Liberal Peacebuilding in Sierra Leone: A Critical Exploration

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Abstract

There is increasing awareness and international support for rebuilding states that have gone through conflict. Third-party interventions in bringing peace to countries that have emerged from civil wars have been channeled through a fundamental concept known as liberal peacebuilding. Liberal peacebuilding, even though it faces much criticism, has been a prominent strategy for third-party intervention in post-war countries since the end of the Cold War. This paper deals with the liberal peacebuilding process in Sierra Leone, after its decade-long brutal civil war. The focus lies on Dr Roland Paris' institutionalization before liberalization (IBL) peacebuilding strategy, its strengths and shortcomings, and its contributions to sustaining peace in Sierra Leone since the end of the war in 2002. Arguing that the IBL strategy has helped to maintain peace in Sierra Leone after ten years of civil war, the paper analyzes how peacebuilding has been implemented in post-war Sierra Leone under the six different pillars of the IBL strategy.

Keywords

Liberal peace theory, institutionalization before liberalization, peacebuilding, conflict in Sierra Leone, civil war

Introduction: the liberal peace theory concept of rebuilding war-shattered societies

Over the years, many theories have emerged as models for conflict transformation. Among the most prominent has been the liberal peace theory, sourced from the democratic peace theory, which states that stable democracies are less likely to go to war with each other and that an extension of democracy will lead to international peace and security (Mac Ginty, 2010). The concept of liberal peace is rooted in the political thought of classical liberals such as Hobbes, Locke, Rousseau, and Kant, among others (Owen, 1994). This was explored by Immanuel Kant over 200 years ago in his essay, "Perpetual Peace: A Philosophical Sketch" (Pugh, 2005), which asserts that the interaction

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among republican states leads to peace, since states with a republican form of government are more transparent and accountable to their citizens, and hence their commitment to the consent of the voters reduces the chances of engaging in war (Doyle, 2005). On the other hand, a non-republican form of government is more likely to be motivated to wage war, putting the state in a constant state of aggression toward its citizens, as it does not require their approval (Paris, 2004).

Therefore, focusing on politics as the source of war, Kant calls for the universalization of liberal republicanism to prevent non-republican states from threatening and oppressing their citizens and those of other liberal states. To Kant, the sustainability of peace rests upon the willingness of each state to adopt the necessary criteria of a liberal state. This includes respect for the rule of law, upholding the principle of human rights, a separation of power, checks and balances on government functions, economic and social interdependency, and multiparty elections (Pugh, 2005). When the government is controlled by liberals, the state's relations with other liberal states are peaceful, and in an incident of war, liberals prevent escalation by using the freedom of expression accorded to them by law. On the other hand, illiberal states are unable to rally their people to take up arms out of the fear that an unpopular war could lead to their downfall (Owen, 1994).

This theory received further recognition at the end of World War I under the rubric of Wilsonianism, a liberal peace doctrine adopted and promoted by former president of the USA, Woodrow Wilson. The theory relied on the central theme that governments based on the approval of the people lead to political stability within states and eventually to international stability and domestic peace, underpinned by the democratization and marketization of the state. Although Wilson's focus was mainly on establishing lasting peace in Europe at the end of World War I, in recent times the strategy has been adopted by many Westerners based on similar beliefs as the prominent model of peacebuilding in war-torn states (Paris, 2004).

This theory, also known today as liberal peacebuilding, became prominent in the post-Cold War discourses of Western democracies. Linking democracy and peace became a notable political ideology that informed the external relations of Western democracies. It has become the foremost strategy to promote peace and security around the world (Geis et al., 2007). Interventions based on this strategy come against the backdrop that democracies do not fight against other democracies. Since democratic states seek to resolve their social differences through cooperation, negotiation, the holding of elections, encouraging constructive, rational debate, tolerance, and compromises, influences such as terrorism, rebellion, civil wars, *coups d'état* and revolution have a more limited impact on democratic states than on nondemocratic states (Paris, 2004). Also, economic interdependence has long been linked to peace and stability; political scholars have argued that when economic interdependence between states is strong, they seek to find peaceful solutions to conflict rather than go to war. Such interdependence enhances integration and cooperation and leads the parties to try to avert war (De Vries, 1990).

The main argument here is that if the values of liberal peacebuilding were implemented widely in post-conflict societies there would be a greater chance of economic growth and lasting peace in those countries, and at the same time this would allow them to become part of the interdependent global democracy, hence further limiting the likelihood of conflict (Tziarras, 2012). Therefore, for the international community, liberal peace is highly regarded as the key to addressing the root causes of a conflict and, despite the fact that its practice in many forms is not flawless, at its highest level it stands as a method for the peaceful settlement of conflict based on mutual trust (Jarstad and Sisk, 2008).

