding efforts similar to those seen in Bosnia and Herzegovina and Sierra Leone (Mac Ginty 2010: 391). Another reason for choosing Afghanistan is that it is a semi-arid country, where irrigation is widely spread and an important aspect of maintaining the livelihoods of million Afghans. Water supply is highly seasonal with times of drought as well as flooding. This varying condition makes water management an important issue (Abdullaev & Shah 2011: 334). The combination of an international presence since 2001 with the prominent role of water management and irrigation makes Afghanistan an interesting case to discuss.

The lack of literature on the subject of peacebuilding and water impedes the study, which is also why Afghanistan has been chosen; material on water issues in Afghanistan has been somewhat easier to find. van Evera claims that selecting data-rich cases is one of the first features to take into consideration when choosing cases (van Evera 1997: 97). It is however important to highlight that Afghanistan is a data-rich case in relation to other cases which were considered in an early stage. The strong international interest and presence since the US intervention in 2001 has led to it being more analyzed and studied, with water management issues being far more frequently featured, at least in comparison to other cases of peacebuilding efforts. The empirical data available is nevertheless still scarce and has problematized the study.

Another interesting aspect of using Afghanistan as a case is the fact that peacebuilding is a very broad term that includes capacity strengthening endeavors as well as peacemaking, peacekeeping, reconciliation and similar efforts. This denotes the reality of many operations where all processes occur simultaneously, such as in Afghanistan (Walton 2009: 717).

When selecting cases for the qualitative as well as quantitative study it is important to take into consideration whether or not they can be argued to be biased. A biased case in case study research methodology is when the selected case is deliberately chosen to either verify or reject the tested theories. To avoid such dilemmas it is worth discussing what the case is a case of; whether it is most likely or least likely to share the predicted outcomes of the theory (George & Bennett 2005: 23). The war and subsequent peacebuilding and statebuilding processes in Afghanistan has been punctuated by problems and relapses. Saying that cooperation over local water management could solve the conflicts and build peace in a broader sense is an overstatement which would only undermine the relevance for theories on water issues in peacebuilding. Since it has been difficult finding relevant empirical material on what role water has played for the security or peacebuilding in Afghanistan it is difficult to say if it can be argued to be a case that is most likely to verify the hypotheses stated earlier. But what could be argued is that if it would be possible to find any causal relations between water management and peacebuilding in Afghanistan it would be a least likely case to verify the theory, due to the spectrum of deep-rooted and widespread problems that contribute to its protracted conflicts.

Despite the need for water in a highly agriculture based society, water has not contributed to the conflict in a direct way, making it a more neutral issue. However, this can be both an argument for it being a least likely as well as a most likely case. With water being a more neutral issue it is easier to cooperate as it is not viewed as a symbolic issue over which parties of the conflict feels the need to have the upper hand, thereby obstructing cooperation. But if water is a small and neutral issue, cooperation over it is maybe not seen as a contributor to other peace dividends or peace in the larger picture.

### 3.2.2 Problematizing sources and references

Burt and Keiru, authors of the article “Strengthening post-conflict peacebuilding through community water-resource management: case studies from Democratic Republic of Congo, Afghanistan and Liberia”, also work for Tearfund, a UK-based relief and development organization, whose project the article is describing. There is therefore a risk that they could over-exaggerate or in some way depict their work and its outcomes in a more positive light. This fact has been taken into consideration when using the article and its content in the thesis.

Mac Ginty raises a more general but interesting note on academic literature: he contends that most academic work on peace and conflict is produced by white men from the global north. He questions what qualifies these scholars (including himself) to understand and analyze on-the-ground conditions in a post-conflict society: “[t]he discipline of international relations, for example, tends to steer towards analyses that concentrate on formal political institutions and actors.” This focus risks missing out on other social, cultural, political and economic phenomena, whose signals the researcher is in danger of not noticing. Anthropology and sociology is to some extent better equipped to pick up these signals but what is recommended is for other disciplines to have a more realistic insight. This could be achieved by recognizing that they are “often only scratching the surface of the phenomena that it wishes to study” (Mac Ginty 2011: 4). While this argumentation has a strong relevance in realizing the limitations of researchers, it could be problematic to assume this position fully as it would then be an almost excusing or obstructing factor when discussing empirical findings. It does however encourage research of post-conflict societies to employ a wider and more open perspective when analyzing local conditions. Since the author of this thesis is also white and from a democracy it might seem controversial to raise this discussion but the aim of methodological discussions is to be open to all aspects of the research process, even those difficult to overcome. The focus on local conditions employed by this thesis can however also be a step towards realizing the complex and unacknowledged aspects of post-conflict societies.

# 4 A joint approach – water management in peacebuilding

As the earlier chapter demonstrated, research on water acting as a triggering factor for either conflict or cooperation is a widely explored and discussed field. While focus has been on interstate conflict, the research on waters role in intrastate peacebuilding contexts have been scarce. The following chapter tries to explore the possibilities of developing a theory in the field of water management in intrastate peacebuilding. The aim is to try and outline a theory which will answer the general research question but which also will hold validity for future research and studies.

The chapter starts with a passage on environmental peacebuilding as discussed primarily by Conca and Dabelko, followed by a critical note on the bottom-up approach. After will follow a discussion on the discrepancies of viewing water as a technical or political issue in relation to how peacebuilding has been regarded. Finally the contribution to a theory on water's role in peacebuilding is outlined, concentrating on three pillars; firstly economic development, secondly trust and confidence-building cooperation on a local level and finally strengthening state legitimacy.

## 4.1 Environmental peacebuilding

Research on the risk for environmentally induced conflicts as well as discussions on ecological security has failed to provide strategies for peace. Instead it typically ends with highly generalized recommendations for environmental cooperation (Conca 2002: 3). While the research on whether environmental degradations can cause conflict is still ongoing, empirical evidence shows that a failure to address environmental needs in a post-conflict society “may greatly complicate the difficult task of peacebuilding” (Conca & Wallace 2008: 485-486). Tensions over environmental issues may be triggered causing a return to conflict while a more general failure to meet the basic environmental needs may weaken efforts for reconciliation, political institutionalization and economic reconstruction (*Ibid.*).

However, an emergent body of literature is arguing that shared environmental problems may create peacebuilding opportunities. Conca and Dabelko have developed a theory on environmental peacebuilding, which even though mostly focusing on regional peace and interstate relation through cooperation over environmental issues, contains important points which are valid in relation to this

thesis (Conca 2002: 3). Their argument is that collaboration over environmental issues can have positive spin-off effects for peace by the prominent characteristics of many environmental problems and the social relations which they can engender (*Ibid*: 9-10). These include; “providing an agenda of shared interests, promoting confidence-building, deepening intergroup ties and fostering the complex task of (re)constructing shared identities” (Conca & Wallace 2009: 489). The focus of Conca and Dabelko's theory is that it is the social relations surrounding the environment that creates the opportunities for peacebuilding. Research on cases of environmental conservation has proved them to be a platform for bringing former warring parties together to engage in the peacebuilding processes surrounding environmental issues (Conca 2002: 9-10).

In the UN's Secretary-general's 2006 progress report environmental peacebuilding initiatives are depicted both as a risk factor for violent conflict but also as a peacebuilding tool “by promoting dialogue around shared resources and enabling opposing groups to focus on common problems” (quoted in Conca & Wallace 2009: 486). This recognition has led to an increased interest in the environmental dimensions of conflict prevention and post-conflict reconstruction. The UN Environment program now has a Post-conflict and Disaster management branch (PCDMB) and the UN Peacebuilding commission counts sustainable development as one of its mandates. Despite the increased attention, we still know little of “the potential role of environmental initiatives in peacebuilding” (*Ibid*.).

