Chapter 5
India's 'Silent Contestation' of the EU's Perspective on Local Ownership

Lara Klossek

Peacebuilding has become a central activity to the international community's pursuit of sustainable peace. The rising number of violent conflicts over the last decades and the increasing complexity of conflict scenarios have contributed to this development (Strand, Rustad, Urdal & Nygård, 2019). With conflict centres remaining in many parts of the world, such as Somalia, Afghanistan, Yemen or South Sudan, it is likely that the urge for the international community to engage in peacebuilding activities will not end any time soon. Given the weakening of a shared understanding over the right tools to address conflicts and a diversification of actors, we can thereby see an increasing contestation over the norms guiding peacebuilding endeavours. One of these contested norms is the norm of local ownership, i.e. the importance to include the 'local' into peacebuilding processes to achieve sustainable peace. The European Union has enthusiastically embraced this norm but has been challenged by other countries and the literature in regard to its inability to successfully implement it (Bojicic-Dzelilovic & Martin, 2018; Dursun-Ozkanca & Vandemoortele, 2012; Ejdus, 2017; Mac Ginty, 2018). The 'new' actors on the scene such as the BRICS and other countries from the global south have argued that the European Union and other traditional donors are not moving beyond their liberal peacebuilding approaches, which are often tied to a heavy external intervention in the sovereignty of the host state and hence in their eyes fail to ensure local participation (De Carvalho & De Coning, 2013).

At the same time, these new donors have claimed for themselves that their south–south partnerships are more successful in engaging the local population on a horizontal level (Brasilia Declaration, 2010; United Nations, 2018a). India has been

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L. Klossek (✉)
Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona (UAB), Bellaterra, Spain
e-mail: lklossek@ibei.org

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particularly vocal in criticising external footprints of traditional donors such as the European Union (United Nations, 2014a). Looking more closely at their discourse at the UN level, it becomes evident that the contestation is thereby not only over the implementation of the norm but also over its content.

While previous applications of the norm contestation framework in the field of security have substantively dealt with the organising principle of Responsibility to Protect (R2P), local ownership has not received the same interest (see for instance Glanville, 2015; Hofmann, 2015; Welsh, 2013).

The chapter, therefore, sets out to explore why and how India is contesting the EU on local ownership, and how far this is impacting the legitimacy of European Union's principles and norms. The chapter is based on a document analysis of UN speeches by India and the European Union (125 UN speeches) from 2011 to 2019, other speeches available online that deal with the topic of local ownership and peacebuilding, as well as policy documents which outline India and the European Union's peacebuilding strategies.

The chapter unfolds as follows. The first section gives a background of the norm under contestation and how it emerged in the international system. It further discusses how the European Union understands the norm, and how India, as the contester of the norm, interprets its meaning. Thereafter, the chapter discusses which modes India chooses to express their contestation and how this affects the European Union. Finally, the conclusion gives preliminary findings and offers some theoretical considerations regarding the norm contestation framework.

Whose Peace? Locating Local Ownership Within a Larger Framework of International Norms on Security Governance

As local ownership does not stand as an independent principle, it is important to locate it within the larger framework of norms shaping security governance and the ideas on 'sustainable peace'. This also helps to identify where to place local ownership in Wiener's (2014) categorisation of different norm types (see also Johansson-Nogués, Vlaskamp and Barbé, this volume). Peace is a fundamental norm laid down in many international treaties. The UN Charter, for instance, names 'maintaining peace and security' as one of its founding principles (see article 1 UN Charter). The goal to maintain peace in the international system is therefore largely undisputed. This unanimity over the fundamental norm of peace is not achieved when it comes to questions of implementation. Since the first (ad-hoc) peacekeeping mission in 1948, a range of different tools emerged. Simultaneously, the norms that guide the international striving for peace have been shifting. Most importantly—with the end of the Cold War—there has been a transformation of the conduct of peacekeeping, which moved beyond maintaining order and settling territorial conflicts between states. Traditional peacekeeping, which had been based on the norms of non-intervention, impartiality and non-use of force, was put aside in favour of more ambitious mandates, which