Critiquing liberal peacebuilding

For decades, there has been enormous international support and effort to promote liberal values in countries emerging from war. Liberal values are considered a fundamental aspect of sustaining

peace and enhancing economic growth and development. However, many questions arise as to how the strategy of promoting such values aims to achieve its goals. The critiques of liberal peace theory posit that the theory is in crisis, as it has failed to put forward a substantive explanation as to why democracies do not go to war with each other. The liberal peace model has also come under severe criticism for the fact that, although the model focuses on creating liberal states, rebuilding and building effective government institutions in war-torn societies, it has to some extent been counterproductive where the implementation of the model in war-torn states has led to a renewal of all-out violence or tensions, as in Angola and Rwanda (Paris, 2004).

In commenting on liberal peace theory, those who challenge the theory have focused on the methodology, the assumption and the hegemonic nature upon which the theory is based. In doing so, they have categorized their criticism under two distinct but related perspectives, "power-base" and "idea-base" critiques (Campbell et al., 2011). First is the power-base critique: this approach argues that liberal peace is a mere extension of Western ideology that has relatively little genuine interest in securing peace and stability in countries where it is introduced. This critique focuses its attention on the role of Western powers in determining world economic policies and how this impacts the rest of the world. Therefore, the emphasis on implementing free market economy policies in war-affected states has in many ways re-ignited the very conditions that caused war in the first place, because such policies only seem to serve the interests of international institutions controlled by Western powers. It further highlights that liberal peace strategy is aimed at spreading Western power by transforming war-torn states and "dysfunctional" societies into cooperative and representative peaceful states. This approach tends to ignore the role of local methods and values in rebuilding war-shattered states (Campbell et al., 2011).

The second perspective is the idea-base critique: such critiques are less concerned with the interests behind Western intervention methods, and instead focus on the standardization of the model as key to the international response to post-conflict intervention. They insist that the framework is inadequate for countries emerging from war or failed states – that focusing on rebuilding war-torn states into stable political entities alone cannot resolve the numerous problems faced by post-war countries. They further argue that the effort to universalize the Western model into non-Western states which are unprepared for such a challenge, and the assumption that democratization and the free market lead to political stability and a better life, ignore the pitfalls that the transition itself poses. Both democratization and marketization call for competition, which, if not handled properly by a well-functioning state, might exacerbate violence and lead to war (Campbell et al., 2011).

For critics like David Chandler, the liberal strategy of rebuilding war-torn states, as purported by Western intervention, is merely "empire in denial." The actual strategy of state-building has failed to restore the capacity of these states to self-govern and instead leads to the creation of what Chandler called "phantom states" that depend largely on external support and lack political and social legitimacy (Chandler, 2006). Mark Duffield adds that the whole concept of rebuilding war-torn states is an instrument of "global liberal governance," where a transnational network of states – and not state actors themselves – tend to be promoting peace, security, and development, but actually are preserving their own interests by promoting Western liberal values (Duffield, 2001).

For another critic, Roland Paris, the process of transforming war-torn states into market democracies poses a serious challenge to the very objective of liberalization. However, rather than rejecting the liberal peacebuilding strategy in totality, he points out the weaknesses and failures of the liberal peace approach and proposes a more efficient and proactive approach to the existing liberal peace strategy. While liberal peace campaigners believe that the competition created through democratization and marketization promotes effectiveness and accountability on both the political and the economic stages, they ignore the fact that this will not lead to effectiveness when the existing institutions are weak, as is the case in war-torn states (Paris, 2004).

For Paris, a country undergoing transformation to market democracy is vulnerable to five main pathologies: (a) "bad" civil society; (b) opportunistic "ethnic entrepreneurs;" (c) the risk that elections can lead to unhealthy competition; (d) the threats posed by local "saboteurs" (Paris, 2004: 159–166), who claim to promote democracy but seek to weaken it; and (e) the challenges that come along with economic liberalization that threatens internal peace (Paris, 2004). These pathologies exist in post-war countries because: first, liberalization starts with intense conflict still taking place within society; second, war-torn states lack a tradition of resolving conflict peacefully; and third, there is a lack of effective government institutions capable of containing the risk of liberalization. Therefore, building stable and strong political institutions is the sure way of overcoming these challenges (Paris, 2004). Paris labeled this approach institutionalization before liberalization (IBL), which he further distinguished into six different pillars under which peacebuilding operations should be carried out in the war-shattered environment:

- wait until conditions are ripe for elections;
- design electoral systems that reward moderation;
- promote good civil society;
- control hate speech;
- adopt conflict-reducing economic policies; and
- the common denominator: rebuild effective state institutions (Paris, 2004).