Similar to the problematic view on peacebuilding as a “one-size-fits-all” model, Conca and Wallace argues that it is difficult for environment-conflict-peace linkages to be made general, since eco-systems and natural resource use patterns vary greatly between nations as well as within states. The heterogeneity of conflicts further complicates such formulas, leaving much to depend on local context (*Ibid*: 488). This is a problematic view when trying to create a theory which aims at being applicable to more than one case. But while Conca and Wallace are making connections between environment and conflict in a more general sense, this thesis focuses on only one natural resource: water. While their research offers an interesting additional note, and is indeed valid in some respects, it is not in its entirety fully relevant to this thesis.

#### 4.1.1 Local level participation in water management

While the environmental peacebuilding theory is generally aimed at transboundary relations, the focus of this thesis lies on the local level, implying a bottom-up approach in regards to water management. Community participation in “all stages of planning, decision-making and project/policy implementation for local water resource management” in the developing world have been recognized as key guiding principles of sustainable water management since the beginning of the 1980s (Smith 2008: 356). The proponents for local community based water management rely on three arguments. First, the central state-based water supply and management programs were not reaching the people who needed them the most, rather such groups were excluded and marginalized from the decision-

making and implementation processes. Secondly, the International Monetary Fund's structural adjustment programs launched in many developing countries advocated a smaller state apparatus, and therefore left gaps in important areas of governance, with water management being one of them. Community participation and management could effectively fill those voids (*Ibid.*). Thirdly that an increasing faith in the communities and their individual capacity would lead to an empowerment for the “local community who had taken ownership, control and responsibility for the project and the local environment” (*Ibid:* 357).

However, despite the optimistic view of the participatory approach, it has also been subject of much criticism. Smith has categorized the critique into four themes, tokenism, the community myth, local-level capacity constraints, and critical lack of facilitator knowledge (*Ibid:* 358). Tokenism refers to community participation only being rhetorically used, but not implemented in reality (*Ibid:* 359). The community myth is similar to the critique of bottom-up approaches in liberal peacebuilding - the dangers of romanticizing the local. Communities are usually portrayed as “idyllic, cohesive, organic, harmonious and homogenous entities united in their interests, aims and goals, rather than as complex organizations of people with differential interests and power relations” (*Ibid:* 360). One of the bigger problems is that of local-level constraints, primarily financially, which hampers bottom-up projects. The enthusiasm with which local participation has been promoted within water management and the belief that “communities are capable of anything”, puts overconfidence on the bottom-up approach (*Ibid:* 361-362). Realizing its constraints is not an unwarranted critique but a realistic assumption. The last point is the “critical lack of facilitator knowledge about community participation held by those charged with the responsibility for its facilitation” (*Ibid:* 362). This point is connected to the critique of tokenism. If the people involved in the implementation of local participation have no knowledge on how to effectively engage communities, than the bottom-up approach will be just a token (*Ibid:* 363).

Even if the local level is an important part of the role that water can play in a peacebuilding context, the contention here is also that water can contribute to broader peaceful relations as well as strengthening the legitimacy of the state. These arguments will be further elaborated at the end of this chapter.

## 4.2 Recognizing the political process

Although research on the role of water issues in peacebuilding is still in its infancy, peacebuilding and water management has similar characteristics, which might be beneficial for the development of a theory of water's role in peacebuilding.

#### 4.2.1 A technical focus

Despite the normative and ideological underpinnings of the liberal peacebuilding, it can be argued that peacebuilding has been viewed in very technical terms evident in the wording and language-use as well as its implementation. Peacebuilding is often described in terms of building, reconstructing, socially engineering or similar, denoting peace as something which can be built in a technical sense. Due to the critique of peacebuilding efforts in the 1990s, that they essentially failed to create a sustainable peace, emphasis came to be put on statebuilding or building and strengthening governmental institutions, which further stress the perspective of peace as a technical building process. Mac Ginty has raised a similar concern, saying that the liberal peace comes in a standardized format, leaving little space for the local or alternative solutions. The liberal template includes for example ceasefire monitoring, peace negotiations, DDR and SSR processes, good governance, post-peace accord elections, marketization and economic reforms. The liberal peace becomes a peace from IKEA; “a flat-pack peace made from standardized components” (Mac Ginty 2008: 145). The risk as Mac Ginty sees it is that the peacebuilding mirrors the knowledge and capacities of the interveners, not the needs of the post-conflict society (*Ibid.*). Aggestam and Sundell-Eklund also hold that there exists a technical discourse of the liberal peacebuilding, in its top-down solutions by the international community for war and conflict. They propose that the de-politicized strategies of the liberal peacebuilding can be merged with similar “technical approaches to hydro-cooperation” (Aggestam & Sundell-Eklund 2011: 4). Their argumentation relies on a functionalist perspective, which emphasizes that cooperation can be developed between disputants in areas of low politics and also spill-over to other fields of peacebuilding in a wider sense. An example is the Middle East peace process where water was framed as a “catalyst of cooperation in order to achieve a comprehensive and durable peace” (*Ibid.*: 3).

Hydropolitics has been depicted in much the same way. As the conflict-cooperation conundrum has been the main focus for water research, the favored solution for water related problems has relied on institution building. Such an approach has excluded an important discussion on aspects of water interaction being a political process (Zeitoun & Mirumachi 2008: 299). Mollinga states that “[t]en years ago politics and the political were anathema in most water policy circles” and instead a social engineering paradigm was predominate (Mollinga 2008: 8). Again, Aggestam and Sundell-Eklund states; “[t]he embedded technological discourse of water management and development is dissociated from historical contexts and has attempted to stir away from political aspects of water rights” (Aggestam & Sundell-Eklund 2011: 6).

#### 4.2.2 Deliberating between a technical and political approach

The UNEP branch of Post-Conflict Disaster Management (PCDMB) deliberately took an approach of technical expertise, in an attempt of trying to act as an honest

knowledge broker and therefore assuming a depoliticized position. The intention was that this strategic approach would generate cooperative environmental knowledge to serve as a trust-enhancing mechanism (Conca & Wallace 2009: 493). In the words of former director of PCDMB, Klaus Töpfer “I am convinced that such a neutral, objective and scientific assessment of the real situation on the ground in a post-conflict situation is essential. This approach provides a much-needed and reliable source of information to the peoples affected” (quoted in Conca & Wallace 2009: 494).

A technical and depoliticized strategy may have its clear benefits; the staff of PCDMB termed their work as “bridge-building tools” and emphasized the significance of a sense of local ownership amongst the local actors. In some of the cases where PCDMB did so called “rapid assessments”, it led to clean-ups and monitoring activities, which also led to bureaucratic strengthening. A depoliticized approach can also be beneficial when acting in a context of an international intervention, where almost all aspects are politicized, in spite of the good intentions of the interveners. The technical approach might ease the cooperation and partnership between the targeted government and local communities (Ibid: 495, 500).

However a strategy based upon technical and depoliticized lines may also suffer from these restrictions. Despite efforts to be depoliticized there is still room for interpretation. As another former PCDMB director, Pekka Haavisto, puts it; “[e]ven in the context of a scientific environmental report, some expressions are interpreted in a political rather than a technical way” (Ibid: 494). The technical-rational approach of the PCDMB assessment reports may not be accessible to a large proportion of its readers, who in contrary to what expert sees as fact may view as highly politicized or contested. Here the trade-offs of a technical and depoliticized strategy becomes visible; the approach “make[s] it more feasible to work under difficult circumstances, but at the risk of reducing the scope of potential ownership in the results” (Ibid: 495).

The argument is also applicable to the critique of liberal peacebuilding’s technical approach – the advantages it may win on trying to be neutral may be lost in other areas, for example failings to acknowledging the inherent political process or having the ability to adapt to local conditions.

While liberal peacebuilding has been critiqued for being too technical and standardized, the academic discussion has produced alternatives, with hybrid peacebuilding being one of them. By acknowledging local actors the liberal peacebuilding template becomes distorted and contextualized and it also reflects the inherent political process that all peacebuilding entails.