include institutional reforms and involvement in state designs, including liberal ideas and putting 'human security' at the centre of peacekeeping (Seaman, 2014). Aside from a 'negative peace' or the aim to stabilise a conflict situation, the international community now strives for a more sustainable peace, addressing the root causes of conflicts and engaging increasingly in post-conflict scenarios. This thinking was later folded into the nascent peacebuilding concept. Formally, peacebuilding was introduced with Boutros Boutros-Ghali's ambitious Agenda for Peace in 1992, which acknowledged that—aside from conflict settlement—restoration of core governmental functions as well as economic revitalisation are crucial to achieve peace in the long run (United Nations, 1992, 2000, 2009). While traditional peacekeeping had encompassed a relatively clear toolbox and was characterised by a small number of mandate tasks, peacebuilding has materialised as a far blurrier concept. At the UN level, it was presented as an entirely new norm in its own right. In practice, however, there are a number of overlaps with post-Cold War peacekeeping and peacemaking (Edgar, 2019). The outcome is that there is less intersubjective understanding among countries, as to which activities in security governance they would categorise as peacebuilding, and in whose responsibility these activities should fall.

One commonality is that everyone seems to embrace the idea of local ownership as a pre-requisite for the sustainability of peacebuilding endeavours. The popularity of this idea is today reflected in its extensive use as a catchphrase among policy makers. All major international organisations, such as the UN, EU, AU, OECD and other aid agencies have endorsed the principle in the discourse and in their policy documents (Ejdus & Juncos, 2018; OECD, 2005, 2008, 2011). The term became popular in the 1990s in the development cooperation discourse and 'the language of ownership' as Chesterman (2007) coined it was first used in a document by the Development Assistance Committee of the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD-DAC) in 1995 (Reich, 2006). The reason it emerged is shaped by a critique of existing programmes of, i.e., IMF and World Bank, and at the same time, a recognition on behalf of the donors and multilateral agencies that sustainable development has to be 'locally owned' (Development Assistance Committee, 1996; Richmond, 2012).

In broad terms, local ownership refers to the importance of peacebuilding efforts to be designed in a manner that the domestic actors have control over the design and implementation of the peace process (Donais, 2009). Beyond this minimal convergence over the understanding of local ownership, other aspects remain open to interpretation (ibid.). This is reinforced through its connection with a number of other notions, such as 'local capacity building', 'localisation' and so forth (Ryerson et al., 2018). The major debates among policy makers, as well as academics, are thereby who constitutes 'the local', how ownership should be implemented into peacebuilding projects (top-down, bottom-up or middle-ground) and who should decide over the effectiveness of its implementation (Tartir & Ejdus, 2018).

The European Union sees itself as a 'force for peace and human development' and literature has recognised this role of the EU as a peace project (EEAS, 2017a; Tocci, 2007). Following a growing US retrenchment in security governance, which materialised, for instance, in form of Trump's attempt to cut down on the US' financial

contribution to peacekeeping or the decision to withdraw all troops from Afghanistan, the EU has further aimed at stepping up its role as a global security provider (EEAS, 2017b; Gibbons-Neff & Barns, 2019; Williams, 2018). Thereby, the European Union has voiced the importance of long-term peacebuilding and the need to link humanitarian, development and peacebuilding activities (Tardy, 2017). For the European Union, the peacebuilding principle encompasses a broad range of activities such as conflict prevention and conflict mitigation (De Coning & Call, 2017). In the EU's own words, expressed both in the 2016 EU Global Strategy as well as in later EU speeches, the integrated approach:

> [p]rovides the framework for a more holistic engagement in external conflicts and crisis to promote human security. It involves conflict resolution and mediation and stresses the importance of local ownership, inclusiveness and the sustainability of actions by engaging with national and local authorities, communities and civil society. (United Nations, 2018b)

The European Union's vision and understanding of peacebuilding is thereby influenced and largely consistent with that of the other OECD countries. Underlying the EU's peacebuilding activities is at its core the norm of 'liberal peace', characterised by the idea that market democracies will be the only guarantors for sustainable peace (Adhikari, 2018; Donais, 2009). This convergence with the OECD-DAC community of Northern donors has also united the European Union in its discourse on local ownership, which is considered to be driven by a liberal peace agenda (Rayroux & Wilén, 2014). Local ownership has entered the EU policy discussion in the late 1990s (Ejdus, 2018). On the one hand side, local ownership was seen as an ideal fit for the European Union's normative framework and one policy document even named it as inherent to the European's approach to international relations (ibid.). On the other hand side, it is a way for the European Union to counter the accusations of having neo-colonial or neo-imperial ambitions shaping their peacebuilding agendas (Rayroux & Wilén, 2014).