The IBL strategy aims to improve and enhance peacebuilding approaches so that they achieve more sustainable, durable peace in post-war countries through liberal market democracy. The strategy recommends that peacebuilders should shift from hastily promoting democracy and a free market economy in post-conflict societies, and instead should first focus on "constructing a framework of effective state institutions" (Paris, 2004: 187). International peacebuilding agencies should prioritize the stable government and functioning institutions necessary to handle the various challenges of post-conflict reconstruction. In other words, international peacebuilders should focus on the priorities of stabilization and security rather than promote liberal ideas in the first stages of the transition (Paris, 2004). However, Paris' understanding of institutions, tied to Western understanding of democratic institutions and not local ownership, has faced a lot of criticism on the basis that the rush to institutionalization itself poses a serious challenge, including destabilization of already weak state structures and encouraging the growth of new spoiler groups (Sriram, 2008).

The pillars

The sections below will examine each of the six IBL pillars of Paris' framework and analyze the extent to which they have been effective in driving and maintaining peace and democracy in Sierra Leone.

Wait until conditions are ripe for elections

The importance of elections lies in their role in legitimizing the representation process. "Elections, open, free and fair, are the essence of democracy, inescapable sine qua non" (Huntington, 1993:7). Today, most political systems tend to use elections as a facade to lend credence and legitimacy to their regime's hold on power. They are also seen as a viable means by which change and continuity are fostered in societies. Given the end of the Cold War and the ensuing success of liberal-variant democracy, more societies have embraced the tenets of the dominant system, which relies on elections as a component of change to democratic rule.

As is the case with many post-conflict countries, Sierra Leone was not in a position to undertake post-conflict elections alone. It sought help from the United Nations (UN), but this help did not go

as far as that provided in countries such as Cambodia where the UN had been directly involved in the elections. The UN mission in Sierra Leone provided electoral assistance during the 2002 and 2007 presidential and parliamentary elections.

The administration and management of elections in Sierra Leone are in the hands of two bodies, the independent National Electoral Commission (NEC) and the Political Parties Registration Commission, both established after the war. The electoral body in Sierra Leone in its early days of post-independence was very successful in conducting free and fair elections. However, it lost its credibility and public confidence in the 1970s and 1986 elections, as the body was highly influenced by the incumbent regimes, with many elections organized during this time fraudulent, not free and fair, and characterized by intimidation (Conteh, 2013). After a series of negotiations, the first multiparty democratic elections took place in 1996, conducted by an Interim National Electoral Commission (INEC) created in 1994. The elections, however, did not end the war. To enhance elections' credibility, a new NEC was established in 2000 and two years later, through an Act of Parliament, received details of its functions and structure, replacing the INEC (Conteh, 2013).

The 2002 elections granted the opportunity to all parties, including the Revolutionary United Front (RUF), to form political parties to contest elections slated for that year. The preparations ahead of the 2002 elections took into consideration full-scale disarmament and registration of voters across the country, which had not been the case in 1996, as the presence of the rebels in areas beyond government control had disenfranchised some people. The RUF and the People's Liberation Party, formed out of the former Armed Forces Revolutionary Council (AFRC), were allowed to transform themselves into political parties, but they did not in any way create a significant impact on those elections. They were subdued by the democratic voice of the people, limited by the complete disarmament of their troops and by the commitment of the international community and the government of President Tejan Kabbah to the pursuit of peace and democracy. "Consolidating democracy involves electoral events which follow each other: if stability is maintained, elections will become cyclical; other types of elections will be held" (Helgesen, 2007: 2).

The 2002 elections thus created the enabling atmosphere and provided the bedrock for sustainable peace and adequate space for the growth of democracy. Since then, there have been several successful elections at both national and local levels. These elections continued to transform Sierra Leone's democracy from a fledgling to a mature one. In fact, the 2007 parliamentary and presidential elections were a failure, as the opposition succeeded in winning both elections. Prior to this, considering the failure of local-level governance another major cause of the war, the Kabbah government had been quick to ensure that measures were put in place to curtail the challenges that such illiberal forces, if left unresolved, could represent for the fragile peace. The government established the Local Government Act of 2004, which allows democratically elected councils to replace president-selected management committees (Fanthorpe, 2005). Although many donors and some liberal peace experts called for the dismantlement of local government structures because they were illiberal institutions, the president was very resilient in resisting such calls. The 2004 local government elections were a means to widen the democratic space further, to devolve power to local entities for greater political inclusion. At this juncture it should be noted that elections, instead of leading to a relapse into violence in the country, have served as a peaceful alternative to war as a means for contesting the leadership of the country through effective existing national institutions.