#### 4.2.3 Bringing in the politics

While transboundary environmental cooperation is usually initiated as merely technical cooperation acting in a depoliticized sphere, Carius argues that there can only be effective impacts on peace once cooperation over water extends into the political sphere. Even though cooperation such as data sharing or joint

environmental monitoring is portrayed as technical, they are essentially political ventures (Carius 2006: 19). Bencala and Dabelko argues the opposite; that by not framing it as a security issue, but a more technical case the technical issues has had time to build a more long-term interaction and trust, making more political negotiations easier afterwards (Bencala & Dabelko 2008: 26). But it still needs to be acknowledged that water has become a much more politicized issue, reflected in the UN General Assembly's decision to make access to water a basic human right.

It therefore becomes critical for water management to be perceived as a political process. Zeitoun and Mirumachi agree; transboundary water interaction is an inherently political process (Zeitoun & Mirumachi 2008: 299). It is besought with the “interests, power games, illusions and distrust that accompany all political processes” (Ibid: 309). Mollinga states the same; water resource management is inherently political (Mollinga 2008: 8).

Hybrid peacebuilding also highlights another important aspect; power. In the four-part actor model by Mac Ginty mentioned in chapter 2.3.1, he displays the relational power asymmetry between the different international and national actors in a peacebuilding process. The model also highlights the fact that the four actors have a constantly changing relationship, where they are sometimes cooperating and sometimes conflicting. As previously discussed, the literature of hydropolitics suffers from an “either/or” discourse which does not resembles reality. By looking at water management through the lens of hybridity it is easier to see how conflict and cooperation is simultaneously interacting and creating the flux in which many post-conflict societies exists.

The benefits for looking at the similarities are also that the connection between water and peacebuilding has been under-theorized and by drawing on hybrid peacebuilding, this new field of academic research gains important theoretical grounds. In acknowledging hydropolitics and water management as a political process, the power and power relations which it inhabits also becomes recognized.

### 4.3 Developing a theory of water management’s role in peacebuilding

Through a reading of the existing literature on environmental peacebuilding, hydropolitics as well as ideas of peacebuilding, demonstrated in the above discussions, the three following areas of water’s role in intrastate peacebuilding have been distinguished. They are; economic development, trust- and confidence-building cooperation on a local level and strengthening state legitimacy. This classification shows on the different ways in which water management can contribute to creating a sustainable peace. By acknowledging water management as a political process it is possible to look beyond the mere technical aspects and look for larger peaceful changes for society.

The three paths outlined below form the theoretical contribution of this thesis to the cumulative research on water and peacebuilding.

#### 4.3.1 Economic development

Economic development has been argued to be one of the more important parts of liberal peacebuilding. For the peace to be sustainable, economic opportunity, productivity and capacity must be available throughout the war-torn state (Richmond 2005: 437). Economic development can be viewed both as a peace dividend and a prerequisite for peace. Collier states that “low income, slow growth and primary commodity dependence” makes a country prone to civil war and conflict. The poorer the country, the higher chance it will relapse to conflict once it has experienced war (Collier 2008: 27). Restarting the economic development after conflict therefore becomes imperative.

As has been previously mentioned, water plays an important part of economic productivity; “[w]ater is an indispensable input to almost all human activity – manufacturing products, delivering services, producing food, transporting goods and sustaining life itself” (Earle et al 2010: 1-2). Access to water is vital for the resuming of economic activity in a post-conflict setting, especially since many countries which have experienced war and conflict are development countries, dependent on agriculture and natural resources. Also the industrial sector is dependent on water management (Ashton 2002: 239). Bencala and Dabelko argue that there are established links between water and development; hence a peace settlement needs to include water agreements for the peace as well as the development to be sustainable. There is therefore a need to look at water issues in order to attain a sustainable economic development and lasting peace (Bencala & Dabelko 2008: 30).

#### 4.3.2 Trust- and confidence-building cooperation on a local level

The growing literature on the linkages between the environment and peacebuilding hypothesizes that the creation of shared environmental knowledge through cooperation is a useful confidence building tool, especially for non-state actors (Conca & Wallace 2009: 492). Bencala and Dabelko agree that water management can “play a fundamental role in building trust and confidence among potential, current or former adversaries” (Bencala & Dabelko 2008: 26). Cooperation over water can be helpful in efforts to end a conflict; even though not the cause of the conflict, water cooperation can serve as an arena for negotiations (Ibid: 25). Even though Bencala and Dabelko apply this argument to interstate relations, it can also be beneficial in a domestic setting of a war-torn society.

Water is usually viewed as the balance point of local communities, especially if they are relying heavily on irrigation for their cultivation. Protecting the common water resources can then become a part of a joint vision and cooperation, which facilitates the participation of local- and non-governmental organization

(Carius 2006: 9). The benefits of building confidence and trust is the assumption that it will create more peaceful collaborations and co-existence on a local level – an important condition for a sustainable peace. It may also be beneficial in another respect; building confidence on a local level might contribute to the empowerment of the communities and the strengthening of civil society and their involvement in the larger peacebuilding process. A stronger community might also have a chance to be a stronger voice and have a more powerful starting-point in the relational hybrid peace model designed by Mac Ginty.

Burt and Keiru argue that “[i]t is important to focus on providing opportunities for dialogue, confidence building and reconciliation at the community level as a first step or in parallel with peacebuilding at a national level. Therefore, the value of capacity building and empowerment at the grass roots community level cannot be underestimated” (Burt & Keiru 2011: 239). Interventions for developing water resource management infrastructure from donors or the government is also “more likely to be conflict-sensitive when they are nested within rather than superimposed upon pre-existing institutional mechanisms” (Weinthal et al 2011: 148). Building on existing local level structures therefore becomes significant as they can ensure that ”such projects are socially, economically and environmentally sustainable” and they also have the potential of mediating between conflicting needs (*Ibid.*). Again, Burt and Keiru state that it is not the recovery of the economy or the provision of basic services that is the main builder of the peace, but what happens within communities when they are working towards achieving those goals; “individuals changed their mindsets, traditional prejudices were broken down, and communities were unified” (Burt & Keiru 2011: 238).

Even though local level cooperation is an important part of the theory on water in peacebuilding, it is here important to note the previous discussions and critique of the bottom-up approach as highlighted by Mac Ginty, Paris and Richmond as well as Smith. Even though participation of the local level is desirable, it is important to realize its disadvantages and constraints. Local communities should not be romanticized but acknowledged for their diverse and complex structure and lack of financial- and knowledge-resources, as the previous quote by Burt and Keiru demonstrates a complete lack thereof.

Even though the authors of the article might be overly biased towards the successes of their own NGO, it still says something about the potential of cooperation over water. It is also important to recognize that a post-conflict society is far from a clean slate; it is often considered that conflict breaks down all aspects of a community, but rebuilding and reconstruction still takes place in the shadows of the conflict (Weinthal et al 2011: 150).

#### 4.3.3 Strengthening state legitimacy

Water management can also serve as a peace dividend and bolsterer of the state legitimacy in providing for the most basic needs of its population (*Ibid:* 144). Bencala and Dabelko lifts an interesting aspect; “[t]he inability to provide water-

related services in the initial months and years following the cessation of hostilities can undercut support for the terms of the peace, creating or extending perceived grievances against the state or occupying forces” (Bencala & Dabelko 2008: 26). They give Iraq as an example where the slow pace of improving the water-related services has undercut the support for the national government and coalition forces. The situation has been made worse by insurgents regularly targeting the efforts made by the government in trying to build a centralized water infrastructure (*Ibid*). Investments in water and sanitation have the potential of being viewed as a provider of peace dividends as an addition to quality-of-life improvements (*Ibid*: 25). If the government could provide with such services, it could also strengthen its legitimacy which is vital for a post-conflict society. Palmer-Moloney advocates that establishing essential services, such as the water sector to the population in the volatile region of Helmand in southern Afghanistan would build confidence and support for the government (Palmer-Moloney 2011: 218).

