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# Analysis

## Liberal interventionism in Liberia: Towards a tentatively just approach?

Philippa Atkinson

*This article argues that international actors have contributed to the peace process in Liberia both in terms of short-term conflict resolution and in relation to its longer-term consolidation, through an intervention consisting of means short of the use of force. It suggests that the strategy of global law enforcement imposed by international actors fulfils to some extent the criteria for just interventions as set out by the ICISS, although these claims to justness become more tentative in relation to the higher standards of human security protection. The more positive impacts of the strategy reflect its attempts to address the deeper roots of the country's protracted crisis, which lie in historical processes of state failure deriving from dysfunctional political economy structures, which were intensified during the*

*conflict. The policies adopted, of sanctions targeted at commodities and individuals involved in the war economy, and the indictment and prosecution of some, have contributed both to reducing impunity and to strengthening economic governance. The strategy was seriously undermined however by its selective enforcement and a failure to promote the reform of democratic governance in addition to economic aspects. Despite this unwillingness to take sufficiently robust actions in some areas, and the crucial role of local factors, in particular, the election of an experienced President committed to reform, the article maintains that the international actions have been instrumental in the transformation that may finally be being achieved in Liberia, demonstrating both that*

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*the turnaround of even the most apparently hopeless failed states is possible, and that the international community can make important contributions to this process.*

## *Introduction*

The departure from Liberia in August 2003 of former warlord and President Charles Taylor was followed by a two-year transitional period in which security was restored and maintained by the deployment of a large UN peace keeping force UNAMIL, and the election in November 2005 of Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf. Although substantial challenges remain to the longer-term consolidation of peace, the apparent commitment of the new government to addressing some of the deeper structural aspects of the country's prolonged crisis seems to present an opportunity for the country to emerge from the destructive cycle of conflict in which it has been mired for so long. The aim of this article is to analyse the contribution to this peace process by international actors in the light of current debates on the discourse and practice of liberal interventionism and its associated critiques. Specifically, it focuses on the strategy of criminalisation and global law enforcement that was adopted by international actors during the period from 2001 to the present, rather than on other more aid-related aspects of the multi-mandate post-conflict peace building (PCPB) operation, from disarmament, demobilisation and rehabilitation (DDR) and security sector reform (SSR) to elections and development, which have already been the subject of some investigation.<sup>1</sup>

The article maintains that this global law enforcement aspect of the overall intervention implemented by international actors made an important contribution both to the immediate achievement of peace in Liberia through the Accra Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) of August 2003 as well as to its subsequent longer-term consolidation. Alongside the standard UN-led PCPB package of peacekeeping, disarmament, and elections, the global law enforcement strategy was aimed directly at regime change through sanctions, prosecutions and strong diplomacy, including a call for Taylor to step down from US President George Bush in June 2003. As such, it represents an interesting example of an intervention through what Waltzer terms 'means short of the use of force', which may offer a progressive middle way between force and inaction, avoiding some of the legal, political and practical perils associated with the use of force.<sup>2</sup>

The article attempts to assess the justness of this intervention in relation to the traditional just war criteria relating to ends and means as discussed by Walter and set out in relation to humanitarian intervention by the International Commission for Intervention and State Sovereignty (ICISS) as the just intervention criteria,<sup>3</sup> as well as in the context of prevalent critiques of interventionism. It argues that in contrast to many others, which remain highly controversial in terms of objectives, means and outcomes, this intervention can tentatively be described as just according to all these criteria of assessment, so in terms of the relative legitimacy of its objectives, the relative legitimacy and effectiveness of its means, and the relatively positive outcome to which it has contributed. While many other factors have also played important roles, the consolidation of the peace process can be attributed at least to some extent to the relative legitimacy and effectiveness of the intervention itself, with the contention that these aspects contributed to the relatively positive outcome. The claim of the justness of the means of the intervention is much weaker than those relating to outcome or objectives however, with serious flaws in the implementation of the strategy, particularly when assessed in terms of broader criteria relating to human security, as articulated by the Human Security for Europe Group in relation to intervention to include the primacy of human rights, the importance of establishing of legitimate political authority, and the need for a multilateral, regional and bottom-up approach.<sup>4</sup>

The more positive aspects of the attempt to address deep-seated structural economic governance issues through the global law enforcement strategy, which represents important progress in the evolution of policy responses involving means short of the use of force, were thus undermined by the serious shortcomings of its implementation, including a failure to follow it through robustly in the peace negotiations at Accra, as well as the insufficient attention given to democratic governance issues alongside economic governance ones. The subsequent restoration of a reform agenda in the country under the Presidency of Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf ultimately owes as much to local leadership and capacity and even to contingency, as it does to the efforts by the international community.

The article examines the extent to which the deficiencies of the intervention challenge its claims to be a progressive and tentatively just approach, with detailed analysis of this experience intended to generate insights in relation to broader debates about liberal interventionism. The first section introduces the case study and sets out briefly these debates to provide context for the discussion in the following section of the extent to which the intervention can be described as just in terms of its ends and means. The article

goes on to explore in more detail the strategy adopted of global law enforcement, assessing its positive impacts and limitations. It concludes with an assessment of the implications of these experiences for the broader debates, arguing that insufficient commitment from international actors, or so-called 'liddism',<sup>5</sup> remains a key constraint to the effectiveness of even relatively legitimate international interventions such as this one. It also maintains, however, that in conjunction with strong local leadership the intervention has contributed to the institutionalisation of economic governance reforms, which address the deeper roots of the country's crisis, highlighting the transformative potential of the forceful but non-military approach adopted in this case. It is more difficult to make any claims about whether the tentative justness of the intervention in this case reflects any broader cosmopolitan trends towards the operationalisation of an international responsibility to protect, but it certainly offers some challenges to the increasingly well-established critique of interventionism following the difficulties encountered in Afghanistan and Iraq.<sup>6</sup>

## *Intervention in Liberia and the liberal peace agenda*

### **International roles in the peace process in Liberia**

The protracted conflict in Liberia, which started in late 1989 and was characterised by warlordism and sub-regional overflows, appears to have finally ended in August 2003 when then President Charles Taylor resigned from power and the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) was signed at Accra in Ghana. This eventual resolution resulted from the gradual intensification of internal military and external political and economic pressure over a number of years, including the strategy of criminalisation and global law enforcement imposed by the international community. Led by the US and UK governments through their diplomatic and aid actors and institutions, this was aimed at promoting regime change and the departure of Charles Taylor from Liberian and sub-regional politics. The set of policies that made up the strategy, implemented from early 2001 till the present, has included the imposition of sanctions targeted at named individuals and specific resources, with the relevant UN resolutions sponsored by US and UK representatives, as well as the indictment and prosecution of some of these individuals, including Taylor himself in March 2003 (although only revealed in June 2003), by the UN Special Court for Sierra Leone (UNSCSL), an institution supported, funded and staffed primarily by the US. Efforts aimed at strengthening economic governance through the

development of institutional control, and at reducing impunity through prosecution of those involved in the war economy, were also included as part of the overall strategy and were a key aspect of the deeper impact of the approach. While a variety of other factors have also contributed to both the immediate and longer term peace processes, from internal military pressure to regional diplomacy to national civil society, the sanctions and associated policies have undoubtedly also been a major factor, according to many observers and as discussed further below.<sup>7</sup>