Designing electoral systems that reward moderation

The rules that govern and guide transparent, free and fair elections are crucial to ensuring democracy and peace in post-war countries and those transitioning from non-democracy to democracy. Electoral systems are used to promote a series of key peacebuilding objectives, such as making sure minority groups are represented, citizen participation and satisfaction, and providing an

electoral process less complicated to administer in post-war countries, in order to consolidate the fragile peace (Report of a ZIF/KAIPTC Seminar, 2008). Choosing an electoral system is a significant part of building a democracy; it has a great impact on how politics will be run in the future for a particular country (Reynolds et al., 2008).

Sierra Leone, like its colonial master before independence, had been practicing one of the oldest and simplest electoral systems – the majoritarian election system. It is a system where either the candidate with the most votes but not necessarily the overall majority becomes the winner, or the candidate with the absolute majority of votes (more than 50%) is declared the winner (Norris, 1997). Presidential elections used the two-round system, and the first-past-the-post system was used for parliamentary elections. In the plurality system, the aim is to ensure that the leading party has enough seats to form an efficiently functioning government. Under this system, effective governance rather than the inclusion of all sides is the focus, and the round-off aims to allow cross-national alliances in the running of the government (Norris, 1997).

In 1996 and 2002 the country used proportional representation and the district block representation system for its parliamentary elections. These systems were used because instability of the government had prevented it from carrying out boundary delimitation to distribute the population into constituencies (Norris, 1997). The current electoral system has been crucial in the consolidation of peace by ensuring that a winner in the presidential election gets support from across the entire country.

Several types of elections are conducted in Sierra Leone, but nationally there are three key types of elections: paramount chief elections; member of parliament elections; and local council elections. First, presidential elections are held every five years. During these elections, the president and the vice-president are chosen directly by voters. A registered political party must nominate any candidate for the presidency and the candidate must be eligible as a member of parliament. Paramount chiefs and members of parliament currently form the legislative branch of Sierra Leone. This is composed of 124 seats, 112 of which are filled by direct election of representatives while the remaining 12 are occupied by paramount chiefs from the 12 provincial districts of Sierra Leone. Each candidate is nominated by a political party which he or she represents for each constituency. However, an independent candidate can also contest a seat in parliament and can serve for two terms of five years each (Conteh, 2013).

The paramount chiefs are elected indirectly by members of an electoral college called chiefdom councilors, who in turn are selected by taxpayers in each chiefdom with the mandate to elect paramount chiefs. Also, there is a local council election held every four years to elect heads and councilors of municipalities, cities, wards, and local councils, as well as by-elections and referendums. Recently, paramount chieftaincy elections have been conducted to elect traditional leaders of the chiefdoms (Conteh, 2013).

Promote good civil society

Healthy and vibrant civil society organizations (CSOs) are important agents in building peace in war-torn societies. Since the end of the Cold War, there has been an increase in the active role that civil society tends to play in societies with deep ethnic, social, religious, and cultural cleavages. The sector is seen as a complementary agent in providing a strong pillar for peacebuilding, contributing to post-war democratic transformation, respect for human rights, and the rule of law (Belloni, 2001).

Within the first decade after the end of the war in Sierra Leone, CSOs received enormous support to design projects or proposals that were responsive to different challenges of the post-war context. Logistical, financial, and technical assistance, capacity-building and monitoring, and

coordinating the activities of local and international CSOs were among the types of support rendered by the international community and partner civil society organizations to Sierra Leone's civil society after the war.

Civil society groups in Sierra Leone, including professionals, trade unions, religious groups, and human rights-, gender, development-, and economic interest- based groups have been very active in promoting gender equality. They have also advocated for women's increased participation in politics and played a key role in the disarmament, demobilization, rehabilitation, and reintegration (DDRR) process. Moreover, they have been instrumental in bringing the war to an end and promoting peace and reconciliation (Belloni, 2001).

One major example is the role of the Inter-Religious Council of Sierra Leone. Its establishment coincided with the overthrow of the democratically elected government by the AFRC in 1997. The council was quick to shift its objectives from harmony among Muslims and Christians – the two main religious groups in the country – to advocating and campaigning for the restoration of the elected government. The Council engaged in a series of programs in education, reconciliation, reintegration of ex-combatants, and consultation with the head of warring parties, and, most importantly, acted as a key facilitator in the Lomé Peace Accord (LPA) (Belloni, 2001).

Today, the important role of civil society in ensuring lasting peace and the restoration of democracy and good governance cannot be overstated. It has been able to build bridges across various communities through dialogue and public communication, and has been important in assisting in the recovery of the economy by supporting economic recovery programs such as poverty reduction strategy projects, ensuring that the country's natural resources benefit the people, campaigning for more women in leading positions in governments and private offices, delivering services in areas where the government cannot afford to do so, monitoring public institutions and processes, and supporting victims of human rights violation through legal means.

