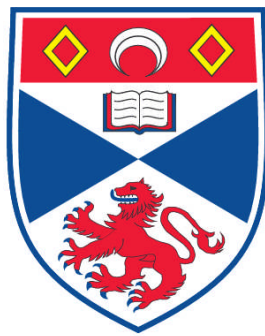


**THE LIBERAL PEACE AND POST-CONFLICT PEACEBUILDING  
IN AFRICA: SIERRA LEONE**

**Patrick Tom**

**A Thesis Submitted for the Degree of PhD  
at the  
University of St. Andrews**



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# **The Liberal Peace and Post-conflict Peacebuilding in Africa: Sierra Leone**

A Thesis submitted to the University of St. Andrews for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

By

Patrick Tom

School of International Relations

University of St Andrews

July 2011

# Declarations

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I Patrick Tom, hereby certify that this, thesis which is approximately 78,417 words in length, has been written by me, that it is a record of work carried out by me and that it has not been submitted in any previous application for a higher degree.

I was admitted as a research student in January 2008 and as a candidate for the degree of PhD in November 2008; the higher study for which this is a record was carried out in the University of St. Andrews between 2008 and 2011.

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## **Abstract**

This thesis critiques liberal peacebuilding in Africa, with a particular focus on Sierra Leone. In particular, it examines the interface between the liberal peace and the “local”, the forms of agency that various local actors are expressing in response to the liberal peace and the hybrid forms of peace that are emerging in Sierra Leone. The thesis is built from an emerging critical literature that has argued for the need to shift from merely criticising liberal peacebuilding to examining local and contextual responses to it. Such contextualisation is crucial mainly because it helps us to develop a better understanding of the complex dynamics on the ground. The aim of this thesis is not to provide a new theory but to attempt to use the emerging insights from the critical scholarship through adopting the concept of hybridity in order to gain an understanding of the forms of peace that are emerging in post-conflict zones in Africa. This has not been comprehensively addressed in the context of post-conflict societies in Africa. Yet, much contemporary peace support operations are taking place in these societies that are characterised by multiple sources of legitimacy, authority and sovereignty.

The thesis shows that in Sierra Leone local actors – from state elites to chiefs to civil society to ordinary people on the “margins of the state” – are not passive recipients of the liberal peace. It sheds new light on how hybridity can be created “from below” as citizens do not engage in outright resistance, but express various forms of agency including partial acceptance and internalisation of some elements of the liberal peace that they find useful to them; and use them to make demands for reforms against state elites who they do not trust and often criticise for their pre-occupation with political survival and consolidation of power. Further, it notes that in Sierra Leone a “post-liberal peace” that is locally-oriented might emerge on the “margins of the state” where culture, custom and tradition are predominant, and where neo-traditional civil society organisations act as vehicles for both the liberal peace and customary peacebuilding while allowing locals to lead the peacebuilding process. In Sierra Leone, there are also peace processes that are based on custom that are operating in parallel to the liberal peace, particularly in remote parts of the country.

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## List of Acronyms

ACC	Anti-corruption Commission
ACPACS	The Australian Centre for Peace and Conflict Studies
AD	Anno Domini
ADR	Alternative Dispute Resolution
AfDB	African Development Bank
AFRC	Armed Forces Revolutionary Council
AG	Attorney General
AL	Arab League
APC	All People's Congress
AU	African Union
BBC	British Broadcasting Corporation
CAPS	Community Association for Psychosocial Services
CDF	Civil Defence Forces
CGG	Campaign for Good Governance
CODESRIA	The Council for the Development of Social Sciences Research in Africa
DDR	Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reintegration
DFID	the UK Department for International Development
DC	District Commissioner
DOs	District Officers
DRC	Democratic Republic of Congo
ECOMOG	Economic Community of West African States Monitoring Group
ECOWAS	Economic Community of West African States
EU	European Union
FBC	Fourah Bay College
FOI	Freedom of Information Bill
GBV	Gender Based Violence
GTZ	The Deutsche Gessellschaft für Technische Zusammenarbeit (German Technical Cooperation)
HDI	Human Development Index
HRCSL	The Human Rights Commission of Sierra Leone
IBL	Institutionalisation Before Liberalisation

ICG	International Crisis Group
IDPs	Internally Displaced Persons
IFIs	International Financial Institutions
INGOs	International Nongovernment Organisations
IMATT	International Advisory Training Team
IMF	International Monetary Fund
JSDP	Justice Sector Development Programme
Le	Leones (Currency of Sierra Leone)
LRA	Lord's Resistance Army
LUC	Local Unit Commander
IR	International Relations
MDGs	Millennium Development Goals
MP	Member of Parliament
MPLA	Popular Movement for the Total Liberation of Angola
NaSCA	National Commission for Social Action
NEC	National Electoral Commission
NPFL	National Patriotic Front of Liberia
NPRC	National Provisional Ruling Council
NRC	National Reformation Council
NGOs	Non-governmental Organisations
OAS	Organisation of American States
OAU	Organisation of African Union
ODI	Overseas Development Institute
OECD	Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development
ONS	Office of National Security
PA	Public Address System
PCD	Public Disclosure Plan
PFM	Public Financial Management
PMDC	People's Movement for Democratic Change
PPRC	Political Parties Registration Commission
RUF	Revolutionary United Front
SADC	Southern African Development Community
SAPs	Structural Adjustment Programs

SSD	State Security Defense
SSR	Security Sector Reform
SLPP	Sierra Leone People's Party
TAs	Tribal Authorities
TRC	Truth and Reconciliation Commission
UK	United Kingdom
UN	United Nations
UNAMSIL	United Nations Mission to Sierra Leone
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UNIPSIL	United Nations Integrated Peacebuilding Office in Sierra Leone
UNITA	Union for the Total Independence of Angola
US	United States
USA	United States of America
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
USSR	Union of Soviet Socialist Republics

# **Introduction**

## **Scope of the Study**

Since the end of the Cold War intrastate conflicts have threatened developing states more than inter-state ones. These conflicts have resulted in the death of millions of civilians. Africa has had the largest number of such conflicts and displaced people in the world. Despite increased international attention on the conflicts in the past two decades, civil wars are not a new phenomenon in Africa, for example, Congo (1960-1964), Nigeria (Biafra) (1967-1970), Chad (1965-1979), Angola (1975-2002), Mozambique (1975-1994) and Sudan (Southern Sudan) (1955-1972). Rather, what is “new” about these conflicts, according to Kaldor (1999: 8), is their aim “to control the population by getting rid of everyone of a different identity (and indeed of a different opinion)” and the strategic goal of “population expulsion through various means such as mass killing, forcible resettlement, as well as a range of political, psychological and economic techniques of intimidation”. In addition, states going through civil war tend to experience war economies characterised by rebels either self-financing the war through extraction of domestic resources such as alluvial diamonds or receiving external financial support from the diaspora and/or transnational networks (Kaldor 1999).

The emergence of civil wars in Africa is generally attributed to the following factors: 1) the end of the Cold War that left many African states in a weaker position because superpowers withdrew their support which had enabled African leaders to control internal threats; 2) the collapse of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR), that resulted in the international system’s realignment; 3) the failure of the state and its institutions; and 4)

the inappropriateness of the Westphalian system as an international order (Franks 2004: 3). In Africa, civil wars are further attributed to a number of causes that are linked to state elite behaviour including “the politics of elite survival” (Jackson 2006) and the neo-patrimonial system of governance and its crisis (Richards 1996).

In the 1990s, the issue of “state collapse” and “state failure” became an issue of international concern witnessing an ideological turn in relation to the United Nations (UN) peace operations. This period witnessed the emergence of an international consensus that failed or collapsed states and non-state actors posed a serious threat to international peace and security more than aggressive powerful states. This resulted in the argument that building effective and legitimate liberal states would deal with such a threat as well as promote self-sustaining peace in war-torn societies. For the past two decades, peace support initiatives have been based on a single model – a western liberal state model – that emphasises building centralised state institutions and ensuring state stability which civil wars tend to undermine, what has come to be called the liberal peace (Paris 2004; Richmond 2005; Roberts 2011; Mac Ginty 2006).<sup>1</sup> Duffield (2001: 11) notes that the liberal peace aims at transforming “the dysfunctional and war-affected societies that it encounters on its borders into cooperative, representative and, especially, stable entities”. For Richmond the main components underlying liberal peace are (neo)liberal development, the rule of law, democratisation, a free market economy and human rights (2006). In addition, the liberal peace focuses on state elites, the state and its institutions as vehicles

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<sup>1</sup> Although the liberal peace project is primarily US project and British to some degree with some donors such as Canada and Japan following on, the UN is implicated in this project quite closely because it uses the idea of liberal in the philosophical sense as it relates to issues such as democratic politics, human rights, the rule of law among other issues. However, the UN outside the Security Council has much been focused on issues of reconciliation, justice and accountability, for example, the United Nations Integrated Peacebuilding Office in Sierra Leone (UNIPSIL).

for peace, marginalising the rest of the population. This has led Roberts to call it a “*pyrrhic peace*, because it forestalls and sacrifices broader peace for a greater number to a narrower peace for mainly metropolitan minority” (2011: xiii, emphasis not mine). He further notes that the liberal peace is “dispossessive [because] it removes from people’s possible futures the possibility of a peace more relevant to them, resulting in a limited peace for a limited minority” (2011: xiii).

For critics of the liberal peace, its dominance, focus on state elites, and emphasis on creating a liberal state, strong and effective state institutions in post-conflict environments make it difficult for the “subaltern” (the marginalised and excluded subjects) to speak for him/herself (Spivak 1988) or to be heard (Libin 2003). The liberal state is often assumed to be a panacea to the problems that post-conflict societies are experiencing – violence, security, development, human rights, economic growth, environment, gender inequalities and the lack of rule of law, among others. Indeed, the most secure foundation for a durable peace. Its success has often been viewed in its ability to end overt violence and establishing some form of order and stability in war-torn societies.

Yet, recent critiques of the liberal peace have shown that in a number of cases it has proved to be partially counterproductive, naive, hard to sustain, disappointing and has produced mixed results (Paris 2004; Bellamy and Williams 2005; Duffield 2001; Fanthorpe 2005; Mac Ginty 2006; Mac Ginty and Richmond 2007; Richmond 2006; Richmond and Franks 2007; Richmond and Franks 2008; Taylor 2007). Roberts (2011: xiii, emphasis not mine) has gone further to note that the liberal peace is “a *hegemony through dispossession*, since its rationale is the accumulation of ideological conformity by means of disrupting the local to dispossess people of their ‘illiberal’ ways.”



Critical literature has identified and conceptualised the liberal peace as well as discussed the flaws inherent in it (chapters 2 and 3). Such critiques on the liberal peace have largely focused on its underlying assumptions, its methodology, hegemonic nature, and the inherent limits and contradictions in it. However, these critiques have come up with two competing visions on how peace and states should be built in post-conflict societies. The first school of thought is the mainstream/ objectivist problem-solving scholarship which argues for the need to reform the liberal peace suggesting that alternatives should come from within the liberal peace itself and would want it to remain the mode of intervention in post-conflict societies. Such scholarship takes an institutional approach that views the establishment of liberal state institutions as the surest means to promote lasting peace in societies emerging from conflict. In contrast, the second school of thought, the critical subjectivist scholarship critiques the mainstream liberal peace discourse and puts emphasis on an emancipatory approach as a means to promote sustainable peace. Critical scholars have been concerned about the totalising discourses of the liberal peace which have “depoliticised and removed [local] agency” (Richmond 2010a: 201) as well as subjugated indigenous insights for peace and peacemaking in post-conflict environments. They concur with conflict transformation scholars like Lederach (1997) who argue that peace should be built “from below”, emphasising the need to focus on “locally-grounded non-state agency and mechanisms of recovery and order” that have received little attention in political science and International Relations theory, “but are of significance for understanding the empirical conditions for political order and peace” (Moe 2010: 7). These critical scholars have taken a step further:

by taking interest in emancipation as well as liberalism, needs and welfare as well as rights, the conditions for durable peace, context and culture, the unintended consequences of the liberal peace, including its impact on the everyday life, and how

local actors view/make peace as well as respond to the liberal peace (Tadjbakhsh 2011: 3).

More recently, some critical scholars (also drawing from post-colonial scholarship) have developed an interest in the concepts of hybrid and hybridisation, and the range of local agencies that emerge in post-conflict societies in the light of liberal peacebuilding (Richmond 2010b; 2011a, 2011b; Mac Ginty 2010a). This suggests the need to start thinking about contemporary peacebuilding as a process of hybridisation – a “new thinking” that involves thinking or investigating ways of moving beyond the liberal peace and the state, that is “post-liberal peace” transformations that allow the excluded and those in the periphery to play an active role in peacebuilding, which also means a radical departure from a rigid and hegemonic liberal peace, the state-centric Westphalian system and a denial of the universality of the liberal peace (Richmond 2010b; see chapter 4). In addition, it means a move into the post-Westphalian system and an acceptance that other “peaces” are possible. Departing from the liberal peace to the “post-liberal peace”, not only allows for a locally-grounded analysis that enables us to bring out other forms of peace that are important in contributing to the establishment of self-sustaining peace in post-conflict environments, but also an understanding of how local social forces are shaping international peace initiatives, thus helping us to understand the dynamics of post-conflict societies. This in turn calls for the need to deconstruct or reform oppressive structures and institutions as well as behaviours, and then construct and place emphasis on those that are capable of promoting lasting peace.

### **Research Aims, Objectives and Questions**

This thesis is a critique of post-conflict liberal peacebuilding. Drawing from the emerging critical scholarship, post-colonial literature, African studies literature and fieldwork in

Sierra Leone, the thesis explores the practical application of the liberal peace in Africa in the context of Sierra Leone. It specifically examines how the liberal peace is interacting with the “local”,<sup>2</sup> the forms of agency that the locals are expressing as a result of these interactions and the hybrid forms of peace that are emerging largely due to these interactions as well as the “local” framework(s) of peace. By also examining the “local” framework(s) of peace this thesis is trying to avoid replicating Western arguments that local actors cannot provide, for example, peace, security, democracy, human rights and gender equality without external direction. This thesis complements the emerging literature that critiques the liberal peace emphasising the need to go beyond the liberal peace; paying attention to the interface between the “liberal” and the “local”, agency and context, among others.

The research questions underpinning this thesis are:

1. How is the “local” interacting with the international in Sierra Leone and whose interests are being served?
2. How is the liberal peace being hybridised, accepted, resisted and subverted?
3. What forms of peace are emerging out of these interactions?
4. What are the “local” forms of peace in Sierra Leone?

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<sup>2</sup> Drawing on Richmond (2010b), the local is understood in this thesis as not homogenous, but diverse with a range of contextual actors some who are transitionally connected, have spent some time in, for example, the West and have worked for international organisations such as the UN. Such people have experiences that would not be associated with the local (for example, some Paramount chiefs in Sierra Leone have been educated in the West), some do aspire to the liberal peace and others draw on, for example, religion, tradition and custom or ideologies such as African socialism, Pan-Africanism and Negritude. The local can have “transnational and transversal exposure” (Richmond 2010b: 667).

In addressing the above questions the thesis aims to contribute to the emerging debates on the need to understand local contextual matters including internal politics through empirical research. The aim of this thesis is not to provide a new theory but to attempt to use the emerging insights from this critical scholarship to gain an understanding of the forms of peace that are emerging in post-conflict zones in Africa which are quite different from the idea of a universal liberal peace that the internationals have been imposing in such zones. In addition, this has not been comprehensively addressed in the context of post-conflict societies in Africa. Yet, much contemporary peace support operations are taking place in such post-conflict environments. These environments are characterised by multiple sources of legitimacy, authority and sovereignty.<sup>3</sup> Individuals, especially in rural societies, tend to subscribe more to non-state and non-territorial forms of political institutions which are more relevant to them than the state.

Hybridity is not a new phenomenon in post-colonial societies, (from Latin America to Africa hybrid political systems, multiple sovereignties, legitimacy and authority have existed since colonial rule). What appears to be new however is the hybridisation that is taking place in the context of contemporary peace support operations in post-conflict societies. Such societies have become “laboratories” of the liberal peace within which the subject in the experiment is proving his/her ability to express agency in the context of structural constraints, despite internationals’ promises that the experiments are aimed at finding a “cure” for the “strangeness” that led to the subject’s predicament (Pugh 2011). The concept of agency has been associated with a number of terms including resistance, “selfhood, motivation, will, purposiveness, intentionality, choice, initiative, freedom, and creativity” (Emirbayer and Mische 1998: 962). In this thesis I adopt Ahearn’s (2001: 962)

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<sup>3</sup> For a discussion of multiple sources of sovereignty and authority in Africa see Engel and Oslon (2010) and Lund (2006)

provisional definition of agency as “the socioculturally mediated capacity to act”. Such a definition of agency does not limit it to persons, but may also include social groups and ancestors.

The thesis links critical literature on the liberal peace to African studies literature, especially one that explores pre-colonial political institutions and processes of state formation, the colonial state, the post-colonial state and the continued existence and formal recognition of tradition- and custom-oriented forms of legitimacy and authority in Africa. It is crucial to take such a long historical perspective since pre-colonial and colonial inheritance, and post-colonial experiences have to some extent influenced domestic politics in African states.

The thesis employs hybridity as a conceptual approach in understanding the dynamics in post-conflict environments in the context of liberal peacebuilding (see chapter 4). Hybridity is increasingly becoming a key concept in the empirical study of contemporary peacebuilding and statebuilding. Although the idea of the liberal peace has been central to post-Cold War peace support operations in Africa, very little empirical work has been done on the interactions between the liberal peace and local cultural, political, social and peacebuilding practices, the forms of agency actors are expressing in these interactions, the forms of hybrid peace that are emerging from this and their usefulness in contributing to sustainable peace. This thesis sheds new light on how hybridity can be created “from below” as citizens do not engage in outright resistance, but express various forms of agency including partial acceptance and internalisation of elements of the liberal peace (including human rights, accountability, transparency, democracy and rule of law) that they find useful to them. Further, citizens also use these elements of the liberal peace to make

demands for reforms against state elites who they do not trust and often criticise for their pre-occupation with political survival and consolidation of power. It also argues that, in light of competing interests between various actors, and the close connection between central and local politics in countries such as Sierra Leone various forms of hybrid peace and politics have emerged, and not all of them can lead to sustainable peace. As such, it is crucial to embrace hybrid forms of peace that do not lead to the continued marginalisation and exclusion of most of the citizens.

## **Methodology**

This thesis combines new theoretical perspectives on the liberal peace and fieldwork in post-conflict Sierra Leone in order to come up with options that could be essential for promoting lasting peace in war-torn societies. It is based on a critical theoretical and methodological approach since such an approach's underlying assumptions are suitable for providing an understanding of how the liberal peace is interacting with the "local", the forms of agency that the "local" is expressing resulting from these interactions and the hybrid forms of peace that emerge largely due to these interactions. In addition, the approach recognises that ordinary people in post-war environments play an active, agentive role in contemporary peacebuilding and are not mere passive recipients of the liberal peace model.

Mainstream International Relations (IR) theories such as liberalism and realism, with their focus on the state and its institutions, world order, the international system, the dynamics of power, war and state sovereignty fail to expose embedded power structures as well as tend to marginalise most of the population and perspectives in conflict, post-conflict situations and poor countries, in general, thus effectively silencing their accounts that could

be essential in improving their situation. By adopting a critical methodological approach, this thesis places the experiences of those who live on the “margins of the state” at the centre rather than margins of research on peace, at the same time taking into account the inequalities, forms of exclusion and oppression as well as power structures that exist in these “margins of the state”.<sup>4</sup>

In contrast to orthodox IR theories, critical theory as a method of examination, according to Cox “stands apart from the prevailing order of the world and asks how that order came about” and as such, it “does not take institutions and social and power relations for granted but calls them into question by concerning itself with their origins and how and whether they might be in the process of changing” (1981: 129). Cox makes a significant contribution to ascend of critical theory in IR. He (1981: 128) observes that, “Theory is always for someone and for some purpose”. All knowledge, for critical theorists, is not neutral, but tends to reflect the observer’s interests. As such, it is always biased since the social perspective of the observer determines how it is produced (Jackson and Sorenson 1999). Theory cannot be divorced from socio-political life. It is crucial to recognise the background and context in which it is produced and used, and also whether the user intends to use it to maintain or change the status quo. In this regard, it is hard to maintain the fact-value dichotomy. A critical approach rejects the three basic tenets of positivism: “an objective external reality; the subject/object distinction and value-free social science” (Jackson and Sorensen 1999: 248). As Seale (1999: 21) notes, “Positivist social scientists

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<sup>4</sup> The margins of the state are “places where state law and order continually have to be established”, where the state’s control of the people and territory is contested and limited, where non-state actors take the state’s responsibility of security, social control and order, and where people are considered to be not well socialised into the law and order of the state (Asad 2004: 279; Das and Poole 2004). As Das and Poole (2004: 8) note, the margins of the state are “simultaneously sites where nature can be imagined wild and uncontrolled and where the state is constantly refounding its modes of order and lawmaking. These sites are not merely territorial: they are also, and perhaps more importantly, sites of practice on which law and other state practices are colonised by other forms of regulation that emanate from the pressing needs of populations to secure political and economic survival.”

have attempted to replicate the success of the natural scientists in controlling the natural world, and so have been committed to approaches perceived to be characteristic of natural science”. Theories, in this case, are separated from observable facts so that their truth “can be tested in a world of these independently existing facts” (Seale 1999: 21). However, critical theorists argue that the prevailing order should not be viewed as rational, inevitable and unchangeable, but a “construction of time and place” and thus historical, for instance, “the international system is a specific construction of the most powerful states” (Jackson and Sorensen 1999: 248).

Cox distinguishes between problem-solving and critical theory. Problem-solving theory, Cox (1981: 128) notes, “takes the world as it finds it, with the prevailing social and power relationships and the institutions into which they are organised, as the given framework of action.” Since problem-solving theory is closely tied to the existing order, it tends to reinforce it. In addition, it does not question the origins of that order and the degree to which this order contributes to the problem. In this regard, it cannot lead to knowledge of human emancipation. Critical theory is also differentiated from problem-solving by its interest in human emancipation, the need to criticise as well as remove various forms of domination that inhibit human freedom, social justice and equality. For Cox (1981) it is interested in emancipation since it questions the status quo and aims at bringing about an alternative order. This relates to recognising a person’s autonomy, free will, enhancing their freedom from conditions of oppression and self-determination, among others. Unlike problem-solving theory that tend to serve particular interests (for example, state and nation), critical theory attempts to capture those aspects of culture, custom, tradition, history and local contexts that can lead to human emancipation and in the context of this study, to sustainable peace in post-war societies.



The use of critical theory in this study is important for supporting arguments advocating the need to go beyond the liberal peace in order to come up with a framework that creates space for voices other than those of state and international elites. Such an approach allows for peacebuilding that “neither dismisses nor denies structural factors, but allows a range of voices to speak” (Lowe and Short 1990 cited in England 1994: 81). Current international concern and responsibility for the “people” in post-conflict environments of the developing world is secondary since internationals put much emphasis on strengthening post-war states which they recognise as legitimate actors in the international system neglecting most of the population’s needs. This inability of the liberal peace to engage with the “people”, culture, needs, politics and peacebuilding practices can contribute to the creation of “a ‘predatory’ peace to the benefit of the elites and a global noble caste and leaving untold poverty and suffering in its path” (Escobar 2004: 214).

By advocating a critical approach I do not mean that the state is not important since its role as the provider of security and social welfare is still essential. However, it is crucial to identify local knowledge, responses and understandings that offer alternatives to the prevailing liberal peacebuilding framework as well as peacebuilding initiatives that are legitimised by the consent of local actors and also based on the state’s ability to become a provider of welfare and basic services. By stressing the agency of individuals and communities in post-conflict societies, I hope to move away from the perspective of such actors as objects and victims who are not in a position to deal with constraining structural forces including, custom, tradition, economics, politics or environment. As such, this thesis “deconstructs” the liberal peace discourse that tends to construct peace in universal terms without reference to local forms of peace and how local responses to the “universal peace” are shaping the peace process on the ground.

Sierra Leone is the case study of this thesis. My choice of Sierra Leone is due to the fact that it is a major case of liberal peacebuilding and statebuilding in Africa that has witnessed the United Kingdom (UK), the US, the UK Department for International Development (DFID), European Union (EU), World Bank and the UN, among others employing intrusive approaches. Although peace remains fragile in Sierra Leone, its experience as a “collapsed state” that “came back from the dead” makes it an interesting case study (Chege 2002: 148). Today, Sierra Leone is regarded as a success story of contemporary peacebuilding. Yet, most of the underlying causes of the conflict including poverty, unemployment, corruption and social injustice remain largely unaddressed.

### **The Qualitative Approach**

This thesis advocates a critical position that attempts to identify the preferences, capacities, responses and agency of the people in post-conflict environments and how the forms of agency they are expressing as a result of their interactions with the liberal peace are shaping the peacebuilding process on the ground. As such, it rejects the mainstream position that views post-war societies as merely objects of interventions. It adopts a research methodology that does not treat them as objects of research, but subjects who can be engaged with. Such an approach that emphasises dealing with the direct experience of research participants in specific contexts allows them to speak for themselves and may help establish peacebuilding initiatives that are more relevant to them.

This study uses a qualitative approach. The qualitative approach enables me to obtain in-depth information on local actors’ experiences, beliefs, perceptions, viewpoints, values and feelings about post-war peace interventions in Sierra Leone, and questions relating to these cannot be answered by quantitative research since it puts emphasis on quantification in the

collection and analysis of data (Bryman 2004). Qualitative research, according to Bryman (2004), is a research strategy that tends to put more emphasis on words than quantification in both the collection and analysis of data.<sup>5</sup> He further notes that qualitative research is distinguished from quantitative research in the following: 1) it “predominantly emphasises an inductive approach to the relationship between theory and research, in which the emphasis is placed on the generation of theories”; 2) it “has rejected the practices and norms of the natural scientific model and of positivism in particular in preference for an emphasis on the ways in which individuals interpret their social world”; and 3) it “embodies a view of social reality as constantly shifting emergent property of individuals’ creation” (2004: 20). As such, it offers a relativist epistemology (Rathbun 2008). From this approach, knowledge is said to be subjective and contextual. In addition, a researcher should be considered as part of the research setting who “must engage in reflexive and self-critical dialogue” (Gray 2009: 168).

### **Criticisms of Qualitative Research**

Qualitative research has been criticised for being “unscientific”, too subjective and imprecise which means, its data is subjected to various interpretations, for not being easy to replicate, for lacking transparency and for having problems of generalisation (Bryman 2004; Gray 2009). For critics, the data collected through the use of qualitative techniques such as interviews is subjective and imprecise due to its over reliance on “the researcher’s often unsystematic views about what is significant and important, and also upon the close personal relationships that the researcher frequently strikes up with the people studied” (Bryman 2004: 284). Since qualitative research is based in one context, it has been

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<sup>5</sup> Bryman (2004: 19) uses the concept of research strategy to mean “a general orientation to the conduct of research”.

criticised for lacking generalisability – the idea that findings from a specific context do not apply broadly to other localities.

Reliability and validity have been central concepts in debates over the credibility of qualitative research. Joppe (2000 cited in Golafshani 2003: 598) defines reliability as

...The extent to which results are consistent over time and an accurate representation of the total population under study is referred to as reliability and if the results of a study can be reproduced under a similar methodology, then the research instrument is considered to be reliable.

The definition raises the question whether research findings are replicable. Creswell and Miller (2000: 124) define validity as “how accurately the account represents participants’ realities of the social phenomenon and is credible to them”. In response to these criticisms, Golafshani (2003) has argued that concepts of validity and reliability are rooted in a positivist perspective and emerged from a quantitative tradition. The quantitative research criteria have had a significant influence on these criticisms of qualitative research (Bryman 2004). To avoid biases and enhance varied constructions of realities, at the same time acknowledging that no research methodology is completely objective, I engaged in multiple research techniques including observation, interviews and conversations (multiple triangulation), researched in multiple sites, what Gray (2009) calls “space triangulation” as well as interviewed actors from diverse backgrounds operating at various levels of society.

### **Multiple Fieldwork Sites**

I conducted fieldwork at multiple sites in western, southern and eastern areas of Sierra Leone (Freetown – western area, Kenema and Kailahun – eastern areas, and Bo, Mattru Jong and Sierra Rutile – southern areas) from the end of November 2009 to mid-December

2009 and November 2010 with the aim of obtaining a wide range of perspectives, reactions and perceptions relating to the participants' experiences regarding post-war liberal peacebuilding and statebuilding initiatives in the country. Researching in multiple sites enabled me to reach the "margins of the margins" (Tsing 1993), in this case, Kailahun, Mattru-Jong and Sierra Rutile. My choice for these sites was to a larger extent based on questions of accessibility and the availability of local contacts willing to help me access respondents including ex-combatants and Paramount Chiefs.

In addition I considered other factors: 1) Freetown is the administrative capital of the country and also a key political, economic and social centre. International actors are based in Freetown and a number of local NGOs have their head offices in the city; 2) Kenema is the third largest city and capital of the Eastern province, and in Kenema the district council, city council and the chiefdom interact on a day-to-day basis. In addition, it was one of the areas that were severely affected by the civil war; 3) As for Kailahun, it was by chance. My host invited me to attend a community leadership workshop he was conducting with community leaders at Kailahun district headquarters. I accepted his invitation considering that the Sierra Leonean civil war started in the district and that it was "the last to achieve peace" (Taylor-Smith 2009: 23)<sup>6</sup> as this would allow me to access a number of community leaders at the workshop. It lies on the "margins of the margins" sharing borders with Liberia and Guinea; 4) Bo is the second largest city in Sierra Leone. Similar to Kenema, it is under a chiefdom with the district council, city council and the chiefdoms interacting on a day-to-day basis; 5) Sierra Rutile featured prominently in my interviews during my first fieldwork in 2009 that was largely based in Freetown so I needed to go and research on what had been raised in the interviews regarding poverty, exclusion,

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<sup>6</sup> Taylor-Smith points out that it was the last to achieve peace in the sense that the district was the last to be declared to be "safe and arms free during the peace process" (2009: 23).

marginalisation, “ignorant” landowners selling their land to a foreign rutile mining company (Sierra Rutile) and who could not think of any other legitimate authority except their chiefs; and 6) Matru-Jong is the Bonthe District headquarters and houses a local council that has been labelled a “rainbow” district council since councillors are from the three main political parties in the country, at the same time, it has witnessed an intense conflict between the Paramount Chief of Jong Chiefdom and the district council chairman.

In these sites I either lived with a host family or at a guest house close to a host/contact which enabled me to interact a lot with them and other people. This proved to be useful since my day-to-day interaction and relationships with my host families, their extended families, friends and neighbours offered me an opportunity to understand the context for my research. This included the everyday struggles for survival of ordinary Sierra Leoneans, their resilience, coping strategies, humanism, hospitality and their disapproval of corruption by government officials, at the same time, tolerating forms of corruption that are beneficial to the extended family. I was also able to gain some understanding of their commitment to community and building relationships, public expressions of religious tolerance and hidden tensions between Christians and Muslims, their lack of trust of state elites/politicians and their frustration with the government’s failure to provide basic services such as sanitation, good feeder roads, water, electricity and health services. In addition, host families/contacts in all the field sites were very useful in helping me reflect on the issues as well as to understand some of the cultural and customary issues which were important in gaining access to Paramount Chiefs, sub-chiefs and Tribal Authorities (TAs),<sup>7</sup> for instance, the payment of a “shake hand” to chiefs.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> In Sierra Leone, Tribal Authorities represent twenty tax payers and are found in all chiefdoms. Depending on the size of the chiefdom, a chiefdom can have more than 1 000 Tribal authorities, for example,

It is also crucial to note that, my travel by road from Monrovia (Liberia) to Freetown on the 27<sup>th</sup> of November 2009 helped me to interact with ordinary people in public transport, observe and experience the situation on the ground. The journey from Bo Waterside (Sierra Leonean border) to Kenema (80 miles) was 13 hours, a result of a combination of an un-roadworthy taxi and a bad road. Yet, it was useful in helping me observe and reflect on the “struggles after the struggle” of ordinary Sierra Leoneans, despite the liberal peace’s promises of a peace that is beneficial to everyone. The taxi had more than five breakdowns and had to be push-started several times when its engine stalled. At times we had to walk because it could not make it uphill road since the road had potholes or was slippery. As we were about to reach Kenema, a front tyre burst.

We were 11 passengers inside the taxi, an old Peugeot 504 station wagon with two passengers in the front seat, eight in the back and one in the boot. In addition, there was one passenger, two “car boys” and luggage on the roof.<sup>9</sup> There was a time the driver failed to negotiate a pot-hole resulting in the taxi veering off the road into a muddy ditch. We struggled for more than 30 minutes to get it out of the ditch until an NGO 4x4 vehicle came to our rescue. I decided to take pictures of the taxi in the ditch. Local passengers encouraged me to do so pointing out that I should show the pictures to the world so that it knows that “this is how we are living. We are suffering”, at the same time expressing their frustration and anger with a corrupt government which was failing to build good roads. Indeed, qualitative research in Sierra Leone gave me an opportunity to connect with respondents at a human level.

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the Nongowa Chiefdom in Kenema (group interview, Tribal Authorities, 28 November 2009). In addition, Tribal authorities act as chiefdom councillors and elect the Paramount Chief.

<sup>8</sup> A “shake hand” is a gift in the form of money that a person gives to the chief when he/she meets him for the first time, before he/she informs the chief his/her purpose of visit.

<sup>9</sup> A “car boy” is a man/young man who among others assists the driver when the car/truck develops a mechanical problem. In Freetown they are called “apprentices” and include commuter bus conductors.

## **Data Collection Techniques in the Field**

The fieldwork involved observing, empathising, talking and listening to people as well as the use of a wide range of documentary sources including newspapers, government and NGO documents. The qualitative research approach I employed entailed the use of multiple methods that allowed respondents to speak for themselves and provide a contextual explanation of the post-conflict situation in the country. This allowed me to capture respondents' feelings, perceptions and experiences in post-war Sierra Leone. Although the use of multiple methods is "demanding and expensive in time and resources", the advantage of using it is that it helps produce "stronger theories than multiple replications and permutations of the same method" (Klandermans, Staggenborg and Tarrow: 2002: 316). In addition, the use of multiple methods of data collection also helped me to avoid biases such as, my own positionality<sup>10</sup> and dominant respondent bias in group interviews as well as identify gaps in the data. The research used ethnographic techniques, particularly participant observation, unstructured interviews, conversations and group discussions/interviews to gain an understanding of the people's experiences of peacebuilding.

### ***Interviews***

In total I conducted seventy one face-to-face individual interviews with a wide range of participants including an academic, a teacher, Paramount Chiefs, sub-chiefs, TAs, ex-combatants, international organisations, government officials, political parties, individuals, journalists, youth leaders, religious leaders, women activists/leaders, trade unions and local NGOs (see appendix 1). The selection of participants was quite purposely aimed at gathering information from a wide range of people in order to understand their experiences

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<sup>10</sup> For instance, I come from a highly patriarchal society that is biased towards women and during my fieldwork, I had to talk to women activists and discuss with them issues related to their social position.



of peacebuilding initiatives in the country, customary peacebuilding approaches, the interactions between the “local” and the liberal peace, the forms of agency and hybrid peace(s) that are emerging in these interactions.

As with unstructured interviews, I raised questions about participants’ own experiences which allowed them to respond freely with me raising new questions as I followed up their responses, at the same time, ensuring that this was in line with my research objectives.<sup>11</sup> The interview process was quite flexible as the aim was to gain a “genuine access to the world views” of the participants (Bryman 2004: 322). The interviews typically lasted between 10 minutes and one hour but sometimes up to two hours, and covered a broad range of issues depending on the respondent’s experience or expertise, including human rights, democracy and good governance, rule of law, economic liberalisation, media, civil society and security as well as their views about the state and internal politics, customary approaches to peacebuilding in the country. In addition to face-to-face interviews, I had email interviews with two Sierra Leoneans who I had not managed to interview during my fieldwork.

### ***Group Discussions/Interviews***

Lewis (1992: 413) defines a group interview as “a group conversational encounter with a research purpose”. Due to the communal nature of “up country” life in Sierra Leone a number of individual interviews ended up being group interviews.<sup>12</sup> This included my interviews with two Commercial Bike Riders Associations, a TA and a Local Unit Commander – police (LUC), a deputy youth leader and an employee of a community radio

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<sup>11</sup> Most interviews were conducted this way, except for group discussions in Kailahun (see appendix 2).

<sup>12</sup> Sierra Leoneans use the term “up country” to refer to places including towns outside of Freetown.

station in the three rural sites.<sup>13</sup> The group interviews ranged between two and six participants. On the 12<sup>th</sup> of November 2010, I had group discussions in Kailahun involving community leaders attending a community leaders training. A total of seventeen participants attended the workshop and with the support of the workshop organisers we divided them into three groups (two groups had six participants and the third had five participants). Each group was given 15 minutes to respond to six questions (see appendix 2). Afterwards, each group made a presentation in plenary and followed by discussions, though the discussions were short due to limited time. I also had a group interview with five participants from an opposition political party, People's Movement for Democratic Change (PMDC) in Bo.