Although not necessarily explicitly stated as such, the set of policies can be understood as constituting an overall strategy that aimed at criminalising the participants and activities involved in the sub-regional war economy, with global law enforcement mechanisms used against them to limit their viability in the short term as well as to address deeper structural problems of economic governance. The gradual evolution of this strategy, seen in the continued implementation of the sanctions and expansion of their economic governance elements, and in the protracted process of indictments and prosecutions, reflects an increased attention to the underlying roots of conflict in the sub-region on the part of the international actors driving the intervention, with increased recognition of the role of predatory political economy structures in prolonging it. This argument is based on reading backwards from the policies applied rather than on any explicit formulation of policy as such. It is notoriously difficult to determine with any clarity the processes by which international strategies or policies are actually formulated, given the multiple actors involved and the role of bureaucratic, institutional and agency-related factors.<sup>8</sup> However, it is not unreasonable to infer from the set of policies that did evolve that their specific focus on addressing elements of the war economy reflected growing attention to the political economy of conflict and its roots in historical processes of state failure.

These historical processes of state failure are related to fundamental weaknesses of post-colonial African states with their lack of empirical sovereignty and tendency to develop divisive, sub-national and often ethnically based social and political contracts in the absence of more unifying national level ones.<sup>9</sup> While these problems are characteristic of many African and other post-colonial states, they seem to be intensified in the context of both natural resource endowments,<sup>10</sup> and because of the economic and political global dynamics associated with the cold war and its aftermath.<sup>11</sup> The exacerbation of existing tensions inherent in neo-patrimonial political economies under such conditions may contribute to the development of a degenerative dynamic, in which the incentives to use increasingly criminalised and predatory methods to gain or maintain power are

heightened. Gradual fragmentation may result as state functions including security increasingly become privatised and competing elites establish regional power bases.<sup>12</sup> The deepening of these centrifugal forces in some cases precipitates actual state failure characterised by violent economic predation and other abuses, widespread institutional collapse and large-scale population movement, with further degeneration into conditions of warlordism sparked by copy-cat factionalisation.<sup>13</sup>

It is argued here both that the criminalisation strategy developed by international actors in response to the evolution and persistence of these dynamics in this region implies some understanding of the processes involved, and that its relative success also reflects to some extent this deeper analysis of the underlying issues. While again the mechanisms of influence are difficult to discern clearly, this greater insight into the issues at the level of policy reflects to some extent at least the growing academic attention to economic aspects of conflict as encapsulated in the greed versus grievance debate.<sup>14</sup> The policy recommendations emanating from this literature, which emphasise the need to alter the incentives faced by actors by increasing the costs of participation in war economy activities and reducing impunity, are closely reflected in the criminalisation strategy that was adopted in this case consisting of targeted sanctions and prosecutions.<sup>15</sup> An important role was also played in this process of increasing understanding of war economy dynamics by global civil society groups, with activist and advocacy NGOs including Global Witness and Partnership Africa Canada (PAC) helping to raise public and policy interest in issues such as blood diamonds for example.<sup>16</sup>

This positive attention to economic governance issues has been accompanied however by a failure to address the more directly political aspects of the country's state failure such as the over-centralisation of power in the institution of the Presidency, an important structural aspect of the predatory political economy, or the defective institutions of local government, which greatly inhibit democratic participation in the political process.<sup>17</sup> This emphasis of policy responses on the economic interests of individuals as opposed to a more structural and political approach aimed at strengthening democratic governance more broadly, may reflect the somewhat narrow focus of academic debates and activists' advocacy on greed and economic factors rather than grievances and more political issues. It also highlights the continued interest of international actors in elections as a useful and relatively quick exit strategy, at the expense of a longer-term role in tackling deeper political reform, suggesting the continued salience of critiques of interventionism on the grounds of insufficient commitment or 'liddism'.<sup>18</sup> So while greater recognition and understanding of political economy aspects of the country's prolonged crisis has

contributed to the adoption of relatively progressive and effective policies in terms of economic governance, other more political aspects of governance have been neglected.

### **The liberal peace agenda**

Despite these limitations, it is suggested here that the various policies that were implemented did play an important role in both the immediate resolution and longer-term consolidation of the peace process. This latter claim in particular has important implications for the broader debates on the liberal peace agenda, and this section now sets out briefly the basic contentions and critiques of this debate in order to provide a context for subsequent analysis.

The liberal peace paradigm refers to the ever-expanding discourse and practice of liberal interventionism encompassing everything from immediate conflict resolution and peacekeeping to democracy promotion, state re-building and development, and the various other activities that contribute to post-conflict peace-building (PCPB). The expansion of liberal interventionism throughout the 1990s was promoted by a number of different actors and interests, from the rights-based agenda of its original humanitarian and human rights proponents, to the so-called enlightened self-interest of its later neo-conservative supporters.<sup>19</sup> This latter element was based on increasing recognition of the threats posed by southern disorder, as expressed in Tony Blair's 1999 speech on internationalism and reflected in the US National Security Strategy of 2002,<sup>20</sup> as well as a belief that these could be addressed through political and economic liberalisation, itself drawn from the empirically grounded contentions of democratic peace theory that democracies are less likely to experience either inter- or intra-state conflict.<sup>21</sup> The core idea of the liberal peace agenda - that the spread of liberalism will contribute to the spread of peace—is rooted squarely in Enlightenment traditions, with the ambiguous mix of cosmopolitanism and self interest of the current interventionist project reflecting the earlier self-mandated civilising missions of the European colonial era, albeit in a more liberal form.<sup>22</sup>

A key aspect of critiques of liberal interventionism addresses the inherent neo-colonialism of such undertakings, questioning whether external actors should intervene at all in such situations and examining the nature of their motivations, raising questions about the authority of those promoting such an agenda as well as their interests in doing so. Serious ethical ambiguities arise from the primarily self-interested rather than humanitarian motivations of interventions, whatever their rhetorical claims.<sup>23</sup>