During conflict the capacity of the government is often weakened, leading the local communities to take up their own measures to provide for access to water. These structures are usually intact after the conflict has ended, however they might be built on unjust grounds, making a change necessary (Weinthal et al 2011: 147). As with the discussion concerning hybrid peacebuilding, discerning which is the best practice for the specific context calls for careful probing of the interaction between local, national and external forces.

By establishing formal links between the local community organizations and the government, local initiatives can support national objectives for water management. This will also contribute to the wider nation building, in avoiding fractured institutions and inequitable service delivery and by so doing it may create the foundation for “sustained national development and peace” (Burt & Keiru 2011: 239-240). Such involvement might also thwart an over-reliance on NGOs and instead create an understanding of the role of the government as a provider of basic goods and services (*Ibid*).

Strengthening state legitimacy is also an important aspect of the statebuilding aim which the liberal peacebuilding has been promoting. A strong state with institutions that can manage democratic and economic processes and handle problems or conflicts is seen as a requirement for a sustainable peace (Paris 2010: 342). As demonstrated in earlier discussions on previous research on peacebuilding and water management, water touches upon many issues which could be considered functions of a state; ensuring public-health and sanitation, driver of development, securing stability and implementing laws. By strengthening the state legitimacy it also increases the chances for a stronger state able to provide for its population.

## 4.4 Implications for water management through hybrid peacebuilding

Water resource management is a very broad term, and includes many different aspects of society; basic water and sanitation services, larger infrastructure and irrigation plans. They all share important effects for peacebuilding by meeting “basic human needs, restoring livelihoods, revitalizing economies, improving public health and restoring cooperation at all levels of society” (Burt & Keiru 2011: 232). Water is needed for almost all sectors of society with often conflicting demands such as large dam buildings versus the environment, navigation and transportation (Uitto & Duda 2002: 367). Despite the international and transnational focus of hydropolitics and the centrality of these within discussions concerning water in political science and peace and conflict studies, water management is also a highly local issue. In a very real sense it is pertinent to the everyday lives of people, especially in the developing world, where potable water is not a given.

Hybrid peace denotes that the discussions on peace and conflict today are guided by an incomplete understanding of the environment in which these factors interact. This also affects the way in which actors and their claims are perceived. It critiques the top-down accounts of conflicts which concentrate on the major actors, such as the government and other armed groups (Mac Ginty 2011: 2). It is in the interplay between the different actors where the strength of hybrid peacebuilding lies; “[w]hile liberal peacebuilding may be adept at top-down ministrations through national governments and ministries, local actors may be better placed to deal with aspects of peacebuilding that have emotional dimensions, such as reconciliation or tolerance” (Mac Ginty 2010: 408). As the previous discussion highlights there has been a tendency to depict water as a technical issue, in order to ease cooperation between adversaries. However as water triggers “highly emotive responses”, some societies even consider water as a gift from God, it might become difficult to handle in a simply technical cooperation (Carius 2006: 10, Pinera & Reed 2009: 568). By looking at water management through hybrid peacebuilding a different aspect of a post-conflict society appears which can build a larger understanding of the needs of the population as well as the local level actors, which are important in creating a sustainable peace. The above theory tries to encompass the focus of the local level agency which the hybrid peace emphasizes, while also acknowledging the external influences which a post-conflict society is subject to.

The next chapter focuses on Afghanistan and how the three suggested areas of water’s role in peacebuilding are demonstrated in the country; their pitfalls, benefits and potentials.

## 5 An illustrative example: Afghanistan

Afghanistan has experienced war and turmoil throughout most of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, with an intensification of violence and instability in the last three decades (Lieven 2009: 341). After the US-led invasion and topple of the Taliban regime in 2001, international troops and civil presence has been devoted to establishing security and governance as well as re-construction and rehabilitation, including the water sector (Abdullaev & Shah 20011: 334). Almost all aspects of the international intervention, the war on terror, the ongoing fighting and subsequent peacebuilding and statebuilding in Afghanistan have been highly discussed in political debates, across the international media as well as throughout academia. This chapter however focuses on what role water management has played in the peacebuilding efforts in the light of the previous theoretical discussions.

It is here important to observe an awareness of the complexity of the situation in Afghanistan. Water can be argued to be a very small factor in the intricate puzzle that is Afghanistan but at the same time water is a vital issue for the everyday survival of the Afghani population. It is therefore not in any way argued here that water management is the solution for the problems of Afghanistan; it rather offers to illuminate new aspects of peacebuilding and the cooperative possibilities of water management.

Due to lack of empirical data which can be directly applied to the theory outlined in the previous chapter, the case study on Afghanistan should be viewed more as an illustrative example. The aim is to discuss how the three factors are present in Afghanistan and from that analyze their possible potentials.

### 5.1 Water management in Afghanistan

Afghanistan is to a large extent a semi-arid country, with great variation in rainfall and water availability, which have only been further destabilized by glacial retreat and early snowmelt (Abdullaev & Shah 2011: 334, King & Sturtewagen 2010: 1). A number of rivers run though the country but the largest part of the population relies on irrigation. In 1979, 4 million hectares were irrigated but due to the protracted violence that number has been more than halved, leaving the remaining irrigation infrastructure outdated and inadequate to cope with the changes in water availability (Abdullaev & Shah 2011: 334). Droughts are another problem; Afghanistan has experienced prolonged droughts in the 1960s, mid 1980s and between 1999 and 2005, with the latest drought being exceptionally long, turning most riverbeds into barren desert (UNEP 2006: 7).

With 75% of the afghan population living in rural areas, agriculture is the main sustenance. 95 % of Afghanistan's water consumption goes to irrigation for agriculture, making the agriculture sector the largest contributor to the country's gross domestic product (not including the opium-based economy). The International Monetary Fund calculates that the informal agriculture sector – opium, accounts for 40-50 % of the gross domestic product but since it is illegal it is not registered in official calculations (UNEP 2009: 9). Water also plays a prominent rule for power generation and industrial use (King & Sturtewagen 2010: 1).

Afghanistan's geographical location and many water resources should give the country sufficient of opportunities for its exploitation however the lack of capacity and insufficient infrastructure limits the ability to store, manage and develop its water supplies. 90 % of the irrigation schemes are today managed by local, community-based *mirab* systems, which have little or no connection to national or regional system or government institutions (*Ibid.*). Abdullaev and Shah explains: “[i]n the absence of the state’s activity, decision-making about irrigation water has been in the hands of local warlords, leader of ethnic groups, elders, religious clerks” (Abdullaev & Shah 2011: 334). The next passage gives a brief introduction on the *mirab* system, in order to give an understanding of the local structures and conditions.

### 5.1.1 The *mirab* water system

Community-based irrigation management system has a long history in Afghanistan. During the last 40 years the deterioration of the social systems has had a negative effect but on the whole the *mirab* system has survived and is still used in almost all parts of the country.

*Mirab* means water master and it is this water master who plays the key role within this system. A *mirab* is appointed, paid and supported by the landowners and water users of a specific community or irrigation system. The communities themselves decide both how the infrastructure of the irrigation systems should be built, the intakes and canals, as well as how much water each landowner is allotted, depending on the size of the land as well as contribution to the maintenance of the irrigation system. Any conflicts concerning land or water are settled internally and the central government has a negligible role (Abdullaev & Shah 2011: 336). Prior to and during the irrigation season the community come together under the *mirab* to construct and change intakes as well as clean and maintain the canals. Depending on the size of the farmland each farmer sends a corresponding number of workers to help with the collective work with the irrigation.