Control hate speech

It is quite clear that the media's role in using any means of expression to communicate, inform, publicize, entertain, and educate its audience in conflict goes back to World War II, where it was used by allied forces and Nazi Germany. It has evolved and become increasingly used as a tool in escalating civil wars today, but also as a prominent tool in facilitating the transition to peace and democracy. The media is a powerful tool in influencing the opinions, attitudes, and beliefs that eventually turn into positive or negative action. Therefore, it is essential to assume that the same means the media uses to divide communities and incite violence could be used to unite the people and bring lasting peace (Bratić, 2006).

The media's role has extended from initially spreading information and educating its listeners, readers, and watcherson how the peace agreement is being implemented, to long-term initiatives such as acting as a watchdog on government activities, giving information on early warning signs of a possible renewal of conflict, and monitoring human rights violation (Bratić, 2006).

The independent press in Sierra Leone dates back to the 1700s, when Freetown, now the capital city of Sierra Leone, was chosen as a suitable place for the resettlement of freed slaves. This period gave rise to press freedom as demonstrations were launched against the activities of the colonial administration. As the years went by, albeit underfinanced and with constant government control and regulation, media outlets, mostly personally owned, were established in the country (Bratić, 2006). Throughout the years that followed independence, the media was engaged in a continuous fight with successive governments for its survival (Bratić, 2006).

The media was seen as biased in the way in which it covered stories during the war; it was involved in the use of pejorative language, such as using different names or status to describe certain

factions of the war. Newspapers were constantly involved in exaggerating atrocities committed by one group, while human rights violations and other appalling abuses carried out by another group received few if any headlines. The amount of airtime and frequency of coverage accorded to the activities of the warring parties was unevenly balanced (Khan, 1998).

So, the international community, in the build-up to the signing of the LPA, was quick to realize that a well-trained and responsible media outlet, whose activities must be regulated to ensure that they did not incite hatred and violence against particular groups, was needed in rebuilding post-war Sierra Leone. From the agreement, it was clear that all parties should respect the independence of the media and refrain from using the press for propaganda purposes or suppressing freedom of expression. The aim was to work together to create an independent media body that would oversee the conduct and activities of all media institutions in the country (Abdalla et al., 2002).

Since the end of the conflict, the media has become an important player in rebuilding war-shattered Sierra Leone. Organizations such as Search for Common Ground (SFCG), which established the radio station Talking Drum Studio (TDS SL), were among the first to enter the country and to use the media in a constructive way to bring an end to the war and sustain the peace (Abdalla et al., 2002).

Through programs such as the "Golden Kids News" and a soap opera drama called "Atunda Ayenda" TDS SL encouraged those affected by war to discuss their hopes for the future, created a dialogue between victims and perpetrators, and informed and sensitized former fighters about the disarmament and demobilization process. TDS SL was instrumental in the early days of post-war reconstruction, with popular programs on issues such as injustice, media and human rights, good governance, gender equality, and HIV/AIDS (Abdalla et al., 2002). Also, SFCG used radio to successfully create national and community discourse across the frontiers of the rebel armies and engaged in direct communication with combatants. SFCG convinced rebel commanders to disarm and release child soldiers. Reporters went into the bush, talked with commanders, established credibility, and then gradually took truckloads of children back into civilian life (Abdalla et al., 2002).

Finally, the radio service of the United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone (Radio UNAMSIL), established as part of the public information section of the peacekeeping mission, had the task of helping to rebuild peace in war-torn Sierra Leone. The radio provided peaceful and unbiased information, educated key stakeholders on their role in restoring peace, broadcasted important live programs, and hosted political parties' leaders and government officials, substituting the incitement of hate heard on radio stations controlled by warring factions (Dxing.info 4 July 2002).

In 2000, through a legislative act, an Independent Media Commission (IMC) was established as an independent entity with responsibility for regulating all media outlets in the country as well as handling all media-related matters. The president appointed the commission members in consultation with the Sierra Leone Association of Journalists, subject to the approval of parliament. Its functions are to promote a free and pluralist media in Sierra Leone, ensure the provision of high-level and efficient media services, promote fair competition, and protect the public against media abuse and manipulation. Together with the Ministry of Information it adopted a code of conduct for media institutions, and it advised the ministry on the issuance of licenses (Sierra Leone Independent Media Commission Act, 2000).

With the IMC Amendment Act 2006, the Commission has continued to provide leadership in matters related to media. The Commission continues to regulate the activities of media institutions independently from government. Today the landscape for media institutions in the country has changed significantly. The media continues to play a major role in democracy, good governance, and peace in the country, and acts as a watchdog for the public. The audience now has a greater choice of which radio station or program they can tune in to.