Lewis has noted that group interviews have several advantages over individual interviews including helping “to reveal consensus views, may be used to verify research ideas or data gained through other methods and may enhance reliability of [respondents’] responses” (1992: 413). However, in the case of my research, group interviews which involved men and women had a limitation since women were silent in most of the interviews. For instance, in Kailahun women were less involved in the discussions than men with the risk that most of the ideas were coming from a dominant group. As with my group interview with PMDC officials, out of the five participants in the group I interviewed, one was a woman who was quiet most of the interview, despite a male participant inviting her to contribute. In this case, individual interviews with women helped me to do deal with this weakness of the group interview technique. In addition, a number of respondents were deeply suspicious of me as a researcher. As such, in some group interviews when a

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<sup>13</sup> I wanted to do an individual interview with an LUC of the police at one of the sites however he invited three other police officers to join him. I noticed that the junior officers could not freely express themselves which could have been due to the power relations between them and the LUC.

participant said something that other(s) felt was sensitive he/she was told to be careful since “you do not know who you are talking to”. In this case, the issue of trust was essential in getting information from respondents, for example, during a group interview with three members of the Commercial Bikers Union in one of the districts, the vice-chairman of the association often warned others about giving sensitive information. Such warnings affected the tone of the participant’s discussion.

### ***Overt Participant Observation***

Participant observation is another valuable research technique that I utilised in the collection of data. Schutt (2004: 277) defines participant observation as a “qualitative method for gathering data that involves a sustained relationship with people while they go about their normal activities”. As noted above, during most of my fieldwork I lived with families which helped me to interact with them a lot in their day-to-day activities and these interactions including deep conversations with ordinary Sierra Leoneans had a lot of influence on my analysis. In places like Bo where there is a serious shortage of water I had to use the infamous bucket bath just like other “family members”. Indeed, sharing their experiences with them was useful since it led them to accept me and to freely express themselves about their situation. As Koegel (1987 cited by Schutt 2004: 282), “By observing people and interacting with them in the course of their normal activities, participant observers seek to avoid the artificiality of experimental designs and the unnatural structured questioning of survey research”. In addition, such an approach does not pre-suppose a researcher’s position of control. I also used this method at a traditional reconciliation ceremony in Matru-Jong and the launch of the Political Parties Registration Commission (PPRC)’s strategic plan for 2010-2013 in Bo that was attended by various political parties and a number of state officials. In addition, at the PPRC meeting I gave a

five minute talk on my research as well as raised issues on politics, tolerance and peace in order to make my talk relevant to the context.

### **Gaining Access**

In recruiting participants, I contacted Dennis Gbambor James, a Sierra Leonean and a former classmate at the University of Leeds who put me in contact with his friends and family in the country, who then introduced me to other prospective participants. This had a snowball effect.<sup>14</sup> In addition, I recruited some of the NGO participants via email, especially those with email addresses on their websites as well as via the Transitional Justice Network Forum which I subscribe to. However, I found the use of contacts in recruiting respondents quite helpful since most of the NGOs I contacted via email did not respond. I had no difficulties in obtaining interviews from those individuals and NGOs I got introduced to by local contacts. The existence of reciprocity, a system of mutual obligations in Sierra Leone meant that the snowball approach for recruiting participants was quite suitable. In addition, the question of trust was essential in such a post-conflict situation. The use of contacts to gain access enabled me to access hard-to-reach participants such as former combatants as well as chiefs and two government officials whose offices were based at State House. One ex-combatant told me that he agreed to the interview because of the good relations he had with my contact.

I avoided tape-recording as a number of people felt very uncomfortable with being recorded. Instead I took notes during interviews. Although note-taking was tedious and also it was difficult to capture all that was said in an interview, it allowed respondents to

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<sup>14</sup> Schutt (2004: glossary/index 1-30) defines snowball sampling as “A method of sampling in which sample elements are selected as they are identified by successive informants or interviews”.

freely express themselves. The main challenges in the fieldwork included the need to build trust with respondents, especially ex-combatants as well as working out on biases and lies from some respondents. For instance, a Member of Parliament (MP) who claimed that, what motivated him to become an MP was the need to represent the interests of the suffering people in his constituency and that he has been working hard to achieve this, only to find out from the electorate in his constituency that he lived in Freetown and had not done anything to improve their situation since he became an MP in 2007.

In order to avoid the danger of producing biased samples that would negatively affect the outcome of my research, I did not employ one recruitment method and also that my research targeted a wide range of respondents, as noted above. In addition, I had a number of contacts who referred me to different groups of people. A central principle of my research, as noted above, was triangulation, using multiple sources to verify the information collected.

In addition to the above methods, during my fieldwork I did not have an opportunity to interview other important actors in the liberal peace project in Sierra Leone such as the UK Department for International Development (DFID) and the United Nations Integrated Peacebuilding Office in Sierra Leone (UNIPSIL). I had to make use of reports and information on their websites.

### **Data Analysis**

During my fieldwork I did data analysis as I collected the data. In this case, I used an iterative process, a reflexive process that was aimed at gaining insights and meaning-making. I had to think and reflect on emerging themes as respondents narrated their stories about their experiences in post-war Sierra Leone. In this case, I was able to identify issues

that needed follow-up, at the same time, reflecting on the relevance of the information I collected to my research agenda – which I consider part of data analysis. Conversations with my host and contacts helped me a lot to reflect on the issues. Data analysis, in this case, was an ongoing process meaning that I did not wait until the end of fieldwork to start analysing it. As Coffey and Atkinson (1996: 2) notes, “We should never collect data without substantial analysis going on”. Once I collected data I identified common themes and patterns that emerged from it, and organised them into coherent categories. Some of the common themes that emerged were poverty, marginalisation, behaviour of political elites and chiefs, custom, corruption, political violence and ethno-politics. I had to do further analysis in order to identify additional patterns, meaning and connections between categories.

This process is usually called coding. It involves reducing large chunks of data to manageable proportions – a form of “data simplification or reduction” (Coffey and Atkinson 1996: 2). I relied on manual analysis marking the text physically writing keywords on the margins. For Miles and Huberman (1994 cited Coffey and Atkinson 1996: 27) codes are “tags or labels for assigning units of meaning to the descriptive or inferential information compiled during a study. Codes usually are attached to ‘chunks’ of varying size – words, phrases, sentences or whole paragraphs, connected or unconnected to a specific setting [...]”. The process forced me to read interview notes line-by-line making sense of the issues raised. Since no single approach to coding data exists, I did not use a single source of categories, but two: the fieldwork data (including participants’ perceptions, concerns and interpretations) and theoretical knowledge. In addition, I compared and contrasted among interview texts. This was due to the need to look at “who is saying what and in what context” (Barbour 2008: 217). I had to link the codes together

in order to figure out the common themes emerging from the text constantly referring back to the original interview texts ensuring rigorous analysis. In addition to this, I also analysed documents including government publications, NGO reports and policy documents, and newspaper articles.

### **Ethical Considerations**

Bryman (2004: 505) notes that we cannot ignore ethical issues in research because they “relate directly to the integrity of a piece of research and of the disciplines that are involved.” My fieldwork involved accessing and interviewing a wide range of participants including former combatants, youth and women’s leaders who are marginalised and vulnerable, the use of contacts to access respondents as well as the use of interpreters in a post-conflict situation where the scars of the conflict are still visible. In such a study, respondents’ physical, social and psychological well-being may be adversely affected by their participation in the research including physical harm, humiliation, exclusion, shame or even death. As a researcher I also needed to consider how to deal with threats to my safety and well-being in such a fragile context. As such, it was important for me to consider carefully how to avoid harm to respondents or third parties, protect their rights, sensitivities, interests and privacy as well as my own safety.

Since I was dealing with a number of participants who were vulnerable and marginalised, the research was guided by four main ethical issues: 1) voluntary participation; 2) participant well-being; 3) identity disclosure; and 4) confidentiality. Although my contacts negotiated for my access to participants I personally sought the respondents’ consent and also informed them about the purpose of my research as well as making them aware that

the discussions were confidential and their identities would not be disclosed, except if they consented to it. Initially, I had wanted respondents to read an information sheet that I had done regarding the purpose of my research and then sign a consent form, however, a number of them were not comfortable with signing the form and felt it contradicted the idea of anonymity. In addition, many people were not interested in reading the information sheet. Rather than continuing to give participants an information sheet to read, I decided to share with them the purpose of my research verbally.

In addition, I applied what Kovats-Bernat (2002) has called a localised ethic which involved taking into account the local population's advice and recommendations in making decisions about the types of conversations (and silences) that were important. For instance, a number of respondents were not keen to talk about secret society affairs, even their role in the provision of security, order, welfare and governance in their communities. In response, to my question regarding the role of secret societies in peacemaking and development, a Paramount Chief pointed out that if he told me about their activities "human rights people" would come after them so he had rather not talk about them. In addition, a TA told me that the government wants to ban them and also that there are risks involved for individuals who divulge information about them. As such, I decided to avoid raising questions relating to secret societies in my interviews and had to rely much on what has been written about them by other scholars and the media. In order to protect the respondents, I do not use their names, except where one consented to it or gave the information at a public meeting.



## **Limitations of the Study**

The thesis has its own shortcomings. Fieldwork was carried out in the southern and eastern areas (the opposition, SLPP stronghold) and the Western area of Freetown, the administrative capital of the country and also a key political, economic and social centre, and this meant the views and perspectives of villagers from the north (the ruling party, APC stronghold) were not captured. This compromises the extent to which the research can be generalised. As such, I do not claim that my research findings can be used as a basis for generalisations about post-conflict peacebuilding in Sierra Leone as a whole. As a “stranger” (an outsider), I was limited in terms of language, culture, traditions and customs, among others. For instance, most people in the hinterland spoke either Creole or Mende (sometimes respondents mixed Creole and English), even at public meetings. In order to get an understanding of the issues being discussed I often asked a contact or participant at a public meeting seating next to me to explain them to me. As for interviews with participants who did not speak English, I made use of one Creole interpreter and three Mende interpreters. The interpreters were also valuable in helping me to reflect on the data collected, although it was difficult to know whether they were censoring some of the information. The use of interpreters was done with the consent of participants.

## **Thesis Structure**

Chapter 1 provides a broad historical overview of political organisation in the pre-colonial, colonial and post-colonial periods and the challenges that a number of post-colonial African states are facing including that of building viable states and sustainable peace. It also defines concepts including democracy, law, human rights and development. Chapter 2 discusses the concepts of peacebuilding and statebuilding. It argues that the two concepts are distinct and should not be conflated. Drawing from Richmond (2005), it provides a

framework of the liberal peace. Chapter 3 is a review of literature on the liberal peace agenda in post-conflict environments bringing out the polarisation between mainstream and critical scholars. Chapter 4 discusses the emerging critical literature that argue for the need to shift from merely criticising the liberal to engaging with local contextual matters through examining local and contextual responses to the liberal peace including identifying the forms of peace that are emerging as the liberal and the “local” interact. The chapter also offers a theoretical framework of the thesis. Chapter 5 discusses historical factors that laid a weak foundation for the modern state in Sierra Leone. It examines scholarly debates on the immediate causes of state failure/collapse and the civil war and its aftermaths. In chapter 6, drawing on the theory chapters and fieldwork I discuss the practical application of the liberal peace in Sierra Leone, the local dynamics, hybrid forms of peace that are emerging or may emerge as the liberal peace interacts with local political and social forces and local forms of peace. It notes that dynamics on the ground have hindered the full realisation of the liberal peace. In addition, in more remote areas customary peacebuilding has operated in parallel to mainstream peacebuilding. Finally, largely drawing on the case study the concluding part offers the conclusions of the thesis.

# **Chapter 1: From Pre-colonial to Post-colonial Governance in Africa**

## **Introduction**

This chapter provides a historical overview of political organisation in the pre-colonial, colonial and post-colonial periods and the challenges that a number of post-colonial African states are facing including that of building viable states and sustainable peace. It will show that since the colonial encounter, Africans were not given an opportunity to define the world from their own position and existential realities, but this was done for them and continues in modern Africa. It is also important to understand how externally imposed policies including liberalisation policies have contributed to the restructuring of African societies and how this has contributed to instability in these societies.

This chapter focuses on sub-Saharan Africa, that is, Africa in the South of the Sahara (hereafter called Africa). This does not mean that there have not been any close historical links between parts of North Africa and parts of West-Africa, or between countries such as Sudan and Egypt (Nugent 2004). However, the dynamics of North Africa are quite different (Nugent 2004) and it has strong linguistic and cultural links with the Arab world. While acknowledging that Africa is a vast continent with a diverse population, religion, custom, ethnicity, culture, economies, politics, and so on, I also recognise the existence of certain commonalities in these African societies, for instance, in the areas of customs and traditional practices which to a greater extent influence political organisation in most of these societies.

In this chapter, traditional institutions/authorities/societal structures are not understood as fixed and essential entities, but continue to be reshaped through decades of interaction with

the state, and other social and external forces.<sup>15</sup> A discussion of this in the context of Sierra Leone would be insufficient without situating it within the broader debate on traditional belief/societal structures/institutions/authorities in other parts of Sub-Saharan Africa.

The first section relies on basic generalisations about traditional African political organisation, although a number of cases will be cited from Sierra Leone. By these generalisations it is hoped that I will be able to provide an understanding of the common elements in traditional systems of government found across Africa. The second part of the chapter discusses the nature of the colonial state. It also offers generalisations about its nature and the impact of colonialism on African societies. The fourth section discusses the nature of the post-colonial state, its crisis from its inception and external intervention. In this context, the use of the term “state” in the singular as in colonial state or post-colonial state reflects the similarities found in these states that significantly influence their political culture.

### **Pre-colonial Political Institutions and Governance in Africa**

Colonisation in Africa witnessed alien state systems being imposed on the existing local political institutions. Yet, these pre-colonial institutions have survived the colonial and post-colonial onslaught, though they have continued to exist in hybrid forms due to their interactions with external political and religious institutions, especially, from the West and Middle East. Political organisation in pre-colonial Africa was quite diverse with various societies that had different polities, culture and traditions, among others.

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<sup>15</sup> In this thesis the concept traditional will be used interchangeably with customary.

### ***States and Stateless Societies in Pre-colonial Africa***

Anthropologists, historians and political scientists studying the nature of early political and social organisations in Africa have divided them into two broad categories: 1) societies that had centralised power structures under kings and powerful chiefs; and 2) societies that were highly fragmented without centralised institutionalised political organisation (also called “stateless societies”) ruled by small chiefs, clan or lineage leaders (Fortes and Evans-Pritchard 1940; Thomson 2000).

In this regard, a state is defined in relation to the existence of centralised leadership and authority, judiciary and administrative machineries (a government) and “in which cleavages of wealth, privilege, and status correspond to the distribution of power and authority” (Fortes and Evans-Pritchard 1940: 5). While pre-colonial states had four units of governance – the chief (who was the central authority), an inner council (which advised the chief), the council of elders (which constituted heads of lineages) and a village assembly – “stateless” societies had only two institutions, namely, the council of elders and the village assembly (Ayittey 1992). This is clear evidence that the so-called “stateless” societies had political institutions, though limited. As Thomson (2000) observes, the political system of such “stateless” societies were an outcome of attempts to build institutions that met the local communities’ needs and interests, and not a sign of backwardness as those who view absence of state institutions would want to believe. Thomson further notes that, “Considerable evidence of sophisticated forms of representation, justice and accountability among these communities has been unearthed” (2000: 8).

### ***State formation in Pre-colonial Africa***

A number of factors have been attributed to state formation in various pre-colonial African societies, among these are: 1) external trade – that led to the existence of an economic surplus

which enabled these societies to sustain their administrative machinery, for example, the trans-Saharan trade contributed to state formation and the building of states in Mali and Ghana (Thomson 2000); and 2) warfare and coercion as means to accumulate and maintain power, as in the case of the Kpaa Mende of Sierra Leone (Alie 1990).

Most of these states had no fixed boundaries.<sup>16</sup> As Thomson notes, “Power broadcast from the centre of a kingdom would dissipate the further a village was from the capital, and would ebb and flow according to the fortunes of the central administration” (2000: 9). These states were not hegemonic since low population densities made it difficult and expensive for governments to exert political authority to everyone within their domain (Herbst 2000; Thomson 2000). And without fixed boundaries it was easy for people disgruntled with their leaders to relocate and settle in areas outside the control of central authority. The process of state formation in pre-colonial Africa (and colonial as well as post-colonial Africa) has been quite different to that of Europe.

In Europe state formation and consolidation resulted in fixed boundaries and governments that had overall political authority over their territories with war playing a significant role in the maintenance or expansion of territory (Herbst 1990; Huntington 1968; Thomson 2000; Tilly 1975). In reference to Europe, Tilly notes that, “War made the state, and the state made war” (1975: 42). Similarly, Huntington puts it: “War was the great stimulus to state building” and this arose as a result of two things: the need for security and an interest in expansion (1968: 123). War-making and empire building were crucial mechanisms for state formation in Europe. Three of the positive outcomes of war on state consolidation in Europe are: 1) efficiency in revenue collection; 2) an improvement in the leaders’ administrative

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<sup>16</sup> Alie (1990) has noted that territorial states of the Mende of Sierra Leone had fixed boundaries.

capabilities; and 3) the growth of nationalism (Herbst 1990). The process of war-making and empire building also resulted in either the destruction or significant improvements of less powerful states. In addition, threats of war enabled European states to bargain with their citizens for taxes. States were able to collect tax with much efficiency and without much public resistance since citizens tended to tolerate increased taxation during wars with other states given that “a threat to their survival will overwhelm other concerns they might have about increased taxation” (Herbst 1990: 120). As such, for Herbst threats to security resulted in citizens tolerating tax increases whenever their state was at war. And the more revenue the state had, the more it was going to prevent defeat. As with regard to the contribution of war to nationalism in Europe, Herbst observes that since there was a continuous external threat to citizens’ security there developed a common association between population and its state (a social contract) since they came to recognise that the sure way of dealing with an external threat was for them to be united as a nation.

The 1648 peace treaty of Westphalia ended inter-state wars that have been waged for three decades in Europe and gave birth to the idea of a state as a sovereign territorial unit – the modern state. Milliken and Krause (2003: 4) note that in conceptual terms, the success of the European states in dealing with political order can be understood in three different, though interconnected ways: 1) in liberal terms as a process of establishing a social contract either between the rulers and their followers, or followers among themselves, with individuals accepting that their unlimited freedoms be limited and the state providing security to them so as to “live within a civil order that guaranteed security and which enjoyed therefore a certain political legitimacy”; 2) from a political economy perspective, as an efficient mechanism that promoted and protected property rights and the securing of markets that enhanced capitalism; and 3) “it can be seen as a more-or-less inadvertent process by which state elites, seeking to

consolidate their hold on power, acted as the equivalent of protection rackets, offering (often minimal) security in return for extraction, thus unleashing a long process that contributed to the development of the modern state”. Milliken and Krause (2003) further note that the above three interconnected narratives of the state do represent three core functions of the state: the provision of security, welfare and representation. This was not the case in Africa. However, this does not mean that ideas such as security, welfare, development, democracy, rule of law and human rights did not exist in pre-colonial Africa.

### ***Democracy***

Traditional political institutions in Africa have often been portrayed as undemocratic with the following characteristics: “secrecy, mystical religious beliefs, and outright autocracy” (Moran 2006: 27). Although scholars do not agree on the meaning of democracy, there appears to be a consensus among them that ancient Greece (Athens in particular) is the source of Western democracy and political thought.<sup>17</sup> In Athens democracy meant “rule by the people” as opposed to “autocracy” (rule by one man) and “oligarchy” (rule by the few) (Beetham and Boyle 1995). In theory, the form of democracy in Athens involved the direct participation of all citizens in the political process of Athens including speaking and voting in assembly. In practice not everyone participated since citizenship was restricted to “free-born males; [...] exclud[ing] women, slaves and resident foreigners [...]” (Beetham and Boyle 1995: 6). This meant that only males could speak and vote in the assembly. The central defining characteristic of democracy here is the direct participation of all citizens – direct democracy.

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<sup>17</sup> For a detailed discussion of classical and contemporary analyses of democracy see Blaug and Schwarzmantel (eds), (2000).



Since the classical times the idea and actual practice of democracy has changed. Dowden (1993: 607) describes the method of democracy that Julius Nyerere of Tanzania advocated as “an idyllic pastoralist democracy where everything was discussed and decided by consensus”. The key element of this form of democracy is consensus. Schumpeter has critiqued what he calls the classical model of democracy which he defines as that “institutional arrangement for arriving at political decisions which realises the common good by making the people itself decide issues through the election of individuals who are to assemble in order to carry out its will” (1950: 250). For him, since people can make undemocratic decisions, decisions and policies should be left to their representatives. Schumpeter defines the democratic method as “that institutional arrangement for arriving at a political decision in which individuals acquire the power to decide by means of a competitive struggle for the people’s vote” (1975: 269).

Democracy in this case, is understood as the ability for people to elect their rulers. It also involves competition for people’s vote by individuals running for the most powerful political office. The key element of this idea of democracy is competitive elections. Schumpeter’s perspective on democracy can be said to be a form of liberal democracy that emphasises “the democratic rule component” (Bollen 1993: 1209). Two dimensions of liberal democracy have been emphasised: 1) the democratic rule; and 2) political liberties (Bollen 1993). Bollen defines liberal democracy as “the extent to which a political system allows political liberties and democratic rule” (1993: 1208). He notes that,

Political liberties exist to the extent that the people of a country have the freedom to express a variety of political opinions in any media and the freedom to form or participate in any political group. Democratic rule (or political rights) exists to the extent that the national government is accountable to the general population, and each individual is entitled to participate in the government directly or through representatives (1993: 1208).

However, except for the definition of democracy that identifies democracy with consensus, the other definitions of democracy and liberal democracy noted above are historically and culturally specific to the West. Given this, a number of African scholars and politicians have examined certain political practices in pre-colonial African societies that could be considered democratic, among these are: “popular will, free expression of opinion, consensus and reconciliation, consultation and conferring, and the trusteeship, and [...] [the] limited nature of political power” (Gyekye 1997: 135). In this chapter, democracy (in the context of pre-colonial governance) will be understood in this sense. Considering the fact that pre-colonial political organisations in Africa were not as developed or mature as the modern ones as well as keeping ancient Greek democracy in mind, the discussion of democracy here will focus on basic democratic features derived from the political practices of some communities in Africa. An examination of locally existing resources that could be crucial for building lasting peace in war-torn societies is in line with the emerging critical literature on the liberal peace (see chapters 3 and 4) and conflict transformation scholars’ argument that local socio-economic and human resources can play a critical role in creating conditions for durable peace (see Lederach 1997). The sections below will discuss several elements of democracy found in a number of African traditional societies that could be essential in post-conflict zones of Africa.

### *Indigenous Checks against the Abuse of Power*

For critics of traditional African political practices, such political practices are undemocratic in nature since they lack competitive elections which enable people to choose their rulers. In most pre-colonial African societies citizens did not go through an election process in order to choose their rulers, given that the right to rule was hereditary, with a few people choosing the king or chief. For example, among the Mende of Sierra Leone, an Electoral College comprising of several prominent people in the state elected the king (Alie 1990). Although

among the Sherbro of Sierra Leone, the king's position was not hereditary, but elected, the election was limited to a council of titular chiefs and was conducted in *poro* (men's "secret society") bush (Alie 1990). As such, these societies do not escape the above criticism for the reason that a few privileged people were allowed to elect the king. This non-elective character of the most powerful office in Sierra Leone's traditional political systems (and other parts of Africa) is considered an anti-thesis of democracy.

Critics have pointed out that without being elected into office by citizens, chiefs and kings had no political legitimacy since this could only be achieved through competitive elections that allowed citizens to choose their leaders. As for Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2003), besides a lack of competitive elections, competition for power was considered illegitimate and could be fatal. This criticism limits the understanding of democracy to the ability of people to elect into office their representatives through competitive elections.

A number of African scholars have noted the existence of other democratic values and practices in most African societies including the limited character of the political authority of most African chiefs or kings (Wiredu 1996; Gyekye 1997, Mentan 2007). Although in a number of African societies, the chief or king, in theory, had enormous power, he was not always despotic and dictatorial since there were mechanisms that acted as checks and balances on his power. Various councils and institutions checked the chiefs or kings' power and prevented corruption. The focus here will be on two institutions that checked the power of the chiefs or kings, particularly in Sierra Leone: the institution of the "secret society" and the chief or king's council.

### *“Secret Societies”*

A vital social feature in Sierra Leone is the existence of “secret societies” such as, the *Poro* (men’s “secret” association) and the *Sande/Bundu* (women’s “secret” association).<sup>18</sup> In Sierra Leone, the *Poro* is the dominant men’s society and is found among the Mende, Sherbro, Kpelle and Temne ethnic groups. These “secret societies” emphasise secrecy in everyday life and formal associations (Murphy 1980). Traditionally, “secret societies” are powerful institutions that have played various political, medical, social, religious and legal functions including education, performing religious rituals, judicial and maintaining traditions. In the political context, one of their functions is to check the power of the kings or chiefs. Among the Temne, the senior *Poro* officials were part of the council that comprised of the king and his ministers which made top-level decisions (Alie 1990). Alie has also noted that among, the Sherbro, *Poro* officials played a vital role of instructing a new king on ethnic law and custom. In addition, *Poro* “inner circle” whose members included the king and top *Poro* officials had two functions, that of executive council and tribunal of their society (Alie 1990).

As such, the king or chief could not make unilateral decisions as he would face resistance from the “secret societies”. For instance, Fanthorpe notes that Paramount Chiefs who owed their positions to British patronage often made moves to consolidate their positions using any means available, however, *Poro* societies would coordinate resistance to such chiefs (2007). A good example in Sierra Leone is that of the widespread riots in the hinterland against Paramount Chiefs’ governance between November 1955 and March 1956 which according to

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<sup>18</sup> Some scholars have questioned the use of the concept “secret society” to refer to such societies since initiates of these societies do not conceal their membership (Fanthorpe 2007) and every adult in his/her rural community is supposed to be a member of a “secret society”. For Abraham (1978) it is not conceivable for a society to be secret to its members, except to the non-initiates who are mainly children and outsiders.

the Commission of Inquiry into the Disturbances in the Provinces were coordinated by the men's "secret societies" (1956).

A number of criticisms have been levelled against secret societies, among them, is what Piot (1993: 354) calls a Marxist critique of secrecy which views it as "a means for social control in a system of power relations". For instance, Murphy who has done research among the Kpelle society of Liberia has concluded that secret knowledge is both property and power among the Kpelle elders. By withholding secret knowledge elders are able to control the youth (or other subordinate groups). This, according to him, "supports the elders' political and economic control of the youth" (or other subordinate groups) (Murphy 1980: 193). While this criticism enables us to understand how this could have led to youth alienation that contributed to the civil war in Sierra Leone (chapter 5), it fails to investigate indigenous motivations for secrecy. There are other studies that have shown that in Sierra Leone and Liberia, for instance, the weak have also used secrecy as means to control the powerful with various forms of agency emerging (Shaw 2002, 2000; Moran 2006).<sup>19</sup> Secrecy, Shaw (2000: 38) notes, is also "important as part of a discourse of power and personhood in everyday situations". She further notes that some practices of withholding secret knowledge are in response to domination the world over. Such strategies of concealment and evasion should be viewed as weapons of the less powerful against the dominant groups (Shaw 2000). In Sierra Leone it is largely attributed to the country's violent past, particularly the Atlantic slave trade

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<sup>19</sup> Shaw (2000) notes that among the Temne, relations of domination and subordination are dependent on asymmetries of power and this means the presence of different types of agency for those with various kinds of power. A person who withholds secret knowledge is considered powerful. Among the Temne, she identifies what she calls indirect agency or mediatory agency: "The agency of Temne husbands and "big men" is [...] paradoxical, because their most powerful actions are those indirectly accomplished (and often invisibly) through others. The agency of Temne wives and junior men, on the other hand, is also paradoxical, because their manifest actions are often subsumed by the agency of another, who acts through them. Yet this mediatory capacity of subordinates also enables the subordinates to block the agency of those who act through them: women, for example, can do this by refusing to cook or farm for their husbands" (Shaw 2000: 45).

and colonial rule (Shaw 2002; Ferme 2001). It is crucial here to explore the positive aspects of this institution that could be useful in effectively checking the powers of local/national leaders at the same time dealing with their negative aspects that can lead to the marginalisation of weaker groups.

### *Councils*

In a number of African traditional societies various councils checked the power of chiefs or kings, and prevented abuse of power and corruption. As with regard to the Temne, Alie (1990) observes that political power was shared among the *O'bai* (the King) who was the central figure, the *Kapr Mesim* (Prime Minister) who was the king's chief adviser and intelligence officer and the *Kapr* (ministers). The chief could not take important decisions without first consulting the council which also included "secret society" officials. Similar observations have been made about the Akan of Ghana (Gyekye 1997) and the Oyo of Nigeria (Ergas 1987). Although in these societies governance centred on the person of the chief or the king, he/she could not decide on important issues without the advice and consent of his/her advisers.

### *Consensus*

Besides councillors freely expressing themselves without fear of being vilified or executed, consensus was essential for decision-making. It has been noted that in the event that councillors disagreed with the king or chief, councillors would "talk till they agree[d]" (Clutton-Brock cited by Nyerere 1966: 103). This idea of talking until people agreed implies the existence of opposed views that required being reconciled (Wamala 2004). Consensus over substantive decisions was a central feature in most traditional African political

systems.<sup>20</sup> Among the Mende of Sierra Leone consensus-building and participation was achieved through the practice of “hanging heads” – “a public sphere based, on a dialogics of compromise forged through both overt and covert consultation, of communal and sectarian interest, of civility” (Ferme 1999: 185, 1998). However, this does not mean that consensus was always attained, nor were such African societies living in harmony all the time (Wiredu 1997). For instance, Ferme (1998) notes the existence of violent elements in practises such as “hanging heads”. This according to her includes “the suppression of decent that is necessary to reach the fiction of social consensus” (Ferme 1998: 557). She further notes that while violent elements exist in such processes as “hanging heads”, “their open-ended and provisional form is often better suited to hold conflict at bay than the finality of vote counts in competitive elctions” (Ferme 1998: 557).

### *Consent by the People*

Although in a number of traditional African societies chiefs were chosen by a few people, as noted earlier and on the basis of hereditary entitlement, people had a say about a chief who was acceptable to them. In the context of the Temne of Sierra Leone, Ali (1990: 14) notes that, the chief was “subjected to various restrictions and taboos, and was expected to conduct himself in conformity with the injunctions and norms of secret society in charge of his position” to curb abuse of power.<sup>21</sup> These injunctions are evidence that accountability and some form of social contract existed between the ruler and the governed in such societies.

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<sup>20</sup> Eze (1997: 321) argues that consensus cannot be viewed as the ultimate goal of democracy, but as one moment of its outcomes. For Eze, democracy should be seen as a “market place of *competing*” ideas not just “consenting or consensing” ones (emphasis not mine). In addition, Eze is of the view that central authorities can still abuse the consensus system.

<sup>21</sup> For an interesting discussion of the Akan of Ghana and their relation to their chiefs see Gykeye (1997).

## ***Human Rights***

There appears to be a considerable amount of consensus that the historical origins of the human rights norms enshrined in the various international declarations and legal conventions such as, the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948) and the United Nations International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (1966), is in the West and are a result of Western histories, social and political thought. However, there is no consensus on the philosophical origins of the concept. On one hand, there are scholars who have argued that conceptions and the philosophy of human rights existed in non-Western cultures as well, although some of the Western conceptions of human rights may not be similar to traditional understanding of human rights in Africa. On the other hand, there are scholars who deny the existence of human rights conceptions in pre-colonial African societies pointing out that those who claim that human rights exists in Africa confuses human rights with human dignity (Howard 1986; Howard and Donnelly 1986). Howard (1986: 23) notes that arguments for the existence of human rights in Africa fail to understand “the structural organisation and social changes in African society” resulting from colonialism and the continent’s incorporation into the capitalist world economy. Conceptions of human dignity in both social and political contexts, according to Howard and Donnelly (1986: 802), relate to “particular understandings of the inner (moral) nature and worth of the human person and his or her proper (political) relations with society”. In contrast, human rights are claims that an individual can make against the state (Howard 1986). According to this view, all human beings have these entitlements by virtue of being human.

Questions have also been raised regarding the applicability and validity of conceptions of human rights in Africa (Shivji 1989). For Howard (1986), although human rights conceptions have origins and a philosophical basis in the West, they have a universal applicability. She



further notes that, “All African societies are now state societies; local communal groups are subordinate to the national state” (1986: 218) and as such, human rights conceptions can now be applied to African societies.<sup>22</sup> In this regard, the concept of human rights is viewed as an outcome of modern Western civilisation.

### ***A Communitarian Approach to Human Rights***

Contrary to the above, a number of scholars have argued that concepts of human rights are not universal, but culturally specific and as such, not unique to Western societies (wa Mutua 1994, 1996; Motala 1988; Pollis and Schwab 1980). However, for these scholars the idea that individuals have rights against the state only exists in Western capitalist states, a result of the West’s historical circumstances (Pollis and Schwab 1980). Whereas in some societies human rights are grounded in the individual, in other societies they are rooted in the “group” (Pollis and Schwab 1980). These scholars have noted that human rights as envisaged in the West are not accepted in the developing world, including Africa since their philosophical basis is different and opposite (Shivji 1989). According to this view, African traditional societies are communitarian in nature (as reflected in their philosophies of life, such as, *ubuntu* in Bantu speaking Africa), and in such societies, personhood is said to be rooted in a context of relationships (Mbiti 1969; Ramose 1999).<sup>23</sup>

An individual is said to co-exist with others and at no level of existence is he/she exclusively alone and vice versa. The “I” is the result of the “we” and vice versa. Person and community are, in this case, defined relationally. Rosalind Shaw (2000) writing about the Temne of Sierra Leone points out that the full Temne term for “person”, “town-person” (*w-uni ke-pet*)

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<sup>22</sup> For a similar argument see Donnelly (1982).

<sup>23</sup> *Ubuntu* can be understood to mean humanness or being human. Some of its values include respect, sharing, caring, tolerance and empathy. It is a Zulu/Ndebele word which is used with the same meaning in a number of African languages and is more pronounced in Southern Africa where it is used in everyday interaction.

suggests the idea of personhood as rooted in a context of relationships. Shaw observes that “Temne evaluations of a person often use parts of the body as tropes for the capacity to relate to others: even though these tropes describe attributes, they are attributes that derive from a relational rather than an essentialist, attribute-based understanding of personhood” (2002: 40). Hence, in such societies, a person can only become conscious of his own being, privileges, and duties towards himself and others through other people. In other words, a person is not an island unto him/herself, he or she needs others. In addition, individuals in the community interact with each other for the benefit of the whole. Such individuals have agreed values, beliefs and objectives and often act to promote them in order to enhance stability, harmony and cohesion.

Criticisms have been levelled against three claims that proponents of this communitarian view consider crucial for distinguishing between social organisation in African societies and that of the West. The three claims are: 1) the communal orientation of African societies which makes people in these societies to be more concerned with group rights than individual rights; 2) group consensus as a key to decision-making in politics;<sup>24</sup> and 3) the economic aspect – the automatic re-distribution of wealth and the absence of the idea of private property, and with the haves being respected in so far as they distribute their wealth to the have-nots (Howard 1984; also see Kaballo 1995; Donnelly 1982).

For the proponents of the communitarian view, economic as well as political rights were guaranteed in these societies. However, for the critics such claims fail to recognise, that culture is not static and it changes due to alterations in social and economic structures

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<sup>24</sup> For instance, Wai (1980: 116) notes that there were checks and balances on the ruler with power generally dispersed as a means to “allow for a modicum of social justice and values concerned with individual and collective rights”. On a comprehensive discussion of the existence of political, economic, legal, religious and other rights in an African traditional society, the Akan of Ghana, see Wiredu (1996, chapter 12).

(Kaballo 1995; Howard 1984). For example, Kaballo (1995: 190) notes that in the modern context “African societies are not any more communal, consensual or egalitarian”. I consider such a view to be too simplistic and may be applicable to urban settings where globalisation has had a lot of impact on social organisation than the more conservative rural settings in most African communities where these values are still upheld, though to some extent affected by the changes critics have highlighted. Contrary to Howard (1994) and Kaballo (1995) there exists in a number of urban settings rural emigrants who have formed voluntary associations (some of them along tribal/kinship lines) that tend to integrate rural and urban expectations exhibiting some of these values including communal and consensus.

Kaballo further argues that the idea of the distinctiveness of local values and traditions should be acceptable, only if it is compatible with “basic human rights standards” as they can easily be used as justification for authoritarian rule (1995: 191). Similarly, Howard notes that “Constant references to communal society can be, and are, used to mask systematic violations of human rights in the interests of ruling elites” (1984: 175). Does the fact that ruling elites in modern Africa have used notions of cultural relativism to mask their human rights abuses mean that this should be used as a justification for the non-existence of the concept and practice of human rights in traditional African societies?

### **Law in Pre-colonial African Societies**

There are claims that there was no such thing as law in pre-colonial African societies. Such claims to some extent have been influenced by the writings of European missionaries, historians, philosophers, anthropologists and colonial administrators. For example, Hegel wrote that in Africa,

[...] history is in fact out of the question. Life there consists of a succession of contingent happenings and surprises. No aim or state exists whose development can be followed; and there is no subjectivity, but merely a series of subjects who destroy one another (1975: 176).

Hegel never identified anything positive about Africans whose character he said was “difficult to comprehend, because it is so totally different from our own culture, and so remote and alien in relation to our mode of consciousness” (Hegel 1975: 176). While it is difficult to know what actually was the case in pre-colonial Africa given that no written records are available and oral tradition can be distorted, classical theorists, European missionaries, travellers and traders who argued that there was no law, history, democracy, human rights, and so on in African societies prior to European colonial rule tended to express their ethnocentric biases.