The amount of water each farmer is allocated is calculated by the concepts of *bel* and *qulba*. They are measurement units, reflecting the size and quality of the farmland. This system of water rights is only used when the water availability is limited. When the flow of water is in abundance, the rules do not apply and water is treated as a collective resource. The *bel* and *qulba* system is the main point of

reference if conflict arises over water distribution (*Ibid*: 337). However, if a severe water scarcity occurs, these rules are often abandoned and water is distributed in an ad-hoc manner. Instead relative power in the community becomes the decisive factor (*Ibid*: 338). It is usually the “people with a beard” – elders and powerful community members, who on an annual basis appoint the mirab, monitor his work and arbitrate if any conflicts arise (*Ibid*: 339).

This local community-based water irrigation system has an institutional and technical aspect but also reflects the social complexity and power dynamics which affect everyday water management in Afghanistan.

### 5.1.2 Economic development

As mentioned in the introduction of this chapter, water plays a significant role for the agriculture, power generation and industry in Afghanistan. The prolonged conflict, followed by Taliban rule, unrest and intervention has substantially decimated the water infrastructure and the hydrological knowledge capacity of the country. King and Sturtevagen claims that if the water sector is not improved, Afghanistan will not meet its goals within agriculture, energy or rural and urban development (King & Sturtevagen 2010: 2). Groninger and Lasko agree; their analysis of southeastern Afghanistan shows that the wellbeing of watershed and agricultural productivity issues are decreasing the chances for rural livelihood recovery (Groninger & Lasko 2011: 693). Years of neglect and misuse has left the existing infrastructure in a poor state, requiring a tremendous effort to be able to improve the “human capacity, physical infrastructure and environmental resources”, which all have been degraded (*Ibid*: 694).

The changing local and regional security conditions in Afghanistan pose a large challenge for development and rebuilding, as well as for the peace and peacebuilding. Southeastern Afghanistan is still “under the influence of insurgents considered violent even by Afghan standards, and active warfare continues”. Even though this has slowed agricultural development in the region, it has however not stopped it completely (*Ibid*: 693).

But problems abound; small projects aimed at watershed management have been stopped because of inter-tribal conflicts, making stability a first priority and prerequisite for development. This fact also contradicts the idea that cooperation over water would generate broader peaceful co-existence. It is however difficult to make any deeper analysis, due to the lack of specific data and circumstances of the case, as well as the socio-political landscape and on-going fighting in the region. Groninger and Lasko argue that “ethnic tensions, as well as feuds among neighboring tribes and sub-tribes within an ethnic group, foment a climate of gangsterism” (*Ibid*: 695). It would not be completely wrongly to suggest that it is not merely water management projects that are being targeted, but all signs of international presence. In an attempt to intimidate the population the insurgents behead Afghans who cooperate with foreigners (Palmer-Moloney 2011: 213). This is of course deeply problematizing, both for the state of the region, as well as for the discussion on the role of water in peacebuilding in Afghanistan, making it

a poor case to choose. But it is important to note that the study by Groninger and Lasko concentrates on the southeastern part of Afghanistan, and the authors also emphasize that other parts of the country are more stable (Groninger & Lasko 2011: 694). The instability of the region also emphasizes the previous discussion of peacebuilding as a process which comprise many actions undertaken simultaneously. Palmer-Moloney contends that Afghanistan “highlights the fragility, instability, insecurity and violence that characterize many post-conflict cases.” (Palmer-Moloney 2011: 209). This difficulty was also discussed in the previous chapter on case study and the choice of case, but it is mentioned here again to denote the author’s awareness of the complexity of the case.

The occurrence of the insurgent network Haqqani and the proximity of Pakistan have had a diverse impact on the agricultural development in the region. Their presence has led to an increase of the international donor’s focus on agricultural and water development, partially to create cooperation with the local inhabitants and gain their trust, rather than the insurgents. But that has also endangered both foreign water and development experts as well as the locals who are working with them. The idea is that activities in the region are “geared toward achieving strong Afghan support in order to deprive insurgent personnel access to these areas” (Groninger & Lasko 2011: 696). So, even though there is still ongoing war-fare in parts of Afghanistan this makes it an interesting case to study since water has actually been used to win the “hearts and minds” of the population in an attempt to secure the area, showing another benefit of water in the difficult conflict to peace process.

A UNEP report from 2009 concludes that the area under cultivation in Afghanistan is increasing but it is still suffering from water shortages (UNEP 2009: 5). Investments in water infrastructure and management would increase the potential for economic development, which would be beneficial for both local communities as well as the national government.

### 5.1.3 Trust- and confidence-building cooperation on a local level

The lack of an enforced national water law (which will be discussed more in the next section), has also led to a disruption in the regulation of the usage of water in Afghanistan. Groninger and Lakso argue that there exists no regards for the needs of down-stream users among the up-stream users of a water resource, which is even demonstrated through a local proverb stating “it is better to be a servant in the upper watershed reaches than a king in the lower watershed” (Groninger & Lakso 2011: 697). They also claim that despite that being highly dependent on its limited water resources, Afghanistan maintains a disrespect toward water, particularly compared to “contemporary Western notion of water conservation or water-quality protection” (*Ibid.*). The rivers in the cities are treated like open sewers and dumpsters. If asked why, a frequent answer amongst Afghans is “it goes to Pakistan”, demonstrating a disregard for the fact that the rivers first supply many communities in Afghanistan (*Ibid.*). This approach to water does not seem to imply a cooperative attitude towards water management, but the authors of the

article suggest that the damaging attitude is an effect of poor education on the subject (*Ibid.*). Another example of this non-cooperative attitude is the number of hydropower mills along canals, a number which has increased dramatically. The mills are usually unauthorized and divert the water from the main canal or embank the water, having a negative effect on the tail-end communities (Thomas et al 2011: 314).

The World Bank has launched projects which targets community based development. The National Solidarity Program is a reconstruction and infrastructure development program driven by communities which “has made significant achievements in empowering communities, improving community relations and increasing public faith in the system of governance” (World Bank). The aim of the program is to strengthen governance at a local level to foster the rule of law, as well as create employment opportunities through rehabilitating the infrastructure which has been devastated by drought and conflict. The program has among other things built hand pumps (*Ibid.*). However, the data does not say whether the program has been successful in any of its more intangible aims, such as empowering communities or strengthening local governance.

Burt and Keiru argue that local water-resource management contributes to peacebuilding by empowering communities and restoring cooperation (Burt & Keiru 2011: 232). They discuss an example from the Afghan province of Kapisa, in the northeast, where a water, sanitation and hygiene promotion program has led to improvements in the public-health among its populations. The project was developed and implemented by the Community Development Council with help from the British based non-governmental organization Tearfund. The project also mobilized the community in an effort to restore the irrigation system in order to ensure larger harvests and make more arable land available, which in turn created employment opportunities (*Ibid*: 235). The article discusses the success of the program in material numbers and facts, but once again fails to give details on how and if the program has generated larger peaceful relations or analyze to what extent the communities have been empowered. But what seems clear is that the community has cooperated around water related issues, even though facilitated by an international NGO.

#### 5.1.4 Strengthening state legitimacy

The third and last aspect of what role water can play in a peacebuilding deals with the possibility of water acting as a tool for strengthening the state legitimacy. Due to the amount of empirical data available this has proved difficult to analyze. The following part therefore tries to highlight the problems which surround water management in relation to state capacity, which could affect the legitimacy in Afghanistan.

The central government of Afghanistan has limited authority throughout most of the country. This problem is reflected in many aspects; among them the inability to enforce water laws to regulate the usage (Groninger & Lakso 2011: 697). Wegerich describes how Afghanistan has had two different water laws

during the last three decades and about to enact a third. The draft of the 2008 Water Law is focusing on integrated water resource management and aims at encompassing both formal systems as well as the traditional mirab system (Wegerich 2011: 298). Despite ambitious efforts to try and acknowledge the traditional system, the new law still seems impossible to implement since it would actually conflict with established practices (*Ibid*: 299). The problem has also been that Afghanistan is almost totally dependent on foreign aid. The influence of donors is reflected in the draft of the new water law and therefore the law does not “reflect the local reality of the traditional irrigation system in Afghanistan” (*Ibid*: 309). Instead the consultations were based on models from neighboring countries where water management is a function of the state, not a community-based structure and mirrored the donor’s interests and own experiences (*Ibid*: 309-310).