The selectivity of interventions in practice, in terms of political commitment, leadership and funding, lends further support to contentions that in non-strategic areas the approach is fundamentally about 'G8 riot control' or containment, rather than a genuine attempt to promote a just and liberal peace.<sup>24</sup> At the same time as pandering to public pressure for some action to be taken, Western discourses of 'saving strangers' also help to obscure the role of structural aspects of the global political economy in the perpetuation of the 'durable disorder' of the south.<sup>25</sup> According to this perspective, even the more progressive global law enforcement strategies serve to focus attention on the war-zones themselves and away from the substantial structural changes at the global level that are ultimately necessary to address war economy dynamics.<sup>26</sup>

Beyond these questions relating to objectives and motives, the liberal peace paradigm also faces serious challenges in terms of the means of implementation of interventions, with critiques focusing on the extent to which external actors can or could intervene effectively to promote a liberal peace, whatever their reasons for doing so.<sup>27</sup> The particular dilemmas that arise in relation to this question of the means of interventions are sometimes framed in terms of the 'liberal paradox', of whether and how liberalism can be fostered through the efforts of external actors rather than evolving organically through long-term and primarily internally-generated processes, a concern for the civilising missions of liberalism dating back to J. S. Mill. This problem emerges in practice in the so-called footprint dilemma, or the question of how to balance external contributions to institutional development with the local ownership so essential for liberalisation processes to take root.<sup>28</sup> The inherent difficulties in maintaining external control while also supporting the bottom-up processes that constitute local institutional development have been widely observed, with overly heavy international footprints inhibiting the generation of more organic and locally owned processes of institutional development in the Balkans and East Timor for example.<sup>29</sup> A different dilemma is created by an overly light footprint or more hands-off approach to local political processes, with the possibilities for locally generated institutional development greatly restricted in Afghanistan, Liberia and elsewhere, by the continued influence of illegitimate and illiberal actors in the political process.<sup>30</sup>

A further aspect of the liberal paradox relates to the question of the sequencing of this local institutional development with processes of liberalisation, given the extent to which the former process underpins the latter, as discussed by Paris.<sup>31</sup> Paris maintains that political and economic liberalisation before or without institutionalisation is more likely to contribute to a return to conflict than to the consolidation of peace, arguing that the

proposition of democratic peace theory that liberalisation promotes peace does not apply in conditions of transition when the opposite is much more likely to be the case. Paris offers substantial empirical evidence from numerous cases where hasty and shallow liberalisation has been counter-productive, including following the 1997 election of Charles Taylor in Liberia.<sup>32</sup> The 'election fetish' of the international community is particularly problematic, with the emphasis in the majority of cases on this aspect of democracy even in the absence of the necessary institutional conditions, suggesting as mentioned that finding an exit strategy is a higher priority than promoting a sustainable and deeper process of liberalisation.<sup>33</sup> As discussed further below, the failure to address the deeper structural aspects of political reform in Liberia as part of the transitional process in Liberia has also been a serious shortcoming of the current intervention, reflecting the deeper failure of commitment or liddism that arguably characterises liberal interventionism.<sup>34</sup>

The extent to which interventions can overcome these various theoretical and practical dilemmas is questionable, with many considerably hampered by their flawed and inadequate means, dubious objectives and mixed motivations. Despite this, interventions in practice may fail only on some grounds while fulfilling others, with the justness of the Kosovo intervention widely recognised for example despite its flawed ends and means.<sup>35</sup> While this experience offers some encouragement for the liberal peace paradigm, the difficult and highly ambiguous interventions in Afghanistan and Iraq, which fall within its expansive conceptual and practical bounds despite their primarily defensive nature, have lent considerable support to its critics on the grounds of both ends and means. Liberal interventionism currently remains somewhat in limbo, with the practice of interventions continuing to progress, including through the increasing number of EU-led multi-mandate PCPB operations with a military or police component, but the discourse remains divided on both the 'whether' and 'how' of interventionism. Further analysis of the Liberian case study can contribute to both these aspects of the debate, with the following section now examining in the context of this brief discussion of the liberal peace paradigm, the extent to which this intervention can be described as having a just approach.

### *Towards a tentatively just approach*

This section now considers the extent to which the intervention in Liberia fulfils the criteria of just interventions as set out by the Independent Commission on Intervention and State

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Sovereignty (ICISS) in their report on the Responsibility to Protect,<sup>36</sup> as well as in relation to broader human security considerations. In terms of objectives, the just intervention criteria are just cause, right authority and right intention, and last resort, while those relating to the means are proportionality and reasonable chances of success.<sup>37</sup> These criteria are derived from the just war tradition and have been adapted to apply to interventions, particularly the latter criteria relating to the means of intervention. As well as the more traditional question of the proportionate or humanitarian nature of the direct means used in a military intervention, of great relevance in Kosovo, Afghanistan and elsewhere, the effectiveness of the strategy and policies implemented must also be taken into account in relation to means, as this will determine the reasonable chance of success of the intervention. The serious mistakes made at the level of implementation in the Iraq intervention and its aftermath underscore the importance of including criteria relating to implementation as part of overall ethical judgements of interventions, with the legitimacy of the means used thus closely dependent on their effectiveness, and both important determinants of a positive and just outcome.

The importance of considering *jus post bellum*, or the justness of actions carried out in the aftermath of the immediate resolution of conflict, is also increasingly being recognised.<sup>38</sup> As with the means of interventions, this criteria also relates to the legitimacy of the processes involved as well as the effectiveness of actual implementation. The various activities that contribute to *jus post bellum* involve the consolidation of the physical security achieved through the short-term resolution of conflict and its extension to the broader aspects of human security. This re-conceptualisation of security and of the objectives of interventions in terms of this more holistic idea of human security centred on the protection of the individual from all existential threats provides a further important set of criteria against which to measure the justness of interventions in practice. As articulated by the Human Security Study Group, these include the primacy of human rights, the importance of establishing legitimate political authority, and the need for multilateral, regional and bottom up approaches.<sup>39</sup> While closely related to the just intervention criteria, these human security principles thus offer useful guidance for assessing particularly the means of intervention in practice.

The first criteria of just cause in relation to the motivation behind an intervention is closely linked to the questions of legitimacy and authority, with a key element of the critique of the liberal peace agenda its challenge to the automatic assumption of a *droit d'ingrèrence* or right to intervene by the Western powers which dominate the international community,

as articulated most forcefully by founder of MSF and current French Foreign Minister Bernard Kouchner.<sup>40</sup> While criticism of the dangers of this elision of might with right has been common in relation to interventions in Kosovo, Afghanistan and Iraq,<sup>41</sup> in this case, however, there has been remarkably little criticism of this assumption by the US and UK instigators of the strategy of the authority and legitimacy to promote regime change of a democratically elected government and President. This lack of questioning of the legitimacy of the interventions in West Africa seems to reflect an acceptance both in the region and beyond of a just cause in this case, and may be taken as evidence of this. Although the policy has been criticised for the selectivity of targeting Taylor and not other African leaders involved in similar activities,<sup>42</sup> there was widespread popular support internationally and locally for an even greater intervention than the limited strategic actions that did take place<sup>43</sup> and few academic, political or civil society dissenters on any grounds.