Elias (1956: 25) identifies four schools of thought among Europeans regarding the debate on the existence of law in pre-colonial African societies – perspectives from the missionary, the administrative officer, the social anthropologist and the judicial official. The early Christian missionaries to Africa often described indigenous laws and custom as elements of “paganism” and pointed out that it was their duty to eliminate them in the name of Christian civilisation (Elias 1956: 25). Such early missionaries could not recognise or appreciate the role of custom, law and other practices in resolving conflicts as well as maintaining peace and order in African societies. As for the Administrative Officer, according to Elias, due to his pre-occupation with the administration of criminal justice, he tended to give the impression that all African laws were criminal. This conceptualisation of law could not provide a clear understanding of law in these societies. The third school of thought is that of anthropologists who even though they had studied Africa societies, did not have systematic legal training, thus were limited to two kinds of mental attitude: 1) “That of the older anthropologists [...]

who, basing themselves upon current Anglo-Saxon law concepts [...] see little or no law in African societies and are emphatic that ‘custom is king’; and 2) “That of the more modern group of social anthropologists who, with their knowledge of comparative institutions and of current juristic thought, are prepared to say that African law is law though there are understandable differences between some of its provenances and those of other types of law, differences rooted in the social environment and economic milieu in which it has had to operate and to evolve all through ages”, for example, Schapera (1938 cited in Elias 1956: 29).

As for the older anthropologists, there was no law in African pre-colonial societies, but custom, thus, treated law and custom as synonymous (Elias 1956). Finally, Elias notes that, a number of judicial officers confirmed the existence of law in African societies with some pointing out that the legal ideas and processes in these societies had little similarity with those of the West. For Eze (1984 cited by Nmehielle 2001) the failure to acknowledge the existence of law in traditional African societies is a result of the following: 1) either insufficient information or failure to appreciate the correct nature of these societies prior to colonisation; and 2) Western scholars’ conceptualisation of law as originating from the state.

In order to ascertain whether law existed in Africa’s pre-colonial societies it is crucial to define law. Wiredu defines law as “promulgated or acknowledged rules that are enforced or, at least, intended to be enforced by a recognised authority having sanctions, usually physical force, at its disposal” (1996: 61). Law, in this case, relates to rules that a government make and enforce aimed at regulating the conduct of people within a given society. This definition is biased towards states.

For John Austin (1885 cited by Elias 1956: 37) law is “a rule laid down for the guidance of an intelligent being by an intelligent being having power over him”. This understanding of law relates to the idea of a sovereign who is able to enact law and coerce compliance. Elias (1956) calls this the “command theory of law” and notes that pre-colonial African societies with centralised governance systems satisfy the idea of a political sovereign as the basis of law. However, this idea of law “properly so-called” does not apply to African societies that are classified as “stateless societies” (Elias 1956).

For some scholars, the court is the basis of law: “The law of a State or of any organised body of men is composed of the rules which the courts – i.e. the judicial organs of that body – lay down for the determination of legal rights and duties” (Gray 1921 cited Elias 1956: 39). Like the definition above that links law with a political sovereign, this definition implies that “stateless” societies had no law since formal systems of courts did not exist in them. Elias points to the indefensibility of this definition: 1) much depends on how “court” is conceptualised – “whether it is a special building in which a robed judge and wigged barristers dispense justice, or whether it is any sitting at which disputes are settled and the social equilibrium of the community is restored by its accredited functionaries”; 2) a number of conflicts, even in modern societies with formal courts tend to be settled without the involvement of courts, judges and wigged barristers (Elias 1956: 39) – often called out of court settlement or negotiated settlement. In addition, in post-conflict environments NGOs are increasingly using alternative dispute resolution (ADR) (linking it with human rights) as a means to settle conflicts (with the exception of criminal cases) without the involvement of courts or judges. The definitions of law that I have discussed above are too narrow since they exclude a number of pre-colonial societies which had no government and a political sovereign to enact and enforce rules. Gert (2003: 11, emphasis not mine) defines a law as

*a rule that is part of a system of rules regulating the behaviour of all the members of a society whether or not they want to be subject to this system. All those subject to this system know that their behaviour is supposed to be guided by it and that they may be judged by the system and perhaps even punished for not following it.*

Gert's definition of law does not connect it to a political sovereign. And what is crucial in this definition is that members of a given society recognise that a certain system of rules regulates their behaviour and such rules are binding on them. I adopt Gert's definition of law as it is broad enough to allow the existence of law in other forms of human social and political organisations such as "stateless societies" and it also shows that law can exist outside the modern framework of a state.

Custom should be distinguished from law since it is "a mere social conformity the breach of which does not entail any form of penalty [...]" (Elias 1956: 294). In African societies law could be distinguished from custom. For example, as Elias observes, "the drumming and feasting that often accompany a customary marriage have been misunderstood by some writers as forming part of the legal requirements, whereas the discharge of, or promise to discharge, the marriage payment by the prospective groom is alone of the essence of the contract" (1956: 294). In such societies whether "stateless" or "states" it is crucial for scholars to pay more attention on "*processes* rather than *institutions*" as the judges who are dealing with cases whether criminal or not tend to be more "intent on the maintenance of the social equilibrium than a strict declaration of legal rights and duties of the litigants without regard to the social consequences of their verdict" (Elias 1956: 298).

Elias further notes that, "Instead of spinning out abstract theories of law, their aim is usually the pragmatic one of removing the causes of social tension, of binding or rebinding estranged

parties in a give-and-take reciprocity, of the re-incorporation of an erring member in the social structure” (1956: 298). Since the emphasis was on maintaining social harmony, more emphasis was put on reconciliation rather than vengeance. However, extreme forms of behaviour such as, witchcraft and murder were not accommodated. Since such forms of behaviour were regarded as antithetical to social harmony. In most cases perpetrators were either banished or killed.

It is quite unimaginable how societies in pre-colonial Africa would have operated without rules regulating people’s conduct and having those rules enforced. These laws were not written, but passed on from one generation to another orally and the lack of written texts should not be used as evidence against the existence of law in these pre-colonial societies. Since law in African societies was never recorded, it is generally known as customary law and operates on the framework of social harmony and stability, and to a greater extent social constraints enhanced social security, cohesion and order. This does not mean to romanticise pre-colonial African societies since other bad things happened such as slavery and inter-tribal wars.

### **Development and the Market**

Rodney (1972: 9-10) views development in human society as a many-sided process: 1) development at the individual level, means “increased skill and capacity, greater freedom, creativity, self-discipline, responsibility and material well-being”, and the achievements of these various aspects of personal development is “very much tied in with the state of the society as a whole”; 2) at the level of social groups it means “an increasing capacity to regulate both internal and external relationships” – in the past it meant infringing upon the freedoms of other social groups and the ability to protect a society’s independence from



others, and involved the development of tools useful for their survival which enhanced social development; 3) at the economic level it happens when members of a given society “increase jointly their capacity for dealing with the environment”.

The capacity for a society to develop in this sense is dependent on a number of factors, among these are: 1) the degree to which its members understand the laws of nature (science); and 2) the extent to which they put their understanding of the laws of nature into practice by inventing tools (technology) and the manner in which they organise work (Rodney 1972: 10). Conceptualising economic development in this wider sense would mean that economic development has existed in human societies since the origins of human beings, given that human beings have increased much their capacity for enhancing a living from nature, including their ability to progress from using stones as tools to using iron and from being hunters and gatherers to farmers, and settling close to their farms and establishing farming-community villages (Rodney 1972). Economic development as understood in this wider sense cannot be denied to such pre-colonial societies in Africa, although prior to the introduction of external trade most African communities tended to focus on producing goods that met their needs.

As Hopkins notes, “Trade in Africa, as elsewhere, is as old as man himself, and the concept of the market is appropriate to early as more recent times” (1973: 5). Further, he notes that subsistence and exchange activities were integrated, and still continue to be integrated. Several reasons have been advanced for the “backwardness” of the domestic economy in pre-colonial Africa as well as the absence of markets in these societies: 1) that the domestic economy was pre-dominantly subsistence, “which was uniform, unchanging and therefore uninteresting”; 2) ancient technology, extended family and communal land tenure system

acted as impediments to the development of the agriculture sector; 3) the dominance of anti-capitalist value system inhibited the progress of key entrepreneurial groups; 4) since African political systems were either egalitarian or “conservative gerontocracies based on ascribed status”, they made it difficult for more entrepreneurial groups to accumulate savings; and 5) exchange was conducted with the aim of maximising social values rather than economic ones (Hopkins 1973: 9). Hopkins further notes that factor markets did not exist meaning that “there was no regular institutionalised means of selling land, hiring labour, or raising money” (1973: 9).

Two themes explained pre-colonial Africa’s underdevelopment: 1) the “myth of primitive Africa” – relating to Africans’ inability to organise themselves as shown, for example in the writings of Hegel on Africa; and 2) the “myth of Merrie Africa” which portrays pre-colonial Africa as the biblical Garden of Eden in which everything was in abundance making livelihoods for Africans much easier (Hopkins 1973). Contrary to these assertions, Rodney has argued that underdevelopment in Africa is an outcome of the close encounter between Europe and Africa which resulted in Europe (which had a higher level of development than Africa) exploiting Africa through capitalism, imperialism and colonialism. For Rodney, prior to this encounter pre-colonial African societies were developing independently. However, capitalist relations of production resulted in a global political economy that saw Africa becoming underdeveloped and Europe increasing its development: “underdevelopment was the creation of development” (Esteva 1992: 11). Europe’s expansionist development led to the increased exploitation of Africans, the exportation of surplus products and labour through slave trade. Consequently, African societies were deprived of the benefit of their natural resources and this contributed to economic stagnation in them. However, this blame should not be entirely levelled against European capitalism and colonialism.

## **Colonisation Rule and Representations of the Other**

Colonialism saw an alien form of governance that was largely undemocratic being imposed on Africans against their will. In 1885 the Berlin Congress resulted in Western colonial states partitioning Africa into territorial units. The partitioning was done in an arbitrary manner to the extent that a number of unrelated areas and peoples were joined together. This period witnessed the imperial powers of Italy, Britain, France, Germany, Spain, Portugal and Belgium occupying and exporting Western notions of government on the continent. Consequently, many African rulers lost control of their territories and many African societies were restructured. In the process, African traditional political institutions were undermined. The imperial powers justified their control of Africa and the destruction of African traditional political and social institutions on the grounds that this would bring civilisation, promote development and education, bringing order by ending the slave trade and stopping endemic warfare on a continent that was largely “barbaric” as well as promote political rights.

Although, Smuts (1930) noted that Europeans by imposing Western forms of governance wanted to apply the principle of equal rights, in practice colonial states did not accept the colonised as equal citizens who had political rights to be protected and promoted. Africans were often portrayed as children who needed the protection of Europeans. As a result, the colonisers could not recognise the agency of indigenous communities in deciding their future and how they wanted to organise politically and socially. Indeed, agency was often located with the colonising power, whereas, the non-Western other was described as childlike who needed the protection of the West from his/her barbaric instincts. For instance, describing indigenous Africans Smuts noted that, “This type has some wonderful characteristics. It has largely remained a child type, with a child psychology and outlook. A child-like human cannot be a bad human, for we are not in spiritual matters bidden to be like unto little

children” (1930: 75). Indeed, Smuts failed to realise that Africans could interpret the world and its realities in different ways from Europeans since their values, traditions, experiences and cultures were different from those of Europeans. Africans’ knowledge systems, values, experiences, etc, could have been irrelevant to Europeans like Hegel and Smuts, but relevant to them.

Because of European domination over other parts of the world, European writers like Hegel were made to believe that Europe was the centre of the globe and a point of reference of everything, and regarded other parts of the world as objects rather than subjects (Lange 1998). For instance, for Hegel, slavery was the only vital connection between Africa (the object) and Europe (the subject). This representation of Africa was used to justify violence against those who resisted being civilised.

Africa was then “invented” in the image of Europe (Mudimbe 1988). Consequently, “An Africa invented for European purposes could no longer serve the interest of its own people. Taken off of its political, economic, and cultural terms Africa became an object to be used, abused, and then shoved to the historical curb” (Asante 2001: xiv).

### **Colonial Rule and the Chiefs**

Besides the use of violence and coercion as means to gain legitimacy from the locals, colonial domination, according to Boone (1994), was entrenched in a “politics of collaboration” between the colonisers and chiefs. In British colonies, the colonial state’s failure to establish legitimacy and authority in the countryside saw it shifting from “direct rule” to “indirect rule”. The new policy, according to Smuts, was “to foster an indigenous native culture or system of cultures, and to cease to force the African into alien European moulds” (1930: 84).

Chiefs and native councils were granted the authority to run affairs in their own areas, however, under the supervision of the colonial rulers. As a result, chiefs and native councils no longer derived their authority from the people, but from the colonial government. For Betts, colonial rule in this case turned the chief from a “native authority” to an “administrative agent” (1990). It was thought that the new system would keep “intact as far as possible the native system of organisation and social discipline” (Smuts 1930: 99).

There exists two broad view points in regard to the relationship between chiefs and the colonial state: one that views the state (colonial and post-colonial) as having fully encapsulated traditional authorities (Mamdani 1996; Herbst 2000) and the other which challenges this view (von Trotha 1996; Ray and van Rouveroy van Nieuwaal 1996; Nugent 1996).

### ***The “Invention” School***

Chieftaincy, according to the “invention school”, is a colonial invention (Hobsbawm and Ranger 1993; Hobsbawm 1993; Mamdani 1996). For Mamdani, colonial rule defined power and authority as “customary” which in much of post-colonial Africa has not only been at “the centre of coercive day-to-day practices”, but also “orchestrated and organised the mass slaughter that led to the genocide” in Rwanda (2001: 277, 1996). According to this school of thought, custom is socially constructed by state elites to suit the interests of the state including, “control, extraction and subordination” (Kyed 2007: 13). For such critics, this has led to the worst forms of violence in colonial and post-colonial Africa. In addition, the “customary law” that was “recognised in colonial legislation, and developed and ‘applied’ in the newly established ‘native’ courts” is criticised for being “supportive of the project of

colonial rule, and entrenching the position of elders over juniors, men over women” (Roberts 1984: 3). Mamdani has concluded that there is a need for a critical rethinking of custom.

### ***Criticisms of Mamdani’s View***

Mamdani’s view that customary authority is unaccountable is a little bit simplistic since it views African communities as incapable of resisting illegitimate authority. While I do not deny that custom has its own biases, I do not agree with the view that it is unaccountable given that it is community-based and needs the community to give it legitimacy, and legitimacy does not just come from laws. Mamdani also essentialises custom as native, barbaric and backward. Mamdani’s criticism disguises the fact that colonialism and global structures of injustice have played a role in creating conditions for civil wars in Africa. As Jackie Smith (2008: 1) notes, “Contemporary violent conflicts are not purely localised phenomena but rather they are deeply embedded within a global context of complex political and economic relationships”. Besides this, Mamdani’s criticism of customary authority removes the role of national elites in causing and sustaining conflicts in Africa. As such, it lays blame on ordinary Africans for having “dysfunctional” institutions. He appears to be advocating centralised, strong modern states for Africa with strong leaders as means to deal with the ills that a number of African states are facing. But is this what Africans want? It does not necessarily mean that such states and strong leaders can work for the good of the people.

### ***Why Chiefs Have Been Viewed as Inventions***

Chiefs during the colonial era, according to Spears, were said to be “inventions in two senses: first, the men colonial authorities appointed often lacked traditional legitimacy, and second, the positions to which they were appointed were either created by the colonial administration or had been so corrupted by its demands to collect tax, raise labour and regulate agriculture

that they no longer represented legitimate patterns of authority” (2003: 3). From this perspective, in its attempt to gain legitimacy among the local population, the colonial state invented custom or tradition, then, co-opted chiefs who then ended up acting as its agents, thus administering and controlling the locals producing a form of power that Mamdani (1996) has called “decentralised despotism”.

According to this school of thought, the local population became subjected to authoritarian rule from the chiefs who now enjoyed state recognised authority. For instance, it is noted that chiefs used coercive measures to collect tax from their followers and to recruit them as farm and mine labourers. Critics of the recent political embracing of chieftaincy in Africa view this as regressive since, state recognition of chieftaincy is antithetical to the democratisation process on the continent for it reproduces “the decentralized despotism that was the form of the colonial state in Africa” and making it hard to empower the rural populace, who as a result would remain subjects rather than become citizens (Mamdani 1996: 25).

The idea that colonial bureaucracy in Africa “invented tradition” so as to control and subordinate the colonised, thus bolstering colonial rule is largely drawn from Ranger (1983). Ranger has noted that, “Since a few connections could be made between British and African political, social and legal systems, British administrators set about inventing African traditions for Africans” (1983: 212). And the “invented traditions” that the colonial administrators imported from Europe “not only provided whites with models of command but also offered many Africans models of ‘modern’ behaviour” (Ranger 1983: 212). In addition, according to Ranger, it resulted in the production of “neo-traditional” cadres meant to serve the colonial states. In this regard, the “invention” school treats locals, chiefs in particular, as passive recipients, powerless, spectators, mere victims or collaborators in the invention of

their tradition or custom. In his later works, Ranger critically revises his earlier position, since according to him the analysis had put much emphasis on the agency of the colonisers in inventing African identities (2002).

For Ranger, colonial hegemony was not really absolute and various agents challenged the invented traditions. In other words, the colonised participated actively in inventing and constructing the new traditions. While Ranger portrays the colonised as active participants in the invention of their identity, he does not look at how the interaction between the colonised and the coloniser contributed to the shaping of the identity of the coloniser, as well. Similarly, critics of chieftaincy as invented ignore this and make a representation of the coloniser as always having possessed power/knowledge and that of chiefs as being powerless. In post-colonial Africa, the same representations of chiefs and ordinary rural people as powerless are being made in reference to post-colonial states that neither reformed nor abolished chieftaincy.

The “invention” school provides its criticism of chieftaincy from a dualistic perspective in which the state is presumed to hold power, and chiefs and their followers as powerless, and at the same time, chiefs are presumed to wield power over their followers. Thus, this ignores chiefs and subordinated rural populations’ agency to resist their situation. As such, the approach does not help us think about the various forms of resistance of the powerless against the powerful (those who have an influence on their lives), how such resistance shaped colonial or post-colonial rule.

Thus, the “invention of tradition” thesis is an elitist model of power that understands power as “highly centralised” (Bachrach and Baratz 1962: 947). “Power”, as Roberts (1984: 4)



rightly puts it, “resides at different levels, takes on diverse forms, and runs in all directions”. Roberts, further notes that, “while ‘customary law’ in the sense of the repertoire of rules applied in the colonial courts *did* provide instrument of rule, it also offered avenues of escape and resistance for the ruled” (1984: 4, emphasis not mine). If this was the case, then the “invention” school has failed to distinguish “judicial customary law” – “customary law” that the “native” courts recognised – from “real” customary law, that is, customary law as practiced in the everyday lives of the people (Roberts 1984). As with regards to governance, in response to the struggles for legitimacy and authority between the state elites and chiefs, the ruled are not passive and can resist by adopting “a strategic pose in the presence of the powerful” (Scott 1990: xii) and engage in strategies of passive resistance. Scott has described this as ‘hidden transcripts’ which “represents a critique of power spoken behind the back of the dominant” (1990: xii; see chapter 4). As such, there are challenges in viewing customary governance and “customary law” entirely in terms of dominance (Roberts 1984). The failure to recognise these resistances can result in the failure of projects aimed at reforming such institutions.

### **Critics of the “Invention” School**

Critics of the “invention school” point out that, “the case for colonial invention has often overstated colonial power and ability to manipulate African institutions to establish hegemony” (Spear 2003: 3; von Trotha 1996; Ray and van Rouveroy van Nieuwaal 1996; Nugent 1996; Skalnik 1996). They acknowledge that colonial and postcolonial “principles of devolution, hierarchy and the administrative district changed the bases of power and authority” of African chiefs (von Trotha 1996: 82). However, this did not mean that chiefs had no agency. Spears points to the agency of the colonised noting the following:

Local discourse played a vital role as people continually reinterpreted and reconstructed tradition in the context of broader socio-economic changes. And colonial policies often stimulated rather than stilled conflict in the ongoing politics of neo-traditionalism. Far from being created by alien rulers, then, tradition was reinterpreted, reformed and reconstructed by subjects and rulers alike (2003: 4).

Further, Spears notes that, “To the extent that colonial authorities depended on local authorities to effect and legitimate their rule, then, their power was limited, and they became subject to local discourses of power that they neither fully understood nor controlled” (2003:9). Contrary to the “invention of tradition” thesis the second school of thought brings to our attention the power and agency of both the coloniser and the colonised. In addition, it argues that chiefs have been able to maintain legitimacy in post-colonial Africa as well, since this legitimacy is rooted in a culture and tradition drawn from the pre-colonial period. As van Binsbergen notes, “By virtue of occupying a pivotal position in the historic cosmology shared by large numbers of villagers and traditionally-oriented urban migrants, the chiefs represent a force which modernising state elites have found difficult to by-pass or obliterate” (1999: 98). As such, the chief cannot be viewed as powerless or lacking agency since, “It is not only the state which co-opts the chief as additional power base. On the strength of the respect their traditional position commands, chiefs have also successfully penetrated the state’s administrative and representative bodies, thus acquiring de facto power bases in the modern political sector” (van Binsbergen 1999: 98, also see van Rouveroy van Nieuwaal 1996).

Thus, two power bases provide chiefs with legitimacy and authority: “From tradition chiefs derive their sacred and other customary powers. From the modern state chiefs attempt to capture resources in the forms of development projects, taxes, etc” (Ray and van Rouveroy van Nieuwaal 1996: 7). Yet, this double basis of power creates a mutual dependence between chiefs and the state (van Rouveroy van Nieuwaal 1996). Further, chiefs continue to play an

intermediary role between the state and their followers. At the same time, they have access to economic resources, for instance, land, that are independent of the state and as such, should not be treated as “mere assistants” of the state since by not relying on one source of income the chief is less dependent on state salary (van Rouveroy van Nieuwaal 1996).

In the “shadow of the state” in many African countries, chiefs play an important role in settling disputes at the local level and at the same time, as administrators and allocators of plots of land to their followers, though the state has attempted, but in vain to restrict their role to “mere” reconciliation and dispute resolution (van Rouveroy van Nieuwaal 1996: 42). In addition, chiefs exercise both moral and ritual authority over their followers and even state officials. Indeed, chiefs have become hybrid authorities. In this regard, if chiefs are really bad to their followers as proponents of the “invention of tradition” claim why then do they continue to command authority in rural areas?

### **Dualistic Forms of Political Authority**

One outcome of indirect rule in Africa was the creation of a “dualism of power” structures (Englebert 2002: 51) as well as a plural legal order (European colonial law and indigenous, and in some societies such as Sierra Leone, Islamic law in addition to the two). Sklar (1993) uses the concept “mixed government” to identify these dualistic forms of political authority. The concept of legal pluralism has been used to refer to the existence of plural legal orders. In the context of dualistic forms of authority two realms exists – the realm of “state sovereignty and the realm of traditional government, both systems effectively govern the same communities of citizen-subjects” (Sklar 1993: 87). Under such arrangements competition and negotiations for legitimacy and sovereign authority between state elites and chiefs often occur. At times it leads to the co-option and regulation of chiefs, as happened during the

colonial era, for instance, under the British's indirect rule and the French's policy of assimilation. This of course also meant the formal recognition of traditional leaders and institutions. At times the competition also meant either the repression or the lack of recognition or the abolition of customary institutions and practices. However, without legitimacy the rural masses have often resisted the imposed state.

### **Limitations of Colonial States: External Actor, Sovereignty and Nation**

Besides lacking internal legitimacy, the colonial state had other shortcomings. Although it enjoyed some of the defining attributes of stateness (territory,<sup>25</sup> population, power, law and state as an idea), it lacked three crucial traits for a modern state, namely, external actor, sovereignty and nation (Young 1994: 43). The colonial state was not an actor in the international system (Young 1994). As such, it remained in the periphery in world politics and governance, and would act as supplier of primary commodities for the more developed states without determining the international trade rules. Sovereignty is understood in two senses: internal and external. In the case of external sovereignty, the state is viewed as “an international legal person” and as regards to internal sovereignty, the state has “unlimited theoretical dominion over its subjects” (Young 1994: 28). Since imperial states had full control over the government of the colonies (with the help of their agents of rule), according to Young, African colonial states lacked internal sovereignty (1994).

As noted earlier, in many parts of Africa a number of unrelated areas and peoples were joined together resulting in such societies struggling for nationhood. Gyekye provides two meanings of the concept of nation: 1) refers to a group or community of people sharing a common

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<sup>25</sup> The idea of territory in colonial Africa was ambiguous since boundaries were drawn arbitrarily without even consulting a single African political authority and as a result, various groups ended up living in the same state. However, there were a few cases in Africa (for example, Swaziland, Lesotho and Somalia) in which new nation states matched the pre-colonial societies.

history, culture, language, “and possibly a territory but believe that they hail from a common ancestral background and are therefore closely related by kinship ties”; and 2) refers to a state comprising of several nations in the first sense (Gyekye 1997: 79). In the first sense, according to Gyekye, members of a nation focus on relationship building through solidarity, empathy, harmony, sympathy, mutual recognition and understanding, among other ethos. In this sense, there is a connection between ethnic community and nation. This idea of a nation denotes an ethno-cultural community and is not equivalent to a state since it does not have well-defined and recognised frontiers, and a government with a central authority, but it can become a state (Gyekye 1997). The second sense of a nation lacks the crucial characteristics of a nation in the first sense since it consists of a wide range of languages and cultures (Gyekye 1997). In short, it is not a homogenous entity.

Unlike in Europe where nation-states were a result of local social forces, as noted earlier, the modern nation-state in Africa emerged from colonial oppression. As Gyekye (1997: 82) notes, “The conquerors who shepherded different nationalities into nation-states failed to realise that it is one thing to make Ghana or Kenya or Yugoslavia; it is quite another to make Ghanaians or Kenyans or Yugoslavs”. This has continued to be a serious challenge for post-colonial states in Africa. For Basil Davidson (1992), the nation-state has proved to be a curse for post-colonial Africa.

### **Colonial Inheritance and Post-colonial Challenges in Africa**

The nationalism of the 1950s and 1960s which removed colonial rule in Africa played a significant role in producing Africa’s modern “nation-states”. The main objective of the nationalist movements during that period was to fight against colonialism as well as racism. However, the Organisation of African Union (OAU) in its 1964 resolution resolved to retain

and legitimate the existing boundaries as a means to avoid border disputes and threats to stability in Africa (OAU in Brownlie 1971). Since the decolonisation process was fast, African leaders failed to pay proper attention to the feasibility of the units being constructed (Herbest 2000). The new African elites' failure to establish indigenous ideas of statehood worsened the internal contradictions of most African states, and this to some extent contributed to the socio-political challenges that led to the civil wars in states including Liberia, Angola, Sudan and Sierra Leone.

### ***Sovereignty and Legitimacy***

Since the new African leaders wanted to avoid border disputes, as a means to promote peace and stability on the continent, they could not gain control of "African territory through wars of expansion or by claiming control of territory on the basis of the administrative facts on the ground," at the same time these leaders "rejected the entire precolonial tradition of multiple sovereignties overlaid with soft borders" (Herbest 2000: 97). A consequence of this was that peasants could not be incorporated into mainstream politics and economics.

Herbest (2000) has observed that the post-colonial state failed to consolidate power within its entire territory. In this case, the state could not extend its power beyond the cities, partly due to the low population densities in many African states and its failure to incorporate the majority of Africans in mainstream politics. As result, the state remained non-hegemonic. However, the international society through the UN and related organisations recognised independent states in Africa as legitimate actors in the international system. They also supported nationalist movements against colonialism rather than secessionist wars to create independent states. Consequently, secessionist wars, for example, Katanga in the Congo

(1960-64), Biafra in Nigeria (1967-70) and Southern Sudan (1955-1972) never received support from the UN and OAU.<sup>26</sup>

While the international environment for African states became secure, the domestic environment remained insecure (Clapham 1998). By so doing, the international community was able to prevent the use of war or force as means to build states in Africa (Jackson and Rosberg 1982). The right for such states to exist, according to Jackson (1990: 24), derived from “new international norms such as anti-colonialism, ex-colonial self-determination and racial sovereignty underwritten by egalitarian and democratic values” with origins from the Western social and political movements.

In this regard, at independence many African states attained international sovereignty and legitimacy, but could not exercise control over the people within their territorial borders.<sup>27</sup> For Jackson such states reveal “limited empirical statehood” and are “quasi-states”, not “real states”. Indeed, post-colonial statebuilding in Africa led to the formation of “quasi-states”. The international acceptance of such states was a significant factor in the “rapid African rejection of any indigenous alternative” (Herbest 2000: 100). However, it became difficult for the African rulers to build effective states within the inherited frontiers.

These inherited artificial states, according Davidson, are a serious challenge for development in Africa and he considers this challenge, the “black man’s burden” (1992). For Davidson,

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<sup>26</sup> Until recently, Eritrea has been the only African country that the UN and the African Union (AU) have recognised as a sovereign state after it seceded from Ethiopia in 1993. On the 9<sup>th</sup> of July 2011, Southern Sudan became Africa’s newest country after most Southern Sudanese voted for cessation in a UN sanctioned independence referendum in January 2011. Somaliland which has claimed autonomy from Somalia has not been recognised as a sovereign state, although it is functioning like any other sovereign state.

<sup>27</sup> I adopt Jackson and Rosberg (1982: 6)’s definition of exercise of control: “the ability to pronounce, implement, and enforce commands, laws, policies and regulations”

traditional political organisations should have been taken into consideration. Instead, the independent African states inherited the very institutions that had undermined development in Africa during colonial rule. As such, genuine liberation that liberation movements had advocated could not be achieved since inheriting the colonial institutions resulted in a “new period of indirect subjection to the history of Europe” (Davidson 1992: 10). Davidson attributes the challenges of the post-colonial states in Africa to the state and its institutions, and offers a solution that would see the decentralisation of political and administrative power from central authority to local authorities as well promote popular participation. In the absence of this ordinary people resisted the state and in response to these challenges the new African leaders centralised power and authority.

### **Conceptualisations of Politics in Post-colonial Africa**

Various conceptualisations of politics in post-colonial Africa largely relating to state elites and their relations to state institutions as well as various forms of governance that emerged with the elites’ centralisation of power and attempts at achieving nation-building have been offered. These include the one party state-system, African socialism, multi-party democracy, personal rule, clientelism and neopatrimonialism. In this section I will focus on the one party state system and neopatrimonialism. The one party state system was seen as essential and quite pragmatic in dealing with the post-colonial challenges of development and nation-building, though in reality it promoted neo-patrimonial politics.

#### ***The One Party State System***

In the immediate post-independence era multi-party politics was banned since it was considered anti-progress and divisive, therefore, a threat to peace and stability. Instead,



“centralised nonparticipatory politics” was seen to be central to national development and unity (Chazan et al. 1999: 12). A strong government was considered essential in welding the nation together that was divided along ethnic lines. It was argued that the single-party system represented “the will of all the people”, it permitted “mass participation in decision-making” and in so doing encouraged “the development of a sense of personal responsibility in government” (Cowan 1964: 8). African leaders also argued that since a single-party system did not “represent only the interest of a group, a section or an economic class in the population, it [was] basically more democratic than the Western multi-party system” (Cowan 1964: 8). Thus, in many African states, the Western-style institutions of parliamentary government that colonial rule had established were dismantled and opposition movements were subjected to repression.

It is generally agreed that states should create political institutions that serve the needs and interests of their societies. In Africa, colonial political institutions modelled on the Western notion of a state did not really serve the interests of Africans, but those of the coloniser and the coloniser’s metropolis. However, the new African leaders who sought to modify the inherited political institutions with the aim of promoting consensus democracy, consequently, the needs and interests of African societies, abandoned this project as they sought to promote their personal interests and those of their own ethnic groups. The post-colonial state was no longer different from its colonial predecessor.

As Cowan (1964: 13) observes, the new African states suffered from a “built-in instability” which basically derived from the rapid process of modernisation. This rapid modernisation process deeply affected the foundations of many African societies as in government various new types of authority emerged. For instance, Cowan notes, “[...] one day a man may be a

farmer in his field, and almost the next day, a Member of Parliament, or a Minister” (1964: 14). The operation of a modern society alongside a traditional one (that colonialism failed to totally eradicate) is also viewed as a source of social and political instability in post-colonial Africa. Cowan (1964:14) observes:

The conflicts between the authority resulting from these new roles and that from traditional roles, and the jockeying for power which is an inevitable part of the still-limited opportunities offered to the growing educated elite, create a social instability which becomes readily reflected in the political process.

Indeed, state elites saw a single-party system as a means to control the political process and deal with the political and social instability resulting from these conflicts. However, post-colonial nation building and statebuilding failed to achieve unity among diverse groups since some of them could not accept the state’s leaders as their legitimate rulers and continued to recognise the authority of their chiefs.

### ***Neo-patrimonialism***

Studies on the nature of politics in Africa have conceptualised political power on the continent in terms of personal rule, neo-patrimonialism and clientelism (Young 2004; Sandbrook 1972; Bratton and van De Walle 1994; Bratton and van De Walle 1997; Jackson and Rosberg 1984; Chabal and Daloz 1999; Thomson 2000). The term neo-patrimonialism is derived from Weber’s idea of patrimonialism. Weber (1947: 347) uses the concept patrimonialism to refer to a form of governance in which “authority is mainly oriented to tradition but in its exercise makes the claim of full personal powers”. In patrimonial political systems the ruler centralises power in his hands and reduces the autonomy of the ordinary person. Bratton and van De Walle note that, the personal ruler treats ordinary folk as “extensions of the ‘big man’s’ household, with no rights or privileges other than those

bestowed by the ruler” (1997: 61). Political scientists have characterised neo-patrimonial political systems as “hybrid” political systems in which legal-rational institutions co-exist with “the customs and patterns of patrimonial” systems (Bratton and van De Walle 1997: 62). In neo-patrimonial states constitutional rules are often evaded. Such states are often associated with corruption with the actual “norms that affect political and administrative action [...] not [being] rooted in state institutions and organisations but in friendship, kinship, factional alliance, ethnic fellowship [...]” (Jackson and Rosberg 1984: 425). Political clientelism is central to neo-patrimonialism. Political office holders who are the patrons offer resources and services to clients in return for political support. In such a political organisation it is hard to distinguish between the private and the public since the “big man” treats the state as his personal property. Lindberg (2003: 123) has called this the “privatisation of the state”, in which formal institutions are rendered ineffective.

The big men see control of the state as essential since it “serves the twin purposes of lubricating the patronage networks and satisfies the selfish desire of elites to self-enrich themselves [...]” (Taylor 2007: 561). It is in the self-interest of the “big men” to declare themselves leaders for life since handing over power to other actors would mean loss of control of state resources. This could be one of the reasons why many African presidents have a desire to be “president for life”. In this case, the political game is turned into “a zero-sum struggle for control of the state” (Lindberg 2003: 123). One of the criticisms of the neo-patrimonial theory of governance in Africa is that it tends to give more attention to the political behaviour of the elites and the logic that drives this form of behaviour, marginalising other significant social forces in the political arena and the structures of power which neo-patrimonial rule is based (Ahluwalia 2001).

## **External Challenges**

Besides the internal political factors that contributed to the crumbling of domestic political order in Africa, external factors, particularly, regional superpower interests during the Cold War intensified some of the civil wars. For instance, in 1975 the Angola civil war that saw two liberation movements, the Popular Movement for the Liberation of Angola (MPLA) and Union for the Total Independence of Angola (UNITA) fighting against each other (soon after the colonial power – Portugal withdrew from Angola) began as a proxy Cold War conflict. In this case, South Africa and competing international patrons including the USSR, Cuba and the USA became involved in the civil war (Clapham 2005).

## **Development Challenges**

In addition to the above, most post-colonial African states' economies could not meet the economic expectations of development (Thomson 2000). Africans who at independence had high expectations of their respective governments to promote development that would see an improvement in their lives were left disillusioned since their governments failed to meet their expectations. As Englebert (2000: 1) notes "Since 1960, Africans have seen their income rise by less than one-half of a percent per year, leaving the continent with negative growth of all regions in the world".<sup>28</sup> One of the implications of this was the damage done to state legitimacy. According to Englebert (2000: 4), a state is considered legitimate "when its structures have evolved endogenously to its own society and there is some level of historical continuity to its institutions. State legitimacy is thus a historical, structural condition of the entire state apparatus." Since the leaders of the new African states faced a serious challenge

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<sup>28</sup> Not all African countries faced a decline in economic growth and the crisis varied widely. For example, Botswana has been labelled "an African miracle" (Samatar 1999), given its fast rate of economic growth. Ghana, Sierra Leone, Zaire and Sudan were of persistently economic crisis, while other countries such as Benin, Burkina Faso and Senegal stagnated and others countries including Mozambique, Uganda, Angola and Central Africa Republic, external intervention and civil war lowered the growth rates (Faber and Green 1985).

to “acquire sufficient hegemony over their society in order to stabilise and routinise their power”, it became hard for them to “use developmental policies and institutions to generate support for themselves”, as these needed “a level of bureaucratic loyalty and a degree of supply response from private agents [...]” (Englebert 2000: 5). Since a number of post-colonial African states lacked this, the growth of corruption, rent-seeking, predation and patronage among other activities in them is said to be an outcome of this.

Consequently, the state’s capacity to provide institutions necessary for fostering economic growth was severely curtailed. State elites had to “respond rationally to the historical constraints that they [had] inherited” (Englebert 2000: 7). The structures that the postcolonial state inherited from colonialism could not promote both economic growth and technological advancement (Sahn 1994). For Clapham (2002: 780), the neo-patrimonial mechanism became a means of maintaining the state on “an inadequate social and economic base”. However, this tended to undermine the state’s effectiveness. With the World recession of the late 1970s, many African states faced a serious economic crisis and became increasingly dependent on external donors including their patrons – USA and the USSR as well as the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and World Bank. The involvement of international donors in the internal affairs of these states undermined the idea of state sovereignty that the OAU had advocated at its inception in the early 1960s.