The protracted conflict has severely diminished the central governments institutional capacity; impacts include a disrupted capacity for effective water management. Deep wells are drilled without overall planning, “timed releases from storage ponds for drought control or irrigation are done poorly, if at all” and the UNEP assessment report found that international efforts to increase the water supply had in some cases led to drinking wells being dug next to septic tanks (Conca & Wallace 2009: 496).

Groninger and Lasko describe how communities close to the border to Pakistan would “go to Pakistan” if they wanted any assistance from the provincial government. This could be a consequence of the strong presence of insurgents in the area and their powerful ties to Pakistan and the support for the insurgents among the population, but also the low confidence in the region for their own officials. Lack of stability and security in the region due to failure from both ISAF troops as well as national security forces to stabilize the area has led to lack of confidence and trust. This may also reflect the inability to provide for agricultural and water development, as described earlier (Groninger & Lakso 2011: 696). The government has tried to implement a Community-Based Natural Resource Management framework, which characterizes a shift from the government owning resources which it cannot control, to a system where the local communities are in charge of the resources and the government helps with the technical support. The framework is however undermined by problems with land ownership and displaced internal refugees, as well as the water law implementation problems. Continued difficulties with these issues could worsen the situation in fostering social instability when more displaced people become influenced by insurgents when the government fails to provide with land and water (*Ibid*: 698). In the densely populated urban areas of Afghanistan the demand for water is usually met, at least on the most basic level. However in the poorer rural areas and the informal settlements in the urban periphery, fundamental services are most often lacking. It is in such areas that insurgents have its strongest support and influence (Palmer-Moloney 2011: 210).

As the security situation is still instable in south and southeastern parts of Afghanistan, government and international organizations have been unable to reach many rural areas even as their water needs continue to rise. As the insurgents’ presence and influence in the area is strong, these communities are

characterized as “tipping point” communities. Their impatience at the government’s inability to provide real solutions to their problems may well move them to look toward the insurgents as an alternative. Even if the insurgents themselves may not have the capability to provide the services required they can always point out where the Afghan government has failed to do so (Ibid: 216). The insecure environment in southeastern Afghanistan has also led to watershed projects being halted or simply considered in other more stable parts of the country, which has led to frustration among the residents of that area. They interpret the situation as another broken promise by the foreigners, causing a lack of confidence between the donors and beneficiaries (Groninger & Lasko 2011: 694).

From these evidences it is clear that water issues are yet to have helped strengthening the state legitimacy in Afghanistan, hindered mostly by the security situation. Groninger and Lasko also see the complexity of problems in regards to local versus national water resource management “[t]he crux of the water management problem is that the central government has not yet proven itself to effectively address large-watershed scale issues” (Ibid: 701). The idea of this third path of water’s role in peacebuilding is that by providing with the most basic needs, the populations trust and faith in its government would grow to strengthen the legitimacy which could in turn produce further positive effects. The capacity of the central government in Afghanistan seems to be very weak and unable to contribute to the issue of water resource management. However Afghanistan has been a highly de-centralized state before with high reliance on local structures and governance, which therefore would explain the lacking authority of the central government (Ibid: 697). A water resource management based on local ownership and decision-making therefore seem like a more viable option. But Thomas et al argue that the focus on stakeholder participation and local governance is necessary but not sufficient. Laws and bylaws regarding water use needs to be enforced from higher levels. They continue “[t]he focus has to shift in establishing local support for conflict resolution backed-up by strong policing capacity” (Thomas et al 2011: 329). It is not enough to create water laws, they also need to be enforced in order for them to act as deterrent of unnecessary conflict and as frame of references for cooperation.

Another issue complicating the third path is corruption, which hampers the linkages between local and national governance (Groninger & Lasko 2011: 698). While corruption is surely a large problem in many of the related issues here, empirical evidence has not focused on this aspect, making it difficult to analyze.

## 5.2 Advantages and constraints of peacebuilding through water management in Afghanistan

Environmental questions are high-stakes issues in a post-conflict peacebuilding: handled correctly they might have the potential of creating a foundation for peace

and sustainable development. But handled inappropriately they risk destabilizing an already fragile peace (Conca & Wallace 2009: 499). The research on cooperation or conflict over environmental issues still remains unclear in some areas, as there are many factors between environment and conflict in its causal chain, which is yet to be established. It therefore remains unclear how exactly environmental cooperation can reduce the likelihood, scope, or severity of violence and insecurity (Conca 2002: 4). Including water issues in a peacebuilding effort could therefore be a perilous undertaking; water management in Afghanistan should hence be treated with caution and respect for context.

In line with the argument of this thesis it could however also be counterproductive not to address water management or other larger environmental governance issues into a peacebuilding process. As research has pointed to water acting as a triggering factor for conflict, especially along ethnic lines, it becomes even more important for Afghanistan with its demographically divided population to acknowledge these issues. Nevertheless, as highlighted above, there are a few obstacles that need to be overcome before water can act as a peacebuilding factor in Afghanistan. The first priority is the security situation. Although some parts are stable and rebuilding has taken place, it is mostly the larger cities that have benefited from this, while many rural areas remain inaccessible. A certain level of order and security is needed in order for peacebuilding to be carried out and in Afghanistan the UNEP team was even obstructed from collecting data by ongoing fighting (Conca & Wallace 2009: 493).

What was found in Afghanistan which was not expected by the outlined theory was that water was used as a way of stabilizing the security situation and building a support for the Afghan case in contrast to the insurgents. While displaying traits similar to that of the third path there is still a difference between strengthening state legitimacy and securing a dangerous area. This point to water's dual character; even if water projects are hampered by the security situation it is also believed that water projects can improve the security situation.

A second problem is that of implementing a functioning water law. While it is a sign of a larger general problem with judicial dysfunction in the country, it is also a consequence of the destabilizing forces of the insurgents. The central government is a generally slow and corrupt system, and local dispute resolutions provided by the insurgents are usually preferred, which further weakens the state's legitimacy (Groninger & Lasko 2011: 698). Abdullaev and Shah also state that the lack of laws for water provision and operational regulation rules in the mirab systems seems to be causes of conflict (Abdullaev & Shah 2011: 339). This appears to imply that for water to be a potential for cooperation there is a need for laws and regulation of water. The need for national water laws could also be extended to include the "recognition of access to water and sanitation as a legal entitlement". By doing so water becomes more than a government service, it can also help the institutions of post-conflict states establish their legitimacy and credibility according to international standards in the eyes of the world (Tignino 2011: 243).

### 5.2.1 The complexity of the local

Despite the instable security situation and lack of functioning or enforced water laws, there is potential for water to be a strong driver for economic development and as a local issue around which to build local governance, cooperation and larger peaceful relations. Due to the important role of water in Afghanistan for agriculture as well as existing local structures on which to build a functioning community upon, water should not be discarded. Influence from donors and international aid organizations could focus on technological inputs and build on local structures. While available empirical data on the exact role and consequences of efforts of cooperative local development and water management processes is scarce and insufficient at best there is still some evidence that cooperation over water has occurred and that it has had positive spin-off effects for public health and created employment opportunities; peace dividends which could be beneficial for creating sustainable peace.

It is interesting to note the complexity of the local in line with the arguments of hybrid peacebuilding. Despite being a local system for water allocation, the mirab system has its drawbacks; it is neither transparent nor inclusive, and the poor, landless and small farmers are often left out from decision-making concerning water. The mirabs are selected for their acceptable behavior, ensuring that “people with a beard” cannot be stopped but can change the irrigation system so that it benefits them, taking as much water as they want and need (Abdullaev & Shah 2011: 340).