The EU has shown a lot of confidence that it has successfully mainstreamed local ownership in their peacebuilding approach and stressed that it is the base for all their ten currently operating civilian missions (EEAS, 2018). The scholarly literature has, however, been far less convinced of this achievement. Case-studies of the failure of implementing ownership in the CSDP missions, ranging from Bosnia, to Kosovo, Afghanistan to Somalia or Mali and so forth (Dursun-Ozkanca & Vandemoortele, 2012). These case studies, have named the European Union's approach to local ownership as overly technical, directed only to the governmental elites in a top-down manner and are doubtful in regard to the EU's success to refrain from imposing their own vision of a sustainable peace (Bojicic-Dzelilovic & Martin, 2018; Ejdus, 2017; Mac Ginty, 2018). Following the so-called 'local turn' in the peacekeeping literature, the European Union, in recent years, has tried to include other stakeholders than just government elites into their peacebuilding projects, particularly when it comes to aid grants from the European Commission, and it shifted some focus towards women and youth, as well as other marginalised groups (Bojicic-Dzelilovic & Martin, 2018; Mac Ginty & Richmond, 2013). Furthermore, the EU has tried to systematically include civil society in their peacebuilding projects. In that regard, the European Commission

has, for instance, developed specific *Country Roadmaps for Engagement with Civil Society* (European Commission, 2017a). This shift from government support towards a bottom-up approach is tied to the EU's understanding that a strong civil society is able to hold the government accountable and can thus reinforce democracy (EUGS, 2016). The European Union's support for ownership of civil society could then be understood as an element of its democracy promotion efforts (Pierobon, 2017). Ownership in the European—and more broadly in an OECD context—is therefore strongly tied to the *type 1* norm 'democracy'. This is reflected in the use of the expression 'democratic ownership' in policy documents (OECD, 2007). Given the EU's systematic effort to include local ownership in their peacebuilding approaches, the large amount of funds dedicated to its programmes, and its embeddedness in policy documents and practice, from a theoretical point of view, one could think of local ownership as a 'standardised procedure' (*type 3*) in the EU's peacebuilding projects.

India understands itself as an inherently peaceful and tolerant society that can accommodate an array of different interests and can, therefore, serve as a paragon for other countries, and models its stance in global security governance (Hayes, 2016; United Nations, 2012). This confidence is mainly shaped by India's record as a major contributor of 'boots on the ground' to UN peacekeeping missions (United Nations, 2017). As a major troop contributor, India has been very vocal at the UN, which has not been entirely uncritical about the inclusion of peacebuilding tasks in the mandates of peacekeeper. India acknowledges that peacekeepers are 'early peacebuilders'. But the Indian government argues that the integration of peacekeeping and peacebuilding should only take place to the extent that is required to build sustainable peace and furthermore 'that humanitarian and development actors and other peacebuilders and peacekeepers all have different tasks and priorities' (United Nations, 2015a). Recognising a strong connection between socioeconomic grievances as barriers to sustainable peace, Delhi considers many peacebuilding tasks to fall within the category of development cooperation, rather than in the mandate responsibility of the peacekeeper.