Justification for the intervention was provided by the growing evidence of Charles Taylor's direct support for the RUF and contributory role in the spread of conflict in the sub-region, providing sufficient justification for the actions taken against him. The framing of the issue by US and UK sponsors of the policy in terms of the threat posed to regional and international peace and security by the destabilising activities of the RUF and Taylor, ensured that the existing perception of legitimacy was supplemented by the legal grounds provided in Article 42 of the UN Charter provision for action in such cases.<sup>44</sup> While this provision has at times been used more tenuously in the wording of UN Resolutions to justify interventions such as Operation Restore Hope in Somalia in the early 1990s, in this case regional destabilisation did represent a genuine cause for international concern, although primarily in relation to the region itself rather than more broadly.<sup>45</sup> Despite the formal legality thus provided, on the face of it an intervention aimed directly at regime change of a democratically elected leader would still be expected to attract justified accusations of imperialistic interference. The lack of any criticism of the violation of the country's sovereign and democratic rights in this case suggests that when an intervention is ultimately backed up by a just and humanitarian cause, that the legitimacy this offers is not necessarily undermined by Western selectivity and dominance of the process.

A further key element of the critique of liberal interventionism rests on the fact that such concern over the security threats posed by rogue states or actors ultimately derives much more from self-interest than from solidarism,<sup>46</sup> with the ethical significance of this element of motivation reflected in the inclusion of right intention in the just intervention criteria. While a mix of motives is pragmatically welcomed by the ICISS as likely to contribute

to greater financial and political commitment to interventions,<sup>47</sup> and in practice is likely to be a crucial determinant of whether interventions are mounted, a predominance of self interest over more purely humanitarian intentions can result in the adoption of non-humanitarian and counter-productive means, such as aerial bombing in Kosovo, or alliances with warlords in Afghanistan, in contravention of the just intervention criteria of proportionate means.<sup>48</sup> Security concerns about the overspill effects of Taylor's behaviour were the primary motivation here, and as in other cases, did ensure political and financial commitment to the intervention. In contrast to these other interventions where primarily self-interested security considerations have been primary, the security concerns in this case were firmly rooted in more humanitarian concerns about the impacts of regional insecurity on those affected by it directly. US commitment to its activist strategy in Liberia was certainly strengthened further by the discovery of an Al Qaeda link to the sub-region,<sup>49</sup> but the sanctions policy against the Taylor government was initiated in March 2001 well before the 9/11 attack took place.

Although both countries have mineral endowments of interest to the West and elsewhere, their minimal strategic value offers further support for the contention that the interventions in both cases were motivated more by solidarism than self-interest, beyond the over-riding cosmopolitan interest of international actors in reducing the spill-over impacts of conflicts by promoting peace and security in insecure regions. The importance of humanitarian motives was also highlighted by the widespread public concern about the situation in Liberia in the US, which was reflected in public calls for a more substantial engagement during the height of the crisis in mid 2003,<sup>50</sup> and provided some backing for the more indirect intervention that was already taking place. UK support for the criminalisation strategy derived from its need to reinforce and consolidate its earlier military intervention in Sierra Leone, which also reflected predominantly humanitarian rather than self-interested motives. These relatively forceful interventions and their primarily humanitarian motives offer some support for cosmopolitan claims of increasing recognition of the need to respond to the threats presented by the evolution of 'overlapping communities of fate'<sup>51</sup> in the context of globalisation, expressed by Tony Blair in his appeal that 'we are all internationalists now whether we like it or not . . . . We cannot turn our back on conflicts and the violations of human rights violations within other places if we still want to be secure'.<sup>52</sup>

Whatever their motives, failure to fulfil the just intervention criteria of right authority has been a further important aspect of the critique of interventions from Kosovo to Iraq, both of which proceeded in the absence of explicit authorisation by the UN Security Council. Again

in contrast to these cases, the adoption in this case of a multilateral and regional approach lent further important legitimacy to the intervention in Liberia, although the leadership of major powers was the driving force in the multilateral setting, with US and UK aid and diplomatic actors setting the agenda and initiating action at all levels, including through their sponsorship of UN resolutions and the establishment in 2002 of the International Contact Group on Liberia (ICGL). The close involvement in the process of regional actors further contributed to perceptions of its legitimacy, with representation from ECOWAS and the AU in the ICGL, and a crucial role played by regional diplomatic efforts in ensuring Taylor's participation in the Accra peace process, with the ECOWAS representative to the ICGL, General Abdusalam Abubakar, serving as Chief Negotiator at the talks.

In terms of cause, intention and authority, the intervention appears to have combined the legitimacy and legality of a multilateral approach with the political commitment necessary to ensure success, and has thus avoided criticism on the usual grounds despite its inherently neo-colonial and selective assumption of a right to depose a democratically elected government. In terms of means, however, the criteria have been fulfilled to a much lesser extent, with the relatively effective strategy of global law enforcement undermined by a neglect of deeper political reform of democratic governance institutions,<sup>53</sup> as well as by its own implementation shortcomings. Despite its limitations, the strategy adopted did make substantial contributions to the peace process and represents a positive evolution of international approaches to economic governance issues. The policies of targeted sanctions and prosecutions both limited the operations of the war economy in the short term and supported the reform of economic governance structures in the longer term. These more progressive aspects thus contributed considerably to improving the reasonable chances of success of the intervention, while the process of their implementation through multilateral channels was also relatively legitimate. In terms of the human security principles of human rights primacy, legitimate political authority, bottom-up, regional and multilateral approaches, claims of legitimacy and effectiveness become much weaker, however, with only the latter regional and multilateral aspects being fulfilled here to some extent, and failures in relation to these other aspects seriously undermining the positive impacts achieved through the more progressive elements of the approach.

Sanctions and other policies were imposed through multilateral UN channels, while the strategy adopted a regional approach to some extent, with the close involvement of regional diplomatic actors in the peace process as mentioned, and Taylor explicitly targeted for his destabilising role at the regional level, although this aspect has also been criticised

for failing to go far enough.<sup>54</sup> There were even more problems achieving a sufficiently bottom-up approach or in contributing positively to the establishment of legitimate political authority, however, with a lack of sustained support for local civil society actors, limited attempts to foster the necessary local discourses on political reform,<sup>55</sup> and the appeasement of the warring parties during the peace negotiations, contributing instead to the reassertion of the usual corrupt political economy practices during the transitional period.<sup>56</sup> Legitimate political authority was sacrificed in the interests of expediency, with the adoption at Accra of the usual power-sharing compromise model, which rewarded military power with political representation and access to the spoils of government. The selective nature of the criminalisation strategy with its focus only on Taylor and his close associates, and its lack of enforcement at the national level, further facilitated this return to business as usual and reaffirmation of impunity.