The systems are also clearly affected by the vestiges of war. Weinthal et al argue that some of the mirab systems have been taken over by militants during the war, making them unjust and not representative of the communities’ needs and interests (Weinthal et al 2011: 147). Groninger and Lakso also claim that the “[s]elf-sustaining community institutions that once maintained water and range resources have fallen victim to a decayed social order” (Groninger & Lakso 2011: 697). The mirabs have lost their authority to other forces operating outside national or local governance (*Ibid.*). Conca and Wallace agree: the local community based decision making structures have collapsed, being unable to deal with the large demands on the environment as well as the resulting environmental degradation (Conca & Wallace 2009: 492). Thomas et al states that the power of the mirabs today is a mere shadow of what they represented thirty years ago (Thomas et al 2011: 314). Abdullaev and Shah also agree that they have been neglected and destroyed due to conflict (Abdullaev & Shah 2011: 340). Even though this discussion problematizes the possibilities of the local mirab systems as structures for peacebuilding, it still gives a more realistic picture of the local level and avoids the dangerous pitfalls of romanticizing the local and traditional.

Lastly, Groninger and Lasko raise an important discussion in relation to hybrid peacebuilding and the process of hybridization which can also be applied to other processes such as development. They claim that there exists a misconception among Western donors and NGO’s that Afghans are resisting external influences. The authors however contend that this is only an appearance as “many Afghans accept outside influences, but only on their own terms and in

ways that are not always easily observed. The more individualized and localized the interaction with a new idea, the better the chance for adaptation” (Groninger & Lasko 2011: 706). They propose that in order for a strategy of governance in Afghanistan to be effective it would have to try to balance the advantages of both the local and centralized government. The insurgents have already understood the importance of local engagement, which they then focus upon to gain and maintain influence. Therefore; “[a]s long as poor security and local tensions persist, water-related agricultural work will be most effective in areas and contexts where conflicts can be avoided [...] Development models that fail to account for these realities will have limited utility, or may even contribute to destabilization” (Ibid.). For any assistance in the water sector to be successful it needs to take into consideration the special social structure of the mirab system, whilst simultaneously providing foreign input in the form of modern technology across the areas of hydrology, irrigation, sanitation, hydropower and agriculture.

# 6 Concluding reflections

The last and concluding chapter discusses the findings from the case study of water management in Afghanistan in relation to hybrid peacebuilding and the outlined theory on water and peacebuilding. The thesis ends with an outlook towards future research.

## 6.1.1 Looking through the lens of hybrid peacebuilding

Hybrid peacebuilding denotes the hybrid process which is created in the interaction between the top-down processes of the international community and the bottom-up approaches from the local communities. It also problematizes the local context and highlights the importance in not romanticizing traditional and local structures and customs for the sake of being just local. These factors have been taken into consideration when outlining the theory on water's role in peacebuilding and also been present throughout the case study and analysis. The influence of the international community is present throughout the three paths; aid and NGO projects are targeted towards economic development, preferably through the local communities, while simultaneously trying to strengthen the Afghan state by for example building wells, even though the results have had varied success. The case study shows the flux of the post-conflict society, where local and foreign actors constantly interact.

While hybridity lifts the problems of the local structures to the surface, it also gives the role of water management a contemporary approach to peacebuilding. It is easy to become pessimistic to peacebuilding if looking at its sometimes disheartening history. Hybrid peacebuilding presents a constantly evolving body of research on the normative ideals as well as the practical implementation of peacebuilding and its potential of making a positive change for post-conflict societies.

## 6.1.2 The research question revisited

The three different roles which water can play in a post-conflict peacebuilding context are in reality not neatly divided but are in fact in constant interaction with one another. Academia and theory usually depict the world in compartmentalized units in order for easier analysis, explaining and understanding, while the world in practice is much more integrated. Economic development can also be seen as sign of governance capacity and efficiency, just as an efficient water irrigation management on a local level could be beneficial for the economic development.

Even though it has its advantages for academic purposes, there is a need for greater integration when analyzing such large processes as peacebuilding. Groninger and Lasko explains it further “[w]ater management issues are so complex that even simple interventions should be viewed holistically to minimize unintended consequences. Within the Afghan government, water problems span legal, engineering, agricultural and range authorities, further complicating coordination” (Groninger & Lasko 2011: 704).

The lack of security in Afghanistan shows on the constraints of water as a peace enforcer, even though efforts have been made to use it as a “securitizer”. However the theory denotes the use of water management as a peacebuilder - after hostilities have ceased. The case study highlights the possibly romanticized view of the cooperative potential concerning water, which this thesis rests upon. The afghan proverbs and general attitude towards water management demonstrate the discrepancies between the ideals depicted in the theory and a harsher reality displayed in the case study. This does not necessarily undermine the relevance for the theory but it is possible that the cooperative benefits of water lies in its practical implications for joint management and political processes and not in a kind of higher normative value relying on water as a source of life.

The three paths; economic development, cooperation on a local level and strengthening state legitimacy are important processes in an intrastate peacebuilding, where water management can play a vital part. The case study illustrate the complexity which surrounds water issues and combined they give an answer to the research question and portray a first attempt of theorizing water's role in an intrastate peacebuilding process.

## 6.2 Future research

The aim of this thesis was to build a theory which could be applicable not only to Afghanistan but also to other post-conflict countries and societies. The argument of Conca and Wallace - that since resource use varies greatly between societies it is difficult to make any generalizations of the linkages to peace is still valid. However the theory presented here still holds generalizability in its focus on aspects which can be argued to be important for any state; an economic development, possibilities of local engagement and cooperation and the state as a provider of goods which creates legitimacy. The theory would however benefit from a theory testing or theory developing study with more than one case, preferably conducted through field studies. This would hopefully test the empirical validity of the theory and also develop it further.

Since water management in peacebuilding is such a new subject there are a number of related issues which would be interesting to study, which also could benefit the development of the theory on water's role in peacebuilding.

There has been a lot of research on the drivers of conflict in relation to water, but the triggers of cooperation still remains somewhat unclear. In order to avoid further conflict in a fragile post-conflict society further research must be

conducted to understand what may bring about cooperation (see also Bencala & Dabelko 2008: 30). When the cooperation indicators as well as conflict triggers are identified, issues of water management have a larger chance of being taken into consideration in a peacebuilding framework. This becomes especially important since some researchers argue that it is the same factors that drive cooperation also develop conflict, highlighting the need to understand exactly why, how and under what circumstances cooperation occur.

Another topic is power; how can power be defined, interpreted and used in a water management and peacebuilding context? Power is a traditional subject within the political science but is yet to be found in deeper analyzes in peacebuilding and water issues. The use of natural resources can itself be seen as a political act as it creates interaction between people of different levels with different power relations. Water's essential role as a fundament for survival is therefore a major basis for power, which is usually expressed through water rights (Wessels 2008: 54). Power has also been briefly discussed in this thesis in relation to Mac Ginty's model of the four actors and their power asymmetry and also power relations on the local level. It would be interesting to elaborate further on this matter.

Correlating with the power issue is the role of women. Women are large users and managers of water but are usually left out of the decision making process, especially in traditional societies such as Afghanistan. On the other hand - women have been acknowledged as a great contributor and important actor for the peacebuilding process. Burt and Keiru discuss how "women and their capacity for development are especially critical during post-conflict recovery to ensure the establishment of sustainable water-resource management systems." (Burt & Keiru 2011: 240). What role do women play in water management and in what way can they contribute to peacebuilding?

Another aspect not taken in by the above analysis of Afghanistan is its regional role in water management. Rivers in Afghanistan may have great effect on neighboring countries, problematizing the use of the water resources full capacity. The war has kept Afghanistan from not using their water resources to their full potential and if they would build more dams and hydropower plants this could affect down-stream communities in already volatile areas such as Pakistan and India. This is another argument for considering water issues in peacebuilding, but also for the need to take a holistic approach on water politics, which encompasses local, national as well as regional dimensions.