India has consequently refrained from distinguishing in their discourse or policy documents peacebuilding from its other development cooperation programmes (Singh, 2017). A state official has even pointed out that a distinction is nothing more than 'academic hair splitting' (ibid., p. 88). For Delhi, peacebuilding, therefore, includes an even broader range of activities, such as studentships and technical training, humanitarian relief, grants, lines of credits, loans and so forth (Mawdsley, 2012). Furthermore, unlike 'traditional' donors such as the European Union, India does not differentiate between conflict-affected, post-conflict and stable developing countries when it comes to decisions over development cooperation (Mullen, 2017). Overall, India has attempted to position its development cooperation as different from that of Northern donors—claiming to meet with their partners on an eye-to-eye-level rather than in a typical donor–receiver relationship and laying its focus on fostering economic growth with a strong focus on engaging the private sector, rather than poverty reduction (Mawdsley & Roychoudhury, 2016). In order to keep

their flexibility in regard to delineating their development cooperation, India has preferred to stay largely outside of the OECD-DAC structures and has, at the same time, attempted to shift the discourse on international development cooperation. The conference on aid effectiveness in Busan, has thereby been pointed out as a turning point. India and other emerging countries have successfully shifted the focus away from poverty reduction and good governance, towards a stronger stress on development (ibid., 2014, 2018, 2019). The literature has even spoken about the 'southernisation' of development (ibid., 2018). With India and other emerging powers' increasing projection of normative power in the international system, it is important to analyse their stance on local ownership.

In the Indian scenario, the support for local ownership is largely shaped by its own historical experience as a colony characterised by the intervention and imposition of an outside power. This led to a stress on state sovereignty in India's international position, which today is still reflected in India's reluctance of having the international community intervene in a country's internal conflicts. An example is India's position on the Kashmir issue, which India understands as a bilateral one that does not require an outside mediation. Consequently, India considers the UN mission in Kashmir (UNMOGIP) obsolete (Miglani, 2014). Similarly, they have refrained from supporting interventions on humanitarian grounds, such as 2011 in Libya (Bloomfield, 2015; United Nations, 2011a). The meaning of local ownership for India is therefore mainly shaped in its negativity or opposition: non-intervention, no outside imposition and a refusal to engage in 'liberal peacebuilding' projects or in Delhi's words: 'the external footprint should be light to avoid any outcomes of neo-colonialism or humanitarian intervention' (United Nations, 2014a). The belief is further that the primary responsibility for maintaining peace is with the host government, which means that the majority of India's activity is directed towards capacity-building of the government (United Nations, 2014b). Local ownership is thus connected to *type 1* norms, such as non-intervention and sovereignty. While in the case of the European Commission, local ownership at least in theory, is referring to the civil society and their participation in peacebuilding and the idea that stabilisation is only possible in a democratic and inclusive environment, for Delhi local ownership means to respect the state sovereignty and to support the host government in their aim to stabilise and rebuild the country (United Nations, 2011b). In other words, local ownership and 'national ownership' overlap in an Indian discourse. This division between traditional donors and emerging donors over ownership also came to the fore during the conference in Busan, where countries positioned themselves as either supporting a reading of ownership as 'country ownership' or 'democratic ownership' (Carothers, 2015). India's reading of ownership as 'state ownership' is thus reflective of its reluctance to engage in democracy promotion and its skepticism towards liberal peacebuilding approaches. For the Indian government, local ownership in Wiener's categorisation of international norms then has to be understood as an alternative to liberal peacebuilding and thus as an 'organising principle' (*type 2*).

Deliberation, Justification, 'Silent Contestation', and Questions Over Contestatory Practice

India's contestation of the EU's understanding of local ownership is primarily restricted to the discourse and takes place at the UN level. Its preferred mode of contestation is of political one and can be considered, what (Wiener, 2014; see also Johansson-Nogués, Vlaskamp and Barbé, this volume) termed 'deliberation'. India thus addresses "rules and regulations with regard to transnational regimes according to semi-formal soft institutional codes" (Wiener, 2014, p. 2). It should, however, be noted that the term 'deliberation' is somewhat misleading in an Indian context, as one of the major contestations of the Indian side has been the structure of the UN system itself. Delhi has argued that the limitations of the membership in the UN Security Council and the decision-making processes are precisely not deliberative—in the sense that it does not give an equal voice to each member state—and endangers the legitimacy of the UN's actorness as the 'custodian of global peace, security and development' (UN, 2015a). This criticism of the structures of the UN systems and the power of the UNSC are the starting point for most of India's contestations in security governance. It applies, for instance, in the area of peacekeeping where India has continuously pointed towards Article 44 of the UN charter that would allow for consultations with the troop-contributing countries in terms of mandate formulation (United Nations, 2014c). It is also named as a reason for India's resistance to recognise the International Criminal Court (ICC) (Linton, 2018). It is, therefore, important to keep in mind questions of access (or lack thereof) to contestation (Wiener, 2017). Particularly, since many scholars have predicted that a continuing denial of a voice for India in international fora will make India less willing to enter into negotiations over international norms in the form of deliberation at the UN level and will push them towards contestation outside of these structures (Lettinga & Van Troost, 2015). Finally, before diving into a discussion of Delhi's contestation of the European Union, it is necessary to point out that in their narrative of contestation, it often does not distinguish between the European Union, Europe or NATO, but refer to these actors with the umbrella term: the 'West'.