### **The Economic Crisis and the Sidelining of the State**

The economic crisis of the late 1970s and the early 1980s which saw a decline in growth rates in many African states had profound effects on the African state’s legitimacy as well. Africa appeared to be the hardest hit compared to other regions of the world during the world inflation and recession of the late 1970s and the early 1980s. This period witnessed a decline

in growth rates in many Africa states as well as an increase of their economic dependence, and external debts.<sup>29</sup>

In 1979, the African Governors of the World Bank requested the World Bank to prepare a report on the economic development crisis in African countries and make recommendations to it. In this report, the World Bank (1981) recognised both internal and external factors as affecting growth rate in African states. For the World Bank (1981), external factors included an increase in oil prices, a fall in mineral prices, mainly in iron ore and copper, and a decrease in the demand for primary commodities, while internal factors included, overvalued official exchange rates which did not reflect its scarcity, bias against peasant agriculture, excessive state interference in the economy, and an inefficient and over-protected industrial sector. The World Bank (1981) further states that, excessive state interference in the economy including price controls led to a production crisis and the rise of the black market; private property laws that were not clear and could not create a favourable climate for private investment, and the use of public jobs as a means to reward allies promoted inefficiency. In addition, the World Bank has observed that the state had dismally performed during this economic crisis due to its less sustainable policies, agricultural bureaucracy and inefficiency among others. The state which at independence was portrayed as a key agent for progress was now being seen as an impediment to it.

As the economic crisis continued in the 1980s, many African regimes sought assistance from the international financial institutions (IFIs) – the World Bank and the IMF – and Western donors. The international donors could only provide assistance on the condition that African

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<sup>29</sup> For a discussion of low or negative growth rates in Africa from the late 1970s to the early 1980s see Sahn (1994), Faber and Green (1985), The World Bank (1981, 1983, 1994) and Englebert (2000).

governments in question would change their policy that led them into crisis. In the 1980s, reforms in the form of structural adjustment programs (SAPs) and stabilisation policies under the World Bank and the IMF with the support of powerful Western states became some of the strategies meant to help African countries emerge out of their economic problems. Foreign experts working for the World Bank and the IMF became involved in African states' economic decision-making. As Abrahamsen notes,

Structural adjustment was intended as an assault on inefficiency, waste and corruption, and, in its name, state bureaucracies across the continent have been drastically reduced and economic regulation dismantled in order to leave the market more or less free from the perceived political and destructive intervention of the state (2001: 85).

For this objective to be achieved the state was required to reduce its role in the economy, and promote market liberalisation and privatisation. However, SAPs failed to attain their stated objectives. SAPs' emphasis on the economic dimensions of adjustment over human dimensions resulted in negative social consequences (Tarp 1993). In this regard, the SAPs era witnessed an increase in the rates of unemployment, poverty, corruption, and the prices of basic commodities as well as, health care and education costs. This intensified inequalities in Africa. Further, the state was further alienated from the needs of the majority of its citizens, thus continued to lose its legitimacy. In response to the negative social consequences that SAPs caused on ordinary Africans, UNICEF called for adjustment with a "human face" (cited in Tarp 1993: 122).

In addition, IMF/World Bank programs "failed to recognise an important element of the political logic of governance in Africa" (Abrahamsen 2001: 85). This element relates to patrimonial networks that are vital for elite cohesion (Abrahamsen 2001; Taylor 2007). As noted earlier, through neo-patrimonial networks elites distribute state resources to various

clients (for example, ethnic groups or ethnic power brokers) in order to meet and maintain their demands. This to a certain extent has helped avert political instability. Structural adjustment meant the limitation of the distribution of these resources to clients. The involvement of external advisers on managing their economies acted as an impediment to the distribution of resources through neo-patrimonial networks. In order to avoid this, African leaders manipulated the reform process. Abrahamsen (2001: 86) has observed that through the “manipulation of structural adjustment, many African elites have succeeded in making dependency a personally profitable and beneficial enterprise, even if the result for the majority of people has been devastating.” In short, the SAPs generated wealth for elites and provided them with resources they needed to remain in power while at the same time those who were not connected to them suffered. Further, these economic measures further weakened such African states as “more and more of [their] functions [were] outsourced to NGOs [...]” (Zack-Williams and Mohan 2007: 417).

In response to these challenges and the state’s failure to protect them from worst excesses of the adjustment programs, ordinary Africans waged anti-SAPs protests. Besides engaging in protests, ordinary people created “autonomous political and economic spaces” like informal markets; smuggled goods across national borders; constructed “a system of multiple modes of livelihood; and directed “challenges to the state through support for social movements challenging state hegemony” (Zack-Williams and Mohan 2007: 417-18). Indeed, internal opposition and external intervention posed a serious challenge to the state’s monopoly of power. SAPs in Africa, according to Thomson (2000: 189), “seriously undermined the old political status quo of centralised states based on clientelism.” Thus, it is not surprising that in the 1980s and 1990s a number of African states either failed or collapsed.



## **Violent Civil Wars in Africa in the Post-Cold War Period**

The situation in a number of African states worsened with the end of Cold War and the collapse of the USSR in the late 1980s which led to the end of super power support that had helped maintain client states. The end of the Cold War also witnessed the spread of democratic and participatory politics across Africa with varying success. This upsurge in democratic transitions in Africa saw a number of African states adopting constitutions that aimed at promoting multi-party political systems, the separation of the powers of the executive, the judiciary and the legislative, promoting human rights, and free and fair elections. However, the upsurge in democratic transitions on the continent coincided with an increase in the number of intra-state wars on the continent. In the 1990s Africa experienced deadly conflicts in the East (Somalia), the West (Sierra Leone and Liberia) and Central Africa (the Democratic Republic of Congo) that negatively affected millions of people. These intense intrastate conflicts and humanitarian crises in this period led to mounting international appeals for the need to intervene in conflict ridden countries on humanitarian grounds.

Indeed, civil wars in a number of African countries and other low income countries posed a big challenge to the UN's traditional peacekeeping approach. With the emergence of failed or collapsed states in Sierra Leone, Somalia, the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) among others the UN's traditional peacekeeping approach could no longer deal with such challenges. The UN gradually moved towards the implementation of peace settlements in countries emerging from violent internal conflict that involved multi-functional peace operations. These peacebuilding operations focused on promoting human rights, rule of law, democracy, economic liberalisation and elections, among others in these war-torn societies. This will be discussed in the following chapters.

## Chapter 2: Peacebuilding, Statebuilding and the Liberal Peace Framework

### Introduction

As noted in the last paragraph of the previous chapter, the end of the Cold War witnessed an increasing change in both the norms and practice of international response to violent intrastate conflict. From Namibia (1989) to Cambodia (1991-92) to Sierra Leone (1999-2005) to Liberia (2003 to present) the UN took a leading role in multidimensional peace support operations that were aimed at preventing a return to conflict and promoting durable peace. Peacebuilding could no longer be limited to keeping warring parties from returning to conflict, but also addressing the root causes of conflict including promoting development since underdevelopment became increasingly linked with violent conflict in low income countries. This was later linked to security and terrorism, particularly, in the so-called “collapsed states”, “failed states” and “weak states”.

The UN’s traditional peacekeeping approach could not match the emerging post-Cold War peace and security challenges in low income countries since it primarily sought to minimise interstate conflict through monitoring ceasefires between hostile states. Since in the early 1990s the idea of peacebuilding was not very clear in policy terms, there was a gradual development of these UN-led multi-dimensional peace missions.<sup>30</sup> These missions comprised of local (state elites) and regional actors, international actors including leading states such as the UK and the US, the UN and its agencies, the World Bank and IMF, international

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<sup>30</sup> Even when Boutros-Ghali wrote his *Agenda for Peace* in 1992 it was not really clear what peacebuilding was. This is reflected, for instance, in the development of UN policy documents on peacebuilding such as the *An Agenda for Peace* (1992), *An Agenda for Development* (1994), the *Supplement to an Agenda for Peace* (1995), *An Agenda for Democratization* (1995) and the Millennium Development goals among others. In 2005 peace became institutionalised with the creation of the United Nations Peacebuilding Commission. One of the aims of the commission is to coordinate peacebuilding activities among key actors. What is important to note is that peacebuilding became clear when it became connected with the state.

nongovernmental organisations (INGOs), bilateral organisations such as, the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and DFID (see Paris 2004). Although these operations lacked coordination and cooperation among the various actors, a loose consensus emerged: that of establishing a Western liberal democratic state as a sure means to maintain peace in war-torn societies. Peacebuilding became connected to the state through liberal peacebuilding. The aim of this chapter is two-fold, first to offer a distinction between peacebuilding and statebuilding, and second, to provide a framework of the liberal peace.

### **Conceptualising Peacebuilding**

During the Cold War the UN did not give political currency to the concept of peacebuilding. Its emphasis was more on preserving the territorial integrity of conflicting states through monitoring ceasefire agreements, creating buffer zones and peacekeeping, among others, partly as a result of conflict-ridden power politics during the Cold War. In the immediate aftermath of the Cold War, the concept of peacebuilding gained international prominence when the then UN Secretary General, Boutros Boutros-Ghali in his 1992 policy statement, *An Agenda for Peace*, brought it to the UN agenda. Boutros-Ghali defined peacebuilding as “action to identify and support structures which will tend to strengthen and solidify peace in order to avoid a relapse into conflict” (Boutros-Ghali 1992: 104). Further, he differentiated between peacebuilding, preventive diplomacy, peacemaking and peacekeeping. Peacebuilding was associated with post-conflict activities that aimed at consolidating peace. For Boutros-Ghali, peacebuilding included the following activities: “rebuilding the institutions and infrastructures of nations torn by civil war and strife; and building bonds of peaceful mutual benefit among nations formerly at war” as well as addressing “the deepest causes of conflict: economic despair, social injustice, and political oppression” (1992: 102). In addition, peacebuilding would encompass such activities as “disarming the previously

warring parties and the restoration of order, the custody and possible destruction of weapons, repatriating refugees, advisory and training support for security personnel, monitoring elections, advancing efforts to protect human rights, reforming or strengthening governmental institutions, and promoting formal and informal processes of political participation” (Boutros-Ghali 1992: 115).

In his *Agenda for Development*, Boutros-Ghali notes the importance of economic and social development as means to promoting lasting peace. In the *Supplement to an Agenda for Peace*, Boutros-Ghali defined the essential goal of peacebuilding as “the creation of structures for the institutionalisation of peace” (Boutros-Ghali 1995: 1409). In this report, he notes that addressing the root causes of conflict is crucial for building lasting peace. In this case, peacebuilding would not only mean the elimination of armed conflict, but also addressing its root causes in order to promote the resolution of disputes without resorting to violence. Boutros-Ghali saw a link between democracy, development and peace since “democracy provides the long-term basis for managing competing ethnic, religious, and cultural interests in a way that minimises the risk of violent conflict” (1995: para. 120).

With time, realities and new challenges on the ground resulted in new understandings and development of the concept of peacebuilding within the UN, academic, leading states, non-governmental and bilateral organisations. Conflict prevention, conflict management and post-conflict reconstruction, among others became part of the peacebuilding agenda. As Call and Cousens (2008: 3) note,

This was driven partly by growing awareness of the complexity of post-conflict transitions and the multiple, simultaneous needs of post-conflict societies, and partly by bureaucratic imperatives as more and more international agency, parts of the UN

system, and nongovernmental organisations began to incorporate “peacebuilding” into their roles and missions.

Kofi Annan who succeeded Boutros-Ghali as the UN Secretary-General emphasised the need to promote democracy, development and human security as conflict prevention measures. Further, he noted the need to strengthen democratic governance (1998). He identified the following as the key components for promoting lasting peace: “good governance, respect for human rights and the rule of law, promoting transparency and accountability in public administration, enhancing administrative capacity and strengthening democratic governance” (Annan 1998: 14). Annan further noted other important activities as organising elections and drafting constitutions. However, citing the case of Angola, Annan noted the inadequacies of elections by themselves in resolving conflicts since, elections can produce powerful incentives for political or ethnic entrepreneurs to engage in conflict (2001).

In 2000, the UN Secretary-General’s Millennium Report, *We the Peoples: The Role of the United Nations in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*, based on the concerns of an upsurge in violent intrastate wars in the 1990s that had claimed more than 5 million lives, proposed a “people-centred” approach: “we must put people at the centre of everything we do. No calling is more noble and no responsibility greater, than that of enabling men, women and children, in cities and villages around the world, to make their lives better” (Annan 2000: 7). The report further noted that in the wake of brutal civil wars “a more human-centred approach” to security was emerging and unlike the security approach of the Cold War era that was state-centred emphasising the sovereignty and territorial integrity of states, this new approach embraced “the protection of communities and individuals from internal violence” (Annan 2000: 43). In addition, the report noted the need to develop conflict prevention strategies that not only address the symptoms of violent conflicts, but also their sources. In this case, peacebuilding

would mean activities aimed at addressing the root causes of the conflict, not just ending overt violence.

Following the above report, in August 2000, the Brahimi report used the term peacebuilding to mean “activities undertaken on the far side of the conflict to reassemble the foundations of peace and provide the tools for building on those foundations something that is more than just the absence of war” (Brahimi 2000: 3). It conceptualises peacebuilding as more than ending armed conflict, but also aimed at seeking to address its underlying causes. The report further provides a wide range of peacebuilding activities designed to help avoid a return to violent conflict, the promotion of peaceful co-existence and non-violent means of resolving conflicts.

In the policy documents discussed above peacebuilding has come to mean a number of things: strengthening the rule of law, enhancing development, promoting justice, building democracies, ending overt violence, reconciliation and stability, among others. Despite the expansion and modification of the concept of peacebuilding in these policy documents as well as an upsurge in peacebuilding activities since the early 1990s, the concept of peacebuilding has remained elusive and contested, among academics and policymakers. While there have been disagreements on the role of external actors in post-conflict societies, there tends to be a consensus on their significance in supporting peacebuilding activities in war-torn societies.

### **Peacebuilding Debates**

Questions have been raised regarding the role and responsibilities of external actors in peacebuilding operations who often determine or have significant influence on the final outcome of the peacebuilding process – whether they should act as mere facilitators of

peacebuilding processes or use more intrusive approaches if this helps promote lasting peace or end overt violence. On one hand, there are scholars who put emphasis on minimalist peacebuilding approaches aimed at ending overt violence and on the other hand, those who argue for maximalist approaches that aim at addressing root causes of conflict and structural violence such as social injustice and poverty (Newman 2009a). The narrow approach is security-oriented since it puts emphasis on the prevention of a return to violent conflict with the aim of promoting stability and order subordinating other values such as justice, development, emancipation and empowerment to the preservation of internal security, whereas, the maximalist approach is social-oriented emphasising on addressing underlying sources of conflict (Call 2008a). As Newman notes, many scholars and practitioners tend to advocate a narrow definition of peacebuilding which states that its main objective should be that of maintaining a ceasefire since for them, it is more realistic and quite feasible (2009a: 27). For these proponents, peacebuilding should be considered a success “once a ceasefire is reached and holds” (Call 2008a: 4). Yet, a focus on maintaining a ceasefire may help in avoiding overt violence, but does not address underlying causes of conflict with a likelihood of a return to conflict if grievances or problems that led to the conflict in the first place are not addressed. Those who advocate a broader approach to peacebuilding argue that there is a need to take into consideration a wide range of peacebuilding initiatives, if “peace” is going to make sense to host societies (Newman 2009a).

The broader approach includes various benchmarks as shown in the discussion above on the evolution of the concept of peacebuilding within the UN system, for example, democracy, respect for human rights, rule of law, eradicating poverty, social justice, welfare, nonviolent action, reconciliation, development, eliminating corruption and good governance (Call 2008a). For critics such an approach is ambitious even for the more developed societies that

are considered peaceful (Call 2008a). As for Call (2008a: 6), this broad approach is “too inclusive to be useful”, although it helps show the complex and integrated nature of peacebuilding. Call further notes that, as it relates to measuring peacebuilding outcomes the broad approach to international peacebuilding fails to distinguish between dismal failures such as Rwanda and Angola and limited successes such as Mozambique and El Salvador where peace has been consolidated, but the underlying causes of the armed conflict have not been addressed. He thus, proposes a standard of success. The standard of success, according to Call,

strikes a middle ground that includes the lack of recurrence of warfare as well as some sustained, national mechanism for the resolution of conflict – signified by participatory politics. Participatory politics does not equate to liberal democracy, but refers to mechanisms for aggrieved social groups to feel that they have both a voice and a stake in the national political system. This standard is difficult to measure but excludes stable, authoritarian, and clearly illegitimate governments (2008a: 6-7).

As for this approach, what is crucial for measuring success are questions whether there has been a return to violent conflict or not and whether minimal political institutions that can help resolve conflict in a nonviolent way with citizens engaged in participatory politics have been established. As such, it does not emphasise the underlying causes of conflict including horizontal inequalities, social injustice and unemployment, which Call considers as “risk factors that shape outcomes, but not themselves indicators of peacebuilding success or failure” (2008b: 174). This standard does not escape from the criticism that it is inadequate since participation in politics will only be meaningful to most, if not all, poor people when their basic needs are met. This explains why in much of Africa people are not keen on participating in politics and tend to be concerned about their everyday survival. For such people peacebuilding is a success, if it meets their everyday needs.



This thesis uses a broader definition of peacebuilding which does not limit peacebuilding to activities aimed at preventing a return to conflict, but also includes social justice, welfare provision reconciliation, equity and humanistic agendas for peace rather than technocratic institutional state-centric agendas for peace. Such an understanding of peacebuilding is useful in dealing with the challenges that marginalised populations in Africa have been experiencing since colonial rule. At the same, time this does not imply that political participation and a prevention of a return to conflict are not relevant, but that these can still be dealt within the above understanding of peacebuilding.

In the context of this study, I focus on post-conflict peacebuilding – as activities that are conducted after the end of a civil war or a violent conflict in a given society so as to redress the causes of the conflict or to come up with structures that help avert future violent conflicts. The term “post-conflict” is problematic, thus its meaning in the context of this study needs to be clarified.

### **Conceptualising “Post-conflict”**

The concept “post-conflict” has been used in various senses and at times in a confusing way. Lambach (2007: 9) raises the question: “What is ‘post-conflict’ about ‘post-conflict’ societies?” He notes that the challenge about the concept of “post-conflict” relates to the fact that “the prefix ‘post-’ is a temporal signifier attached to a noun (“conflict”) that has no fixed temporal content” (2007: 9). The result of this is that the idea of “post-conflict” leads to a mental dichotomy that transforms “conflict” into a synonym of “war” and “post-conflict” into a synonym of “peace” (Lambach 2007). In this dichotomy, the idea of “conflict” relates to situations in which organised groups engage in acts of violence against each other, for instance, a state against a rebel movement, and this is conducted in accordance with a

dominant conflict narrative, whereas, “post-conflict” would mean the end of such violence, and a return to normalcy and peace (Lambach 2007).

Yet, such an understanding of “post-conflict” makes it hard to provide a clear understanding of extensive violence, as in the genocide in Rwanda or situations where open warfare has taken long to end in which there has been a slowdown in violence, for example, northern Uganda. In northern Uganda, since the signing of the cessation of hostilities agreement between the rebel movement, Lord’s Resistance Army (LRA) and the government of Uganda in 2006, the government of Uganda has encouraged internally displaced persons (IDPs) to return to their homes (World Bank 2008a) as it considers the situation a “post-conflict” one. Yet, the LRA has not laid down its arms, but has retreated to Garamba National Park in DRC. In this case, conflict in northern Uganda has slowed down with the retreat of the LRA to DRC. The same question can be raised about South Africa: whether it can be considered a “post-conflict” situation given an increase in criminal violence and continued deterioration of human security since the end of the struggle against apartheid rule.

Indeed, the concept “post-conflict” can be a misnomer for those societies which continue to experience other forms of violence after the end of open warfare or where violence has slowed down. As such, the level of violence is not a sufficient indicator of the end of conflict (Lambach 2007). Although in these situations, overt violence is absent, it does not necessarily mean that peace exists. For Mac Ginty (2006) it is a “no war, no peace” situation. As Finnstrom and Atkinson note, a “post-conflict” situation “can often be more violent than a conflict itself [...]. It is essential to acknowledge that a peace agreement must be won over and over again, on an everyday basis, in people’s everyday lives” (2008: 2). It is, thus, crucial to understand the various uses of the concept “post-conflict”.

For Call (2008b: 175) concept “post-conflict” has three uses: 1) refers to the period when open warfare is said to have come to a virtual end, either through a peace agreement or a military victory, as in Sierra Leone after 2002, Angola after the death of Jonas Savimbi in 2002 and Liberia after 2003; 2) refers to “societies that have signed a formal peace agreement, even where the political violence that the peace agreement was designed to end has not been significantly diminished”, rather this should be called a “post-accord” situation, as in the DRC and northern Uganda; and 3) refers to “the apparent military defeat of one side in armed conflict, but more particularly the fall of a regime associated with the army”, for example, the fall of the Taliban and that of Saddam Hussein’s regime in Afghanistan and Iraq respectively. According to Call (2008b), the last two conceptions of “post-conflict”, have undermined the usefulness of the concept. For instance, in Iraq and Afghanistan organised violence has continued years after the fall of the target regimes, and for societies experiencing this violence, the term “post-conflict” is a misnomer in relation to their situation. As for Call (2008b), the first understanding of the term “post-conflict” tends to be more useful than the last two, since in such a situation there are certain changes that happen including, security sector reform, the building of more effective state institutions, elections, Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reintegration (DDR), reconciliation and transitional justice initiatives, development programs, the (re)construction or building economic institutions.

This thesis uses the idea of “post-conflict” adopted from Lambach. For Lambach, a conflict is considered to have ended when “violence is no longer explained in terms of the dominant narrative of conflict” (2007: 10). Viewing “conflict” and “post-conflict” situations as social constructs, “discursive delimitations of the kind of behaviour that is to be expected and

allowed in a given set of circumstances” would mean a narrative of peace is put at the centre of the definition of “post-conflict” (Lambach 2007: 10).

## **Statebuilding and Peacebuilding**

The concept of peacebuilding has also been used in the context of (re)building effective, legitimate government institutions, that is, statebuilding. Fukuyama defines statebuilding as “the creating of new government institutions and the strengthening of existing ones” (2004: xvii). In recent years, international actors and mainstream scholars (Paris 2004; Paris and Sisk 2009; Fukuyama 2004) have emphasised the significance of the state, power, functions and its institutions. According to Fukuyama, statebuilding is one of the most crucial issues for the global community since “weak or failed states are the source of many of the world’s serious problems”, including terrorism and poverty (2004:1). In addition, such states are regarded as impediments to development, the eradication of poverty as well as a threat to domestic and global stability.

Since the 9/11, 2001 terrorist attacks (which were linked to Afghanistan – a “weak state”) on the US, international terrorism has been linked to state fragility/weak statehood. In this regard, such states have been viewed as having lost their monopoly over the use of violence to warlords, militia groups and terrorists.<sup>31</sup> For Rotberg (2004: 1), nation-states fail “when they are consumed by internal violence and cease delivering positive political goods to their inhabitants”. Rotberg notes that political goods are:

those intangible and hard to quantify claims that citizens once made on sovereigns and now make on states. They encompass indigenous expectations, conceivably obligations, inform the political culture, and together give content to the social contract between

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<sup>31</sup> The 7/7, 2005 terrorist attack in London, UK is evidence that terrorists can emerge from more stable states since the attackers were British citizens.

ruler and ruled that is at the core of regime/government and citizenry interactions (2004: 2).

He considers the provision of security, especially human security as a crucial political good and the main function of a state. Rotberg further notes that the state's provision of security includes the prevention of "cross-border invasions and infiltrations, and any loss of territory; to eliminate domestic threats to or attacks upon the national order and social structure; to prevent crime and any related dangers to domestic human security; and to enable citizens to resolve their differences with the state and without recourse to arms or forms of physical coercion" (2004: 3).

If a reasonable measure of security exists, then it becomes much easier for the state to deliver other political goods. In addition to security, a state ought to provide "predictable, recognisable, systematised methods of adjudicating disputes and regulating both the norms and the prevailing mores of a particular society or polity" – this implies the existence of codes and procedures essential for the respect of the rule of law, private property, and contracts as an efficient and effective judiciary system (Rotberg 2004: 3). Another crucial political good that Rotberg notes is one that allows for an open polity that promotes the vital freedoms for citizens including, their ability to freely express themselves, freely participate in politics and in competition for office. In such an open political system fundamental human and civil rights are respected. Other public goods that a state is expected to provide to its citizens include education, physical infrastructure (roads, railway lines, telephones, electricity and so on), employment, health care (which can also be provided by private companies), space for the development of a vibrant civil society, national currency and a central bank. Rotberg notes that, put together this bundle of political goods does establish a set of criteria

for determining whether a state is strong, weak or failed (2004). For Rotberg, strong states tend to fulfil expectations in all the areas, while weak states tend to meet expectations in some areas and fail in some, failed states fail to meet expectations in all the areas.

Consequently, weak and failed states are prone to a high level of internal violence which is often associated with inter-communal tensions. Such states cannot control their territories and are characterised by a lack of respect for the rule of law, human rights abuses, weak institutions, destroyed infrastructure, political instability, humanitarian emergencies, criminal gangs, arms and drug trafficking, and a loss of domestic legitimacy, among others (Fukuyama 2004; Rotberg 2004). Strong states are the opposite of weak states. The failed or weak state paradigm fails to take into consideration external factors that contribute to state weakness or failure, for instance, colonial rule in Africa as noted in the previous chapter also contributed to the underdevelopment of Africa, as noted by Walter Rodney and also international trade with its rules determined by more powerful states and IFIs.

### ***Institutional and Legitimacy Approaches to Statebuilding***

There are two different approaches to the state: 1) the institutional approach (proponents of this approach include Fukuyama 2004, Rotberg 2004 and Paris 2004); and 2) the “legitimacy” approach (Call 2008a; Lemay-Hebert 2009). An institutional approach to statebuilding focuses on building effective state institutions in post-conflict environments as a remedy for the “weirdness” or “abnormality” found in weak and failed states that is absent in strong states and also as a way of enhancing conditions for building self-sustaining peace in them. This approach largely draws from the Weberian notion of statehood which views a state as a political entity that has monopoly over the legitimate use of violence. Since the institutional approach emphasises building the capacity of state institutions it ignores

customary institutions (Call 2008a). In addition to service delivery, another important element of the state, according to the institutional approach, is the state's capacity to institutionalise its diverse organisations (Call 2008a). "Institutionalisation", according to Call, means "the process by which a cluster of activities acquires a persistent set of rules that constrain activity, shape expectations, and prescribe roles for actors" (Call 2008a: 8). Institutionalisation enhances the durability of the state and its institutions, and the death of a leader would not result in the collapse of the state. For example, the death of the Polish President, Lech Kaczynski and a number of senior government officials in a plane crash on the 10<sup>th</sup> of April, 2010 did not result in the collapse of state institutions in Poland. However, according to Call (2008a), predominant approaches to peacebuilding ignore institutionalisation of state agencies since these agencies are usually not functioning well and can be an impediment to the peacebuilding process. Instead, internationals often end up devising their strategies around influential leaders and this can have negative outcomes in relation to building durable institutions (also see Paris 2004).

The "legitimacy" approach finds the institutional approach's focus on institutions insufficient, thus argues for the need to also focus on "socio-political cohesion and the legitimacy central authorities can generate" (Lemay-Hebert 2009: 22). In this regard, issues of legitimacy are considered of paramount importance when building states. This also relates to issues of nation-building, that is, issues related to socio-political cohesion and how external actors shape conditions under which social integration is enhanced in post-conflict states (Lemay-Hebert 2009).<sup>32</sup> However, this idea of external actors being involved in building "nations" contradicts the empirical and theoretical understandings of the nature of a

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<sup>32</sup> Social integration occurs when distinct groups are incorporated into a common society with the creation of an over-arching supra-national identity by means of standardising and unifying the various cultures and identities (Kostic 2008).

nation and nation-formation (Newman 2009a, also see chapter 1). As Newman (2009a: 30) notes, “The idea of international nation-building seems a contradiction in terms, and nation-building as peacebuilding seems like a historical aberration; historically nation-building was achieved through widespread violence”. As such, an emphasis on state legitimacy makes sense since a state needs to be acceptable to its citizens for them to be able to rally behind its authority, thus enhancing stability and order in it. Nation-building should evolve organically and not imposed from outside. Cramer (2006) has noted that, “civil war is not a stupid thing”, that is, civil wars can also have progressive consequences including nation- and statebuilding.

In terms of conceptual viability, according to Newman, statebuilding is more conceptually viable than nation-building given its focus on meanings that are more objective such as the (re)building of government institutions and the provision of positive political goods including security, among others (2009a). The assumption behind statebuilding as peacebuilding is that once strong and legitimate state institutions are built then societies emerging from violent civil war are freed from the troubles of weak statehood. As such, this will enable positive political goods necessary for promoting internal order and stability as well as international peace and security.<sup>33</sup>

A number of scholars and international, bilateral and development organisations have been engaged in debates on statebuilding and how it can contribute to peacebuilding. For Fritz and Menocal of the Overseas Development Institute (ODI), statebuilding means:

constructing the foundations of the very (government) edifice within which governance ought to operate. Without the construction of this edifice, governance interventions cannot have an impact. At the same time, ensuring the quality and integrity of government is an important dimension of the state-building process, including

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<sup>33</sup> For instance Fukuyama (2004)'s view that weak states tend to be aggressive against their neighbours.



generating legitimacy of a new or re-emerging state and contributing to the creation of “nationwide public” and a shared sense of the public realm (2007: 4).

This represents the idea of statebuilding and external nation-building as peacebuilding which is problematic as noted earlier. The Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) in its “Principles for Good International Engagement in Fragile States and Situations” considers a focus on statebuilding as the main objective in enhancing state stability and order. In 2008 the UNDP launched the “Statebuilding for Peace” project aimed at empowering “national and local actors to develop and implement strategies that address fragilities and enhance responsiveness and resilience of states for sustainable peace” (UNDP 2009a: 5). Analysts such as, Paris and Sisk have argued for the need to bring statebuilding into peacebuilding and consider statebuilding a sub-component of peacebuilding (2009; Paris 2004).

### **Does One Size Fit All?**

Chapter 1 has shown that state formation and consolidation in the West took several centuries according to the socio-political, economic and historical circumstances of the region. In the past two decades, states and institutions that the internationals have been imposing in post-conflict environments resemble liberal Western states, an approach that largely overlooks local contextual matters. Western states are based on liberal values – support for individual liberties, a free market economy, a state with limited power, a viable civil society and a separation of state and church, among others – and such values are “not acceptable to all contexts as legitimate or appropriate” (Newman 2009a: 30). The success story of Asian developmental states such as Korea and Singapore which are not liberal, has raised questions about whether other forms of statebuilding, for instance, strong or authoritarian states, “are not, in the long run, more successful in creating stability, security, wealth and welfare for the

population” (Goetze and Guzina 2008: 324). Other critics view the statebuilding aspect of peacebuilding as “a thinly disguised attempt to modernise and thus ‘civilise’ dysfunctional ‘third world’ countries that are incapable of developing viable indigenous forms of cohesion” (Newman 2009a: 30). In addition, peacebuilding is focused more on what peace means qualitatively and it does not have to be necessarily connected to the state. How it has been connected to the state is through liberal peacebuilding which has emphasised on building liberal states. In this sense, contemporary statebuilding in post-conflict societies is positivist instrumentalist Western Westphalian project which argue for the need to build states in order to build peace. It is no surprise that statebuilding is fraught with tensions and contradictions (Paris and Sisk 2009).

### **Peacebuilding as Liberal Peace**

As noted in the introduction to this thesis and in this chapter, contemporary post-conflict peacebuilding operations assume a different approach to managing conflicts, and international order and stability, which according to Newman, Paris and Richmond is perhaps a reflection that a liberal post-Westphalian world order is being constructed (2009; Newman 2009b). In addition, it is viewed as a challenge to the Westphalian notions of the sovereignty of states as understood in the conceptualisation of “sovereignty as responsibility” (International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty 2001; Deng et al. 1996). A number of scholars have concluded that in the post-Cold War era international peacebuilding reflects a liberal agenda (Paris 2004; Taylor 2007, Duffield 2001; Willet 2005; Richmond 2004; Richmond 2005; Richmond 2006; Mac Ginty 2006; Richmond and Franks 2008; Franks and Richmond 2008; Mac Ginty and Richmond 2007). The dominant form of contemporary peacebuilding that places emphasis on establishing liberal values such as, the protection of individual rights, rule of law, a free market economy, democracy as well as

building a liberal state in war-torn societies is called liberal peacebuilding. Liberal peacebuilding has sometimes been confused with statebuilding, however, as noted above, the two are different. In addition, liberal peacebuilding and peacebuilding are not the same, though sometimes the two concepts have been used interchangeably. Whereas liberal peacebuilding focuses on building a liberal state, democratisation, a free market economy, individual rights and the rule of law, as noted above, peacebuilding emphasises issues such as social justice, welfare provision, tradition, custom, culture, the grassroots, reconciliation, equity and humanistic agendas for peace rather technocratic institutional state-centric agendas for peace. The theoretical foundation for liberal peacebuilding is the liberal peace.

### **The Liberal Peace Thesis**

The liberal peace thesis states that “certain kinds of (liberally constituted) societies will tend to be more peaceful, both in their domestic affairs and in their international relations, than illiberal states” (Newman, Paris and Richmond 2009: 11). As such, it is premised upon the idea that liberal democracy and neo-liberal economics promote sustainable peace in war-torn societies. The state and the building of its institutions are central to liberal peacebuilding. In other words, liberal internationalists require the state and state elites as main means to introduce the idea of the liberal peace in societies emerging from violent conflict. The main proponents of the liberal peace agenda including the US and UK consider liberal ideas and practices as universal, and as such tend to undermine the ideas and practices of non-liberal societies.

The concept of the liberal peace should be viewed in relation to the democratic peace thesis.<sup>34</sup> A growing literature in IR has focused on the implications of democracy and markets on interstate relations. This literature has focused more on whether democratic states are more peaceful in their foreign relations and have attempted to provide the theoretical and empirical explanation for this (Chan 1997). The democratic peace thesis states the following: 1) democratic states rarely fight against each other; 2) democratic states tend to be more open to international trade than non-democratic ones creating interdependencies that preclude the outbreak of war between them; and 3) democracies tend to be more peaceful internally than other systems (Doyle 1983; Doyle 1986; Oneal et al. 1996; Rosato 2003). The democratic peace thesis is largely associated with Immanuel Kant's notion of "Perpetual Peace" (1795).

It appears a general consensus has emerged among international scholars that democracies rarely fight against each other, although they can fight against illiberal states, for instance, the US and democratic allies' war in Iraq and Afghanistan. Drawing from the democratic peace thesis, theorists such as Rummel (1995, 2005) have noted that democratic states are less likely to experience civil wars since democratic institutions create conditions for dealing with potentially violent social conflicts in nonviolent ways including mediation, voting, compromise and negotiation. I am more interested in debates on intrastate war and the liberal peace than the democratic peace since their focus is on inter-state relations. It is crucial to note that there is no single liberal peace, but various forms of it (Richmond 2005).

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<sup>34</sup> A number of scholars have used concepts of the "liberal peace" and "democratic peace" interchangeably. Mac Ginty (2006) uses the concept "liberal democratic peace." However, in this study the liberal peace is distinguished from the democratic peace in the sense that, whereas, the democratic peace focuses on how peace can be built between states and its institutions, the liberal peace focuses on how peace can be built within states and tends to be ideological.

## **The Liberal Peace Framework**

Nearly everyone yearns or supports peace with many commentators “invoking and prescribing peace” and yet, Richmond contends that peace has “rarely been addressed in detail as a concept” with its theorisation “normally hidden away in debates about responding to war and conflict” (2005: 2; also see Mac Ginty 2006; Gregor 1996).<sup>35</sup> While war is described as real, peace is described as an ideal, “a chimera, receding over the horizon just as we get closer” (Gregor 1996: x). Hence, more attention has been given to war and “negative peace” in IR that understands peace as absence of overt violence within or between states as opposed to positive peace which is present where structural forms of violence, such as poverty and social injustice have been eliminated (Galtung 1969, 1985). It is the kind of peace which the “law and order-oriented” person envisages and it “leads to stability thinking” (Schmid 1968: 223). In this case, peace research that is defined solely in terms of negative peace will

easily be research into the conditions of maintaining power, freezing the status quo, of manipulating the underdog so that he does not take up arms against the topdog. This concept of peace will obviously be in the interest of the status quo-powers at the national or international levels, and may equally be a conservative force in politics (Galtung 1967 cited in Schmid 1968: 223).

As Richmond (2005: 2) notes, “Where theorists do attempt to engage with peace as a concept, they often focus upon units such as states and empire as its main building blocks, thus broadly discounting the role and agency of individuals and societies in its construction and sustainability.” In this regard, those who advocate negative peace tend to put much emphasis on states, and their institutions and functions, as well as want to maintain the status

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<sup>35</sup> In *The Transformation of Peace* (2005) and *Peace in International Relations* (2008), Richmond attempts to fill this gap in IR and provides a discussion of how peace has been discussed in IR literature.

quo as means to maintain order and stability in post-conflict environments. This renders most of the population invisible.

Consequently, this tends to promote the interests and needs of the most powerful and not those of the marginalised, the poor or the less powerful. This results in a failure to come up with strategies that also seek to empathise with the “subaltern”, reduce the inequities in power that can lead to structural violence or violent conflict, bring culture, custom, tradition, and make considerations of the everyday needs of most of the population in war-shattered states in the peace debate. In addition, as Richmond notes, “Concepts of peace may also be used as a tool of war, used to justify, legitimate, and motivate a recourse to war [...] (2005: 13). For those interested in multiple conceptualisations of peace and emancipatory forms of peace questions such as who owns the peace, who creates it, who are the winners and whose interests are being served become pertinent. The dominant form of peace – the liberal peace – that international actors construct in post-conflict environments is a result of a limited conceptualisation of peace as absence of overt violence. An understanding of the nature of the liberal peace is useful in our understanding of the challenges it faces in post-conflict environments, the criticisms levelled against it, and the approaches and conditions relevant for helping create durable peace in post-conflict environments.