Adopt conflict-reducing economic policies

Economic mismanagement was also a leading cause of the outbreak of the war in 1991. With independence in 1961, there were hopes for better life and development in the new nation because of its natural resources and raw material endowment. Nevertheless, hopes were dashed a decade after independence as political instability ensued, and the economy declined drastically. Economic growth reduced to −5.3% in the 1980s (World Development Indicators, 1985). To save the country, the government and its partners introduced economic structural reforms toward the end of the 1980s. The reforms were halted, however, by the RUF invasion in 1991 (IMF Country Report No. 05/191, 2005).

During the war the economy continued to decline and growth became stagnant as all the warring parties engaged in seeking to control the sources of the economy to support the war. From the 1990s to 2000, economic growth regressed to 4.5%, poverty increased and the country's gross domestic product (GDP) was halved, reaching US$142 per capita in 2000 (IMF Country Report No. 05/191, 2005). With the war coming to an end, it was clear that Sierra Leone was incapable of undertaking the implementation of the LPA; the UN was quick to encourage donor countries to make contributions toward the reconstruction of the war-shattered state. In the UN Security Council Resolution 1289 the UN asked the international community to contribute to "sustained and generous assistance for the longer-term tasks of peace-building, reconstruction, economic and social recovery and development in Sierra Leone" (UNSCR 1289, 2000: 4). The international community indeed provided such assistance, but with stringent conditions assumed to be essential for promoting economic growth and development. The Kabbah government was quick to adhere to these conditions by giving high priority to foreign direct investment, privatization, reducing market barriers, and other financial policies in the belief that private investment leads to job creation and economic growth.

The compound challenges of the post-war country led it to benefit from the surge of donors of all kinds. International actors, learning from the experiences of previous peacebuilding programs, were keen to prioritize the strengthening of political and financial institutions capable of implementing various projects, including economic reforms. So international governmental financial institutions such as the World Bank and the African Development Bank, and international development agencies such as the UK Department for International Development (DFID) and the United States Agency for International Development, contributed significantly to the Sierra Leone recovery process by focusing on different sectors, but with the same goal of rebuilding the country at the end of its devastating civil war in 2002. Private international funders such as the Ford Foundation and Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation were also greatly involved (Kanyako, 2016).

The European Union and the UK contributed nearly US$800 million to boost the newly elected government in 2002 (Kanyako, 2016). The World Bank launched an Assistance Strategy Program in the country and provided US$244.6 million toward the peace process. In the middle of the DDRR program, the UN was spending close to US$16.4 billion per year; at the same time DFID was disbursing about £100 million a year on the country's reconstruction process. From 2004 to 2005 alone, the USA, through its agency of international development, spent US$45 million on the resettlement of internally displaced persons, the reintegration of former fighters, and revamping the economy (Kanyako, 2016). With the end of the war, there was evidence that the country's economy required major new policies and substantial investment. The post-war economic recovery policies focused on two key issues: the stabilization policies, which sought to restore the overall economic balance and control inflation; and the structural reforms policies which aimed to set the economy on a high growth and sustainable development path by correcting institutional and systemic inefficiencies (Sierra Leone PRSP, 2005).

Other economic programs such as the International Monetary Fund (IMF) Emergency Post-Conflict Assistance Facility and the World Bank Economic Recovery and Rehabilitation Credit (ERRC I) were aimed at re-establishing macroeconomic stability, rehabilitating the economic and social infrastructure, and rebuilding capacity for policy formulation and implementation (Sierra Leone PRSP, 2005). As the security situation continued to improve, an Interim Poverty Reduction Strategy was approved in 2001 by the IMF to work in line with the Poverty Reduction and Growth Facility for an initial three years, running until 2005. This program was aimed at comprehensively addressing the poverty situation and facilitating the prospect of economic growth in the country (Sierra Leone PRSP, 2005). There is no doubt that international community intervention since 1999 serves as the force behind the rapid economic and political stabilization in the country (World Bank Report 50351-SL, 2009).

The GDP has been expanding, from 6.7% in 2000 to 20.7% in 2013 (World Development Indicators, 2000–2013). Following the outbreak of the Ebola epidemic in 2014, the state's economy contracted to −20.5% in 2015, but it has picked up again since to 6.3% (World Development Indicators, 2000–2015). Some analysts say that with the sources of income available to Sierra Leone the economy should be performing better than it is now – a situation which is not limited to Sierra Leone but applies to many other African countries categorized under such a profile.

As stated above, with the outbreak of Ebola in 2014 the economy came to a standstill. However, as was the case with post-war recovery, there was positive donor sentiment toward post-Ebola recovery. The government adopted the new Economic Recovery Strategy (ERS) to implement reforms and rebuild the economy. The focus is more on strong tax policies than natural resources (Masha, 2016). According to the IMF representative in Sierra Leone, Iyabo Masha, unlike the post-war economic recovery, the Ebola crisis will be less challenging as many sectors of the economy are well placed. With proper implementation of the ERS along with the ongoing Agenda for Prosperity Program, Sierra Leone could achieve its vision of becoming a middle-income country by 2035 (Masha, 2016).