A further key failure in terms of the means of intervention relates to the severe humanitarian emergency during the height of the political and military crisis in the summer of 2003. International actors contributed to this either through omission by failing to mount a military humanitarian intervention, or through commission, as maintained by some commentators who have suggested that the unveiling of Taylor's indictment by the United Nations Special Court for Sierra Leone (UNSCSL) at the start of the Accra talks further fuelled the conflict at the cost of civilian lives.<sup>57</sup>

The imposition of a global law enforcement strategy through multilateral and regional channels although backed up by major power leadership and commitment, thus only partially satisfies the relevant just intervention criteria. The relatively legitimate and effective aspects of the means of the intervention in terms of its multilateral and regional approach, and economic governance strategy respectively, were balanced by its shortcomings in terms of a limited contribution to the establishment of legitimate political authority, an insufficiently bottom-up approach, and a failure to put human rights first by mounting a rescue mission in the summer of 2003. In so far as it meets the narrower ICISS criteria, the intervention does offer a relatively robust response to critiques of liberal interventionism on the basis of legitimacy. However, its serious flaws lends some support to broader criticisms of liberal interventionism on the grounds of containment or liddism, with the failure to follow through the more progressive elements of the strategy jeopardising the important achievements of these aspects, and undermining the considerable efforts of this tentatively just approach.

## *Global law enforcement in practice*

### **Processes of intervention**

This section now considers in more detail the flawed means through which the global law enforcement strategy was implemented, suggesting that the positive contributions to promoting regime change and deeper structural reform were undermined by their limited enforcement and by the contradictory appeasement approach to the peace agreement at Accra adopted by international actors. Although representatives of civil society and civilian opposition groups present at the negotiations were able to promote the inclusion of some economic governance reforms in the actual agreement,<sup>58</sup> in furtherance of the existing strategy, insufficient efforts were made to develop alternative political solutions to the usual model of temporary division of power among the warring parties followed by elections, or to promote deeper dialogue on democratic governance reform, either by national activists or by the international facilitators of the talks. There was also a failure to seize the opportunity to extend the existing criminalisation strategy to the national level through the establishment of a robust war crimes tribunal, with a Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) set up instead. As well as an unwillingness of international actors to fund another expensive legal institution in the region in addition to the UN Special Court for Sierra Leone, the compromise on transitional justice also reflected a lack of national consensus on the issue of war crimes, related in part to the continued power of the military actors. In its counter-productive aspects, the Accra CPA recalled the numerous similar agreements of the 1990s when the copycat factionalisation of the warlordism phase was deepened by the rewarding of military power with political representation. The reliance on this discredited model also reflects broader international trends characterised by insufficient commitment from international actors to enforce a human rights approach in practice.<sup>59</sup>

Following this apparent retreat from their initially more robust engagement, international actors did however renew their efforts in support of the second chance for reform that arose with the election of Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, particularly through the imposition of a Governance and Economic Management Action Plan (GEMAP).<sup>60</sup> In conjunction with the continued implementation and expansion of the sanctions policy, this has provided support for the efforts of the new administration in partnership with international actors in strengthening economic governance institutions and financial management systems, with dismissals and prosecutions including of members of the

former transitional administration. Although dysfunctional political economy structures remain deeply embedded at all levels including within the new government, hesitant and slow progress is being made in the implementation of the reform process, with evidence of a strengthened national commitment to addressing impunity, as well as attempts to enforce the UN asset freeze nationally.<sup>61</sup>

International actors have played a key role in promoting this return to reform, demonstrating their renewed commitment to addressing economic governance problems through the introduction of GEMAP,<sup>62</sup> in addition to their substantial and decisive contribution to creating the conditions in which an election could be held, through promoting the removal of Taylor from the political scene as well as through the provision of ongoing security through the peacekeeping force UNMIL. The crucial factor in the return to the reform agenda contained in the initial global law enforcement strategy has however ultimately been the election of a new government that can act in partnership with international efforts. The stark contrast between the reformist efforts of a democratic and accountable government with the continuation of existing trends during the interim period, highlights the centrality of strong partnerships between international and national actors in the achievement of successful post conflict transition and the longer term consolidation of peace processes. It also emphasises the potential for transformation that still exists even in such apparently hopeless cases as Liberia.

### **Sanctions and indictment**

The primary instrument in the set of policies implemented as part of the global law enforcement strategy was the sanctions, targeted at individuals in the form of a travel ban and later an asset freeze, and on specific resources, first the trade in diamonds and later expanded to include timber as well, a key source of income and arms for Taylor's regime.<sup>63</sup> An arms embargo already in place since the early 1990s was also reaffirmed.<sup>64</sup> An important aspect of the sanctions was the strict conditions for the lifting of the trade bans, which enabled the exercise of ongoing international control during the transitional period and beyond, as well as contributing to the development of institutional capacity in economic governance of these resources, such as through achieving compliance with the international Kimberley Process.<sup>65</sup> Other elements of the sanctions policy included the usual committee to monitor compliance, as well as the establishment of a UN Panel of

Experts, whose investigatory work has provided detailed information about the activities and actors involved in the war economy, helping to increase understanding of the dynamics and providing evidence for the prosecution of some of those involved.<sup>66</sup> Its continued close attention to these processes in the period since the resolution has also been crucial in the maintenance of pressure for reform on the transitional government and the subsequent elected one, with its repeated calls for local enforcement of the asset freeze for example taken up eventually by the new government despite strong local opposition from those affected and their supporters.<sup>67</sup>

The final key aspect of the overall strategy has been the indictments and prosecution of Taylor by the UN Special Court for Sierra Leone (UNSCSL) and of a number of his international associates by national courts in Europe. While Taylor has been charged with 11 counts of war crimes and crimes against humanity relating to his role in the conflict in Sierra Leone,<sup>68</sup> others have been prosecuted for arms offences relating to sanctions violations, highlighting their important contribution to reducing impunity. International arms dealers Sanjivan Ruprah and Leonid Minin have both been prosecuted in European courts for offences at least in part relating to their arms trading with Taylor,<sup>69</sup> while Dutch national Gus Kowenhoven, who has been closely involved in his timber and arms activities since the early 1990s, was sentenced to eight years imprisonment in Holland for violating the UN arms sanctions.<sup>70</sup> Although highly selective and ad hoc, the successful prosecution of individuals such as these who play crucial roles in the illegal economic activities and networks that characterise conflicts such as that in Liberia, represents important if tentative progress in addressing such negative dynamics, through increasing the costs of participation to such actors at the international level. In addition to the targeting of sanctions at individuals through the travel ban, and despite not being fully articulated or designed as such, this aspect of the strategy reflects closely the recommendations emanating from academic debates over the role of war economies in conflict and how to address them as mentioned above.<sup>71</sup>