As discussed above, India and the European Union have both recognised the value of local ownership for their peacebuilding and development projects, but they have distinct interpretations over its meaning. India's interpretation of local ownership as 'national ownership' is in itself constructed as a contestation of the meaning of the norm as promoted by the European Union, by building upon the argument that the West has not moved away from imposing their standardised liberal models of peace in the host societies. Ambassador Asoke Kumar Mukerji, former permanent representative of India to the UN has argued that '[p]eacebuilding needs to integrate indigenous and informal justice mechanisms into judicial reforms, instead of viewing them as incompatible with western liberal values' (United Nations, 2014a). Many statements by Indian policy makers, such as that of Ambassador Hardeep Singh Puri, reflect on this contestation of a liberal peace agenda, which ignores the local conflict environments: '[n]ational ownership is the key determinant of success in

peacebuilding. The international community can encourage, motivate and facilitate. It cannot solve those problems which require national will and national ownership' (United Nations, 2011c). Attached to this debate is a feeling that the West is behaving in a teacher-like role vis-à-vis the developing world. Addressing this issue, India's former Minister of External Affairs Mr. S. M. Krishna has stressed the importance of avoiding these top-down approaches:

> Prime Minister Indira Gandhi once said that 'a nation's strength ultimately consists in what it can do on its own, and not in what it can borrow from others'. The international community can encourage, motivate and facilitate (…) The new orthodoxy of talking down rather than listening, must be avoided at all costs. (United Nations, 2011d)

The Indian government's support for ownership as an opposition to outside intervention also stretches into the area of human rights, which is often associated as a component of the liberal peace agenda. In Myanmar, for instance, where the persecution of Rohingya Muslims in Rakhine state by security forces and Buddhist militias, has led to a humanitarian crisis. Delhi took the position that 'every state has the right to organise its internal affairs, including in the field of human rights' (United Nations 2015b). Consequently, it considered technical assistance, cooperation and a strong partnership with the Myanmar government as the only way to stabilise the country and opposed any unilateral actions (United Nations, 2015b; Viraj, 2018; Yhome, 2018). The European Union on the contrary, which emphasises a value-based human-rights focused diplomacy, decided to issue travel bans and freeze assets of members of the Myanmar military (European Council, 2018).

The Indian government also projects its own role or identity as an international actor in peacebuilding or development cooperation as distinct from the European Union (Richmond & Tellidis, 2014). It claims for itself that its development cooperation 'ensures that all plans and programmes are implemented under national ownership and through national institutions', are free of conditionalities and that it meets with the host country on an eye-to-eye-level rather than in a typical donor–recipient relationship (Ministry of External Affairs (India), 2017). This also explains why Delhi has refrained from using terms such as 'developing aid' and has instead stressed the 'cooperative' character of the interaction. Building on a discourse of south–south cooperation and the understanding that India's own success story of poverty alleviation and economic development will be valuable for other developing countries, India perceives its own development cooperation projects as truly 'locally owned'. This narrative of a 'southern' alternative to peacebuilding and development cooperation, which is characterized by '[p]rinciples of respect for national sovereignty, national ownership and independence, equality, non-conditionality, non-interference in domestic affairs and mutual benefit' is also uniting India with other developing and emerging countries, as reflected in the narratives that are guiding the IBSA or the Non-Alignment Movement (Brasilia Declaration, 2010; United Nations, 2018a). A similar rhetoric is also intrinsic to India's engagement with Africa, where Prime Minister Modi at the last India-Africa Forum Summit in 2015 had stressed on their commonalities in regard to their historical past as 'great civilisations', but also 'former colonies' and their partnership being based on 'emotional bonds' and 'solidarity',