The common denominator: rebuilding effective state institutions

All the activities mentioned above were undertaken to restore peace; democracy and a viable economy depended on the existence of national institutions to implement, monitor, and enforce them. This was essential in Sierra Leone, where the state failed as a result of weak institutions. The objective of the IBL model, therefore, suggests that international peace intervention must ensure the availability of healthy and properly functioning government institutions if it is to succeed in restoring a viable political system and lasting peace. In this regard, several instances of institutional building and rebuilding were undertaken. Some of the major ones are discussed in this study.

The security sector of Sierra Leone before and during the war was fragile in that it could not stop the rebels from invading. As the war progressed, security deteriorated, with the military joining forces with the RUF in 1997 and the police becoming very much unresponsive. The international community, especially the UK, was quick to engage in reforming the armed forces, the justice sector, and the Ministry of Defence (Skora, 2010). The İnternational Military Advice and Training Team, mainly composed of British soldiers, trained and equipped all the units of the military, including ex-combatants, and restructured the various institutions of the armed forces (Skora, 2010).

The UK government, in collaboration with the UN, further undertook the rebuilding of an effective police force capable of dealing with internal threats while the army concentrated on external threats. Training and equipment were provided to the police, auxiliary mechanisms such as police radio were established, and new prisons and courts were built, along with a community relations

department and a trained justice of the peace, to maintain a robust and responsive force and build a sense of public trust (Skora, 2010). The strength and effectiveness of these institutions was manifested in 2009 when Sierra Leone started contributing troops to UN peacekeeping missions. Today the Sierra Leone Police has become a force for good in providing internal security with its presence all over the country.

To ensure that the atrocities committed during the ten-year civil war are not repeated, the Kabbah administration, in consultation with the UN, established the Special Court for Sierra Leone in 2002. The court was tasked with the responsibility for prosecuting all those who bore the greatest responsibility for atrocities committed against civilians during a given period of the war (Special Court of Sierra Leone, 2002). In 2003, the court began the prosecution of leading figures of the RUF, AFRC, and Civil Defense Forces, and of Charles Taylor, the then-president of Liberia. While Foday Sankoh and Sam Bockarie of the RUF died before trial and Johnny Paul Koroma was presumed dead, the court was able to indict nine of the ten convicted persons and commit them to long-term imprisonment. The court ended its initial mandate in 2013. With support from the UN, the court, currently under the new name of Residual Special Court for Sierra Leone, engages in managing the court records, providing protection to witnesses, and supervising prisons (Special Court of Sierra Leone, 2002).

Another institution that needed reform and strengthening was the Public Service Commission. The Sierra Leone Public Service Commission was known for its effectiveness and standards just after independence; however, this soon ended when Siaka Stevens and the All People's Congress declared a one-party system in 1978. Employment in the civil service was based on political patronage, resulting in the recruitment of unqualified staff. Against this backdrop civil service credibility and capacity for service delivery was eroded, and the situation further worsened as the public sector lost a skilled workforce, as many fled the war and resettled abroad (Thomson, 2007).

After the war, reform of the public sector was one of the key plans of President Kabbah's governance reform programs. With support from donors, the commission has gone through restructuring and training to meet the demands of the public. Today the civil service is mainly relied upon for the development and implementation of government policies, monitoring and evaluating those policies, better public goods delivery, and neutrality (Sierra Leone Public Sector Reform Unit).

Regarding restorative justice, a Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) was created in 2000 by an Act of Parliament: "To create an impartial historical record of violation and abuse of human rights and international humanitarian law, related to the armed conflict in Sierra Leone from the beginning of the war in 1991 to the signing of the Lome peace agreement" (Sierra Leone TRC, 2004 Vol. 1, Ch. 1: 24). The commission was also mandated to address impunity, to respond to the needs of victims, to promote healing and reconciliation, and to prevent a repetition of the violence and abuses suffered (Sierra Leone TRC, 2004).

The focus was on victims rather than on punishing perpetrators. The TRC was high on the agenda of international peacebuilders as one of the mechanisms that would support national healing and sustainable peace. After listening to and recording a series of cases, the commission recommended the continued involvement of all stakeholders, including national and private actors, in establishing institutions for the protection of human rights, to promote good governance and the rule of law; to protect women, young people, and children; and to embark on reparation programs (Sierra Leone TRC, 2004, Vol. 2, Ch.3). Many of these recommendations have been implemented by the government of Kabbah and the current government of Koroma, through the Human Rights Commission, established in 2005; the provision of skills training in amputee camps; the establishment of the youth commission; free education in primary schools; reparations for many war victims; and female participation in politics. The TRC was a success story that serves as a reference point for international peacebuilding.