In terms of their immediate effects, the sanctions helped to weaken Taylor's government both politically and economically, and in conjunction with other factors including military and diplomatic pressure, played a decisive role in helping to end the conflict, according to the UN Panel of Experts.<sup>72</sup> In political terms, increased local awareness of Taylor's international rogue status greatly undermined his remaining domestic political support, with the direct naming of Taylor and his close associates in the individual travel ban making it much more difficult for him to manipulate them politically, as had been done

so successfully by Milosevic and Saddam Hussain. In economic terms, the travel ban in particular also made it much more difficult in practical terms for Taylor and his cronies to operate their various business interests, preventing travel to conduct deals or deposit cash. In terms of the trade sanctions, the ban on diamond exports was effective in closing down this aspect of the war economy, in conjunction with other international efforts through the Kimberley Process as well as the peace process in Sierra Leone.<sup>73</sup> In combination, these impacts restricted to some degree the continued operation of the war economy, while reducing further any residual domestic political support for Taylor's regime.

The sanctions have also had important longer-term impacts through making the lifting of the trade embargos conditional on the attainment of specific benchmarks relating to the management of diamond and timber production and export. This has contributed to strengthening national capacity in economic governance, with the development by local and international stakeholders of a Forestry Development Plan to provide a road map for reform of this sector linked to the gradual removal of timber sanctions, and the lifting of the diamond sanctions linked to the implementation of the Kimberley Process control mechanisms, again helping to build local institutional capacity in the longer term as well as maintaining control in the short-term.<sup>74</sup> Despite the many challenges to this process, from continued vested interests, unreliable funding and highly limited physical and human capital in the immediate aftermath of the conflict and Taylor's Presidency, the compliance with the international Kimberley Process was finally achieved, leading to the eventual lifting of the sanctions,<sup>75</sup> while the Forestry Development Plan has also been adopted and gradually implemented both with considerable institutional and financial support from various international actors. As suggested already, this inclusion of highly concrete economic governance institutional development seems to reflect the tentative evolution of ways in which these issues can be addressed through particular policy responses including control and reform reflecting an increased understanding on the part of international actors of the dynamics of war economies.<sup>76</sup>

These positive impacts were undermined, however, by the limited nature and selective enforcement of the sanctions, with the French and Chinese blocking the inclusion of timber, which they both continued to import, until mid 2003, giving Taylor continued access to this key source of funding. There were also concerns over the humanitarian impact of closing down the logging industry, an aspect deriving from criticism of the serious humanitarian problems created by comprehensive as opposed to targeted sanctions, although these were relatively unsubstantiated. The arms embargo as usual proved difficult to enforce, with

a substantial shipment to the government in August 2003 intercepted only because of the simultaneous arrival at the international airport of West African peacekeeping forces.<sup>77</sup> The focus of the strategy on Taylor alone was a further key shortcoming, with a failure to pursue enforcement at the national level, including of the asset freeze, allowing impunity to flourish during the interim period and undermining the deeper impacts of the strategy in terms of addressing the predatory political economy structures. Given these constraints to the implementation of the sanctions, it could be argued that other factors were equally or more important in achieving actual regime change, with military pressure from the rebel groups, whose arms supplies were maintained by sub-regional allies, certainly a key aspect of Taylor's eventual capitulation.<sup>78</sup> The regime had already been considerably weakened by the sanctions, however, which greatly increased its susceptibility to this military force, by restricting the activities of the war economy on which its power was ultimately based. The earlier inclusion of timber and more effective implementation of the sanctions generally could have greatly strengthened the role of these international means short of the use of force in Taylor's removal, however, and in doing so perhaps reduced the high humanitarian costs that resulted during the military crisis of mid 2001.

### **Appeasement at Accra**

The contradictory approach adopted by international actors during the actual peace agreement negotiations at Accra, which could be described as appeasement of the warring parties, further undermined the effectiveness of the global law enforcement strategy, already weakened by the selective focus on Taylor and limited enforcement of the sanctions. The Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) signed in August 2003 was based on the standard power-sharing compromise approach in a similar format to the various flawed agreements reached during the 1990s. The key stakeholders in the process, the three warring parties, the official mediator ECOWAS and ICGL representative General Abdusalam Abubakar, as well as US military and diplomatic officials present at Accra, all acquiesced in this approach to the CPA, which in effect awarded the warring parties a temporary share in the spoils of government in exchange for peace. Opposition parties and civil society groups were also represented in the process and outcome, as they had been in earlier agreements, but had little influence over the proceedings and limited alternatives to offer. Rather than focussing on the substantive and urgent questions of political reform,

energy and time at Accra was spent instead in haggling over the allocation of particularly lucrative posts such as the Ministry of Finance, Central Bank and National Petroleum Refinery Corporation.<sup>79</sup> These positions were then exploited during the transitional period for economic gain as in the past, although the illegal exploitation of natural resources element of the illegal political economy was being restricted quite effectively by continued trade sanctions. This resumption of corruption in various other forms occurred throughout the transitional government and administration, with gregarious examples not limited to former warring parties alone, reflecting the depth of such problems within political institutions and culture.<sup>80</sup>

The establishment by the CPA of commissions on governance reform and monopolies and contracts (GRC and MCC) did reflect some civil society influence as well as the broader ongoing efforts to address these political economy issues, but their scrutiny was unable to prevent the negotiation of dubious contracts such as with Mittal Steel,<sup>81</sup> or the issuance of diamond licences in violation of the sanctions.<sup>82</sup> As well as the reassertion of deeper corrupt tendencies, this was partly because the agreement had failed to set out in sufficient detail the role and limits of the transitional government, with no limits to its powers to negotiate contracts or its ability to run up domestic debt, for example.<sup>83</sup> This failure to build in checks and balances in the transitional period reflects a lack of attention in the CPA to key structural (and cultural) weaknesses, despite the emphasis on economic governance as part of the overall strategy, reflecting perhaps the ultimate limits to the interests of international actors in promoting deeper solutions to these problems. As increasing evidence of corruption emerged during the interim period, renewed efforts were gradually initiated however, with a series of audits carried out, including one by ECOWAS which provided evidence of serial abuse,<sup>84</sup> and finally in the lead up to the 2005 election, the development and imposition of the Governance and Economic Management Action Plan or GEMAP.<sup>85</sup>