rather than 'economic considerations' (Prime Minister's Office, 2015). Political contestation in the form of deliberation is complemented here by moral contestation or justification (Wiener, 2014, p. 2). Following the Indian argumentation, peacebuilding activities by traditional donors are almost always bound to fail in terms of understanding the local population and to move away from a top-down approach, as they do not have the same affinity or closeness with the countries in which they operate. As Mawdsley (2012, p. 266), in her analysis of southern development actors put it: '[b]y making these assertions of subaltern expertise, and grounding development assistance in shared experiences and challenges, the Southern donors construct a distinct position for themselves in the foreign aid arena from those of the North.' Contestation of the EU's understanding of local ownership is, therefore, materialising in terms of a clear association with the developing world in their own respective fora, rather than working together with the Western donors as represented in the OECD-DAC. This also includes the creation of new fora that operates parallel to the ones associated with the Western liberal order, such as the New Development Bank (NDB) founded by the BRICS (Ollapally, 2018).

In terms of India's success to implement this alternative to liberal peace and Western aid practices in form of a 'truly locally' owned 'southern' model of cooperation, the literature has shown a mixed picture. Some of the literature has concluded that India does not move beyond implementing liberal peace 'with a southern twist' and consequently will face the same local resentments (Kenkel, 2016, p. 381; Mukherjee, 2015). This applies particularly to India's engagement in its own neighbourhood but has also been discussed in regard to its inability to sensitively deal with its own internal conflicts in the North East and Kashmir (Malone, Mohan, & Raghavan, 2015; Pogodda, Mac Ginty, & Richmond, 2014). An example is Delhi's involvement in the peace process in Nepal in the aftermath of the Nepalese civil war. Delhi had successfully been lobbying at the UN for a limited UN mission without provisions for humanitarian assistance and reconstruction (Suhrke, 2011). Later, Delhi had used this as a narrative to portray itself as the protector of 'Nepalese ownership' in the peacebuilding process (Ghimire, 2018; Richmond & Tellidis, 2014). At the same time, it has actively tried to shape and mediate the peace process and had used its influence in its direct neighbourhood (Martin, 2012). Other scholars have been more positive about India's success to provide an alternative to liberal peacebuilding models which ignore local pre-conditions (Chanana, 2010). In Afghanistan, it has, for instance, been noted that India—with its 'non-invasive character'—managed to establish itself as the most popular foreign actor in the country (Destradi, 2014; Mishra 2018). India's engagement has also been highlighted for introducing the policy of 'Afghanization', which refers to Delhi's practice of giving direct payments to the Afghan government for capacity-building projects, which are free of any conditionalities (Peral, 2012). This practice has deepened the relations of India with the central government and other local authorities (Kavalski, 2015).

Afghanistan also serves as an example, where India and the European Union's discourse on local ownership has been an essential part of their peacebuilding and

development cooperation initiatives, with both actors declaring that their engagement is focusing on 'Afghanistan's priorities', and a peace process that is 'Afghan-led, Afghan-owned broad-based and inclusive' (Bose, 2019; EEAS, 2019; Indian Embassy Kabul, n.d.). As discussed above, there is thus convergence in terms of recognising the importance of local ownership as a goal for their engagement with Afghanistan. There is also substantial convergence in terms of priority areas for India and the European Union, such as training of security forces, capacity building and infrastructure projects (Sachdeva, 2016). This convergence has however not translated into a meaningful cooperation between the largest international, respectively, largest regional donor in Afghanistan, and Brussels and Delhi have operated largely in isolation (Joshi, 2017; Mohan, Kumar, & Xavier, 2016; Mullen, 2017).