Since the end of the war in Sierra Leone, the international community role has been critical in strengthening and building institutions such as those mentioned above. The government continues to work with international donors and creditors to support stable, effective institutions for the sustainable development of Sierra Leone.

Efficiency

The IBL approach has received its own share of criticism as being too technocratic, focusing too much on political and economic institutions driven by Western values, and lacking local ownership. Many of the root causes of the war are still unresolved. There is huge economic inequality, high youth unemployment, poverty, a poor health system, and a high illiteracy rate. Even though civil society can now freely operate in the country, it remains highly corrupt, lacks transparency and accountability, and is not unanimous in condemning bad governance practice, gender inequality, or human rights violations. Despite progress made to improve the public sector, low remuneration appears to be a major obstacle and the reason the civil service has not been able to attract highly technical and committed staff (Thomson, 2007).

Another weakness of the IBL is that the institutions have not been effective and efficient in carrying out their functions: there has been too much corruption, and management and employment in these institutions are based on political connections and not merit. The media is highly politicized, with newspapers aligning with certain political parties. The IMC has been criticized for its unequal treatment of media houses in terms of issuing licenses and regulation.

The judiciary is significantly underfunded; judges are often influenced by politicians and private businesspeople. Elections, even though conducted regularly, are highly contested, cabinet ministers are mostly loyal followers of the president, and the parliament rarely rejects government policies, instead rubber-stamping them, as many members are answerable to the president thanks to his appointment of them as heads of major contracts and other projects.

Despite the criticism that these institutions are driven by Western values and lack local ownership, they have become the base from which to address long-term political, economic, and social problems that might arise. Also, these institutions have come to be occupied by locals who could not have had the capacity to structure and strengthen them after they collapsed before and during the war, therefore, "reforming governmental structures in war-torn situations that are severely damaged or completely in ruins is essential in creating the institutional capacity and necessary security for preventing a relapse into violence" (De Zeeuw, 2001).

At this juncture, it is important to note that this would not have been possible without continuous international support for large-scale peacebuilding projects and the courage of the people of Sierra Leone to accept what had happened and look toward a brighter future. Local approaches to peacebuilding (such as the palava hut, and the principle conveyed by the local proverb "Bad bus nor dea for troway bad pekin," meaning "There is no bad bush where you can throw away a bad child" – in other words, no matter what a person has done they will still be a part of the community), used as reconciliation tools for building and strengthening trust among other things, are complementing the IBL approach, ensuring that sustainable peace is maintained in the country. The state continues to receive donor assistance to carry out various developmental projects as the country moves to a level of development and prosperity.

Conclusion

In this paper, we have outlined the strength of the IBL strategy and how it has helped to maintain peace in Sierra Leone. We have also underscored the socioeconomic benefits of the approach, how

its pursuit has largely laid the basis for the erection of very strong institutions, and how such institutions have in turn transformed the sociopolitical, economic, and cultural landscape of the country and helped to repress any tendency toward a return to war. While acknowledging these merits, we have also looked critically at the shortcomings of the approach and its implications in countries emerging from conflict.

However, what we have sought to do in this paper is to demonstrate that war-torn societies can pursue the path to lasting or relative peace and economic rejuvenation if the right approach is utilized. IBL is invariably posited, as it is in this paper, as the true panacea for addressing not only a specific problem but the whole gamut of structural problems that initially led to war in the first place. It is also seen as an appropriate and efficient tool for pre-empting and dealing with issues that might emerge in the future. Achieving this, however, depends on the political will of all stakeholders in the conflict, and the international community, whose resources and patience to stay the course is important.

Furthermore, the failure of the international community and other stakeholders in past interventions seems to be compensated for by the results and successes that are tending to emerge in countries where the IBL strategy has been introduced. Sierra Leone, being a test case for this strategy, has so far proven that stronger institutions are fundamental pillars of socioeconomic and political stability. The fact that the country has enjoyed relative peace, a stable political landscape and steady economic growth over the years (with the exception of the Ebola period) shows that the IBL strategy is clearly gaining ground and could be a starting point for the sustenance of peace in future peacebuilding operations.

In general, even though there has been enormous progress made in building and strengthening institutions over the past few years in the country, the sustenance of these institutions presents a tough challenge to be further researched. It is significant to emphasize here that this study's aim was not to imply that the IBL strategy was the overall peacebuilding objective. Rather, the focus was to highlight how important it is for post-war societies to adopt the approach and how, so far, it has become the bedrock of peace and development in post-war countries such as Sierra Leone.

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