### **Four Strands of the Liberal Peace**

In his conceptualisation of the liberal peace, Richmond (2005) has identified four main strands that have emerged from the debates in international theory and different historical contexts, particularly in the West. These four strands of the liberal peace include victor’s peace, constitutional peace, institutional peace, and civil peace. Richmond has pointed out that victor’s peace is an outcome of the age-old realist argument that peace is dependent on

military victory and upon the domination or hegemony of a winner. However, the victor's peace may result in political resistance, as in Iraq and Afghanistan. The second strand is the constitutional peace which is derived from the Kantian argument that peace is an outcome of democracy, trade and a set of cosmopolitan values based on individualism. Richmond observes that the "constitutional peace struggles with those who do not want to share power, and who do not want the certainty of domestic legal structures that might outlaw their activities" (2005: 203).

The third strand, according to Richmond, is an institutional peace which is a result of normative and legal institutional arrangements among states in which these states multilaterally agree on ways of behaving and enforcing or determining their behaviour. This can be found in international institutions such as the UN as well as regional organisations such as the EU, the African Union (AU), the Arab League (AL) and the Organisation of American States (OAS), and sub-regional organisations such as Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and Southern African Development Community (SADC). These international regimes and organisations regulate behaviour of member states. The institutional peace discourse "often fails to communicate with those involved at the civil level, or to receive their feedback on its overall project" (Richmond 2005: 203). The fourth strand, the civil peace emphasises participation, citizens, human rights and civil society as significant in peacemaking. Unlike the other three strands of the liberal peace, individual agency rather than state or international agency is present within it. The civil peace has not had huge support from states and multilateral organisations. As such, it has not received a central place in their thinking about peace. As Richmond notes, "The civil peace discourse often struggles to be heard, even though it is often propagated by non-state actors motivated by human security and social justice, who blame the state for war, or liberal states for self-

interest” (2005: 203). Further, according to Richmond, these four strands of the liberal peace are “both contradictory and complimentary, and each brings with it a certain intellectual and empirical baggage” (2006: 294). Despite this, the liberal peace framework has been uncritically assumed as a panacea for all the problems experienced in post-conflict societies and is being exported to these societies without considering that their socio-political experiences are different from the West.

### **Graduations of the Liberal Peace**

According to Richmond (2005), within the liberal peace framework there are several different graduations. An understanding of the graduations of the liberal peace framework is useful in helping expose the challenges of building sustainable peace and the types of liberal peaces that are being established in post-conflict environments. Richmond identifies three of these graduations as the conservative, orthodox, and emancipatory which relate to the four main intellectual strands of the liberal peace noted above. The conservative version of the liberal peace largely relates to top-down approaches to peacebuilding and development in which powerful external actors are heavily involved in the peace process and may involve the use of military force or coercion or conditionalities in its application. As such, “it is often seen as an alien expression of hegemony and domination” (Richmond: 2005: 214). This, according to Richmond (2005: 214), “equates to a hegemonic and often unilateral state-led peace [...]”. Examples include the UK and UN involvement in Sierra Leone. However, coercive action in Iraq, Somalia and Afghanistan, for example, represents what Richmond calls a *hyper-conservative model* and is “heavily informed by the victor’s peace in preliminary stages of intervention” (2005: 214, 2006, emphasis not mine).



In such situations, the military option appears to be the most realistic, and the militarisation of peace is justified on humanitarian grounds, though after the violence has stopped, this form of peace seems to care less for the ordinary people who suffered during the violent conflict or the period of gross human rights violations and even during the period of intervention. Besides being based upon coercive action, the conservative model of the liberal peace is also based upon diplomatic processes, that is, it is created at the elite level. Diplomacy or military intervention will lead to the cessation of hostilities between the warring parties, then peace negotiations and in the process a peace agreement is reached. Thus, the conservative model of the liberal peace is often associated with the idea of negative peace. With its heavy bias towards negative peace, it tends to focus on bringing an end to violent conflict and the introduction of programmes such as, the DDR and security sector reform. While this promotes order, stability and basic security to civilians, not much is done to promote their other basic needs, welfare and interests.

The orthodox model of the liberal peace involves a top-down approach to peacebuilding and some bottom approaches that engage with a range of non-state actors. Although actors are “wary and sensitive of local ownership and culture”, they are “still also determined to transfer their methodologies, objectives, and norms into the new governance framework” (Richmond 2005: 214). However, consensual negotiation dominates this framework (Richmond 2005). Although the orthodox model represents a bottom-up approach involving civil society and grassroots peacebuilding activities, as well as the top-down approach involving international organisations including the UN, IFIs, states, and the elites, top-down activities dominate through the use of carrots and sticks by leading donors and states. Both the “conservative and orthodox models assume technical superiority over recipient subjects, as well as the normative universality of the liberal peace” (Richmond 2005: 215). The two models lead to

peacebuilding approaches that depend on a “technocratic” understanding of peace, making it hard to accommodate alternative approaches to peacemaking, thus privileging the liberal peace to the detriment of the local understanding of peace (Mac Ginty 2006).

The third model of the liberal peace that Richmond has identified is the emancipatory model. This model is a more critical version of the liberal peace “concerned with a much closer relationship of custodianship and consent with local ownership, and tends to be very critical of coerciveness, conditionality and dependency that the conservative and orthodox models operate upon” (Richmond 2005: 215). Bottom-up activities dominate the emancipatory model of the liberal peace and this model aims at promoting human needs, welfare, justice and reconciliation. Richmond further notes that, this form of peace “equates to the civil peace” (2005: 215). Although this peace is not state-led since social movements and civil society shape it, it is still based on the belief that the liberal peace is superior to all other forms of peacemaking, thus tends to push the liberal agenda to the extent that local elites are co-opted as agents of the liberal peace. Consequently, statebuilding and peacebuilding remain chiefly the preserve of the state and its institutions since these are regarded as routes to a self-sustaining peace and emancipation.

Richmond observes that the above three graduations of the liberal peace model “tend often to be combined in the peacebuilding consensus and are expressed at different degrees in any one peacebuilding intervention, depending upon priorities associated with dominant state interests, donor interests, and the capacity of peacebuilding actors” (2005: 215). He further notes that these three versions of the liberal peace can undermine and contradict each other affecting the larger peacebuilding process. However, it is crucial to note that all the three graduations of the liberal peace tend to share an assumption that the liberal peace is a

universal peace, thus legitimating intervention and the superiority of the liberal peace over local forms of peace (Richmond 2005). The following chapter is a comprehensive review of literature on liberal peacebuilding.

## **Chapter 3: The Liberal Peacebuilding Debate**

### **Introduction**

Liberal peacebuilding initiatives in post-war societies have generated debates and controversies within the academic and policy circles on their nature and effectiveness, what causes peace, the nature of peace to be built, the owner(s) of the peace and how the international actors should relate with local actors. In addition questions have been raised regarding the assumptions, strategies, viability and coherence of international peacebuilding initiatives.

Empirical and statistical evidence show that post-Cold War international peacebuilding operations have managed to promote stability and end overt violence in war-torn societies (Doyle and Sambanis 2000). However, recent studies on international peacebuilding note that liberal peacebuilding and statebuilding have proved to be partially counter-productive and on the whole have not achieved the intended goal of helping war-torn societies transform from states of violent conflict to self-sustaining peace (Paris 2004; Taylor 2007, Duffield 2001; Willet 2005; Richmond 2004; Richmond 2005; Richmond 2006; Mac Ginty 2006; Richmond and Franks 2008). The prevailing consensus among these critics of liberal peacebuilding is that efforts to promote political and economic liberalisation in post-conflict environments has had a mixed record – has often led to tensions or a return to overt violence, as in Angola, as well as partial success, as in Namibia and Mozambique (Paris 2004). Yet, the debate over the liberal peace reflects a polarisation between those who would want to see the liberal peace made better and cannot see “realistic” alternatives outside it, thus would prefer a search for alternatives within the liberal peace itself (Paris 2004; 2010; Begby and Burgess 2009), and

those who have subjected it to critical scrutiny questioning its viability, appropriateness and legitimacy (Richmond and Franks 2009; Taylor 2007; Willet 2005), with some like Richmond proposing “post liberal peace[building]” (2009b).

The aim of this chapter is to offer a critical review of literature on the liberal peace agenda and the controversies surrounding liberal peacebuilding. The growth in literature on post-conflict peacebuilding and the liberal peace is a result of the increase and omnipresence of civil wars in the developing world after the end of the Cold War and the supposed failure in the dominant paradigm to create conditions for durable peace in post-conflict environments.

### **Political Liberalisation, Free Markets and Peace**

There has been considerable debate among social scientists on the causes of a self-sustaining peace. Against the backdrop of the collapse of communism in the former Soviet Union, liberal democracy has been viewed as viable and good form of governance across the world that promotes durable peace. However, the celebration of the triumph of liberal democracy at the end of the Cold War in the early 1990s was overshadowed by an increase in violent intra-state conflicts in Rwanda, Sierra Leone Somalia, Bosnia, Kosovo, Angola, Liberia and Burundi, among others. In the absence of superpower competition, Western liberal democracies had an opportunity to intervene for humanitarian purposes, to end the conflicts and adopt approaches aimed at establishing a liberal peace that has proved durable in Western liberal democracies. For proponents of the liberal peace, as noted in the previous chapter, open markets and open political spaces are essential for both domestic and global peace and security. Another assumption is that, since the liberal peace has worked well in the West, transplanting it in other parts of the world, especially those emerging from violent conflict,

can deliver sustainable peace in them. Based on these assumptions, international actors have pursued fast-track political and market liberalisation initiatives simultaneously.<sup>36</sup>

Free market reforms involve the implementation of policies that lead to deregulation, macroeconomic stabilisation and the opening up of domestic markets to foreign investment, among others. On the political front, post-war societies have witnessed international actors pushing for multi-party elections, the writing of constitutions, the liberalisation of political activities, the establishment of vibrant civil societies and so on. In post-conflict environments it is assumed that providing individual liberties and free markets would not only promote economic growth, but also a self-sustaining peace since this encourages peaceful means of resolving conflicts. The simultaneous promotion of market liberalisation and political liberalisation is based on the assumption that the two are intrinsically connected and complement each other. However, the two tend to conflict with each other (Paris 2004). For instance, market democracy encourages competition and conflict, and in a situation where institutions are lacking to manage economic and political competition this can lead to violence and can undermine the (re)building of state institutions and the promotion of political liberalisation in war-affected societies (Paris 2004).

In an attempt to answer the question whether international peacebuilders' strategies of political and economic liberalisation can recreate conditions of civil war, Paris (2004) examines fourteen major peacebuilding operations under the UN umbrella between 1989 and 1999. These fourteen peace operations shared a basic assumption of transforming states emerging from violent conflict into "liberal market democracies as quickly as possible" (Paris

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<sup>36</sup> This study adopts Simmons, Dobbin and Garrett (2008: 2)'s use of the concept political liberalism to refer to policies aimed at reducing "government constraints on political behaviour, promote free political exchange, and establish rights to political participation", and economic liberalism to refer to "policies that reduce government constraints on economic behaviour and thereby promote economic exchange".

2004: 5). According to Paris, the cases produced mixed results. In most of these cases the process of political or economic liberalisation or both had damaging and destabilising effects. Paris (2004: 155) concludes that rapid liberalisation helped rekindle overt violence or contributed to the recreation of the social and economic conditions that had caused violence in many of the countries that have hosted these missions, raising questions about the reliability of the current “peace-through-liberalisation strategy”.<sup>37</sup>

Paris attributes the big part of this problem to contemporary students of the liberal peace thesis and peacebuilders who have continued to pay excessive attention to contemporary advocates of rapid liberalisation while ignoring classical liberals’ “pragmatic emphasis on authoritative and effective – in addition to limited – government as a precondition for domestic peace” (2004: 152). For Paris it is crucial to draw on classical liberalism’s “insights into the preconditions for lifting societies out of the state of nature, including the requirement for effective government institutions, or ‘state capacity’, as the foundation for a peaceful market democracy” (2006: 427).

## **Democratisation and Violent Conflicts**

A number of studies that have examined the nature of the relationship between democratisation and the risk of violent conflict concur with Paris’s findings (Ottaway 1995; Snyder 2000). Snyder (2000) has used empirical evidence, both historical and contemporary to investigate the connection between democratisation and increased risk of political violence that is related to nationalism and ethnicity. Snyder has noted the following paradox:

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<sup>37</sup> Chua (2004) has shown that there is a link between democratisation and market liberalisation on one hand, an increase in ethnic violence and instability on the other hand. For Chua, where an ethnic minority group dominates, the simultaneous introduction of democratisation and free markets exacerbate minority grip on the economy while democratisation provides an opportunity for the poor who are in the majority to express their resentment against those ethnic minority groups who dominate the market.

On the one hand, the successful unfolding of global, liberal democratic revolution might eventually undergird a more peaceful era in world politics. On the other hand, the transition to democratic politics is meanwhile creating fertile conditions for nationalism and ethnic conflict, which not only raises the costs of the transition but may also redirect popular political participation into a lengthy antidemocratic detour (2000: 20).

Although Snyder does not dispute the position that democracies rarely fight against each other, he finds the initial phase of democratisation to be extremely unstable. According to him, transition to democracy triggers political violence that is related to nationalism and ethnicity. Democratisation creates political space that results in the establishment of politically significant groups that have diverse interests and sometimes different ideologies. This results in political elites feeling threatened. For Ottaway (1997), since the process of democratisation challenges the status quo, traditional elites who feel threatened seek to maintain authority by mobilising masses along ethnic or nationalist lines. As such, if violence erupts, it does so along ethnic or nationalist lines.

In addition to the above, elections can be highly destabilising in deeply divided societies, for example, Rwanda in 1994, Burundi in 1993 and Angola in 1992 and more recently, Kenya in 2007, Ivory Coast in 2010 and Nigeria in 2011. Ferme (1998) who examines the thought and practice of Sierra Leoneans in relation to competitive elections prior to the civil war observes that Sierra Leoneans perceive competitive elections as violent and dangerous. As a result, they “champion the social cohesiveness of consensus-building in ‘traditional’ African political idioms, such as the Mende practice of ‘hanging heads’” since “their open-ended and provisional form is often better suited to hold conflict at bay, than the finality of vote counts in competitive elections” (Ferme 1998: 557).



Without an understanding of the local context and power relations, the idea of peace-as-democratisation can lead to unintended consequences in conflict-prone societies. As such, a Western-style democratic system should not always be seen as a panacea to the instability in conflict-torn societies, but also a potential source of instability depending on how it is introduced in these societies. Given the fact that the process of democratisation is more problematic, Snyder argues for the need for democratisation initiatives to be cognisant of the politics of the transition (2000). Snyder's findings are crucial in our understanding of how democratisation can lead to instability in states emerging from civil war and ways of avoiding this.

### **Paris' Institutionalisation Before Liberalisation Approach**

Paris does not suggest a solution that takes proper consideration and understanding of existing political and cultural systems in countries hosting peacebuilding operations, but one that aims at building effective institutions before the liberalisation process. His work is significant in bringing out important issues including the process through which war-torn societies can be transformed into liberal market democracies, and the negative effects of competition associated with capitalism and democracy on war-shattered states. While proponents of the liberal peace see the competition that democracy and capitalism encourage as important in promoting efficiency and accountability in both the economic and political realms, they overlook the fact that this is not effective in war-shattered states since such states lack effective government institutions (Paris 2004). For Paris war-torn societies are susceptible to five pathologies: 1) "bad" civil society; 2) opportunistic "ethnic entrepreneurs"; 3) the danger that elections may cause destructive societal competition; 4) local "saboteurs" who claim to be champions for democracy, but seek to destabilise the democratic process; 5) and the risk of economic liberalisation (2004: 159-65). War-torn states

are vulnerable to the above five pathologies due to intense societal conflicts, their lack of traditional conflict dampeners including cultural constraints on violent behaviour and ineffective political institutions (Paris 2004: 168-75). For Paris, building strong and effective state institutions before implementing liberalisation policies is the sure way out of this challenge.

Drawing from the democratic peace thesis, Paris argues that peacebuilders should preserve the broad goal of transforming war-torn states into liberal market democracies since mature democracies tend to be peaceful in their domestic affairs as well as in their relations with other democracies. Although Paris is critical of the liberal peace model of the 1990s, he does not reject the goals of liberal peacebuilding. Instead, he offers an alternative model within the liberal peace framework which he calls “Institutionalisation Before Liberalisation” (IBL). This approach acknowledges that political and market liberalisation can worsen societal conflicts and further proposes the building of strong and effective state institutions before embarking on a liberalisation agenda and transferring power to local actors.

In this regard, the process of liberalisation is gradual and controlled ensuring that state institutions being built can manage the political and economic reforms being introduced in such post-conflict societies. The IBL approach encourages an arrangement that is similar to the United Nations Transitional Administrations in East Timor and Kosovo. Since there is a likelihood of warring parties returning to conflict in the early stages of building strong institutions, Paris suggests that in these earliest stages international peacebuilders should act “illiberally.” For Paris such a move is crucial if the long-term objective of establishing durable peace in such societies is to be achieved.

### *Criticisms of the IBL Strategy*

Paris's IBL approach is flawed for a number of reasons. It is built on the idea that the liberal peace is a universal peace and as such, it offers a prescription that overlooks and undermines local ownership, custom and local institutions. As Mac Ginty and Richmond note:

[...] even the process of building institutions must be locally owned, and reflect local identity and the new peace, liberal or otherwise, and must be quickly and demonstrably of benefit to the vast majority of the population, not just in ways that withstand comparison with the local pre-peace process environment, but the globalised milieu of stable and prosperous societies around the world (2007: 493).

In addition, Paris's suggestion that peacebuilders should use "illiberal" means to achieve the goal of building institutions before liberalising political and economic spheres reflects a classic expression of the authoritarianism that liberalism can adopt. It encourages liberals to use force in situations where they want to build strong institutions in war-shattered states or when the host states do not comply with the demands of the liberals. The net effect of this is that the liberal peace that is created in post-conflict states is anti-liberation since it takes away the right to self-governance and self-determination of the individuals in host countries. As it is, the IBL is counterproductive. It asks too much from the peacebuilders including being coercive in the interim period and can put peacebuilders in harm's way if local actors violently resist such initiatives. Sriram (2008: 191) adds that "the rush to institutionalisation carries with it significant risks, including destabilisation of weak state structures and the development or consolidation of new spoiler groups".

In addition, the IBL strategy overlooks critical factors to the promotion of lasting and stable peace including the promotion of the needs and interests of the ordinary people. Further, it reduces peacebuilding to a technical exercise involving activities such as, institution building, demobilisation, disarmament and reintegration of former combatants, rather than considering

the root causes of the conflict. A “virtual peace” (Richmond 2005, 2006; Taylor 2007) or “technocratic peace” (Mac Ginty 2006) emerges from such problem-solving approaches to peacemaking. A “virtual peace” does not have wide support from most of the population in war-torn societies, though it is usually satisfactory to the ruling elites and international peacebuilders (Taylor 2007; Richmond 2005). It is often contested, fragile and overlooks the agency of most of the population to build peace through other mechanisms such as custom, traditions, reconciliation and restorative justice.

For Chopra and Hohe (2004) there is the need to integrate “communities into the process of institution building, where they live and at higher-levels, in order to foster a sense of identification with the greater whole and a feeling of ownership of the alternative structures” (2004: 291). Empirical studies on Cambodia, East Timor, Kosovo and other war-shattered states have shown that where a peace dividend is not shared among most of the population, there is a very high risk of a return to a violent conflict or authoritarianism (Richmond and MacGinty 2007; Chopra 2002; Richmond and Franks 2008).

### **Critiquing the Liberal Peace Agenda in Africa**

Despite the fact that most of the violent conflicts have occurred in Africa and the liberal peace agenda has been dominant on the continent, many studies on the liberal peace tend to focus on non-African cases (Shaw and Mbabazi: 2007). Few of the studies on the liberal peace specifically examine the implications of the liberal peace agenda in Africa and their conclusions show that it faces challenges on the continent (Abrahamsen 2001; Fanthorpe 2005; Shaw and Mbabazi 2007; Taylor 2007; Willet 2005; Castaneda 2009; Kurz 2010; Englebert and Tull 2008; Salih 2009). Abrahamsen notes that contemporary development

policy has emphasised a merger of development, democracy and peace: “development is dependent on democracy, and democracy supports peace and stability, further encouraging development” (2001: 80). However, she observes that democracy and peace have remained elusive in Africa despite the international actors’ high expectations and injection of considerable political and financial resources aimed at promoting this developmental agenda (Abrahamsen 2001). The primary reason being that “the policies of development and democratisation ignore crucial features of the power structure in African states, and entail an assault on existing relations and forms of power and legitimacy” (Abrahamsen 2001: 80).

In a number of post-conflict African states, the liberal peace has failed to transcend the neo-patrimonial political culture and in some cases, democratisation and liberalisation policies have created conditions for conflict, for example, Rwanda’s 1994 genocide, civil war in Sierra Leone and a return to conflict in Angola (Williams 2004; Abrahamsen 2001; Taylor 2007, 2009). Williams (2004) has observed that attempts at constructing liberal democratic states in Rwanda and Sierra Leone contributed to the violence in the two countries since these failed to take into account the neo-patrimonial nature of state power in the two states. Indeed, the promotion of neo-liberal economic reforms in Africa has “contributed to the undermining and dissolving the patrimonial ‘glue’ that previously bound many African states together, resulting in the reconfiguration and re-negotiation of political authority as elites compete for their survival in the face of declining resources” (Abrahamsen 2001: 99).

Taylor (2007) who concurs with Williams and Abrahamsen, adopts a Gramscian critique of neoliberalism to note that the concept of the liberal peace as a representation of an internationalised neo-liberal hegemony depends in part upon the existence of a domestic hegemony that is absent in Africa states. Gramsci conceptualised hegemony as “a dynamic

lived process in which social identities, relations, organisations, and structures based on asymmetrical distributions of power and influence are constituted by the dominant classes” (Mittelman and Chin 2005: 18). In this regard, the dominant class does not rule against the subordinate groups, but with and over them, and hegemony can only be achieved within the realm of civil society which gives “meaning and organisation to everyday life” resulting in the elimination of the need to use force (Mittelman and Chin 2005: 18). In addition, it requires consent and participation of most of the population. In the absence of this form of hegemony at the domestic level of African states with most leaders using violence, intimidation, personal rule and patronage to control the state and the masses, there exists a disconnection between international prescriptions for peace and the socio-political dynamics on the ground (Taylor 2007). Taylor concludes that the liberal peace is being naive in its evaluation of its potential to bring about change in post-conflict zones in Africa and its failure to understand the nature of political organisation in the African context.<sup>38</sup>

The assumption that Western institutions can be successfully transferred to Africa without modifications which underpins the liberal peace agenda and the failure to take into consideration underlying political dynamics in Africa’s post-conflict environments are flawed. These challenges of liberal peace in Africa call for the need to rethink liberal peacebuilding on the continent. Indeed, it is crucial to “think anew” in relation to international intervention aimed at building durable peace in Africa’s war-torn societies including an understanding that the essence of peacebuilding and statebuilding on the continent is “not to construct state structures per se, but to foster state formation, that is, interaction and bargaining processes between government and society” (Englebert and Tull 2008: 138).

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<sup>38</sup> Taylor (2009) offers a similar conclusion in his analysis of liberal peacebuilding in Sierra Leone and further notes that the nature of political culture in the country makes it difficult for the liberal peace to succeed.

Some scholars have offered critiques of the dominant political economy of the liberal peace in Africa (Salih 2009; Castaneda 2009; Cooper 2008). Salih (2009: 133) notes that while the dominant political economy of the liberal peace has led to stability, “nurtured the politics of democratic hope and a modicum of respect for human and civil rights, [...] it has largely failed to deliver tangible developmental or economic benefits to the majority of the African poor”. The main developmental challenges that the liberal peace has failed to address, according to Salih, include the deficit of social justice, poverty, exclusion and limited access to human needs. He further notes that, this failure to address such major developmental challenges in Africa and the emphasis on the liberal above the social will do more harm than good on the continent (Salih 2009).

Similarly, in the case of Sierra Leone, Castaneda (2009: 236) observes that the political economy of the liberal peace favours macro-economic security over the social and this is based on the assumption that peace will “trickle down from the macro-economic to the social realm” leading to a “trickle-down peace” – a form of peace that trickles down from the top to the bottom emphasising on security and tends to be oblivious of current interests of most of the population in post-conflict societies. The assumption behind the idea of a “trickle-down” is that “a lack of violence (negative peace), an improved macro-economic framework (‘economic peace’), and large-scale goals such as food production will flow down to the community and individual level as increased personal, economic, and even food security” (Castaneda 2009: 236). For Castaneda, a trickle-down peace will make peacebuilding hard and problematic. While she acknowledges that Sierra Leone’s fragile stability is legacy of the civil war, she also argues that it is also a product of a post-conflict peacebuilding initiative that emphasises “trickle-down peace” and fails to pay greater attention to social welfare. As

such, this makes it difficult for the liberal peace to establish sustainable peace in post-war environments of Africa where poverty, exclusion, marginalisation and inadequate access to social justice are major problems.

### **“Thinking Anew”**

In an attempt to provide a new thinking about international peacebuilding and statebuilding, contributors to the book, *Peace Operations and Global Order*, edited by Bellamy and Williams criticise the problem-solving approach of the mainstream literature on peacebuilding and statebuilding (2005). Bellamy and Williams state that it is crucial to “think anew” about the role of peace operations and “providing alternative visions of their function in global politics” (2005: 2).

Bellamy and Williams, and others call for the need to adopt critical perspectives in order to re-examine the ontology and epistemology of peacekeeping. In an attempt to “think anew”, this thesis goes beyond Bellamy and Williams’ conceptualisation of “thinking anew” and draws from critical thinkers whose interests include liberation and emancipation as well as the liberal peace, the conditions of a durable peace that are not necessarily grounded in the liberal peace, but in the local context, culture and custom, human needs and welfare as well as rights and the unintended consequences of the liberal peace (see Tadjbakhsh 2011). This points to the need to acknowledge what is there on the ground rather than “what ought to be there” (Moe 2010: 7).

### **Using Local Cultural Resources in Peacebuilding**

Lederach (1997) has argued for the need to approach a conflict within its particular context.

For him people within a conflict setting should be viewed as a key resource, not recipients.



He further argues for the need to build appropriate models from the cultural and contextual resources for peace and conflict resolution available within a conflict environment. For this to be achieved, according to Lederach, those in the international community need to “move beyond a simple prescription of answers and modalities for dealing with conflict that come from outside the setting and focus at least as much attention on discovering and empowering the resources, modalities, and mechanisms for building peace that exist within the context” (1997: 95).

Although internationals have paid some attention to the roles of African culture in creating conditions for a self-sustaining peace in some African states emerging from violent civil war, they do not want to acknowledge it. Why are African cultural experiences of conflict resolution and peacebuilding not really present in the literature about conflict resolution and peacebuilding? This could be a result of Western bias against African culture which is viewed as dysfunctional and inadequate as well as responsible for all the ills that are being experienced on the continent. However, “inherent in most African cultures is the belief that conflicts should be resolved through dialogue and non-violence, dialogue that encourages participation and compromise, the component parts of a culture of peace and democracy” (Osei-Hwedie and Abu-Nimer 2009: 1).

Indigenous traditions in Africa have played a significant role, for instance, in creating conditions for order, healing, reconciliation, peaceful coexistence, among others at community levels, for example, the *Jir* (a community dispute mediation session) among the Tiv community of Nigeria, the *guurti* system (inter-clan mediating council) in Somaliland, *Mato Oput* (drinking the bitter herb) in northern Uganda and the *Ubuntu* approach to reconciliation in South Africa (Murithi 2008). In Somaliland traditional leadership

institutions played a significant role in bringing together the various clans and creating “a legislature and government drawing upon Somali tradition and combining these traditional structures with modern institutions of governance like the parliament” (Murithi 2009: 148; Boege et al. 2008).<sup>39</sup> The situation in Somaliland is more promising than in central and southern Somalia, and it currently enjoys some relative peace and stability (Murithi 2009). These traditional and indigenous forms of peacemaking and dispute resolution have co-existed with the international/Western ones and remain resilient against the onslaught of modernity, thus continue to be extensively used at community levels in most parts of Africa.

In the context of Sierra Leone, its 1991 constitution recognises the institution of the Paramount Chief and customary law. In fact, a dual formal legal system exists in the country that is based on a common law consisting of English law which is administered through national courts and customary law that is administered through local courts in 149 chiefdoms (Sawyer 2008). According to the 1991 Sierra Leone constitution, “customary law” refers to “the rules of law which by custom are applicable to particular communities in Sierra Leone” (section 170(3)). In Sierra Leone, “Customary justice is dispensed in line with the beliefs, customs and traditions of inhabitants of the local area through the administration of customary law by local courts” (Robins 2009: 1).<sup>40</sup> Although most of the rural population use local courts, such courts’ jurisdiction is limited to minor criminal offenses, land disputes, seduction, witchcraft, divorce and debt. An informal legal system also exists in the country. Sawyer (2008: 393) notes that, “Paramount chiefs, section chiefs and village headmen often hold informal courts where they adjudicate cases, levy fees, and impose fines or other

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<sup>39</sup> Recent research in the Pacific Islands region – Bougainville (Boege 2010), Timor Leste and the Solomon Islands (Richmond 2011a), and Vanuatu (Brown and Nolan 2008) – shows the effectiveness of customary institutions in conflict resolution and peacebuilding.

<sup>40</sup> In Sierra Leone, the term local court is sometimes used interchangeably with the term “native court” and these courts are located within chiefdoms. According to Ali (2008), 80 per cent of Sierra Leoneans fall under the jurisdiction of customary laws.

punishments”, and are more accessible for most of the rural population. In addition, most of the rural population rely upon “[...] customary law structures and processes within secret societies [...]” (Sriram 2011: 130) as well as diviners and “medicine men” “who may offer alternative forms of adjudication or retribution” (Sawyer 2008: 393; Ali 2008), although the state does not recognise them.

The rural populace in Sierra Leone have continued to rely upon customary, non-state justice systems for a number of reasons: corruption and limited access to the formal justice sector, customary justice systems offer a range of advantages to them including being cheap, accessible, connecting them to their customs, flexible, familiar to the conflicting parties, not adversarial, offer restorative justice (aimed at mediation that leads to decisions that restore and rebuild community relations) as opposed to retributive justice, give them a sense of ownership, payment of compensation to the individual(s) who is wronged and are flexible (see Sawyer 2008; Sriram 2011; Ali 2008). Like other parts of Africa, in Sierra Leone customary law has been criticised for privileging men over women, especially in the context of marital disputes (Ali 2008; Sriram 2011). However, Ali (2008: 137) notes that among the Kpaa Mende this is done for the purpose of maintaining relations and peace:

It is not considered in the best interest of the family to wrong a husband even if his guilt is clearly evident. Instead, the elders would attempt to saying soothing words to the wife and later privately rebuke the husband for his misdeeds. While this may look like an injustice to the woman, there is an important social element here. The main interest is to hold the marriage together, not to create a situation where the woman will “win the war but lose the peace”.

Manifesto '99 (2002), a human rights NGO in Sierra Leone, notes that traditional beliefs play a significant role in the lives of Sierra Leoneans and most of the 14 ethnic groups in the country have long-established traditional practices of conflict resolution. In addition, Sierra

Leoneans have used proverbs and idioms in conflict resolution. For instance, Stovel (2008: 306) has observed that, in post-war Sierra Leone, officials and civil society leaders, searched their traditions and found the conciliatory Krio proverb: “Bad bush nor dae for troway bad pekin” (“There is no bad bush to throw away a bad child”), which means that irrespective of what a person has done the community will still accept him/her. According to Stovel, the philosophy behind this Krio proverb extends beyond children as it implies that Africans are community-oriented and the community will always have space for its members (2008). Officials and civil society leaders, in Sierra Leone, used this proverb to promote reconciliation and integration of former rebels and child soldiers in the society.

However, Stovel (2008) observes that this approach has led to the romanticisation of this conciliatory tradition-based expression and thus has a danger of being blind to or to reinforce the power structures that contributed to the conflict. Besides the use of proverbs in promoting reconciliation and peace, secret societies’ “processes of justice and conflict resolution [such as cleansing ceremonies that] often emphasise truth-telling and reconciliation” have been used to facilitate the reintegration of former combatants, especially the reintegration of former child soldiers into their families (Sriram 2011: 130; Ali 2008). One of the limitations of secret society processes, according to Sriram (2011), is that given an oath of secrecy, it is difficult for members to seek recourse, even when a decision made under such a process is abusive.

In addition to the issues discussed above, Lederach (2005: 60) has noted that “suspicion, indifference and distance” are feelings expressed by ordinary people in societies emerging from violent conflict. For Lederach, it is crucial to pay attention to “social spaces, relationships, ideas and processes” that can contribute to the restoration of trust (2005: 59). The liberal peace which places much emphasis on the state and its institutions tends to be

blind to this. As such, it has failed to acknowledge customary approaches to peace and conflict resolution that are significant for rebuilding social and interpersonal trust through participation, forgiveness, healing, restorative justice and reconciliation (Murithi 2008).

In addition, customary approaches to peacemaking can be useful in recognising the voices and agency of ordinary people in post-conflict environments as well as in dealing with some of the root causes of conflict at community or village levels. At the same time, these approaches should not be over romanticised. It is crucial to expose their limitations as well as argue for integrating their positive aspects with other forms of peacebuilding such as the liberal peace. In post-conflict societies, a mere adoption or uncritical use of customary approaches to peacemaking can reinforce the local power structures that were part of the root causes of the conflict. In addition, recognition of positive aspects of customary systems and traditional belief systems, chieftaincy and African philosophy as expressed in proverbs can help identify local “resistances” to violence (Milne 2010).

Mac Ginty (2008) cautions against viewing indigenous and traditional approaches to peacebuilding as a panacea to all the problems associated with the liberal peace. This, according to Mac Ginty, is for the following reasons: 1) “the dislocation associated with civil war has often made traditional and indigenous social patterns unsustainable. [...] the descent into civil war may have been facilitated by the failure of traditional and indigenous restraints on conflict”; 2) “some literature has a tendency to over-romanticise traditional and indigenous practices (and similarly overlook the advantages of conventional approaches to peacemaking) [...] some traditional and indigenous practices can be deeply conservative and exclusionary” (2008: 120). Further, Mac Ginty (2010b) notes that in recent years leading states and INGOs have been facilitating and funding traditional and indigenous approaches to

peacebuilding. He, therefore, questions whether such methods should be called “traditional” or “indigenous” if leading states and international organisations have co-opted them. Mac Ginty (2010b: 353) further notes that “the international peacebuilding agents that regard ‘local ownership’, ‘participation’, and ‘sustainability’ as the saviours of peacebuilding have also identified indigenous and traditional approaches to peacebuilding as a means to promote their peacebuilding agenda”. He calls this approach a “peace-fixing” or “problem-solving” approach and that it can lead to the co-optation of local elites and NGOs. This would end up undermining the voices of the “local-local”.<sup>41</sup> While I agree with Mac Ginty that traditional and indigenous approaches to peacebuilding are not panacea to all the problems in post-conflict situations, his idea of “peace-fixing” runs the risk of undermining the role of custom in peacebuilding and overlooks the local’s creative agency to influence international peacebuilders. However, the idea of “peace-fixing” helps us to think about interests of the internationals who sponsor local forms of peacebuilding.

As such, it is crucial to critically examine the relationship between the international actors who are sponsoring and supporting traditional and indigenous and the locals, whether these “indigenous” or “traditional” approaches are not being designed to suit the interests of their sponsors and also to what extent local voices and agency are being recognised. In addition, whether the “local-local” lead these initiatives or whether co-opted local NGOs are not imposing these programs on them in the name of tradition in order to continue getting funding from the West which in the end may promote Western interests and not interests, needs and concerns of the ordinary people in a post-conflict environment. This should not

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<sup>41</sup> I borrow the idea of “local-local” from Richmond (2009a: 341) who defines it in contrast to “the local”, which (“the local”) according to him refers to “what international actors normally perceive as a range of actors and terrains spanning their non-Western and non-liberal partners for liberal peacebuilding at the elite level [...] and civil society and in contrast, he uses the term “local-local” to show “the existence and diversity of communities and individuals that constitute political society beyond the often liberally projected artifice.”

distract us from identifying customary and indigenous peacebuilding approaches that could still have relevance in contemporary Africa. As Richmond (2011a: 118) notes, “A resurgence of traditional belief systems and customary forms of governance perhaps has the effect of [...] redressing the local agency gap, and certainly also significantly modifying the liberal state”.

### **On the Crisis of the Liberal Peace**

The liberal peace’s failure to adequately address the positive aspects of peace such as welfare, poverty and social justice has led critical scholars like Richmond (2009b) to conclude that it is in crisis. Richmond (2009a: 324) criticises liberal peacebuilding for its failure to achieve “a liberal peace for all” as per its promise:

It has become clear that the liberal international institutions and “corridors of power” have so far failed to deliver on their promise of a liberal peace for all – and particularly for the citizens of the new “liberal” states that have been recipients of peacekeeping and peace operations in the post-cold war world.