# 7 Executive summary

Water is a prerequisite for all life. This essential character gives water a vital role in a post-conflict society, as it is important in accommodating basic human needs as well as for the recovery of the economic sector.

## 7.1.1 Framing a theoretical starting point

Contemporary research on water mostly focuses on hydropolitics; transboundary waters as a source of either conflict or cooperation. Even though most scholars have moved away from pessimistic water wars predictions, conflicts over transboundary water sources still to some extent dominate the academic discussion. While most research focus on interstate conflict or cooperation, many also contend that conflict is more likely to occur on the subnational level.

Another strand of scholars is concentrating on the cooperative characteristics of water. Their key point is that cooperation is a more likely consequence than conflict, as water can act as a focal point for dialogue and confidence building. Even conflict-ridden national relations such as Israel and Palestine cooperate over water issues.

This thesis argues that the cooperative potential of water together with its essential, local and practical characteristics makes it an important factor to take into consideration also in an intrastate peacebuilding context. Since there is very little research on this subject to date, this thesis aims to outline a theory which combines hydropolitics and water management issues with contemporary peacebuilding. The theoretical argumentation is guided by the following research question; *what role can water management play in intrastate peacebuilding?*

Discussions on peacebuilding have lately displayed a critical approach to the most dominant framework, liberal peacebuilding. Its main elements, democracy and market economy have proved to be more destabilizing than expected, evident in the many failed attempts to create a sustainable peace in post-conflict societies. Another critique has been that liberal peacebuilding has failed to identify the local dynamics of the post-conflict societies and instead promoted Western values. As a result an interest in traditional, local and customary approaches to peacebuilding has increased. The notion is that traditional forms of governance or dispute resolution will create a more sustainable and legitimate peace as it has the potentials of connecting on a natural level with the cultural expectations of the local communities.

Mac Ginty (2011) has created the theory of hybrid peacebuilding, which states that peace is in reality a hybrid between external forces and influences and local resistance and acceptance. This process whereby the hybrid peace is created is

more complex than the simple fusing of two entities. There can be positive and negative interaction occurring simultaneously, pointing to the constant flux the post-conflict society is in. A cautionary note is however raised against romanticizing traditional or customary bottom-up approaches just for the sake of them being local. Mac Ginty therefore does not promote hybridity as such, as it can be unjust, unequal and build on structures remaining from the war.

The critique of liberal peacebuilding gives important incitements for rethinking the political aspects of water management. Liberal peacebuilding has been criticized for being too technical, focusing on standardized components that does not acknowledge local context. Hydropolitics has also had a technical focus, relying on institution building and leaving out important considerations for the political process. However, for water to have any impact on peace and peacebuilding it needs to recognize its inherent political aspects.

### 7.1.2 Developing a theory on water's role in peacebuilding

Despite the scarcity of research on water management issues in peacebuilding, Conca and Dabelko have outlined a theory on environmental peacebuilding, which have important insights helpful for the aim of this thesis. They argue that it is important to address environmental problems and needs in a post-conflict society. If overlooked they might exacerbate tensions and cause a return to conflict, or cause failure to provide for basic needs which may destabilize progress for reconciliation and economic reconstruction. They also state that cooperation over environmental issues can have positive spin-off effects for peacebuilding, prominently through the social relations which it creates. Although the theory on environmental peacebuilding focuses on interstate relations, the contention here is that it can also be applicable to intrastate local contexts.

Through the above discussions the following three paths of water's role in peacebuilding is outlined. The first concerns economic development, which is an important factor for building a sustainable peace. Empirical evidence shows that slow growth, low income and dependence on primary commodities makes a country more prone to civil war and also increases the risks for relapses. Water is an important part of the recovery of the economic sector, especially for the agriculture productivity which many populations in war-torn societies depend upon. It therefore becomes imperative to assure an equitable water infrastructure for economic development.

The second role is trust- and confidence building cooperation on a local level. While hydropolitics emphasizes the cooperative potentials of water, environmental peacebuilding states that cooperation over shared environmental resources is an important tool for building confidence and trust. In communities highly dependent on agriculture, water is usually viewed as the balance point. Cooperation over water resources can therefore be a part of a joint vision and larger peaceful relations on a local level.

The last path of water's role in peacebuilding focuses on strengthening the state's legitimacy. Access to potable water is a basic service and if the state could

provide with it for its population, this could be seen as peace dividend, reflecting positive on both the state and the peacebuilding process. State legitimacy through water management could also be created through formal links between the local communities' organizations and the national objectives, furthermore contributing to wider nation building.

### 7.1.3 Water as a tool for peacebuilding in Afghanistan

In order to illustrate the outlined theory's constraints, advantages and possibilities, the three paths were discussed through the case of Afghanistan. Despite still experiencing war-fare in parts of the country, Afghanistan has been exposed to international efforts of peacebuilding. Even though the security situation hampered the suitability of the choice of case, it also proved to be an interesting aspect since water management projects have been used as a tool for securing areas prone to insurgents, although the tactic did not seem to create the intended effects.

Since Afghanistan is mostly a semi-arid country with agriculture as the main sustenance, irrigation is very important. The more than three decades of conflict, war and insecurity have severely decimated the water infrastructure. Attempts to rebuild irrigation systems have to some extent been obstructed by insurgents. In order for water management to contribute to economic development, security needs to be stabilized. There is however potential for that investing in improvements of the water infrastructure may increase the potentials for economic development.

Concerning the second path, trust and confidence building through cooperation on a local level, a number of NGO's and projects seem to focus on community based development, which would require local cooperation. The empirical data is however somewhat unclear as to how the cooperation contributes to broader peaceful relations. One article discusses the Afghan attitude towards water and how rivers and canals are treated like open sewers, disregarding the fact that the water supplies many communities, indicating an approach for water that is not very cooperative. This mentality could however be an effect of poor knowledge and education on water management.

The last path shows on the problems of the Afghan state's capacity, evident through the security situation as well as difficulties to implement national water laws. The inability to reach rural areas due to the intimidating presence of insurgents decreases the possibilities of the state to provide with basic water services. Even though the insurgents cannot provide with water themselves, they can always point out the failings of the government. Afghanistan has historically been a centralized state, with strong reliance on local structures. The mirab system is an example of such a structure; it is a water management system on community level, where the mirab, or water master, is the main element and driving force. The system has been decimated by the war, but is still used in many areas of Afghanistan.

#### 7.1.4 Analysis and concluding discussion

Through the case study a number of conclusions could be drawn. Firstly it showed on the constraints of water as a peace enforcer. Despite efforts, water management projects have not lead to stabilization of insecure areas. In order for water to be a tool for peacebuilding, the violence needs to have been ended. Secondly, while still a sign of a low capacity of the state, the judicial dysfunction in Afghanistan also affects the water laws, which to some extent impedes the development of water management, both on local and national level.

The case study also added important insights of the complexity of the local level. Even though it is a local and traditional system for water management, the mirab system suffers from unequal and nondemocratic features, as well as remains from the conflict. Afghanistan also exposes the notion that it is the essential character of water as a source of life which initiates cooperation, which the case study seemed to prove faulty.

Finally, the thesis is ended with an outlook towards future research. Since water management issues in peacebuilding is such a novel topic there are many areas which could be further developed. The theory outlined in this thesis would benefit from a larger study, preferably based on field study, to test its validity and contribute to its development. Another interesting issue is that of power. Water can be argued to be a major basis for power and since the peacebuilding process is fraught with many different power relations, it would be interesting to develop these ideas further. Related to the topic of power are the role of women and water management in peacebuilding, and also the regional perspective of Afghanistan's water use in perspective to its rivers that also flow through India and Pakistan.

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