The failure of local civil society actors to push for greater control on the transitional administration or greater consideration of questions of political reform reflected a lack of national consensus on key issues such as a war crimes tribunal, as well as a recognition of the military power of the warring parties.<sup>86</sup> The lack of influence of civil society and opposition groups despite a relatively strong national support base reflects persistent internal divisions based more on personal competitiveness than policy differences, which has greatly weakened their ability to offer a real alternative to the power of the armed political actors.<sup>87</sup> The failure by international actors to follow through their relatively

forceful strategy into the peace negotiations is less understandable, especially given the strong commitment to a criminalisation strategy already demonstrated as well as their greater ability to influence and even direct the proceedings. Although the warring parties were loudly and damagingly exercising their military power throughout the June to August 2003 negotiations, with the siege of Monrovia by rebel group LURD and advances in the south-east by the newer rebel group Model, these attacks greatly weakened the government forces, while the two rebel groups had very limited longer term claims to power in relation to either political constituencies or military strength, particularly with the enforcement of the arms embargo which they had been evading with the help and connivance of regional and international allies.<sup>88</sup>

In combination with the limited enforcement of the sanctions, this failure to challenge more deeply the power of these armed political actors greatly undermined the existing contribution of the intervention to the deeper reform process, and represented a significant and ambiguous retreat from the earlier more principled interventionism. While power-sharing approaches to peace agreement negotiations have become embedded in the evolving system and process of responses,<sup>89</sup> it is still difficult to understand the apparent unwillingness of international actors to follow through their strategy of regime change into influencing the actual peace negotiations, with representatives of the ICGL and other key diplomatic players preferring to play a more limited facilitating role.<sup>90</sup> Any qualms over legitimacy issues were somewhat late in the day given the intrusive nature of the existing intervention, while any perception of limited leverage at this stage is again hardly justified given prior and subsequent levels of interference. Arguments of limitations to policy space resulting from the prevailing 'ground truth' in relation to the military power of government and rebel forces in Liberia are more convincing, although their very limited actual power was also widely recognised as mentioned, and could probably have been relatively easily overcome, either diplomatically or through minimal military engagement as had been successful in Sierra Leone. Discussions at the time about the possibility of an international trusteeship also reflect a high degree of perceived leverage.

Perhaps ultimately a greater challenge to the short-term military power of the warring parties in order to address the underlying political issues, would have required a more robust military engagement from the international community, with the US in particular widely criticised for its failure to respond militarily to emergency calls at the height of the crisis. While this reflects its ultimate lack of pressing strategic interest in the country, as well as its over-extended capacity elsewhere at the time,<sup>91</sup> the sustained media debates

about this option suggest that it was being taken seriously, with public opinion and the State Department in favour of more substantial action. Although an actual military humanitarian intervention was not mounted in the end, a small force of marines was finally dispatched to the country, arriving as Taylor left, at the same time as the initial deployments of the multi-national force, UNMIL, which has maintained security since. The substantial contributions from the US both politically and financially to ensuring the eventual deployment of this large firstly regional and subsequently UN peacekeeping force, despite the usual costly delays in this process, further highlights their commitment, and reflects the widespread and cosmopolitan public concern and support. Nevertheless, given the strength of this commitment to other aspects of the process demonstrated both before and after, the lack of a more robust engagement by international actors during the actual negotiations at Accra or attempt to promote a more reformist agenda at that time is particularly disappointing.

As elsewhere, the focus of international actors on establishing a timetable for elections and exit strategy as part of a standard power-sharing political compromise and internationally supported PCPB package, meant that insufficient attention was given to deeper, more structural political issues. Unlike to some extent in relation to economic governance, minimal attempts were made to facilitate any process of regeneration of the institutions of political governance either indirectly through support of civil society groups and their agendas or directly through exercising greater influence during the negotiations of the CPA.<sup>92</sup> This failure by international actors to follow through sufficiently on their earlier tentative commitment to the relatively just approach that had been adopted, both by ensuring better implementation of the sanctions and by wielding the influence at Accra that they undoubtedly could and should have, suggests ultimately an insufficient commitment to particular aspects of the strategy and lends support to critiques of liberal interventionism on the grounds of 'liddism'. The limited crisis management approach adopted during the actual peace negotiations further reflects the broader tendency for international actors to chose the standard option of power-sharing despite the considerable longer-term costs involved in the reward of use of military means to gain political representation.<sup>93</sup> It may also reflect the ultimate lack of strategic interest in the country, however strong expressions of popular concern may be during crises,<sup>94</sup> highlighting the limits of cosmopolitanism as well as the high level of sustained attention and analysis and continuous engagement necessary for such interventions.

### **Return to reform**

A number of factors combined to rescue the country from a potentially highly damaging return to the status quo ante and contributed to the restoration of the initial reform agenda, including the introduction of GEMAP, the continued implementation of the sanctions and, most importantly, the election of a reformist President. The expansion of the trade sanctions into economic governance measures in addition to their direct control over the export of diamonds and timber was a crucial aspect of the ongoing application of the global law enforcement strategy, effectively preventing their exploitation in the medium term while contributing to the development of institutional checks and balances through the promotion of the Kimberley Process in the country as well as the Forestry Development Plan as mentioned. A further key element of this return to reform was the introduction of the Governance and Economic Management Action Plan (GEMAP) in the run up to the election, which involved the imposition of external control over the revenue earning and expenditure making government agencies in which corruption was concentrated. This policy was generated by the increasing frustration of international actors with the accelerating corruption of the transitional administration, the last six months of which were referred to as 'rush hour'.<sup>95</sup> GEMAP's central element was the placing of internationally recruited experts in the key revenue earning and expenditure making ministries and para-statal in which corruption was concentrated, to provide direct oversight over all activities for a three-year period.<sup>96</sup> The policy was only accepted by the outgoing transitional government following considerable pressure and the credible threat that funding of PCPB activities would otherwise be cancelled.

Although the concept of a GEMAP was welcomed by many local commentators in acknowledgement of the deeply embedded nature of the problem of corruption and potential contribution to its resolution through a system of international oversight, the process by which it was imposed was also strongly criticised locally, in particular for its top-down nature, lack of transparency and a failure to foster local ownership of the process. The emphasis on external control and relative neglect of local capacity and institution building was widely viewed as neo-colonial short-termism, with then Presidential candidate Ellen Johnson Sirleaf among many criticising the affront it represented to the country's economic sovereignty.<sup>97</sup> These concerns over the limited contribution of such a strategy to local institutional capacity and problems with the processes by which such strategies are developed and imposed, reflect the broader critique of overly-heavy footprints discussed

above, with local actors objecting in particular to the failure to involve them in the development of the policy. Despite its weaknesses, the policy has been contributing to the institutionalisation of economic governance to some extent, including through the training of local staff by the foreign experts during their three-year tenure, as well as helping to restrict corruption directly in the short-term, and as such is increasingly appreciated, including by the government. GEMAP has also been an important affirmation of the commitment of international actors to the deeper consolidation of the peace process in Liberia.<sup>98</sup>