Richmond (2009b) further notes that, the liberal peace is experiencing a crisis of legitimacy at the level of the everyday in post-conflict societies. In a number of post-conflict societies, for example, in Liberia and Sierra Leone, the bulk of the population is increasingly becoming disappointed since the liberal peace that is trickling from top to bottom is yet to reach them. In such post-conflict environments most of the population, according to Richmond, perceive the liberal peace project and its focus on statebuilding as “ethically bankrupt, subject to double standards, coercive and conditional, acultural, unconcerned, with the social welfare, and unfeeling and insensitive towards [them]” (2009b: 558). Despite the implantation of the liberal peace in post-conflict environments, ordinary people in these environments continue to engage in what Gordon (2002 cited in Gonzalez de Allen 2006: 9) calls “extraordinary

measures to live ordinary lives.” In response to this crisis, a number of critical scholars have called for an alternative(s) to or modifications of the liberal peace(s) that is grounded in people’s customs, traditions and culture, an adoption of hybrid practices in post-conflict situations, a consideration of local participation and use of local resources, among others. However, this has not gone without challenges from those who want to maintain the status quo.

### **Critiquing the “Hyper-critics”**

Various responses have been offered to criticisms and challenges of the liberal peace. Recently, mainstream scholars while acknowledging that the record of liberal peacebuilding is not very impressive have criticised critical scholars for being “hyper-critical” and for exaggerated or misdirected and generalised claims on liberal peacebuilding as well as for failing to come up with a viable alternative to it (Paris 2010; also see Begby and Burgess 2009; Newman 2009a).

Paris notes that in spite of liberal peace operations’ many flaws, they have done more good than harm, and “the failure of the existing peacebuilding project will be tantamount to abandoning tens of millions of people to lawlessness, predation, disease and fear”, and as such these criticisms are unwarranted and imprudent, respectively (2010: 338; 2009). Similarly, Begby and Burgess (2009) argue that although liberal peacebuilding has a disappointing record, this does not warrant the conclusion that the very idea of liberal peacebuilding is bankrupt. As for Paris, scholars and commentators who argue that the liberal peace is illegitimate or basically destructive are being “hyper-critical”. These responses reflect a deep polarisation between the critical theorists and mainstream critics who would want to see the liberal peace model made better within the liberal internationalist



framework.<sup>42</sup> Liberal peacebuilding according to mainstream scholarship needs to be “saved” from “hyper-critics” who have offered exaggerated claims about it. Saving it would include the following: 1) “continuing to press forward with efforts to dissect and understand the paradoxes and pathologies of peacebuilding”, and 2) “ensuring that this critical enterprise is well-founded and justified” (Paris 2010: 339).

Paris further notes that instead of offering sweeping rejections of liberal peacebuilding, critical scholars should use tools of critical analysis to come up with alternatives within the liberal internationalist framework itself rather than conceiving alternatives to liberal peacebuilding. For him, it is not difficult to conceive alternatives or reforms from the liberal approach since the idea of liberalism is quite broad that it can “accommodate a wide range of political and economic structures as well as diverse methods for engaging with inhabitants of war-shattered societies” (Paris 2010: 339; also see Begby and Burgess 2009). However, the thinking that there are no alternatives outside the liberal peace is controversial, as it impedes ingenious thinking regarding ways in which durable peace can be built, including imaginations about a “post-liberal peace” (Richmond 2009b; Tadjbakhsh 2011).

In their examination of the dilemmas of statebuilding, Paris and Sisk (2008) argue that although statebuilding remains a core element for peacebuilding in war-torn societies, it faces inherent contradictions and tensions which international state builders have paid little attention to and these tensions and contradictions in turn have resulted in policy dilemmas for both international and local actors. Roland and Sisk further argue that although statebuilding

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<sup>42</sup> For a similar view see Begby and Burgess (2009: 93). For the two scholars there are two strands to the recent critique of liberal peace: the first one which they call the primary argument offers “a diagnosis of what goes wrong when things go wrong with liberal peacebuilding” and the second one “attempts to distil from the primary argument a negative assessment concerning the very idea of liberal peace”. According to Begby and Burgess the primary critique is more plausible than second one which is “radical”.

has produced mixed results and its record has generally been disappointing, neither can it be abandoned nor can the international state builders do more, but should manage these dilemmas (at the same time, noting that these dilemmas are difficult to resolve). Further, these dilemmas of statebuilding can better be managed by having a deeper understanding of them. The two scholars recommend “dilemma analysis” as a new analytical tool that international state builders must use before and during their missions in order to more effectively deal with the inherent tensions and contradictions of statebuilding. However, this “dilemma analysis” does not aim at replacing the more conventional approach to mission planning, but supplements it and starts from the assumption that many of the elements of statebuilding will not integrate easily. This still reflects an ethnocentric bias which does not see anything good in the non-European “other” and views the liberal peace as the best possible alternative.

This raises the question whether the liberal peace is prepared to engage with the non-liberal other. And if it is tolerant to local approaches to peacemaking, as Paris is pointing out, why is it that for the past two decades it has ignored them or undermined them? Is this being done with the consent of recipients of the liberal peace? Or is the social contract not of much significance? Legitimacy can only be built with the consent of those in host-countries and without this the politics of anger, frustration and resentment can emerge. In other words, the liberal peace-is-good-for-sustainable peace argument, fail to realise that liberal peace-without-local-legitimacy-is-not-good-for-sustainable peace. This argument is in line with utilitarian arguments which argue for approaches that would produce best possible results in a given situation and also points out to the possibilities of other alternatives.

## **Liberal Peacebuilding as Neo-Colonial or Neo-Imperial?**

Given that the liberal peace is engaging the non-liberal other in a dominant way, one would understand why some critical scholars have concluded that liberal peacebuilding is a form of neo-colonialism or neo-imperialism. For instance, Roberts (2008: 64) views liberal statebuilding and peacebuilding as a “post-Cold War neo-imperial agenda of intervention” in which states in post-conflict environments are being built in the image of the West. For Roberts, such an approach which is invasive and imperial has failed and will continue to fail as long as there is a failure to recognise and understand that “transitional impositions of democratic practice cannot be substitute for or replace, in the short-term, political behaviours derived from needs, experiences, histories and evolutions quite different from those from which Western democracy is derived” (2008: 64). Similarly, Darby using a post-colonial critique of liberal peacebuilding notes that it is a colonial enterprise that marginalises the experiences, approaches and understandings of non-Western societies and does not connect with their everyday lives (2009).

Paris’s response is that while there were echoes of European colonialism in other parts of the world during the nineteenth century, in current peacebuilding operations, comparisons of modern peacebuilding and European colonialism should be limited. He further notes that, although liberal peacebuilding and European colonialism share the idea of refashioning of domestic structures of weaker societies with the intention of achieving a greater “good” – civilisation for nineteenth century European colonialism and “good governance” in the form of a liberal market democracy, they differ in four important respects: 1) the primary motive of the practice of colonialism was to benefit the colonising state at the expense of colonised societies (for instance, through cheap labour and the extraction of material resources from them), whereas in the case of liberal peacebuilding resources flow from international actors to

war-torn societies;<sup>43</sup> 2) liberal peacebuilding support operations are multilateral involving a wide range of actors, international and local, however, this was not the case with colonialism which was primarily carried out by individual colonial states for their own benefit; 3) Europe's imperial states often perceived overseas colonies as their permanent possessions until the latest stages of colonialism, whereas, post-Cold War peace building missions are not permanent and aim at establishing necessary conditions for effective governance in the host-countries; and 4) the practice of colonialism was grounded in ideologies of racial superiority, however, this is not the case with liberal peacebuilding (2009). Paris thus, argues that equating liberal peacebuilding with colonialism or imperialism is not only an exaggeration, but it "implicitly (or explicitly) discredits and delegitimises peacebuilding by framing it as an exploitative, destructive and disreputable form of international intervention" (2009: 102).

However, as Darby notes, as long as peacebuilding initiatives are determined from "above and outside", they are "cast in the mould of colonialism" (2009: 701). In other words, while the practice of international peacebuilding is not grounded in ideologies of racial superiority, it is grounded in the idea of the superiority of the liberal peace over other forms of peace, especially, local ones. Communities in Africa, for instance, are rarely consulted about what kind of politics or state they want and as such, are being presented with no choice, but the liberal peace. This assumes a priori that this is what they want, thus ends up looking like a colonial project. Richmond observes that "The whole apparatus of peace is sometimes colonial and racist in that it implies the transference of enlightened knowledge to those who lack the capacity or morality to attain such knowledge themselves" (2005: 2004). In addition, the liberal peace project has failed to achieve its aims including a democratic setting in which

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<sup>43</sup> There is also the need to investigate how much is coming out of these societies with the introduction of open markets, particularly, resource rich countries like Sierra Leone and the DRC.

people's welfare and human rights are promoted. As such, it doesn't look like a very humanitarian practice, but as something that has been designed to recreate colonialism.

However, this should not be interpreted as implying that the primary motive for liberal peacebuilding is colonialism. The point here is that just as during the colonial era (see chapter 1), the dominant assumption is that Western knowledge and political organisation are more advanced than those of non-Europeans. And even where they claim to be working in partnership with state elites in host-countries, their approach to "good governance" (and their idea of partnership) is through direct, hands-on intervention. In this regard, Western forms of governance are seen as the norm and as such, for the internationals, it is essential to ensure that the host-countries do not deviate from the norm.

Similar criticisms have been given in the area of development in which post- and anti-development scholars have noted that there is a continuity between the current Western assumptions about universal validity of modern Western science and knowledge, and those of the colonial past (Escobar 1996; Esteva 1992). According to Escobar, "Development has been the primary mechanism through which the Third World has been imagined and imagined itself, thus marginalising or precluding other ways of seeing and doing" (1996: 212). For Escobar since the end of World War II, development has been a powerful tool for the production and management of the non-Western world. Development is perceived as a means to modernise, urbanise, promote industrial growth and agricultural modernisation in the less developed world, however, it has "proceeded by creating abnormalities ('the power', 'the malnourished', 'the illiterate', 'pregnant women', 'the landless') which it would then treat or reform" (Escobar 1996: 214). In this case, "development experts" from the West who go to the developing or underdeveloped world to deal with the "abnormalities", tend to offer

solutions to these problems using Western lenses with alternatives, local voices and other ways of knowing often being ignored. For Escobar, development approaches have uncritically transferred modern Western science, technology and knowledge from the West to the South as a means to end problems in the South, however, this has ended up “multiplying them indefinitely” (1996: 217).

Similarly, Duffield views development as “a liberal design of power” which “always acts in the name of protecting and bettering life” (2007a: 232, 2007b). He further notes that development discourse “the civilised/barbarous dichotomy has been realised in terms of humanitarian differences between *effective* and *ineffective* states” (2007a: 236, emphasis not mine). As noted in the previous chapter, ineffective states are viewed as not having the capacity to protect and improve the lives of their citizens. In response to this, the international community has adopted the responsibility to protect doctrine as a means to protect the lives and human security of citizens of such states. In the name of partnership, NGOs and leading states personnel have become heavily involved in the work of key government departments and institutions, and have become part of the state. Thus for Duffield, “Development is the essence of a specifically *liberal* imperial urge. It embodies the experience of life that is culturally unfamiliar as provisional and incomplete, and consequently in need of external tutelage to induce self-completion” (2007a: 241, emphasis not mine).

For instance, nine years after the official end of the civil war in Sierra Leone, British government officials are still directly involved in governing the state of Sierra Leone. Little (a BBC reporter) notes that the British influence in Sierra Leone is far much greater than since the end of British colonial rule in the country: “British government officials sit in the main offices of [the] state [of Sierra Leone] – monitoring what the ministers do, supervising,

scrutinising, guiding the country toward European-style good governance” (Little 2010). He further points out that Valnora [Edwin]<sup>44</sup> of a local Sierra Leone NGO, Campaign for Good Governance (CGG) commented that an inside source had told her that “when other donor partners are coming, they need clearance from [...] [DFID] or the UK before they do x and y, and everywhere you go, there’s a British person” (2010). While critics call this form of intervention intrusive and neo-colonial, the British government, state elites and mainstream scholars view it as a social mission, a form of partnership aimed at “planting the seeds of progress” in Sierra Leone (Little 2010). Yet, Little observes that nine years of “peace” in Sierra Leone has not done much to deal with high poverty and unemployment rates as well as high child and adult mortality across the country (see chapter 6).

For Chandler (2006a), external support operations, for example, the British government’s intervention in Sierra Leone can have negative effects such as creating a dependency syndrome, the weakening of politics at both national and local levels which could further diminish the political autonomy and capacity for self-rule, and also create challenges for state elites to establish broad legitimacy among ordinary citizens. Without self-governance, the state has no legitimacy and also will not function independently, thus will remain weak and cannot deal with post-conflict (and even pre-conflict) challenges including socio-political divisions, unemployment and poverty (Chandler 2006a). This form of external intervention leads to what Chandler calls “peace without politics” in which the creation of liberal democratic institutions is not grounded in domestic politics (2006b).

If liberal peacebuilding is to be “saved”, it ought to be saved from its “cheer leaders” who offer prescriptive strategies without a critical reflection on their viability and acceptability in

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<sup>44</sup> Allan Little cites the respondent’s name as Valnora Jones, however, her correct name is Valnora Edwin. I have changed the name with her consent.

post-conflict environments, and have witnessed local resistance to them. While the liberal peace model has worked well in the West, it is crucial to question whether transplanting it wholesale to non-Western societies with different cultural and historical backgrounds from it will work. In fact, war-torn societies need to be “saved” from problem-solving approaches that are biased towards these societies and ignore local agency, capacities for peacemaking, order and recovery. It is important for the locals’ voices to be heard since as insiders they “possess the historical, cultural, and linguistic resources that outsiders lack, and that are essential not only to understanding the root causes of conflict but also to the search for sustainable solutions” (Donais 2009: 11; also see Lederach 1997). At the same time, it is crucial to be aware that there are various claims to local ownership in post-conflict environments and how these claims can be dealt with in ways that do not recreate the conditions for a violent conflict.

More recently, critical scholars rather than just focusing on the inherent tensions and contradictions of the liberal peace in post-war societies have argued for the need to move beyond the liberal peace through examining local and contextual responses to it. This will be discussed in the next chapter.



## **Chapter 4: Thinking Beyond the Liberal Peace**

### **Introduction**

This chapter discusses the emerging critical literature that argue for the need to shift from merely criticising the liberal peace to engaging with local contextual matters through examining local and contextual responses to liberal peacebuilding that is, the forms of peace that are emerging as the liberal and the local interact. It also offers a theoretical framework for the rest of the thesis.

### **Thinking of the Local and Contextual Responses to the Liberal Peace**

As noted in the previous chapter, it is widely accepted – among mainstream and critical scholars - that the liberal peace’s record has been very disappointing and partially counter-productive. However, there is a lack of consensus among these scholars on how to respond to its partial success as well as tensions and contradictions inherent in it. This lack of consensus is partly due to the different approaches that these scholars take. Mainstream scholars such as Paris advocate a problem-solving approach and argue for the need to reform the liberal peace model as well as the need to search for alternatives from within the liberal framework itself. As such, remain committed to the liberal peace framework. However, critical theorists are not just concerned with the liberal peace and its implications on non-liberal societies, but also about social and economic rights, custom, traditional and indigenous forms of governance and peacemaking, and the everyday. Critical thinkers like Richmond have gone a step further noting the need to start imagining a “post-liberal peace”. This emerging literature has shifted attention from merely critiquing the liberal peace in terms of its inherent contradictions, the practical challenges of liberal peace support operations and the ideologies underpinning them

as well as finding ways of “saving the liberal peace”, among others, to examining local and contextual responses to the liberal peace and the forms of peace that are being built.

Scholars like Paris who have argued for the need to save liberal peacebuilding have failed to see or think beyond the liberal peace framework. Rather, as noted in chapter 3, they have proposed the need to build the capacity of institutions of the central state, as in Paris’ IBL strategy (Paris 2004). This is despite Paris’ earlier observation that international peacebuilding appears “to represent an updated version of the *mission civilisatrice* [“the Westernisation of the periphery”], or a colonial-era notion that ‘advanced’ states of Europe had a moral responsibility to ‘civilise’ the indigenous societies that they were colonising” (2002: 651). This of course, has resulted in internationals seeing war-torn societies in terms of how they see themselves (Paris 1997). In his IBL approach and the “saving liberal peacebuilding” argument, Paris locates agency with the West, and not the people in post-conflict environments. In “Bringing the Leviathan Back In: Classical Versus Contemporary Studies of the Liberal Peace”, Paris shows a nostalgic feeling of the classical liberals sidelining local agency (Paris 2006). This exposes Paris and other mainstream scholars for their Eurocentric biases since they see the West as the sole producer of peace and the liberal peace as the only viable peace.

The failure of mainstream scholars to think beyond the liberal peace framework itself and their call to think within it could be a result of the hegemonic nature of the liberal peace, Eurocentric biases and the commitment to problem-solving approaches. However, Eurocentric biases have often resulted in the historical experiences of people in the periphery being “conceived in categories derived from great power politics in the North” (Barkawi and Laffey 2006: 332) and their treatment as objects and not subjects, thus negating their agency.

This failure to see most people in post-conflict environments as subjects has often brought unintended consequences in such environments including the failure to be responsive to their demands, needs and interests (chapter 3), hence the need for an empirical study of post-conflict societies helps to come up with a deeper understanding of realities on the ground and identifying the forms of peace that are emerging which may or may not lead to durable peace in these societies.

Based on recent experiences of liberal peacebuilding and statebuilding in post-conflict societies some critical scholars have suggested the need to pay attention to the dynamics and resilience of local politics and their relationship to external intervention, that is, local and contextual responses (at various levels – elite and grassroots) to the liberal peace project, among other things (Richmond 2010c; Heathershaw and Lambach 2008). This emerging literature points to the need to think of peace support operations, for instance, in terms of hybridity (Richmond and Franks 2009; Heathershaw and Lambach 2008; MacGinty 2008; MacGinty 2010b, 2011), and also to think of them normatively in terms welfare, empathy, and care, as well as empirically in terms of “the everyday” (Richmond 2008b, 2009a, 2009b, 2009c; Pugh 2009). Richmond (2009a), for instance, has shown an interest in the possibilities of drawing upon resistance and the everyday of those individuals in the host-communities taking note of the hybridity that emerge as the “local” and the international interact, resist, tolerate and accept each other. Similarly, Heathershaw and Lambach (2008) have dismissed the view that post-conflict environments are just objects of international involvement and have suggested the need to consider them as spaces in which various agency emerge – where international and local actors re-appropriate, appropriate, accept, hybridise, subvert, resist and co-opt peacebuilding or statebuilding initiatives to suit their own interests and needs, some of which may be at odds with the intended objectives of the liberal internationals. For

Heathershaw and Lambach, post-conflict spaces should be understood as “fields of power where sovereignty is constantly contested and negotiated” among different actors – internationals (whether liberal peacebuilders or not), elites and non-elites in the host-country” (Heathershaw and Lambach 2008: 269). This implies that there is no full absorption of international peacebuilding and statebuilding in post-conflict societies, but get mixed with local forms of peacemaking. Thus, these local responses and reactions result from vested interests among various local actors. These local actors develop “tactics” aimed at promoting their interests and needs, in response to the liberal peacebuilding and statebuilding strategies that have seen internationals superimposing the liberal state, (neo)liberal economics and liberal forms of governance on them.<sup>45</sup>

According to this emerging critical literature, these responses and reactions on the ground may lead to hybridised forms of peace – this will be discussed below (Richmond 2009a, 2009b, 2010b; Mac Ginty 2010b, 2010c). This, according to Richmond, might be called a “post-liberal peace” (Richmond 2010b). This highlights the mutual dependency between the internationals and the locals in constructing peace in societies that are going through transition. I will use hybridity as a conceptual approach in understanding the dynamics in post-conflict environments in the context of liberal peacebuilding. Thinking of post-conflict environments as spaces where hybridised forms of peace are emerging need to be done in the context of an understanding of these environments as “contact zones”<sup>46</sup> where international actors encounter local ones.

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<sup>45</sup> On the relationship between strategy and tactics see de Certeau (1984).

<sup>46</sup> Mary Louise Pratt (1992: 6)’s notion of “contact zones” could be useful in the analysis of the interaction of external and local actors. She uses the concept “contact zone” to refer to “a space of colonial encounters, the space in which peoples geographically and historically separated come into contact with each other and establish ongoing relations, usually involving conditions of coercion, radical inequality, and intractable conflict.”

## **Post-conflict Environments as “Contact Zones”**

Though used in the context of the “first” encounter between the coloniser and the colonised, the concept of “contact zone” will be used here to mean a space where the culture, the local and the outsider interact, negotiate, get modified, accepted and resisted (even in situations where power relations are viewed as asymmetrical) which may result in a form of peace that is neither liberal nor local but a mixture of the two, that is, a hybrid peace. This results in what Pratt regards as a contact perspective – a perspective that considers the relations between (in the case of contemporary peacebuilding) local and international actors in terms of “co-presence, interaction, interlocking understandings and practices, often with radically asymmetrical reflections of power”, and not in terms of separateness (Pratt 1992: 7). This helps us to break from binary oppositions, for instance, the civilised and the primitive, the local and the international, the modern and the traditional, and the developed and the underdeveloped, and as such, could help in finding ways of creating conditions for durable peace in post-conflict environments. In this sense, an understanding of post-conflict environments as “contact zones” in which international actors and local actors interact, at the same time paying attention to unequal power relations, would emphasise facts on the ground and attempts to show that post-conflict situations follow their own logic or that state institutions exist alongside with non-state institutions such as indigenous and traditional political institutions and secret society institutions (as in the case of Sierra Leone) which have various claims to authority, legitimacy, power, sovereignty and order. This calls for the need to recognise multiple sovereignties and legitimacies in such situations rather than focusing on undermining or banning these institutions.

As critical literature has highlighted, the liberal peace is far from being perfect, particularly in post-conflict environments. Hence, the need to investigate what is on the ground through empirical research.

### **Conceptualising Hybridity**

The concept of 'hybrid' is not new. Young (1995) traces its origins to biology and botany. He notes that in Latin, it referred to the progeny of a tame sow and wild boar and for human beings, a progeny of human parents of different races (Young 1995: 6). Webster (1828), provided a definition of hybrid as "a mongrel or mule; an animal or plant, produced from the mixture of two species (cited in Young 1995: 6). In the 18<sup>th</sup> century, colonialism and population displacement in countries such as, the US, UK and France led to interracial contact, resulting in new debates on the notion of hybridity (Kraidy 2002). However, hybridity, during this period was defined in the negative sense since there was a general fear among Westerners that the other races they encountered and colonised would pollute them, thus often invoking biology so as to "justify ideologies of White superiority and warned of the danger of interracial breeding described as 'miscegenation' and 'amalgamation'" (Kraidy 2002: 319). Hence, for Knox (1850), hybridity, in the context of interracial contact had a negative consequence as it was "a degradation of humanity and was rejected by nature" (cited in Young 1995: 15). Although Knox and others paid attention to hybridity as it related to interracial breeding and the negative connotations of this, hybridity during this period was not limited to this form of interaction. It existed on the commercial farms, mines and even in colonial administration. For example, the British form of indirect rule produced a British-local hybrid form of governance.

In recent years the concept of hybridity has been widely used and applied in a variety of ways in cultural studies, literary theory and criticism, anthropology, communication studies, political science (for instance, the study of hybrid political regimes/orders) and post-colonial studies. However, this concept has not attracted much attention in IR. Indeed, in post-colonial studies, hybridity has become a central theoretical concept in debates on culture and identity formation. Bhabha (1994), a prominent theorist of hybridity, celebrates the notion of hybridity as evidence of the resilience of the colonised and “as the contamination of imperial ideology, aesthetics, and identity, by the natives who are striking back at imperial domination” (Kraidy 2002: 319). For Bhabha (1994), in the colonial situation the indigenous people who encountered the colonisers found themselves caught in between two cultures, theirs and that which the coloniser had imposed on them and as the natives continually negotiated, resisted, undermined and re-appropriated the dominant colonial culture in their struggle for survival new cultural forms and practices emerged, that is, hybrid cultures. Contrary to the “invention of tradition thesis”, post-colonial scholars like Bhabha (1994), have observed that the hybridity that resulted from the interaction between the colonisers and the colonised reflected mutual dependency between them in the construction of a shared culture. Such theories show that hybridity is a positive force that resists homogenising ideologies because it creates space in which the agency of the subaltern can be enhanced as well as that of inclusivity. Through their questioning of the notion of a monolithic identity and invoking the notion of hybridity post-colonialists have been able to focus on the marginalised and their agency.

The concept of hybridity has been used with much controversy. As Kraidy states, it is “conceptually ambiguous and controversy surrounds its meanings and implications (2002: 320). According to Kraidy, “While some see hybridity as a site of democratic struggle and

resistance against empire, others have attacked it as a neo-colonial discourse complicit with transnational capitalism [...]” and also that “the concept reflects the life of its theorists more than the sites and communities these theorists write about” (2002: 316). Frello has spelt out the danger of celebrating hybridity as it can be “potentially oppressing” since if done uncritically, it may work in favour of the powerful by “hiding unequal power relations, rather than undermining or criticising them” (2007: 4). In this sense, hybridity can be seen as a negative development and an uncritical theorisation of it can be blind to existing unequal power relations. For instance, Schmeidl (2009) has noted that recent attempts at establishing a liberal peace in Afghanistan has created a hybrid state in which regional strongmen and warlords command more power than state elites. Similarly, Mehler has pointed out that, in Africa hybrid solutions have a risk of bringing back instabilities and inefficiencies associated with neopatrimonialism (2009). Hence, the need to recognise and analyse internal politics, difference and how power is exercised within post-conflict “contact zones” and their impact in generating positive hybridity.

In the context of Africa (and other former colonised parts of the world), an argument for peacebuilding initiatives which, for example, take custom and tradition into consideration does not imply an argument for returning to the pre-colonial period or purity of indigenous knowledge/tradition since this will fail. For instance, where a Western culture was imposed on Africans during the colonial period has become part and parcel of their experience. As such, we cannot ignore the reality of colonial history (chapter 1). However, African societies’ experiences, cultures, customs and traditions must function as sources “from which to extract elements that will help in the construction of an authentic and emancipative epistemological paradigm relevant to the conditions in Africa at this historical moment” (Ramose 1999: 130). Although, Ramose does not use the concept of hybridity, he shows the inevitability of it since



for him the “alien European culture has become part and parcel of the contemporary way of life in Africa” and at the same time, though weakened indigenous and traditional political and social institutions have remained operative (1999: 134).

For Ramose, what is practical and realistic is to “situate the Western culture in a fundamental dialogue with African tradition” as a way of determining whether the two different paradigms can be reconciled (1999: 134). While Ramose recognises the influence of the West on the colonised, the process of constructing “an authentic and emancipative epistemological paradigm” in Africa which he advocates should not merely focus on “refuting and dislodging the “social epistemology of domination” (Ramose 1999: 128) as it relates to Western domination if it is going to be meaningful to everyone. It must also deal with certain customary practices that have resulted in certain groups of people (such as children, youths and women) being exploited and abused by the powerful at the local level. In this case, hybridity should be examined with a critical eye including questioning what it consists of. In other words, a “a radical conception of agency” in the context of hybridity is crucial – the concept “radical” entails that agency “must be tied to social change in which some inequality or injustice is addressed” (Prabhu 2007: 2).

While I support the idea of hybridity in peacebuilding and statebuilding and the need to examine hybrid forms of peace that could be emerging in post-conflict environments, I argue for a hybridity that does not end up “immunising the objectively false and socially regressive elements of indigenous knowledge systems of non-Western societies from critical evaluation or reform” (Nanda 2001: 182). As Harris notes, “suitably honed hybridity has a necessary place in our tool kit, along with tradition and modernity, domination and hegemony, subalternity and power. We just have to get out there and use it” (2008: 29).

## **Situating Hybridity in Peacebuilding and Statebuilding**

Recently, hybridity has been used in the study and practice of transitional justice to describe courts that have been developed in a number of settings, but more generally in post-conflict settings, such as Sierra Leone, Kosovo and East Timor in which international criminal courts combine domestic and international components as in “hybrid domestic-international courts” (Dickinson 2003). In Darfur, Sudan, the term “hybrid AU-UN force” has been used in reference to the AU-UN peacekeeping forces in the region. In IR, and Peace and Conflict Studies, as noted above, there is an emerging literature that has invoked the concept of hybridity to describe a process whereby the “local” interacts, resists and modifies the liberal peace producing new forms of peace and practices. In this literature, concepts such as “hybrid political orders” (Boege et al. 2008), “liberal-local hybridity” (Richmond 2009a) and a “local-liberal-hybridity” (Richmond 2010b, 2010a) have been used. Based on empirical research, Richmond has noted the existence of resistance to the liberal peace in post-conflict environments, such as the Solomon Islands, Liberia, Mozambique and Timor Leste, and in this “Agency are expressed that contaminate, transgress and modify both the international and the local”, resulting in “local-liberal” or “liberal-local” hybrid forms of peace (Richmond 2010b: 669, 2011a, 2011b).

Although Richmond uses the concept contaminate, he does not use it in the negative sense, as was done in the 18<sup>th</sup> century in reference to interracial mixing, but in a positive sense in which subaltern agency becomes a resistive force to the liberal peace hegemony resulting in a peace that is a mixture of local forms of peace and the liberal peace. This defies the purity and hegemony of the liberal peace in post-conflict environments. However, where a “liberal-local” hybridity emerges, though local actors have an influence on the peace that emerges, the liberal peace still dominates. As noted earlier, it is crucial to pay attention to relations of

power and domination that may be inscribed and reproduced within hybridity (Pieterse 1993). In this context, “hybridity raises the question of the *terms* of mixture, and the conditions of mixing and melange. At the same time it is important to note the ways in which hegemony is not merely reproduced but *refigured* in the process of hybridisation” (Pieterse 1993: 11, emphasis original). While Richmond has conceptualised the forms of peace that emerge with the interaction between the liberal peace and the local forms of peace in terms of “liberal-local” and “local-liberal” hybrid forms of peace, Boege et al. (2008, 2009a) have argued for the need to recognise hybrid political orders as the basis for statebuilding and peacebuilding.<sup>47</sup>

### **On Hybrid Political Orders**

Boege et al. (2008) have conceptualised fragile or failed states as hybrid political orders. As Clements notes, hybrid political orders are characterised by “a contradictory and dialectic co-existence of forms of socio-political organisation that have their roots in both non-state indigenous societal structures and introduced state and societal structures” (2008: 12). In these political orders “diverse and competing claims to power and logics co-exist, overlap and intertwine, namely the logic of the ‘formal’ state, of traditional ‘informal’ social order, and of globalisation and associated social fragmentation (which is present in various forms: ethnic, tribal, religious...)”, for example, East Timor, Somaliland and the South Pacific Island of Bougainville (Boege et al. 2009: 24). In this case, a particular internal logic governs hybrid political orders and empirical evidence has shown that such political orders can be a source of stability, for example, Somaliland. In situations where state and informal institutions exist alongside there is tendency for them to share authority and legitimacy. This implies that in

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<sup>47</sup> Hagmann and Hoehne (2009: 44) define a political order as “the sum of institutionalised, yet dynamic power relations that one can empirically grasp at a given time and place. It involves international legal arrangements as well as everyday practices of ordinary people and processes on the local, often across but rarely without reference to national boundaries.”

terms of governance and legitimacy hybrid political orders are quite distinct from the Western Weberian model state (Clements 2008).

As noted in chapter 1, whereas, legitimacy for the institution of the chief in Africa is derived from custom and tradition, in the Western model state legitimacy is derived from legal-rational authority.<sup>48</sup> In hybrid political orders legitimacy derived from tradition and custom, and that derived from legal-rational authority interact. In Africa, as noted in chapter 1, chiefs still play a significant role in local and national politics as well as in development, security and justice. It is also crucial to note that in hybrid polities, customary law and forms of governance are still considered to be crucial in people's everyday life (Clements 2008). Clements observes that customary governance that is deeply rooted in locality impacts strongly on state's capacity, function and legitimacy and in addition, customary institutions do permeate state institutions, even though there is a lack of formal recognition of this.

Boege et al. (2009) argue for the need to recognise the hybridity of political orders in the context of statebuilding and peacebuilding. By doing so, such an approach deconstructs the idea of the Western liberal state as crucial and superior form of political order and stability by itself. This implies paying attention to the complexity or dynamics of domestic processes, to local agency, local institutions, and indigenous knowledge. The idea of hybrid political orders reveals the political potential intrinsic in hybridity, though it is crucial not to romanticise it.

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<sup>48</sup> With regard to legal-rational authority, obedience to the rulers is based on a liberal social contract (see Weber 1978).

## **Richmond's Everyday Approach**

In an attempt to make the marginalised and groups more visible Richmond (2009a, 2009b) has gone further to argue for the need to critique contemporary peacebuilding and statebuilding interventions from the notion of the everyday. He notes that there is a possibility of achieving more emancipatory forms of peace through the utilisation of the concept of the “everyday” (together with that of “empathy”) (Richmond 2009a: 326, 2009b). This, according to him, could be helpful in uncovering and implementing plural models of peace, thus “moving beyond [the] problems of liberal agency [...] in its modernisation-oriented, problem-solving, institutional and governmental forms” (Richmond 2009a: 326). The everyday approach entails the uncovering and analysing of the types of agency, responses and practices in the everyday life of people in post-conflict societies that produce hybrid models of peace in the context of international peace support operations. Richmond (2010c: 671) defines the everyday as “a space in which local individuals and communities live and develop political strategies in their environment, towards the state and towards international models of order”. He does not consider it as civil society, which in most cases emanates from the West, but as “representative of the deeper local-local” (2010c: 671). For him, “It is often transversal and transnational, engaging with needs, rights, custom, individual, community, agency and mobilisation in political terms” (Richmond 2010c: 671).

Yet, the internationals have paid scant attention to ordinary people's everyday concerns. Richmond's everyday approach attempts to bring to the fore people's everyday concerns such as employment, welfare, food security, culture and social needs into the liberal peace discourse. Through its connection with resistance and agency, the everyday is said to be a site that has a potential to generate autonomy, new political orders and forms of peace (Richmond 2009a). Richmond connects the everyday and resistance.

## **On Resistance**

As noted earlier, international peacebuilding relies on the exercise of power in its expression of what counts as proper order and acceptable forms of political organisation and in its reaction to “disorder” and nonconformity – this can be through conditionality or force or sanctions. In this sense, international peacebuilding is a form of domination. However, as Sharp et al. have observed, “domination is no way complete or secure” since people may resist it since the dominated will always seek alternative spaces the dominant group want to erase (2000: 7).

The concept of resistance does not have a clear-cut definition. I use Hollander and Einwohner (2004: 534)’s definition of resistance as “a form of refusal, opposition or unwillingness to cooperate with behaviour or practices that are abusive or undermine one’s interests”. As Routledge (1997: 361) notes,

Resistances are assembled out of the materials and practices of everyday life and imply some form of contestation, some juxtaposition of forces involving all or any of the following: symbolic meanings, communicative processes, political discourses, religious idioms, cultural practices, social networks, physical settings, bodily practices and envisioned desires and hopes.

Individuals or groups of citizens, in this sense, may engage in overt and confrontational or hidden forms of resistance (Scott 1985, 1990) or both. Resistance can be expressed through language, communication, art, drama and music.

Questions have been raised whether for an action to be called a form of resistance it should be recognised by others or not, and whether it is the actor’s intention that matters (Hollander and Einwohner 2004). For Scott resistance can be hidden and an action does not necessarily have to be recognised for it to be called a form of resistance. As for Hollander and

Einwohler, both intent and recognition matter “to different degree for different types of resistance” (2004: 539). Another crucial point is that the idea of resistance is complex: 1) it can play a dual role (not pure), that is, “even while resisting power, individuals or groups may simultaneously support structures of domination that necessitates resistance in the first place”; 2) neither those who resist nor those who dominate are monolithic given that “multiple systems of hierarchy, and individuals can be simultaneously powerful and powerless within different systems” (Hollander and Einwohner 2004: 549, 550).

Similarly, Ortner has noted that there “is never single, unitary, subordinate, if only in the sense that subaltern groups are internally divided by age gender, status, and other forms of difference and that occupants of differing subject positions will have different, even opposed, but still legitimate, perspectives on the situation” (1995: 175). It is crucial to consider this when studying resistance from the margins since resisters also have their own politics which can be conflictual (Ortner 1995).

Resistance is crucial in determining the success or failure of international peacebuilding. If properly understood and worked with, it can be useful for peacebuilding. It can help to show that ordinary people in post-conflict situations are not merely passive objects of international peacebuilding, but also active agents involved in shaping the peacebuilding process. Writing about resistance is crucial for helping support emancipatory forms of peace. As de Certeau (1984) has noted, subordinate groups or individuals often engage in tactical practises in their everyday life as a form of resistance to domination. He considers tactics as everyday activities including walking and interacting. Scott has analysed and theorised relations of domination and resistance, which highlights “everyday resistance” of the weak against the strong (Scott 1985, 1990, 1989). Scott critiques social analysis on resistance for being limited

to the obvious such as large scale, organised protest movements that often were perceived as threats to the state, making the peasants' resistance invisible (1985).

Scott has proposed the concepts of public transcript and hidden transcript in order to elaborate his argument. The idea of public transcript relates to the aspect of domination that is obvious, that is, the open, public "interaction between subordinates and those who dominate" (1990: 2). He considers the public transcript to be "highly partisan" since the dominators have the power to control it and compel performance from the dominated. The public transcript is "designed to be impressive, to affirm and naturalise the power of dominant elites, and to conceal or euphemise the dirty linen of their ruler" (Scott 1990: 18). Scott further notes that the public transcript of domination comprises "a domain of material appropriation (for example, of labour, grain, taxes), a domain of public mastery and subordination (for example, rituals of hierarchy, deference, speech, punishment, and humiliation and [...] a domain of ideological justification of inequalities (for example, the public religious and political world view of the dominant elite)" (1990: 111). In contrast, the hidden transcript comprises of "the offstage responses and rejoinders to that public transcript" (Scott 1990: 111). By concealing the resistant nature of their activities the dominated can protect themselves from the powerful. He then introduces the concept of "infrapolitics" as "[...] the circumspect struggle waged daily by subordinate groups is, like infrared rays, beyond the visible end of the spectrum" (1990: 183). In this sense, the concept refers to hidden everyday forms of resistance that subordinate groups wage against the dominant elite and its invisibility is "a tactical choice born of prudent awareness of the balance of power" (1990: 183).