Many explanations for this lack of cooperation build upon the argument that the Indian government does not perceive the European Union as a credible actor in security and is unimpressed with its track record in Afghanistan, thereby contesting the actorness of the EU itself (Howorth, 2016; Sachdeva, 2014). This might serve as an explanation for India's reluctance to join the EU's CSDP missions, even though Brussels has shown a keen interest to get Delhi on board (EEAS, 2016; Joshi, 2017). Additionally, three other explanations can be put forward. First of all, while both actors might agree on the importance of security sector reform and, in particular, to train the security forces in Afghanistan, India is traditionally very cautious about joining force with the EU, as it associates its practices with the imposition of Western norms and principles of security governance and a poor understanding of local structures (Adhikari, 2018). In an assessment of the state of police reform, Ambassador Asoke Kumar Mukerji, former Permanent Representative of India to the UN, had repeatedly pointed out that '[g]iven the scarcity of resources, the priorities should be ensuring impartiality in recruitment and vetting and training new recruitments rather than seeking to make cultural change a central aspect of police reform' and further that the '[f]ocus on the political dimension of police reform will only be controversial and perhaps counter-productive' (United Nations, 2014d, 2015a). This statement aligns India with other emerging countries' preference for a pragmatic approach to security sector reform, which focuses less on liberal notions of transparency, accountability and democratic control. While the EU is not openly acknowledging Delhi's contestation regarding over-ambitious security sector reform ideas, its peacebuilding practices have often automatically adapted to ground realities in a manner that its ambitious agenda driven by liberal values and the idea to change security culture had to make space to a security-focused government-led process (Sedra, 2013). Secondly, India's understanding of local ownership as state ownership has led them to engage almost exclusively with state-led agencies rather than civil society organisations (CSOs), which the European Union is strongly promoting in their own approach (Mawdsley & Roychoudhury, 2016). This also has to do with the idea among some of the governmental elites in India, that CSOs are being instrumentalised to promote the agenda of their donors. A shut-down of foreign-funded non-governmental organisations and CSOs in India, in recent years, is an expression of these accusations (Brechenmacher & Carothers, 2018). Lastly, India has established itself as popular actor in Afghanistan, and constructed its role as a southern

donor whose engagement is characterised by mutual cooperation and a respect for state ownership as an alternative to traditional peacebuilding (Sinha, 2017). Cooperation with the European Union in that sense might hamper this self-proclaimed image. Aside from a first path of politically criticising the Western failure of implementing the local ownership principle in their peacebuilding practices (deliberation) and a moral contestation in terms of questioning the ability of traditional donors to comprehend the needs of the global south, Delhi has therefore chosen a third path of 'silent contestation' or actively choosing to refrain from cooperation with the traditional donor countries. In many conflict scenarios, India and the EU have therefore talked at cross purposes and operated in parallel. Contestation, in this case, becomes visible without even encountering each other. Furthermore, the outlined case of Afghanistan and the actors entering a direct confrontation or example of 'silent contestation' support the argument of Wiener (2004, 2014, 2018), that even seemingly universally shared norms, which have found many advocates at the international level, remain contested at the implementation stage.

Looking at the major characteristics of India's contestation vis-à-vis the European understanding of local ownership, as outlined in the section above, the chapter argues that India's contestation remained 'soft' (see Johansson-Nogués, Vlaskamp and Barbé, this volume). This categorisation is justified in several ways. First of all, India does not contest the norm itself, but rather its meaning-in-use. Secondly, India often voices contestation in fora where the European Union is either not present, i.e. during BRICS summits or if present—such as in the UN—has restricted its verbal attacks in most cases. Thirdly, India's 'silent contestation' at the implementation stage of the norm has meant that instead of articulating a direct critique, India has simply ignored the EU's efforts on local ownership.

Outcome: Rethinking Legitimacy of Local Ownership?

Being challenged on having neo-colonial or neo-imperial ambitions shaping their peacebuilding agendas and undergoing a learning process in terms of effectiveness of liberal peacebuilding approaches, the EU has over the last decade increasingly stressed the importance of local ownership (Rayroux & Wilén, 2014). One could thus argue that the persistent critique of India and other developing countries has at least partially contributed to putting local ownership on the agenda in the first place. During the institutionalisation process of the norm and after it made its way into the policy discussions, the EU has however developed and maintained its own distinct understanding of the principle. In this understanding of local ownership—especially in the reading of the Commission—the main goal is to include as many society groups into peacebuilding and state-building interventions (Vogel, 2016). External contestation over the content of the principle, such as the one put forward by India, has thereby not impacted or fuelled the discussion over its legitimacy in the EU context.