The real key to the restoration of the reform agenda promised by the initial strategy of the international community and seriously threatened by the return to business as usual and impunity during the transitional period, has however been the election of a President committed to reform. It is interesting in this respect to consider the counter-factual of the possibility of a victory for former footballer George Weah in the election, which seemed an equally likely outcome well into the first round of the election in which the two candidates were neck and neck. This outcome would almost certainly have derailed even further any attempts to reform the country's political economy structures, and given the past record of some of Weah's backers as well as his inexperience, could have contributed to a deepening of the return to the status quo ante as seen in Sierra Leone.<sup>99</sup> Of particular concern in Weah's circle was Emmanuel Shaw, *persona non grata* in South Africa for his involvement in illegal activities there, and long-time player in the Liberian war economy. Associates of Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf have equally been involved in questionable activities, and there are concerns about a return to the deeper roots of the dysfunctional political economy in the days of the exploitative Americo-Liberians, but there were clear differences between the candidates in terms of both commitment and capacity, with the final election vote perhaps representing a vote for reform in acknowledgement of this.

While it is difficult to assess conclusively the reasons why Ellen managed to win the election in the second round by a decent margin of 60% to 40%, observers at the time pointed to a campaigning mistake of Weah as a major factor.<sup>100</sup> Following the first round in which Weah gained slightly higher support of 30% of the vote compared to Ellen's 20%, Weah visited the region of the abusive former President Samuel Doe wearing a t-shirt with his picture on, an apparently highly unpopular move. This suggests that rather than any deeper trend reflecting the readiness of the Liberian people to choose reform for themselves, contingency may have been the key factor behind the electoral outcome. It could however also be argued that as well as a vote of confidence in the formidable qualities of Ellen herself, that Liberians were consciously embracing a more just and

sustainable road to peace, and rejecting the continuation of business as usual that the Weah camp ultimately seemed to represent despite its youthful figurehead. To whatever extent this was a factor, and despite the at times hesitant embrace of the more difficult aspects of tackling corruption, the election of Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf has ensured the country's return to the broad reform agenda contained in the earlier international efforts, which aimed at tackling the political economy roots of the conflict. The combination of the underlying commitment to deep reform with the strong administrative capacity being established, as well as the substantial levels of international support and goodwill, gives the new administration a potentially transformative power.

The turnaround achieved through the election of Ellen Johnson Sirleaf is interesting in relation to the critiques of the election fetish of the PCPB paradigm, or the problem of liberalisation before institutionalisation.<sup>101</sup> Amos Sawyer has criticised specifically the faulty logic of the assumption that 'once a 'good' person is elected President the (institutional) problems will then be addressed',<sup>102</sup> maintaining that the high continued risk of a misuse of power derives from a failure to address the flawed political institutions, and specifically the centralisation of power in the Presidency. It appears, however, with the election of Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf that strong local leadership and capacity can help overcome these problems of insufficient institutionalisation to some extent. In this case, the processes of democratisation, liberalisation and institutionalisation are developing simultaneously if gradually, and while structural political aspects are evolving more slowly, relatively significant reform in economic governance and financial management is already being achieved through the joint contributions of external and internal actors. There are concerns over the neo-liberal leanings of the new government with its emphasis on macro-economic stability and fiscal probity in line with the prescriptions of the international financial institutions where prominent members of the government have been trained. This strategy of being 'open for business' in order to attract the international capital necessary to rebuild the country seems far preferable, however, to the return to business as usual that the interim administration represented, while the background of the President herself in the World Bank and UNDP is also helping to ensure sufficient attention is also being given to social services provision and poverty reduction. Timely achievement of IMF standards in relation to financial management has also contributed to faster qualification for international debt relief and forgiveness schemes, representing further important progress for the country's consolidation of peace.

## *Lessons from Liberia*

This final section briefly summarises the lessons learned from this experience of intervention and considers their implications. Firstly, it seems as if a combination of strong local leadership and continued external support has enabled the liberal paradox or dilemmas over how external actors can foster processes of liberalisation, to be surmounted to some extent in this case. Although there has been serious neglect of specifically political institutions, concurrent liberalisation and institutionalisation is occurring in relation to economic governance. GEMAP has contributed to this reform process, with some of the problems relating to the heavy footprint encountered during its initial imposition overcome with the help of strong local leadership. Part of the relative success in this case must thus be attributed to the election of a particularly capable leader, in which contingency undoubtedly played some role, with international local partnerships obviously much more straightforward as a result. The President's background in the international civil service further reinforces this dynamic, along with her appointment of similarly like-minded people to key positions. This development also suggests that positive processes of reform and rebuilding can emerge from within countries, facilitated by international support, and that further decline from state failure and conflict is not inevitable. Just as Taylor emerged from these degenerative and ultimately devastating historical processes of state failure, so did Ellen, reflecting the existence of a strong local constituency for reform that international actors can help to foster, as this case has also demonstrated.

The failure of international actors to support the emergence of legitimate political authority during the actual peace negotiations considerably undermined these positive and progressive aspects. The major shortcomings of the strategy in terms of its limited enforcement and the appeasement approach at Accra, suggests that liddism remains more problematic than legitimacy or leverage issues, with the retreat from direct engagement ultimately a failure to commit fully to the tentative just peace approach. This reflects both a lack of attention to political and structural aspects of the country's state failure and the need to strengthen democratic governance, as well as the ultimate absence of sufficient strategic interest in Liberia as elsewhere in the south,<sup>103</sup> and it suggests that while it is difficult to achieve the requisite balance with a heavy footprint, this dilemma is preferable to the highly counter-productive impacts of a lighter footprint or lack of engagement. The extent to which this reversion to containment could have undermined even further the

more positive contributions of the strategy highlights the extent to which deeper structural change is in fact a fundamental basis for the longer-term consolidation of peace, something that supports the contentions about the centrality of processes of institutionalisation.<sup>104</sup>

Despite these various flaws, there is no doubt that the intervention has contributed substantially to the longer term peace process in Liberia, both in terms of setting the scene for the election of the 'right' person, and in terms of the deeper structural reforms that it promoted, suggesting that international actors can help to foster a conducive environment for liberalisation and its institutionalisation through the use of means short of the use of force. Finally, and again in spite of its various shortcomings, the intervention can be described as a tentatively just approach. This claim rests on the assessment of the relative legitimacy of all its various aspects, from its just cause and intention to the use of relatively effective means to some extent at least, to the longer-term commitment to deeper structural aspects that it demonstrated, highlighting the usefulness of these criteria in assessing the claims and impacts of liberal interventions.

## Endnotes

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5. Cooper, 'Picking out the Pieces of the Liberal Peaces'.
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