The “small arsenals” for the less powerful include such acts as, “foot-dragging, dissimulations, false compliance, feigned ignorance, desertion, pilfering, smuggling, poaching, arson, slander, sabotage, surreptitious assault and murder, anonymous threats [...]” (Scott 1989: 34). Such activities are regarded as “everyday” due to their ordinary nature (appear to be survival or coping mechanisms) and if taken at face value it is hard to tell that they are forms of resistance against domination. In this case, everyday resistance is “*virtually always a stratagem deployed by a weaker party in thwarting the claims of an institutional or class opponent who dominates the public exercise of power*” (1989: 52, emphasis not mine). Informal assemblages such as the local community, informal market, the workplace, public transport and secret societies bushes “provide both a structure and a cover for resistance” and as such, are spaces for infrapolitical activities (Scott 1990: 200). Scott considers infrapolitics as real politics – politics in which “counterhegemonic discourse is elaborated” (1990: 200). For infrapolitics to be identified, according to Scott, then it is essential to juxtapose the hidden and public transcripts. Insights from Scott’s theory such as “hidden transcripts”, “public transcript”, “everyday forms of [...] resistance” and “infrapolitics” can be useful in understanding local and contextual responses to contemporary peace support operations.

### **From Liberal Peace to Post-liberal Peace**

Acknowledging local agency, institutions and knowledge as well as the emergence of hybridity in post-conflict spaces, at the same time being aware that the powerful have a potential to hybridise, thus continuing to dominate the less powerful, is a step towards what Richmond (2009a) calls, a “post-liberal peace” agenda in peacebuilding. The prefix *post-* in this context could be interpreted as implying that the liberal peace is in the past when in reality it continues to play a dominant role in post-conflict environments. However, this is not

the sense in which it is understood in this thesis as will be shown in the next paragraph. Another question relates to whether the idea of a “post-liberal peace” is not a Eurocentric critic of the liberal peace given the absence of the voices of scholars in the global South and also that its main proponents hail from Europe and whether this would mean the concept “trans-liberal peace” is more appropriate as it relates to transcending the liberal peace. Although the main proponents of the notion of “post-liberal peace” come from Europe, their proposal of a post-liberal peace is based on facts on the ground – a result of empirical research in various post-conflict situations, such as East Timor, Liberia, Kosovo, Bosnia, Somaliland, and Pacific Islands including the Solomon Islands and Tonga. However, it is crucial for these progressive intellectuals to do collaborative research with thinkers from various post-conflict environments in the developing world, especially in Africa where this remains under theorised.

In regard to the prefix *post-*, Vattimo (1991 cited in Mazotti 2008: 100) notes that it “does not always imply a temporal sequence, but simply an opposition practice”. In this sense, the prefix *post-* as in the context of liberal peace is an indication of “a desire among the dominated subjects to alter or overcome [the liberal peace] domination, and it would also recognise that this desire generates a variety of subjective positions and agency” (Mazotti 2008: 100). In addition, it does not negate other forms of peace and knowledges, rather recognises them and emphasises their co-existence.

In this case, a “post-liberal” peace agenda advocates a move towards new and reconstructed approaches and strategies that allow different actors – international, state elites and local groups – to participate in peacebuilding and statebuilding processes in non-hegemonic ways. It also engages in processes that are relevant to socio-political, cultural, historical and

economic experiences of the host-state. This recognises and accepts the positive changes or modifications that are happening on the ground as locals interact with the internationals, resist, modify, accept, reject and tolerate international peace initiatives in an attempt to establish peace that is relevant to their situation. Such an agenda (as noted earlier) implies moving beyond the representation of local populations as victims who need Western concepts of progress and peace for them to move out of their situation, while at the same time, ignoring or avoiding local forms of political organisation and peacemaking in international peacebuilding practice and policy. It is also a project that advocates the liberation or emancipation of Dussel's "post-colonial" marginal (1995) or Spivak's "subaltern" (1988) or Fanon's "wretched of the earth" (1967), who often have been represented as victims who cannot liberate themselves out of their situation without outside intervention.

In a nutshell, a "post-liberal peace" agenda deconstructs conventional approaches to peace- and statebuilding which explain violent conflicts, fragile or weak statehood as "deficits measured in standards of modern civilisation [Western civilisation] and ends up in strategies of promoting and implementing these standards where it is (seems as) necessary" (Meyer 2008: 569), but does not attempt to deal with the problems in relation to the situation on the ground. It also implies the "possibility of a non-Eurocentric dialogue with alterity, one that fully enables 'the negation of the negation' to which subaltern others have been subjected" (Escobar 2004: 219). This will also help to show how marginalised or subordinated groups who are not readily in a position to control what comes from the dominant culture are able to determine to varying degrees what to absorb and what not to absorb from the dominant culture into their own culture as well as what use it is for them (Pratt 1992).

In this sense, the daily reality of peacebuilding practice ensures that the ideas and assumptions of the liberal peace cannot exist undiluted in reality. In addition, the existence of multiple or hybrid sovereignties,<sup>49</sup> local approaches to peacemaking, different cultural practices, dual authority and different ways of understanding political organisation in Africa, as noted in chapter 1, entails that reality is different from theory and that a state-centred approach does not provide us with a full picture of what is the case on the ground. Hence, it is crucial to move beyond blue prints of the liberal peace which are disconnected from local realities. This approach through detailed empirical research enables the researcher to understand real issues, such as poverty, food insecurity, social injustice, the everyday life, resistance, acceptance and modification of the liberal peace in post-conflict societies. One of the goals here relates to “de-Westernising social emancipation” (Escobar 2004: 12) or challenging the emancipatory version of the liberal peace which views the liberal peace as the only peace that ensures human emancipation or progress and showing that the local has a role to play in its own emancipation or progress. In this case, there is the need for the position that the liberal peace per se is the real peace and good for all the people across the world to give way to the understanding that various forms of peace exist or are possible including hybridised forms of peace which could be appropriate for particular situations.

In an attempt to show that “other forms of peace are possible” this study will examine the interface between liberal peacebuilding and domestic politics and social forces interacting in Sierra Leone. By so doing, this study will be able to ascertain how local agency is driving the peacebuilding process in Sierra Leone, how local actors are maintaining their agency in their interactions with the internationals and the forms of peace that are emerging as a result of this interactions. An investigation of the agency and methods that local actors in Sierra Leone use

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<sup>49</sup> For an overview of the concept of hybrid sovereignty see Bacik (2008).

to resist, accept, modify and subvert the liberal peace in order to enable more locally resonate forms of social, economic and political organisation will help us understand the facts on the ground, for instance, to find out how this results in the production of a certain kind of peace(s) – whether hybrid or not.

As noted earlier, IR scholarship has for a long time been preoccupied with states, state sovereignty, anarchy, security, order and territorial integrity, as a result, it has failed to engage with multiple and hybrid sovereignties, how external intervention has been resisted, accepted, modified, tolerated, co-opted or subverted. However, in recent years, efforts at theorising and developing a framework for the analysis of post-conflict spaces as spaces where various agency emerge and hybridity occur have challenged the ideas of bounded territoriality, the single sovereignty of the state as well as the dominant liberal position on peacebuilding (Heathershaw and Lambach 2008; Richmond 2009a, 2010c; MacGinty 2010b, 2010c). By doing so, this critical literature is giving more attention to local actors' (state elites and non-elites) creative reinvention of the liberal peace agenda and their initiatives to engage it. As Richmond and Franks (2009: 182) have recently noted, "Far more attention needs to be paid to peacebuilding and longer-term engagements with specific conflicts, with a more hybridised meeting of the 'liberal' and the 'local' than currently appears to have occurred". This study draws from the critical insights and investigates whether this is the case in Sierra Leone. Insights from this critical literature have not been comprehensively examined in relation to post-conflict societies of Africa. This study, thus, complements the emerging critical literature putting emphasis on the need to pay attention on the interface between the "liberal" and the "local". The next two chapters focus on Sierra Leone.

## **Chapter 5: The Sierra Leonean Struggle**

### **Introduction**

My aim in this chapter is to discuss the causes and evolution of the civil war in Sierra Leone. Although there has been a tendency among a number of scholars to associate the crisis in Sierra Leone with short-term causes, I consider the causes to be multifarious and connected to Sierra Leone's past including the intense social, economic and political polarisation that the country experienced during the colonial period which the postcolonial state inherited. A discussion of the background to the civil war in Sierra Leone is useful in helping us gain a more intimate understanding of the local context and its possible challenges to the liberal peace

In this chapter, I will first discuss historical factors (Sierra Leone's pre-colonial and colonial inheritance) that laid a weak foundation for the modern state. I will then examine scholarly debates on the immediate causes of state failure/collapse and the civil war. Neither religion nor ethnic tensions was the cause of Sierra Leone's civil war. Kurz (2010: 219) identifies three key factors that had a role in shaping the origins and development of the Sierra Leonean state: "the fragmentation of the polity, the centre-periphery divide and the role of powerful local chiefs".

### **Geography and a Fragmented Polity**

As noted in chapter 1, political organisation and institutions in Africa date back to the pre-colonial period. Chapter 1 also noted that although large kingdoms with highly developed political systems existed in pre-colonial Africa, including Sierra Leone, these kingdoms were

not hegemonic because low population densities made it difficult and expensive for governments to exert political authority to everyone within their domain. In Sierra Leone, dense tropical forests and hills (together with a lack of transportation and communication technologies) imposed certain constraints on the establishment of large-scale states (Kurz 2010). Sierra Leone's hinterland which consisted of 14 ethnolinguistic groups "was not a unified entity, politically, culturally, or ethnolinguistically" (Caulker 1981: 399). Despite, cultural and linguistic homogeneity, the ethnolinguistic groups were never (and even today are not) politically integrated and each had its own distinctive political institutions and culture, language, social and cultural institutions (Caulker 1981). Each ethnolinguistic group tended to localise political power: "Instead of an integrated political dominion in which political authority was in the hands of one ruler, each ethnolinguistic group was divided into small, independent political entities" (Caulker 1981: 400). Due to the lack of a unified polity in pre-colonial Sierra Leone, large political organisations similar to the one that formed in the West did not develop and this has had a negative impact on state and nation formation in the country (see chapter 1). In Sierra Leone, the rural populace tend to associate themselves more with their chiefdoms/ethnic groups than the state.

## **Colonial Legacies**

### ***Socioeconomic and Political Polarisation***

Sierra Leone's colonisation is a form of external intervention that saw the British attempting to build a form of state that resembled the Western polity – a Westphalian state. However, this resulted in a hybrid polity that was weak, undemocratic, authoritarian and politically and socioeconomically polarised.<sup>50</sup> With the colonial state failing to establish durable or strong connections between the urban centre (Freetown) and its periphery (rural publics) as well as

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<sup>50</sup> Chapter 1 has discussed the nature of the colonial state in Africa and the issues raised are relevant to Sierra Leone.

extending its institutions into the hinterland, the chieftaincy became the colonial's state's main agent of local rule from the time the British established a British protectorate over the inhabitants of the hinterland in 1896 (Barrows 1976; also see chapter 1).

British rule in Sierra Leone began in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century after the British colonialists declared Freetown a crown colony for the freed slaves who had been removed from Jamaica, Britain and Nova Scotia as well as Africans freed from slaving ships. The new settlers became known as the Creoles. The assumption was that freed slaves would be “better off in their ‘ancestral homeland’” (Cartwright 1978: 36). In 1896 the British declared the hinterland a protectorate. Consequently, the hinterland people became the British's protected people, while the Creoles who lived in the colony (Freetown) were British subjects. Both colonial authorities and Creoles generally referred to the protectorate people as “aborigines, natives, savages, naked barbarians and many other kindred epithets” (Kandeh 1992: 83). The Creoles who through Europeanization held Euro-Christian values and culture regarded themselves as more civilised and superior than the indigenous population. Indeed, the relations between the protectorate people and the Creoles were characterised by “a peculiar version of the colonial *mission civilisatrice*” (Pham 2006: 70). According to the Sierra Leone Truth and Reconciliation Commission (hereafter called the TRC), the British colonial administration promoted the idea that Western values and Christianity were superior to religions, traditions and customs practiced in the hinterland, leading to the discrimination of the protectorate people (2004). As a result, the colonial administrators pursued a social engineering strategy that divided the colony and protectorate people resulting in extreme political, social and economic polarisation in the country. A unified state could not be created, thus effectively establishing “two nations in the same land” (TRC 2004: 5).



This colonial social engineering strategy saw the emergence of two distinct political units in which Freetown was run on modern lines and the Creoles being ruled under this modern system, and a protectorate that was subjected to indirect rule via Paramount Chiefs who were under the supervision of a small civilian staff (Jackson 2005). Further, given that all mineral and agricultural resources were in the protectorate, the colonial government had to adopt strategies of co-option and coercion as means to extract them, and often, it preferred cooptation given the limited resources that were available to it (Kurz 2010). Two important outcomes of this strategy were the creation of a colony-protectorate divide in political and economic terms that undermined nation building and the creation of powerful chiefs vis-a-vis, their followers.

### ***Chiefs, Power and Local Politics***

From the onset, like other colonised parts of Africa, the colonial state in Sierra Leone had no local legitimacy and acceptance. In order for the colonial government to extend its authority in the hinterland the colonial administrators adopted a policy of indirect rule which allowed traditional leaders designated “Paramount Chiefs” to rule their followers using “native custom” and “native law” under the supervision of a British District Commissioner (DC) (Pham 2006; Alie 1990; CGG, Methodist Church Sierra Leone and Network Movement for Justice and Development 2009; Cartwright 1976).<sup>51</sup> The assumption among the British colonialists was that “these institutions, under the guidance of the resident European DC, would be continually developing into more efficient units of administration; responding to and adapting themselves to the new situations created by colonial rule” (Alie 1990: 134).

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<sup>51</sup> The colonial government introduced a system of “ruling houses” in which each chiefdom had at least two ruling houses and only if someone was a descendent from a ruling house he/she was eligible to contest an election for Paramount Chieftaincy and was elected for life, unless if the relevant Chiefdom Council (an assembly of elders and notables) disposed him/her (Barrows 1976).

Consequently, Paramount Chiefs became subordinate to DCs who were the heads of districts and representatives of the central government.

In addition, Paramount Chiefs' functions and powers became limited compared to the pre-colonial period. In this new political arrangement the chiefdom became the basic unit of administration in the protectorate under the rule of Paramount chiefs, with the support of the Tribal Authority (in post-colonial Sierra Leone this was changed to Chiefdom Council). As the TRC notes, the DC could only grant a Paramount Chief a degree of autonomy to rule his people, if he met the DC's demands for "maintaining law and order" in his chiefdom as well as meeting demands for labour and taxes (TRC 2004). As such, the chiefdom in Sierra Leone has often been portrayed as having been "originally designed to harness 'native authority' to British rule" (Fanthorpe 1998: 558).

### ***British Consolidation of Colonial Rule and the Creation of Powerful Chiefs***

Following the British's defeat of the protectorate people during the war of 1898 that was attributed to the protectorate people's resistance to the British imposition of hut tax, the colonial government maintained the position of the Paramount Chief in the protectorate. In addition, it maintained their main role of collecting taxes, maintaining law and order and dispensing justice among the indigenous population as well as the provision of essential services such as clinics and schools. However, the colonial government ensured that chiefs recognised its control over the protectorate and required them to promote its interests ahead of the interests of their followers. This transformed the nature of chiefs' power. Some chiefs were deposed, with some coming into power resulting from British patronage, not popular support. As such, chiefs became very powerful vis-a-vis their followers. For some scholars and local NGOs in Sierra Leone, chiefs could no longer be accountable to their followers, but

the colonial government (CGG, Methodist Church Sierra Leone and Network Movement for Justice and Development 2009; Fanthorpe 2007; Barrows 1976).

For instance, Alie notes that since chiefs knew that they had the backing of the colonial government, many of them became authoritarian and maltreated their followers as well as “ran the Native Administration as if it was their personal property” (1990: 154).<sup>52</sup> He further notes that chiefs received financial incentives from the colonial government as means to make them dependable allies in the new system of governance. The incentives included “a five per cent rebate on collection of the house tax, incidental gifts, entertainment allowances and tributes from sub-chiefs and headmen. Economically, the chiefs made capital of the tribute paid them in goods and services to enhance their standing in the community” (Alie 1990: 150). In addition, with the colonial government not giving much attention to the chiefs’ activities after its consolidation of colonial rule, chiefs often appropriated tax revenue as well as used forced labour for their own personal gain (Barrows 1976). Moreover, as Tangri notes, “offices and financial resources have not always been distributed in such a way that all groups in the chiefdom might benefit equally; the paramount chiefs and their followers have been the major beneficiaries, and certain sections have been favoured” (1976: 312). Since the chiefs had support and recognition from the colonial government, internal checks and balances (see chapter 1) that had been established during the pre-colonial period diminished. Violence came to characterise chiefdom politics.

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<sup>52</sup> The colonial government introduced the Native Administration system in the Protectorate in 1937 with the aim of putting the chiefdom administration on “a sound footing” and it served three main purposes: a) “the establishment of separate financial institutions, known as Chiefdom Treasuries, for each unit of administration”; b) “the grant of tax authority to each chiefdom unit”; and c) “authorisation of Paramount Chiefs and other Tribal Authorities to enact by-laws and issue orders in pursuance of social services and development functions” (Alie 1990: 152).

### *Violence in Chiefdoms*

The colonial transformation of chiefs had a negative impact on their relations with the followers. Since the end of 1898 Hut Tax War and the British consolidation of colonial rule, the protectorate had never been free from politically motivated violence. The violence that came to characterise chiefdom politics and periodically disrupted it has largely been attributed to conflicts among the hinterland people themselves (Tangri 1976). Two different explanations regarding the frequency and virulence of the violence in the chiefdoms, especially since the late 1930s, have been provided.<sup>53</sup> Kilson attributes the conflict in the hinterland to rural “radicalism”. He notes that a form of rural “radicalism” characterised this conflict “which in some instances constituted a virtual peasant revolt against traditional rulers and authority” (1966: 60). According to Kilson, the November 1955 to March 1956 riots in the hinterland are an outcome of this rural radicalism. He further notes that, “a populist groundswell against taxes resulted in great violence” and the objects of this populist violence were “all related to specific features of local administration that proved unjust or unduly burdensome to the masses” (1966: 188-189). Contrary to this position, Barrows (1976) and Tangri (1976) attribute the intense political competition among ruling house families to the violence that came to characterise chiefdom politics.

Because of the power and economic benefits associated with the Paramount Chieftaincy including its use as an avenue for private accumulation as well as the general underdevelopment in the rural areas, the office of the Paramount Chief became a site of intense (sometimes violent) political competition among rival ruling houses due to the existence of a “zero-sum game” (Keen 2005). This was more pronounced in the Mende chiefdoms since the idea of a “bi-polar chief” (“chief-opposition ruling house”) was alien to

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<sup>53</sup> Fathorne (2007; see chapter 1) has attributed the violence to the power struggles between secret societies and chiefs.

them (Barrows 1976: 100). As compared to the Temne in the north, the practice of rotating the chieftaincy was not common to the Mende (Barrows 1976; Keen 2005). For the Mende chiefdoms, their openness to internal rivalries often led the various factions forging alliance with outsiders who further divided them, unlike other societies, such as, Somalia where rival clans have often closed ranks against outsiders (Barrows 1976). Often members of a rival ruling house(s) mobilised “young men” to engage in protests and acts of violence against incumbent chiefs in order to advance their personal interests, for instance, economic gain, political power and position.<sup>54</sup> As Tangri notes (1976: 312), “violence has been a means of seeking to achieve greater share of the resources and benefits of the chiefdom – for themselves and their clienteles – by overthrowing the incumbents and installing themselves in office”. Tangri adds that, “young men” resented the chiefly hierarchy, and as result, disaffected “young men” who feared continued forced labour and the heavy fines forged alliances with opposition elders who were more interested in their own personal gain such as power and position in the chiefdom affairs than the masses.

Although chiefs, their supporters and property were targeted, no chief was killed and attention was on removing certain chiefs from power as well as doing away with specific chiefdom policies and rules (Tangri 1976). This, for Tangri, shows that the protests neither represented “a popular movement against the existing establishment, nor the wholesale change of the structure of chiefdom authority”, but largely a result of opponents of the local establishment who manipulated popular discontent (1976: 315). In addition, indigenous people respected the institution of the chief and wanted to see it continue. Indeed, the post-colonial society inherited them with the new African state elites, like their colonial

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<sup>54</sup> According to Barrows, the Mende use the term “young men” to refer to males who have no respect, little power and hold no position in the chiefdom affairs (1976). The use of “young men”/youth in political violence at the national level has also been noted as a key factor to the recent civil war in Sierra Leone.

predecessors failing to reach the grassroots, but relying on the chiefdom as the basic unit of administration since for the new state elites the chiefdom was the only local institution that could command support from the hinterland people.

The hold to chiefs, according to Keen, was further underpinned by Sierra Leone's path to independence (2005). In preparation for Sierra Leone's independence, the British and Sierra Leone elites in 1960 held a constitutional conference in London which saw them drafting Sierra Leone's constitution without the input of most of the population. Following this the British granted independence to Sierra Leone in 1961. According to Keen (2005), in Sierra Leone there was no broad-based nationalist movement that could have played a role in mobilising popular discontent and threatened the chiefs' position. Unlike other colonial states such as Mozambique where the post-colonial government depicted chiefs as colonial stooges and a threat to the modern nation-state it wanted to establish, Paramount Chiefs in Sierra Leone were not viewed that way since chiefs had been involved in the country's struggle for self-governance. As such, at independence, Sierra Leone inherited a combination of a Westminster model and indigenous institutions of chieftaincy in which central and chiefdom politics closely intertwined, that is, a hybrid political order.

It is crucial to note that the colonial state in Sierra Leone never had effective state institutions and the colonial government's attempt to integrate traditional political structures into the colonial state led to the transformation of the indigenous political order, the relations between ordinary people and their rulers as well as society and state, and increased the role of patronage as competing ruling families sought to outdo each other. The postcolonial state inherited this.

## **Politics in Post-colonial Sierra Leone**

The idea of the liberal peace is not new to Sierra Leone. In response to calls for decolonisation and self-governance of colonised African states that came across Africa, in Sierra Leone the British created a liberal democratic framework aimed at enabling local political actors to establish political parties as well as compete for the leadership of the state (Abdullah and Rashid 2004). Alie (2000: 15) notes that at independence in 1961 Sierra Leone inherited from the British “the promise of a budding democracy”. In the early years of independence, Sierra Leone had a functioning parliamentary system that exercised legislative power in an elected House of Representatives, an independent judiciary system, a vibrant civil society and a free press, among others (Alie 2000). In addition, it had “a policy of *Laissez-faire* in economic development, a willingness to accept whatever kind of investment might be offered, regardless of its effect on the overall economic position of [the country]” (Cartwright 1978: 74). In this regard, all private investors were welcome. A consequence of this approach was that Sierra Leone could not come up with an approach to development that emphasised on self-reliance, thus Sierra Leoneans were left in “a state of economic dependence on industrialised states for most of the satisfaction to which they aspired” (Cartwright 1978: 74).

Despite the liberal democratic experiment that the British initiated towards the decolonisation of Sierra Leone, the political polarisation between the Creole and the hinterland people did not cease to exist. At independence, a coalition of indigenous elites from diverse regional and ethnic background prevented the Creole elite from inheriting the state from the British (Kilson 1966). This resulted in SLPP winning independence for the country and its leader Sir Milton Margai becoming the first Prime Minister of independent Sierra Leone. Milton Margai continued to be closely connected with the chiefly ruling strata. The alliance between

the indigenous elites did not last long as the ethnic tensions between the Temne and Mende witnessed increased ethnicisation and regionalisation of domestic politics. As a result, “The ‘indigenous’ elite subsequently fragmented into Sierra Leone People’s Party (SLPP), a coalition of chiefs and middle-class professionals that came to represent the predominantly Mende southeast, and the All People’s Congress [led by Siaka Stevens], which garnered support from the Temne and Limba in the north, the Kono in the east, and the Creoles in the west” (Abdullah and Rashid 2004: 173). Political competition among elites increasingly grew into a contestation for power between those from the north and the south aligned to their respective ethnic groups and coalitions. This, to some extent, can be linked to the pre-colonial nature of political organisation and societies in Sierra Leone, as noted earlier in this chapter and chapter 1, which were heterogeneous and fragmented. Despite this, the British brought them under one territory and their departure in Sierra Leone saw “differences rather than similarities increasingly dominat[ing] political life” in Sierra Leone with elites using these differences to consolidate their control over the state (Ake 1991: 317).

The liberal democratic experiment that had begun towards the decolonisation in Sierra Leone collapsed in 1967 when the head of Sierra Leone army, Brigadier David Lansana seized power following APC’s defeat of the SLPP which witnessed an intense struggle over electoral results between the two parties. This effectively blocked what would have been Africa’s first smooth democratic transition involving transfer of power from a ruling party to an opposition one. A few days after Brigadier Lansana took over; a second coup was staged resulting in the creation of a National Reformation Council (NRC) which took control of the government for a year (Fisher 1969). A year later, a third military coup led to the restoration of civilian rule with the handing over of state power to APC and the position of Prime Minister to Siaka Stevens. The transfer of power marked the beginning of the decline of the



state and the country's descent to state autocracy that contributed to the Revolutionary United Front (RUF) insurgency in 1991. Stevens first transformed the country into a republic in 1971 and then into a one-party state in 1978 after several attempts to overthrow his government failed. In 1985, Joseph Momoh a former army commander succeeded Stevens. However, his rule was brought to an end in 1992 when disgruntled front-line soldiers led by Captain Valentine Strasser seized power and established the National Provisional Ruling Council (NPRC) (Gberie 2005).

### **Explaining the Short-term Causes of the Sierra Leonean Civil War**

Various interpretations have been offered in response to Sierra Leone's state decline, its descent to state autocracy and the civil war. These interpretations tend to focus on the short-term causes including a crisis of patrimonialism (Richards 1996; Reno 1998); an outcome of lumpen culture and youth resistance (Abdullah 1998; Abdullah and Rashid 2004); the predatory functionality of state power (Kandeh 1999); a product of greed, not grievance (Collier 1999, 2001; Collier and Hoeffler 2004) and a new form of barbarism (Kaplan 1994). Although most of these explanations do not bring out the long-term historical causes of the civil war including pre-colonial and colonial legacies, and the eventual state collapse, they deserve attention since an understanding of both long-term and short-term causes of the conflict contributes to our understanding of the dynamics of the civil war in Sierra Leone and responses to it. Below I will review some of these accounts.

#### ***A New Form of Barbarism***

In his seminal article, "The Coming Anarchy", Kaplan (1994) has traced Sierra Leone state's descent to state autocracy to new forms of barbarism, what Richards (1996) has called, the

“New Barbarism” thesis (Richards 1996). Kaplan refutes the political dimensions of the civil war in Sierra Leone and other parts of West Africa, and emphasises its criminal nature – an outcome of traits embedded in the local culture. For him, like in other parts of West Africa, the conflict in Sierra Leone is a result of a combination of factors including marginalisation from the world economy, overpopulation, environmental collapse, disease, crime and deep-seated tribal hatred, among others. Kaplan’s work reduces rebels in West African countries like Sierra Leone to irrational and superstitious bandits engaged in primitive violence. Since his work is not analytical and also it does not examine the local context in a historical perspective, it does not help in explaining the structural causes of the civil war. Other scholars like Richards (1996) who have critiqued the “New Barbarism” thesis have pointed out that the RUF insurgency is an outcome of the disintegration of patrimonial politics in Sierra Leone.

### ***A Crisis of Patrimonial Politics***

Several scholars have traced the origins of the RUF insurgency in Sierra Leone to a “crisis” or collapse of patrimonial politics in the country (Richards 1996; Reno 1998; Boas 2001). As noted earlier, rather than building up formal state institutions, successive post-colonial state elites in Sierra Leone preferred to use informal networks to consolidate their political and economic power. During his reign, Siaka Stevens increasingly centralised his power and authority as well as personalised the office of the President by dismantling district councils, putting the institution of chieftaincy under the control of the central government, establishing a one party state in 1978, politicising the military and police, undermining press freedom, civil society and the autonomy of the legislature (Hayward 1984). For Boas, Stevens is “the perfect embodiment of a neo-patrimonial ruler [who] envisioned himself as the head of the

extended Sierra Leonean family, claimed roots in all major ethnic groups” and portrayed himself as “Pa Siakie” – “the father of the nation” (2001: 708).

The personalisation of government meant, for example, employment and education became dependent on loyalty rather than performance. Reno has called this form of politics, “warlord politics” in which “rulers reject the pursuit of a broader project of creating a state that serves a collective good or even of creating institutions that are capable of developing independent perspectives and acting on behalf of interests distinct from rulers’ and personal exercise of power” (1998: 1). Reno further notes that, patronage politics in Sierra Leone resulted in a “shadow state”, a form of patronage system that was not formally recognised, which at the same time, was “rigidly organised and centred on the rulers’ control over resources” (1998: 2).

Neopatrimonial corruption affected all state enterprises including the diversion of profits from oil and rice marketing for the personal gain of state elites and their associates including Lebanese merchants. However, it is in the diamond sector that it was more pronounced. As Reno notes, “Before Stevens’ rule, diamonds had generated about \$200 million in profits in Sierra Leone’s formal economy, or about 30 percent of national output, and had provided 70 percent of foreign exchange reserves” (1998: 116). Indeed, the extensive patronage network that Stevens and later his successor Joseph Momoh created resulted in few diamonds passing through the formal economy to the extent that, by 1987 they were valued at \$100,000 effectively depriving the state of much needed revenue while financing neo-patrimonial exchange (Reno 1998). As state elites channelled public resources for patrimonial distribution, most of the population was suffering. It is not surprising that an “irrelevant” state emerged that was “inefficient as an instrument of policy, inept in the regulation of social

behaviour and almost irrelevant as a force for the mobilisation of national resources for development” with groups of “people, individuals or certain ‘classes’ retain[ing] sufficient clout to undermine policy and hold the state hostage” (Sesay 1995: 167).

Richards (1996) notes that, a combination of economic decline and external impositions, especially, the IMF and World Bank’s demand for reforming Sierra Leone’s economy including public expenditure cuts and strict financial discipline which starved state elites of resources essential for financing neo-patrimonial exchange in Sierra Leone led to a crisis of patrimonialism in the country. Based on this, Richards uses “the crisis of patrimonialism” as a framework for understanding factors that led to the outbreak of the civil war. He rejects Kaplan’s argument that overpopulation and scarce resources contributed to the violence, and argues that the origins of the RUF insurgency and the brutality that ensued are political and rational rather than anarchic. In fact, for Richards, the crisis of patrimonialism under APC rule resulted in the contraction of the state “both physically (in terms of its communication facilities) and sociologically (in terms of the groups it can afford to patronise)” (1996: 36). And, without sufficient resources to “maintain the crumbling facade of the ‘official state’” the regime had to prioritise maintaining loyalty among the security forces for its survival and this had a devastating effect on, for example, the hinterland, education, jobs and social services (Richards 1996: 36).

Richards further points out that, in Sierra Leone, the crisis of patrimonialism had a negative effect on young people, especially in the area of education since “one end point of much patrimonial redistribution is the payment of school fees” (1996: 36). Momoh who succeeded Stevens viewed education as a privilege rather than a right of Sierra Leoneans. As such, for him the state had no obligation to provide education to its citizens. As Kandeh (1999) has

observed, prospective students were awarded government scholarships for higher education on the basis of their patronage ties and ethnic identity, and not merit. This resulted in the alienation of youths. For Richards, the RUF insurgency is a response to this social exclusion and it sought to provide an alternative political organisation. Richards further notes that, the “excluded intellectuals” who had grievances against their exclusion from the patrimonial networks of support under APC governance, appealed to the “excluded youths” who faced the reality of state recession in the mining districts such as Kailahun and, ultimately providing a fertile recruitment ground for the RUF.

### ***Lumpen Youths and the Culture of Resistance***

Several Sierra Leonean scholars have rejected that the civil war was an outcome of a crisis of patrimonialism per se (Bangura 2004; Abdullah 1998; Abdullah and Rashid 2004; Rashid 2004). Bangura (2004) critiques Richards’ “a crisis of patrimonialism” thesis and traces the origins of the RUF insurgence to the fiscal crisis that Sierra Leone experienced since the early 1980s. He links this to the informalisation of essential industries, such as, diamonds as well as the collapse of the iron ore mines which had previously played a crucial role in providing much of Sierra Leone state’s official revenue. Bangura further notes that the informalisation of public resources was later extended to state sectors, such as, gold and fisheries. This, according to him, weakened the government’s capacity to collect revenue from state enterprises. State elites played a prominent role in “the process of destroying the formal institutions for resource extraction, the management of public sector enterprises, and the regulatory mechanism that had ensured the transfer of revenue from such ventures to the state” (Bangura 2004: 27). Bangura observes that, while the fiscal crisis affected general state provisioning and administration, it increased the fortunes of those who used the state as a source of their livelihood. For Bangura, there is a positive correlation between “the poverty of

the state” and the “affluence of ‘patrimonial’ groups” (2004: 27). Such “patrimonial” groups were insensitive to the suffering of those who were not part of their networks, and who had been seriously affected by the shrinkage of the state and the informalisation of public resources.

Contrary to Richards, Bangura argues that foreign aid flows in Sierra Leone never declined, but instead went up consistently each year since 1987 (except for 1990 when it dropped): “[...] official development assistance to Sierra Leone went up from US\$68 million or 7.3 percent of GNP in 1987 to US\$99 million or 10.6 percent of GNP in 1989; it dropped to US\$66 million or 8.1 percent of GNP in 1990; but shot up to US\$108 million or 10.8 percent of GNP in 1991 [...]” (2004: 26). Bangura further notes that, this happened at a time when APC was engaged in the informalisation of essential formal structures crucial for revenue collection in both the private and public sectors. Internationals ended up taking the responsibility to promote the welfare of ordinary Sierra Leoneans while state elites and their clients abused state resources and strengthened patrimonialism (Bangura 2004; Kandeh 1999). Bangura concludes that most of the population suffered due to the crisis of the state and the increasing gains of patrimonialism, not from the crisis of patrimonialism as Richards claims.

According to Bangura, patrimonialism is just one aspect of the problem of the state in Sierra Leone and as such, a fuller understanding of the political atmosphere that led to the creation of the conditions for the civil war requires a closer examination of other critical issues. Some of these factors have been discussed above like state autocracy and the centralisation of power under APC rule, the silencing of various forms of civic opposition through co-option, suppression and intimidation, the concentration of power in Freetown and the marginalisation

of rural areas. This resulted in “a highly repressive, anti-developmental political system, which rewarded sycophancy [...], and punished honesty, hard work, patriotism and independent thought” (Bangura 2004: 29). The RUF was able to appeal to disaffected youths alienated from mainstream society.

Several Sierra Leonean scholars concur with Bangura (Abdullah 1998, 2004; Rashid 2004; Kandeh 1999). While Abdullah (1998) concurs with Kaplan and Richards that the youth factor is central in understanding the crisis, he points out that their interpretation of the origins and character of this factor are to some extent flawed. For Abdullah, it is vital to understand the historical and sociological processes that led to the formation of the RUF. He observes that the civil war can be traced in the “lumpen” youth culture that began to unfold in the post-1945 period and the absence of a radical post-colonial alternative in Sierra Leone’s political culture (Abdullah 1998, 2004, Rashid 2004). He uses the concept lumpens to refer to mostly unemployed and unemployable urban young males, “who live by their wits or who have one foot in what is generally referred to as the informal or underground economy” (2004: 45). Such youths are said to be prone to anti-social behaviour like substance abuse, gambling, petty crime and violence, among others.

As Kandeh points out, lumpens are “an inchoate mass of thugs, hoodlums, pickpockets, transients, vagabonds, panhandlers, and discharged jailbirds” (1999: 356) and this youth culture had its roots in the *rarray* boy culture (Abdullah 2004).<sup>55</sup> In the post-independence

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<sup>55</sup> *Rarray* boy is a Creole term used to refer to unemployed urban youth involved in anti-social behaviour, such as drugs and petty theft – in short, “underclass” youth (Abdullah 2004). The emergence of *rarray* boys was a result of the colonial political economy in late nineteenth and early twentieth century when peasants, escaped and freed slaves migrated to the city in search for greener pastures with most of them settling in peri-urban enclaves and as the rural to urban migration increased their population continued to grow since there were no jobs in the city and *rarray* boys were compelled to engage in all sorts of social vices including drugs, petty theft, prostitution and violence (Rashid 2004; Abdullah 2002).

period lumpens have been key actors in political violence since SLPP and APC politicians hired them to intimidate and engage in violence against their political opponents.<sup>56</sup> For instance, in the 1973 elections, the ruling party, APC hired lumpens to engage in intimidation and political violence against SLPP politicians forcing SLPP to withdraw from the elections (Rashid 2004). In addition, in the late 1970s Siaka Stevens was able to use lumpen youth violence to establish a one party-state in Sierra Leone.