For the European Union, it has been easy to ignore India's critique as they have alternative channels available for implementing their understanding of local ownership without having to consider external contestation, such as their own CSDP missions. Similarly, in development cooperation, they have played a leading role in defining local ownership in their club of like-minded Northern donors within the OECD-DAC context. This common understanding of local ownership in the OECD-DAC context has also helped to foster the EU's belief in local ownership as a universally accepted standardised procedure (*type 3* norm) for peacebuilding projects.

With a growing influence of emerging countries in peacebuilding and developing cooperation (material, as well as normative) and a changing international system, it is, however, questionable if the EU will be able to maintain the legitimacy of local ownership solely internally. The EU has always put an emphasis on multilateral solutions, and in the Global Strategy, pledged to '[p]ursue a multi-lateral approach engaging all those players present in a conflict and necessary for its resolution' (EUGS, 2016 p. 19). Entering into a dialogue with India and other emerging countries over the interpretations of international norms in the field would be necessary to live up to this self-proclaimed goal and increase legitimacy of the EU's foreign policy norms, such as local ownership. Shared meaning over norms can potentially be reached through more open deliberation among the different players present in conflict scenarios (Hansen-Magnusson, Vetterlein, & Wiener, 2018). This would create the 'conditions for sustainable normativity' at the meso-level (organising principle) and enable actors at the implementation stage of norms to go beyond the formulation of a common goal (Hansen-Magnusson, Vetterlein, & Wiener, 2018, p. 9).

Conclusions

The discussion has shown that divergent histories, as well as legal and political contexts, have shaped the emergence of local ownership in India and the EU's discourse, whereby both actors have settled for their own interpretation in terms of its meaning and degree of institutionalisation (organising principle and alternative to liberal peace vs. standardised procedure). India's preferred modes of contestation: deliberation, justification and 'silent contestation'—and the EU's availability of alternative channels for its peacebuilding activities—have thereby led to a minimum of exchange and constructive debate over the meaning of local ownership. On the contrary, local ownership seems to be exploited by policy makers as a 'rhetorical cover' to claim what they are not. Brussels is using it to counter accusations of imposing liberal models of peace to local contexts and Delhi is claiming it for constructing their development cooperation as an alternative to northern donors (Chandler, 2011, p.87). Together with the fact that robust empirical research has shown that, in practice, international actors have struggled to implemented local ownership, this raises serious questions over the legitimacy and global character of this norm (Lemay-Hérbert & Kappler, 2016).

Regarding the literature on local ownership, there has been a great effort to critically distinguish between international and local actors and their divergent understandings of local ownership and the success of its implementation (Rayroux and Wilén, 2014). Most of these studies have thereby focused on the European Union and have overlooked other international actors active in peacebuilding. This Eurocentrism of the literature creates the impression that the principle of local ownership has originated among the 'Western' donor community. While this might hold true for the standing term 'local ownership', it seems quite far-fetched to claim that prior to the 1990s, no country had aimed to conduct peacebuilding in a way that is sensitive to the local pre-conditions and had argued that conflict resolution must be locally owned. As norms and principles are difficult to operationalise, a lot of the existing literature bases their analysis on an assessment of policy documents. This makes the European Union an easier case to study than a country like India, which has not produced many policy documents that would outline their approach to peacebuilding or peacekeeping. The above-discussed example of India's discourse and contribution serves as a reminder that these claims of the principle being intersubjectively held among the international community, emerged in the 'Western' donor community and then was made popular among 'the Rest' are flawed. Here, the framework of norm contestation proves as a great analytical tool to unravel these tendencies.

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Lara Klossek is a Ph.D. candidate at the Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona (UAB) and researcher at the Institut Barcelona d'Estudis Internacionals (IBEI). Her Ph.D. is conducted within the framework of the Marie Sklodowska-Curie European Training Network 'Global India'. Her thesis examines India and the European Union's approaches to global governance in peace and security, with a particular focus on peacekeeping. This corresponds with her research interests in India and the EU's foreign policy, security, peacekeeping, and IR theory.

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