According to Abdullah, it is also crucial to note that the 1970s and 1980s witnessed a loose association between marginalised radical students and urban lumpen youth – an outcome of their common experience of state repression under APC rule. Their meetings took place at cultural sites and trends – “the *pote* (a place for alienated and marginal youth to congregate, smoke, gamble, and talk), reggae music, odelay festivals<sup>57</sup>, drugs, a new Krio language, and the neighbourhood – which had hitherto separated respectable middle-class youths from the lumpen ‘riffraffs’” (Abdullah and Rashid 2004: 178; Rashid 2004; Abdullah 1998). It is at these sites that radical students and lumpens engaged in radical politics and where also radical students “conscientised” the underclass youth with ideas from Pan-Africanism and the Libyan leader, Muammar Qaddafi’s *Green Book* – that favours direct democracy through people assemblies to the Soviet’s single party-rule and Western democracy – resulting in the development of an anti-establishment culture among the youth (Abdullah and Rashid 2004: 179; Richards 1996).

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<sup>56</sup> This can be linked to the Chiefdom level violence in colonial Sierra Leone (even today) as noted earlier, in which “young men” were at the center of political violence involving rival ruling families.

<sup>57</sup> In Sierra Leone, masked urban *odelay* societies started as urban gangs “modelled on traditional secret societies, boasting masquerades and initiation rituals” which helped to bind their members together and have often been associated with political violence and petty crime, though in recent years they are now seen as representing social clubs (Opala 1994: 198).



The development of the anti-establishment culture among student radicals and lumpens, in the late 1970s and 1980s witnessed violent clashes between the APC-led government and students at Fourah Bay College (FBC) with lumpens joining the violence on the part of the students. The RUF is said to be a by-product of this alliance between urban lumpens and radical students who increasingly came to believe that progressive social transformation could only be achieved through violence. As Rashid notes, “The RUF attack of 1991 and the NPRC coup d’état of 1992 were direct results of youth and student political actions, and government reactions of the 1980s” (2004: 83). Abdullah and his colleagues claim that none of the original intellectual leaders in the “revolutionary” movement, including some student leaders who went into exile in Ghana, were part of the RUF leadership. They further point out that the RUF leader, Foday Sankor was not an intellectual, hence their denial of the presence of either radical or “excluded intellectuals” in the RUF leadership (Abdullah 1998; Rashid 2004; Bangura 2004). In response to Abdullah and others’ criticism regarding RUF intellectuals, Richards acknowledges that he was quick to give credit to the “highly-educated civilian members of the RUF/SL’s small ‘war council’”, thus notes that “movement intellectuals” guided the organisation and some of them had not gone beyond primary school education and some were of mixed Liberian-Sierra Leonean descent (see the 1998 reprint of his book – “Postscript”: 174).<sup>58</sup>

While Abdullah and others have attributed the civil war to excluded urban underclass, Chauveau and Richards although agree that disenfranchised youths played a role in the outbreak of the war, based on their research in eastern Sierra Leone conclude that the RUF recruits were from an excluded agrarian underclass who during the war sought to target local

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<sup>58</sup> Paul Richards uses the concept “movement intellectuals” to refer to thinkers “(ideologues, apologists, strategists etc, whether highly-trained or autodidacts) who develop their analytical skills on the job, in response to the needs and circumstances of their movement” (1996: 175).

leaders and community institutions (2008). For the two scholars, in the context of Kailahun, the war was not much about natural resources such as diamonds, but more about “serious (and still unresolved) social tensions of an agrarian character, skilfully exploited by the RUF” (Chauveau and Richards 2008: 536), thus the violence reflected an element of revenge. Chauveau and Richards note that “community failure” in rural areas resulting from traditional social institutions’ failure to incorporate a large number of community members led to the crisis of the youth in rural areas. The two scholars further note that, the rural “lineage” structures allowed an exploitative labour system, rigid marriage laws and heavy fines. As such, it became difficult for a large number of young men to acquire social standing including the position of an adult or eldership in the community resulting in their frustration with the system. Chauveau and Richards conclude that the war that ensued in Sierra Leone was a rebellion against the existing social system. This was also confirmed by chiefs, youths, NGOs and villagers I interviewed in Sierra Leone who pointed out that forced labour, social exclusion and heavy fines, were among the factors that led young men to flee rural areas to urban areas and to Liberia where the RUF recruited them. However, it is important to note that not all RUF combatants joined the movement voluntarily, quite a number of them were abducted and forced to join the rebels.

From the above discussion, it is vital to note that “community failure” (which contributed to the marginalisation of rural youths) and “state failure” (which largely affected urban youths as the state could not provide public goods including education and the creation of employment opportunities) should be viewed as interdependent. Both had a role in contributing to the country’s youth crisis that saw marginalised youths playing a central role in the civil war. In this regard, putting much emphasis on urban lumpen youths will not help us understand the magnitude of the “youth crisis” in Sierra Leone and it also silences youths

from rural areas who voluntarily joined the RUF. The urban lumpen youth thesis also fails to account for the involvement of foreign Liberian and Burkina Faso youths in the RUF ranks.

In my interviews with two former combatants, one a former RUF commander and another, a former Civil Defence Forces (CDF) commander, both pointed out that poverty and continued marginalisation that most ex-combatants experience in post-war Sierra Leone may force them to join rebellions in other countries in the region – at least by doing so, they can earn a living. Further, they pointed out that the recent instability in neighbouring Guinea made a number of former combatants “excited”, most of them now live in cities such as Bo, Kenema and Freetown, with their fellow “brothers and sisters” (other former combatants) since their families and communities rejected and re-marginalised them. This could also explain why foreign mercenaries from Liberia and Burkina Faso joined the RUF ranks – poverty and marginalisation in their communities. As such, the crisis should not be seen as limited to Sierra Leone’s urban lumpen youths, but should be seen as a regional one.

### **Liberia and other Regional Actors**

The conflict in Sierra Leone should also be understood in the context of an insecure and unstable region, especially the crisis in Liberia in the 1980s. The end of the Cold War saw Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Cote d’Ivoire, Liberia, Senegal and Sierra Leone involved in “an interconnected web of conflicts that have seen refugees, rebels, and arms spill across porous borders” (Adebajo 2004: 1). In addition, Libya, a North African state, played a significant role in the conflict. It is well-documented that the Libyan leader, Muammar Qaddafi helped start civil wars in Sierra Leone and Liberia since he provided military training to RUF rebels and Charles Taylor’s National Patriotic Front of Liberia (NPFL) rebel group, “as part of his anti-Western crusade for influence in West Africa” (Hirsch 2001: 147). Davies considers Libyan military training and finance for rebellion as the key factor that really triggered the

civil war in Sierra Leone (2000). Libya was not the only country that provided military training for the rebellion since some Sierra Leoneans living in West African countries such as Nigeria, Ghana, Liberia and Cote d'Ivoire were later recruited for training in Burkina Faso, and after their training they first went to Liberia with other Libyan-trained Sierra Leoneans to join forces with Charles Taylor's NPFL's initial campaign against the Liberian president, Samuel Doe that started in 1989 before invading Sierra Leone on 23 March 1991 (Abdullah and Rashid 2004). Taylor in return supported the RUF's invasion of Sierra Leone: "[...] provided a base in Liberia for the RUF to launch its 'revolution' with the help of 200 Burkinabe regular soldiers and NPFL veterans [...]" (Abdullah and Rashid 2004: 185). It is not surprising that after the war the UN-assisted Sierra Leone Special Court indicted Taylor for crimes against humanity and war crimes in Sierra Leone.

Taylor's support for the RUF rebellion was done for several reasons. Momoh had allowed the Economic Community of West African States Military Observer Group (ECOMOG) that had intervened in Liberia's civil war to use Sierra Leone as its air-base to launch attacks against Taylor's NPFL in order to prevent it from toppling Doe's regime (Keen 2005). In addition, the government of Sierra Leone contributed troops to ECOMOG forces launching attacks on the NPFL in Liberia which, according to the TRC, "drew an embittered and vengeful response from within Liberia" (2004, Vol.3A: 98). In response to this, Taylor sought to retaliate against the government of Sierra Leone. By supporting the RUF incursion into Sierra Leone and providing it with arms and ammunition, Taylor sought to undermine and discredit ECOMOG by showing that it was not capable of keeping peace in the region.

Keen notes that, internal discipline could have been a motive, since Taylor sent "some of his wildest and most violent fighters" to join forces with the RUF (2005: 37). Taylor's support

for the RUF was also aimed at forcing Sierra Leone to withdraw its troops from the ECOMOG peace operation in Liberia. In addition, it would also help him exploit the country resources, especially diamonds. Although Taylor provided support to the RUF, there is no evidence that it was his brainchild.

## **An Overview of the Civil War in Sierra Leone**

On the 23<sup>rd</sup> of March 1991, the RUF consisting of a small group of Libyan-trained Sierra Leoneans with the support of Burkinabe and Taylor's NPFL invaded the eastern region of Sierra Leone from Liberia with the objective of ending APC's grip on power.<sup>59</sup> The war in Sierra Leone had spilled over from neighbouring Liberia where Taylor was fighting the Doe regime. For more than a decade Sierra Leone experienced a devastating civil war that lasted until January 2002 in which an estimated 50,000 people lost their lives (Abdullah 2004; Gberie 2005), a large number of civilians were displaced, raped and maimed, children were recruited through abduction, diamonds were looted and the revenue from diamonds helped prolong the war, the rule of law became non-existent, social capital declined and schools, government buildings and administrative infrastructure were destroyed. This devastation and the RUF's targeting of civilians contradicted its claims that it wanted to liberate the people of Sierra Leone from state autocracy and introduce multi-party democracy in the country, that it was fighting for the provision of public goods such as better medical care, free education and the need to protect Sierra Leone's resources from foreign capitalists.<sup>60</sup> Because of its violence against civilians, the RUF failed to win the sympathy and support of the people in the

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<sup>59</sup> Although he was not part of the first RUF rebel group that invaded eastern Sierra Leone from Liberia, a former RUF commander acknowledged the presence of the Burkinabes in the RUF and also pointed out that, he was among the group that the "special forces" from Burkina Faso provided with military training in Liberia (personal interview, 23 November 2010).

<sup>60</sup> The former RUF commander cited above also told me that the RUF fought to put SLPP in power and he could not understand why the same SLPP which he fought for went on to imprison him and his colleagues after the war.

Southern and Eastern Provinces, despite the fact that most of them wanted to see an end to the APC regime which was aligned to the Northern Province.

### ***The 1992 Coup***

In order to counter the RUF invasion in the east, the government of Sierra Leone deployed its paramilitary State Security Defense (SSD), however, the SSD could not defeat the rebels since it was poorly equipped and lacked morale (Abdullah and Rashid 2004). In 1992, a group of young officers in the Sierra Leone army staged a protest in Freetown against poor salaries and working conditions for front-line soldiers which inhibited them to counter the rebels more effectively. The mutiny escalated into a coup resulting in Momoh fleeing to neighbouring Guinea (Gberie 2005). The soldiers then formed the NPRC, led by a young officer, Captain Valentine Strasser to replace the APC regime. The new NPRC government which had the support of young people pledged to end corruption, end the war swiftly and a return to civilian rule. However, without experience and consisting of mostly high school graduates as well as its leadership surrounded by “discredited politicians and senior civil servants” who had ruined the country, the NPRC regime soon began to display political behaviour that had characterised previous regimes including a high level of corruption, the targeting of political opponents and the looting of diamonds for personal gain (Abdullah and Rashid 2004: 187).

In an attempt to bring a quick end to the war and in response to the RUF insurgency that was gaining strength, the NPRC regime increased the size of the army from 3 000 to nearly 15 000 and the majority of the new recruits were urban lumpen youths who, according to Rashid, “revealed their lumpen instincts in their desire to get rich quick, the use of drugs, disrespect for ordinary citizens and excessive womanising” (2004: 85; Abdullah and Rashid 2004). The recruitment of the “urban riffraff” in the army led to the creation of a “lumpen

militariat” and tipping the “balance of war in favour of the RUF” (Abdullah and Rashid 2004: 187). In addition, army rank and file who shared the same social background as the RUF rebels colluded with the RUF resulting in the phenomenon called “sobel” (soldier by day, rebel by night) in the period 1994 to 1997 (Kandeh 1999; Keen 2005; Richards 1996). The same period also witnessed RUF change its tactics from conventional warfare to “classical guerrilla tactics using bypass to hit strategic targets” (Abdullah and Rashid 2004: 188). The phenomenon of “sobels” and the RUF’s change in military tactics as well as the revenue that the rebels got from the diamonds contributed to the prolongation of the war.

### **The 1996 Multiparty Elections and AFRC-RUF Challenges**

Under local and international pressure, the NPRC government conceded to a return to multiparty politics. In early 1996 multi-party elections were held in Sierra Leone. The elections were conducted in the midst of a civil war and increased RUF violence against civilians since the rebel group wanted to discourage people from voting. Despite these impediments the elections went ahead and Ahmad Tejan Kabbah of the SLPP emerged the winner with the NPRC regime handing over power to him. However, this was short-lived as Kabbah was overthrown in a military coup staged by the Armed Forces Revolutionary Council (AFRC) which then invited the RUF to join their government in Freetown. Kabbah and his government fled to neighbouring Guinea where they mobilised regional and international support. The AFRC under the leadership of Major Jonny Paul Koroma suspended the country’s constitution and banned all political parties. The AFRC-RUF coalition was also short-lived since the Nigerian-dominated ECOMOG forces together with

local Civil Defence Forces (CDF) expelled the regime from Freetown in 1998, restoring Kabbah back in power.<sup>61</sup>

The RUF continued to fight for the control of Freetown. Backed by Ukrainian and South African mercenaries, the RUF and dissident AFRC units invaded Freetown in January 1999 (Richards 2002; Gberie 2005). Richards (2002) has noted that those who attacked Freetown in 1999 had various motives: some in the AFRC joined the attack with the hope to return to power, others wanted to destroy the evidence on which the cases against their colleagues who had been imprisoned rested and the RUF's main interest was to free their leader Sankoh from prison.

Contrary to the economic analysis put forward by scholars such as Keen (2000), Reno (1998), and Collier (2001) which views rebellion as indistinguishable from organised crime,<sup>62</sup> Abdullah and Rashid (2004) argue that the RUF had a political agenda since it was interested in capturing political power as shown in its involvement in the 1999 invasion of Freetown as well as its participation in the AFRC government. The RUF's strategy was to capture political power by any means at its disposal. However, Abdullah and Rashid do not account for why it failed to break away from its violent past after signing a power-sharing agreement in 1999 in which Foday Sankoh was appointed vice President of the country as well as chairman of a commission managing strategic resources including diamonds and gold, and development.

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<sup>61</sup> These were community-based militias that emerged in the mid-1990s among various communities in Sierra Leone. Their main aim was to protect their communities from RUF and government soldiers attacks when it became clear that the Sierra Leone Army was colluding with the rebels to stabilise the countryside and also that the army was failing to defeat rebels. The most prominent and largest community-based militia was the *Kamajoisia* (a militia force from the south and eastern parts of Sierra Leone that was rooted in Mende cultural practices, see Hoffman 2007).

<sup>62</sup> According to this view, the RUF was more interested in mining diamonds than seizing political power.



As such, the two views – the view that the RUF had a political agenda and the one that sees the war as mainly a function of economics – should not be seen as in much contradiction with each other. As noted earlier, in Sierra Leone the dominant group (state elites and their allies)’s appropriation of public resources and their distribution to their patrimonial networks had a devastating effect on the population and the state, resulting in the less dominant group (disenfranchised youths, in particular) claiming their share and joining the RUF to wage a “war of liberation”. In this regard, greed by state elites and their allies, generated grievances from the marginalised which resulted in them calling for an armed “revolution” as well as joining the RUF ranks. As a result, the outbreak of the civil war in Sierra Leone (in relation to the short-term causes discussed above) could be attributed to the interaction of economic motives and opportunities with political factors and economic grievances. However, the revolution turned wrong when RUF wanted to achieve their political agenda and access to mineral resources by any possible means as was the case during the 1999 invasion of Freetown code-named “operation no living thing” in which a lot of civilians lost their lives (Gberie 2005; Alie 2000).

### **A Framework for Liberal Peacebuilding in Sierra Leone: Lome Accord**

The January 1999 AFRC-RUF attack on Freetown saw the Sierra Leone crisis receiving much more international attention and commitment. With the both the RUF and the government of Sierra Leone under immense pressure to resolve the conflict peacefully (international and regional organisations such as the UN, Commonwealth, ECOWAS and OAU as well as states such as Libya, the US and UK became involved), the warring parties signed a peace agreement (Lome Peace Agreement) in July 1999 in Lome, Togo (Malan, Rakate and McIntyre 2002). This peace accord should be seen as a framework for liberal peacebuilding in Sierra Leone. It led to the establishment of the United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone

(UNAMSIL) to implement the agreement, and the withdrawal of ECOMOG forces from the country. It included a power-sharing deal between the SLPP government which would end with the 2001 elections, security sector reform and a blanket amnesty to all warring parties. It also focused on other significant issues on governance, education, health, disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration, and the establishment of a human rights commission as well as a TRC.

Despite the fact that the agreement provided an opportunity for both the RUF and the Kabbah government to gain legitimacy as well as an access to economic and political power for the RUF, the protagonists had not negotiated in good faith, thus failed to sustain the process resulting in its collapse as well as the country's failure to make a transition to peace and stability. The peace process was largely flawed. Since the immediate imperative was to stop overt violence as well as achieve order and stability, the peace agreement was rushed. Given that the violence was largely associated with the RUF, the negotiations were done between the RUF and the government. This resulted in a range of key stakeholders including other armed combatants such as the *Kamajor* militia, AFRC/SLA and West Side boys, civil society and local community leaders being marginalised in decision-making. Moreover, those involved in the peace negotiations failed to make use of the *barry* system, a community decision-making system that is found throughout Sierra Leone which local communities use to discuss issues, resolve conflicts and reach decision through consensus. As such, a bottom-up approach to the process could have been useful in helping formulate an agreement that had a vision for the country as it would have allowed the wider public and other stakeholders to participate in the peace process.

In May 2000 the Lome Peace Agreement collapsed and much blame was laid on the RUF which had been reluctant to disarm, continued to harass civilians, contested the legitimacy of UNAMSIL and took hostage 500 UN peacekeepers as well as confiscated its equipment threatening its collapse (ICG 2001a). The May 2000 crisis brought the conflict to increased international attention with the British taking a pivotal role in ending it. A combination of factors contributed to the eventual stabilisation of the situation, disarmament and demobilisation of thousands of the RUF and other armed groups, and an end to the conflict. These include, diplomacy, British military intervention, the May 2001 Guinean bombardment of Kambia – a town in north Sierra Leone on the Sierra Leone-Guinea border that was under RUF control, the UN Security Council expanded the size of UNAMSIL and its mandate which allowed UN troops to use force against the RUF, civil disobedience, and the imposition of economic and travel sanctions on Charles Taylor's government in Liberia (Ero 2009; Olonisakin 2008; Paris 2004; ICG 2001b). In early 2002 the war was officially declared over and multi-party elections were successfully held in the same year, which Kabbah's SLPP won. The post-war period has seen international intervention strategies aimed at promoting the liberal peace in Sierra Leone as will be discussed in the following chapter.

## **Chapter 6: Liberal Peacebuilding in Sierra Leone**

### **Introduction**

In February 2002, during her visit to Sierra Leone, Clare Short, the then UK Secretary of State for International Development, said: “[...] the UK government is committed to stand by Sierra Leone for the long-term provided that we have a strong mutual commitment to the building of a competent, transparent and uncorrupt modern state” (2002). Indeed, the end of the civil war gave the internationals an opportunity to transform the Sierra Leonean state on liberal lines, economically and politically with the aim of creating a stable and peaceful post-war society. Much attention has been given to building a Western liberal democracy and effective state institutions, a (neo)liberal economic order, security and governance with little attention to social justice, the basic needs of most of the population, welfare, custom, tradition, local political dynamics, and customary peacemaking and political institutions. Internationals intervened in the war-torn state of Sierra Leone on the assumption that the locals did not have the capacity to (re)build it on their own viewing themselves as having the capacity to do so. Based on this flawed assumption, internationals (working with state elites) took a direct role in the statebuilding and peacebuilding efforts in the country sidelining most of the population. This international peace support operation in Sierra Leone appeared to be neo-colonial in nature (see Chapter 3).

From this it could be noted that, in Sierra Leone, international attempts at social and political engineering largely reflected internationals’ preference and terms, and failed to engage with most of the population in defining the kind of post-war society/polity they wanted to construct. As such, this neglected “local agency and indigenous capacities for institution building” (Englebert and Tull 2008: 134) as well as customary practices and customary law,

and the development of a social contract between the state and citizens, among others. As this chapter will show, Sierra Leoneans (I encountered during my fieldwork in the country), some of whom live on the “margins of the state”, who have become disillusioned with the liberal peace, state and state elites’ failure to respond to the underlying causes of the conflict as well as their needs, want to have more voice in defining the sort of post-war society they want. In addition, they have offered critical responses and agency challenging the hegemony of the liberal peace in the country.

The withdrawal of UNAMSIL in December 2005, the holding of two successful post-war national elections in 2002 and 2007, and the smooth transfer of power from the ruling party, SLPP to the opposition, APC in 2007 has resulted in Sierra Leone being cited as “a successful example of multilateral peacebuilding” (UN Secretary-General 2010: 6). Yet, the reality on the ground shows that nearly a decade after the end of the conflict a liberal democratic state, a self-sustaining peace and political stability are far from being achieved. International intervention in the country has witnessed the alienation of the interests of most of the population in the country. The peace dividend in Sierra Leone is yet to emerge for most of the population including war victims, and it largely supports state elites and those connected to them. Despite the emergence of a basic form of security and some progress in the Human Development Index (HDI) in 2010,<sup>63</sup> Sierra Leone’s social and health indicators remain weak. The government of Sierra Leone has acknowledged that it is most unlikely that it will meet most of the millennium development goals (MDGs) by 2015: the country has an adult illiteracy rate of 60 per cent, its infant rate (89 per 1 000 live births) and maternal rate (857 per 100 000 live births) are among the highest in the world, it has a high rate of unemployment, particularly among the youth (Government of Sierra Leone 2010) and about

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<sup>63</sup> In 2010 it was ranked 158 out of 169 countries compared to 180 out of 182 countries in 2009 based on 2007 data (UNDP 2009b, 2010).

70% of the population live below the poverty line of \$1.25 a day, most of them live in extreme poverty (UN 2009), among other challenges.<sup>64</sup>

In addition, the Sierra Leonean state is increasingly becoming polarised along regional and ethnic lines, has failed to break away from patrimonial politics, is experiencing pervasive governmental corruption and growing inequality as well as continues to be highly dependent on external aid. For international actors such as the US and UK, IFIs including the World Bank, IMF and African Development Bank (AfDB), DFID, the UN and EU who provide support to the state, imagining peace and progress in Sierra Leone outside of the liberal peace framework is difficult, if not impossible.

Chapter 4 noted the need to think beyond liberal peace by examining how the locals have appropriated, modified, subverted, resisted and accepted it for their own purpose, and the forms of peace that are emerging in post-conflict societies. Rather than praising the liberal peace as the mainstream scholars have done or burying it, the chapter noted the need to put the context back in contemporary peacebuilding, examining the interactions between the liberal peace and the local, and the forms of peace that are emerging as the two interact. This is precisely what this chapter aims to do. This chapter will show that while internationals have played a dominant role in (re)building post-war Sierra Leone and have wanted to establish a form of peace that takes a liberal form marginalising or ignoring local forms of politics and peacemaking, the dynamics on the ground have hindered the full realisation of the liberal peace. For instance, traditional forms of governance and justice are so entrenched in the society, particularly, rural societies and cities other than Freetown, and in such places

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<sup>64</sup> The Minister of Finance and Economic Development, Samura M. W. Kamara (2010: 5) noted that “inadequate infrastructure, especially roads, electricity and [clean] water as well as a low level of basic social services” make it difficult for the country to achieve the MDGs by 2015.

the liberal peace has often been met with a mix of resistance and partial acceptance resulting in hybridity. Hybrid forms of peace and politics have emerged in Sierra Leone - an outcome of a mixture of accommodation, resistance and acceptance, tolerance and modification of the liberal peace as will be shown in this chapter. Further, the chapter will show that the complex nature and dynamics of the local environment resulting in multiple dimensions of peacebuilding in Sierra Leone including customary peacebuilding, liberal peacebuilding and hybridised forms of peacebuilding that incorporate elements of the liberal peace and the local. Customary peacebuilding has tended to focus on local aspects and institutions of peacebuilding and social cohesion that mainstream peacebuilding has largely ignored such as ritual cleansing, secret societies, chieftaincy, the tree, the hut, ancestors, reconciliation, customary justice and law, and dispute resolution. In more remote areas, such customary peacebuilding has operated in parallel to mainstream peacebuilding.

### **Sierra Leone a Success Story of Liberal Peace- and Statebuilding?**

The previous chapter has noted the role of disaffected subaltern youths in rural areas and cities in the emergence of the civil war in Sierra Leone. In addition, the conflict greatly affected the hinterland, especially, the eastern and southern areas.<sup>65</sup> Yet, international peace support operations have privileged the capital city (Freetown), state elites, statebuilding and the construction of a liberal peace over the “margins of the state” such as Kailahun District, Sierra Rutile and Mattru Jong whose inhabitants experience poor living conditions, high levels of poverty, poor access to safe drinking water, health and education, and poor infrastructure. This is despite the fact that, the state is highly contested in Sierra Leone and

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<sup>65</sup> For instance, in its 2009-2011 development plan, the Kailahun District Council notes that the 2001 vulnerability assessment stated that an estimated 80 per cent of the infrastructure in the district required reconstruction (2009). It further notes that, “The general standard of living of the populace is very low, with the majority having access to meals of poor nutritional status and drinking water that is not safe” and also in small communities people live in substandard houses that have “become death traps and therefore dangerous to live in” (Kailahun District Council 2009: 8).

“indigenous” communities predominantly occupy and control the “up country” space, as opposed to Freetown where the state has historically been the strongest, a result of the heavy concentration of white and Creole settlers in the pre-independence period. As such, the existence of multiple systems of power and authority including informal networks and institutions such as chieftaincy, women and youth associations, secret societies, kinship and ex-combatant networks, and religious networks (see appendix 3) has allowed for the existence of multiple systems of social ordering which either compete for space and power or cooperate with each other or both. This has prevented the state from providing a single dominant form of social ordering. Yet, in their endeavour to establish a single sovereign, internationals are not keen on acknowledging such non-state systems and institutions for social ordering in Sierra Leone.

Internationals’ privileging of statebuilding over the building of informal institutions particularly, the chieftaincy system, human needs and welfare of most of the population in Sierra Leone is reflected in Mohamed Sidie Sheriff (the World Bank’s Communication Officer in Sierra Leone Sierra Leone)’s claim that at the end of the civil war Sierra Leone had two challenges: 1) statebuilding (“the rebuilding of state institutions”) and 2) state transformation (“making it [the state] look better”) (personal interview, 05 December 2009). In response to the crisis in Sierra Leone, international donors have taken an institutional approach to peacebuilding and statebuilding committing millions of dollars to support security sector reform (SSR), the Special Court for Sierra Leone, national and local government elections, a multi-party political system, local government, institutional reform and building the capacity of national institutions for democratic governance, respect for civil and political liberties. Internationals have also committed resources to the establishment and operation of the country’s Anti-corruption Commission, the establishment of a (neo)liberal



economic order, a vibrant civil society, a free, professional and independent media, rule of law and human rights. It is thought that through the provision, promotion and establishment of these institutions sustainable peace will emerge in Sierra Leone.

Sierra Leone has also witnessed “a wide range and comprehensive governance reform measures [...] being undertaken [including] the enactment of the Anti-corruption Act 2000 [and a new Anti-corruption Act 2008], Anti-money Laundering Act in 2004; a new Public Procurement Act 2004; the Local Government Act, 2004; the Budget and Accountability Bill, and an Investment Code, 2005” (Government of Sierra Leone 2006: 3). In an attempt to improve good governance and accountability, DFID Sierra Leone, the World Bank, EU and other international donors have also supported work on strengthening Public Financial Management (PFM) systems and civil service reform. Internationals have also supported the establishment and operation of a number of core state institutions for democracy and good governance including the office of the Ombudsman, the National Commission for Privatisation, the National Revenue Authority, the National Electoral Commission (NEC), Political Parties Registration Commission, the Decentralisation Secretariat, the National Commission for Democracy and the Independent Media Commission, among others. Since the end of the conflict, Sierra Leone has held two multi-party legislative and presidential elections (2002 and 2007) and two local council elections (2004 and 2008). The 2007 national elections have been described as overall peaceful and credible, evidence that the country is democratising (UN 2009).

Yet, little attention has been paid to indigenous and traditional social, economic and political structures, and forms of peace and peacemaking that exist and have deep roots in most parts of rural Sierra Leone as well as “local” culture, values, politics, structures of power and

authority.<sup>66</sup> This has further alienated most of the population from the state with those in the hinterland viewing it as being located in Freetown. TAs I interviewed expressed disappointment with the state noting that it has failed to meet people's basic needs and also that state elites are privileging Lebanese merchants and contractors from Freetown with whom they have established patron-client relations over local contractors and business persons (group interview, TAs, 28 November, 2009).<sup>67</sup> Further, the TAs were critical of internationals such as the EU, who according to them, view the locals as lacking capacity, thus, bring "their brothers" (expatriates) to do work that locals are qualified to do. They therefore, questioned the logic of spending thousands of dollars in salaries and holiday allowances on expatriates when there are locals who are better qualified than such expatriates which for them, is corruption: "Most of the money is not coming for us. They are eating it" (group interview, TAs, 28 November 2009).<sup>68</sup> The TAs also pointed out that, "We are not happy. We cannot live as third class citizens". The TAs further noted that they have raised these issues in workshops. Indeed, ordinary people have become disillusioned with the state's failure to meet their basic needs and welfare, and resent internationals' failure to acknowledge their capacity to contribute to local development programs/transformation.

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<sup>66</sup> For instance, internationals privileged the Special Court for Sierra Leone over the TRC, war victims and customary approaches to peacebuilding. Over US\$300 million was spent on the Special Court for Sierra Leone to prosecute nine people who bore "the greatest responsibility for the commission of crimes against humanity, war crimes and other serious violations of international humanitarian law as well as crimes committed under relevant Sierra Leonean law in the territory of Sierra Leone" (UN 2000: 1; Hoffman 2008). This means that at least \$33 million dollars was spent on each perpetrator. Yet, war victims did not receive much support including medical assistance and compensation. In 2009 (seven years after the end of the civil war) the President of Sierra Leone launched a trust fund for war victims, however, it has received very little international support (personal interview, Obi Buya Kamara, NaCSA, 08 December 2009).

<sup>67</sup> A local businessman pointed out that, he is finding it difficult to secure a business loan from the Central Bank of Sierra Leone and that state elites and bank officials are prioritising Lebanese investors over local business persons, particularly local business persons who are not connected to them or who refuse to bribe them (personal interview, 23 November, 2010).

<sup>68</sup> Similar criticisms were raised by a respondent who works for an international NGO who said "They [internationals] are spending a lot of money on expatriates while local staff does most of the dirty work" (personal interview, confidential source, 01 December 2009). However, ActionAid Sierra Leone was singled out for having a country director who is Sierra Leonean.

From Freetown to Kailahun to Matru Jong to Sierra Rutile the general perception among ordinary people is that the peace dividend has not been equitably shared and peace remains fragile. For them, most of the factors that contributed to the civil war remain unaddressed including marginalisation, unequal power relations, social injustice, corruption, exclusion and poverty with some saying that the situation is even getting worse (personal interview, Legal Officer, Freetown, 08 December 2009; Community Leaders Training, Kailahun, 11 November 2010). Indeed, these are some of the challenges that TRC report (2004) noted as needing urgent attention since a failure to address them might see the country returning to conflict. As such, there is an element of anger among the “up country” people, that the state is biased towards the centre (Freetown), Lebanese merchants and foreign investors, neglecting the periphery (the hinterland).

Yet, state and economic elites, and the World Bank see Sierra Leone as having made a transition to a “post” post-conflict phase and are privileging security as well as (neo)liberal peace and economics over social peace for addressing the country’s challenges. In order, to rationalise the establishment of a free market system in the country, state elites and the proponents of (neo)liberal economics have made promises about the benefits that such a system would bring not only to the state, but also to poor Sierra Leoneans.<sup>69</sup> Such benefits

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<sup>69</sup> In rural areas where the state has invited transnational corporations to invest in agricultural land (most of which is customary land), the use of concepts such as “agriculture-for-development” (World Bank 2008b), employment creation and economic growth has led the state and its development partners to consider such investment a key priority. In order to make this more appealing to the rural populace, the use of such concepts has also meant the creation of pathologies in rural areas where there are vast tracts of agriculture land, such as “under-utilised land” and “food insecure”. Large scale farming is viewed as a solution to such pathologies. Since the locals lack capacity to engage in such agricultural activities, multinational corporations are invited and would be considered crucial for “transforming” the livelihoods of poor local subsistence farmers. This overlooks the fact that such customary land is being kept for future generations. Some of the rural people have come to accept these pathologies, for instance, a town chief told me that “We were ignorant about agriculture” and he further said that the community supports the idea of “big farms” (personal interview, Chief Pyne, 21 November 2010). The same town chief noted the lack of basic health services in the chiefdom, particularly a “big” hospital. The chiefdom offered 30 acres of land to the government for the purpose of building a hospital however the government built a small health centre on 4 acres of land and called it a hospital. Further, he noted that the “hospital” has inadequate medicine and bedding, and “babies are finding it difficult”.

include economic growth, sustainable development, chiefdom development, an increase in food security (in relation to foreign investment in agricultural land<sup>70</sup>) and jobs. As such, state-centred and (neo)liberal peace-centred abstractions such as (national)security, investor friendly, rule of law, economic growth and development have become dominant, seeking to erase the interests, welfare, needs and rights of landowners in rural mining areas as well as rural areas where foreign companies such as Addax Bioenergy have invested in customary land for the purpose of producing biofuel or oil palm for Western markets. For instance, despite promises of development, Imperi Chiefdom (Bonthe district), a rutil mining area, is in a deplorable state without running water, electricity and good roads. The host communities and landowners face everyday challenges of land and food insecurities as well as extreme poverty, land degradation, loss of land to the mining company and the creation of artificial lakes due to the use of dredge mining. In addition, most of the people are not well educated and have been blamed for this. For example, a local respondent who works for an international NGO pointed out that the people are “lazy academically” and are selling their land to the mining company so that the company pays them surface rents as owners of the land (personal interview, confidential source, 01 December 2009). Yet, in my interviews with the locals, they expressed a lot of interest in education citing poverty and corruption as major impediments to their education. For instance, a town chief pointed out that recently a vocational training school was established in the area, however, most locals have “no cash to pay for the tuition fees” and in addition, scholarships are not being granted to the financially needy, but to those who are connected or related to senior members of the mining company and state elites (personal interview, town chief, 21 November, 2010). Further, the locals are bitter that the government sold away their land to the mining company without first seeking

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<sup>70</sup> This is despite the fact that such transnational corporations are more interested in biofuel production and cash crops such as oil palm than food crops. Yet, the country has a high prevalence of hunger (in 2010 it ranked 79 out of 84 countries on the Global Hunger Index). In addition, ordinary farmers complain that the government has failed to support and protect the already existing indigenous farmers.

their consent. Indeed, poverty, economic liberalisation and corruption are some of the reasons why most people in the area lack education and skills, not laziness.

Meanwhile, mining activities have undermined local economies and have also disrupted traditional land use practices. As such, there is a lot of anger among the host communities that the state and their Paramount Chief have failed to protect their interests and rights from Sierra Rutile mining company, one of the largest foreign investors in the country.<sup>71</sup> In addition, there are also complaints that surface rent payments that landowners receive from the company are meagre and that landowners are not consulted, even when it comes to deciding how these funds are to be shared between them and the state, the district council, the chiefdom development committee and the Member of Parliament (MP) (group interview, youth leaders, 21 November, 2010).<sup>72</sup> A youth leader pointed out that “The funds belong to us [landowners]”, however, “Much [money] goes to the Paramount Chief, Chiefdom Council, the District Council, the MP and the state, and little to the people. When extended families share cash from surface rents each gets little” (group interview, youth leader, 21 November 2010).<sup>73</sup> He then noted that, “The mining company is using *our* [landowners] money to

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<sup>71</sup> Villagers in Imperi Chiefdom perceive their Paramount Chief as conniving with the government and the rutile mining company (as well as that she accepts bribes from the company, such as bags of rice). However, national governing structures tend to supersede the authority of the Paramount Chief (see Akiwumi 2011). For instance, part 2.1 of the 2009 *Mines and Minerals Act* states that “All rights of ownership in and control of minerals in, under or upon any land in Sierra Leone and its continental shelf are vested in the Republic notwithstanding any right of ownership or otherwise that any person may possess in and to the soil on, in or under which minerals are found or situated” (Government of Sierra Leone 2009a: 8). This effectively takes away land rights of rural farmers in mineral rich areas. Yet, the *Provinces Land Act* cap. 122, provides that “protectorate lands are vested in the tribal authority (now chiefdom councils) to manage on behalf, and for the benefit, of community members with land rights” (Akiwumi 2011: 61).

<sup>72</sup> In its 2011 Public Consultation and Disclosure Plan (PCDP), Sierra Rutile Limited provided the amount it disbursed as surface rent payment to affected landowners in five chiefdoms in Moyamba and Bonthe Districts. For instance, in Imperi Chiefdom the surface rent payment was disbursed as follows – the payment rate was US\$12.3 per acre (the figures are quoted in Leones): 1) Bonthe District Development Fund – 126,546,329.70; 2) Constituency Development Fund – 84,364,219.80; 3) Chiefdom Development fund – 84,364,219.80; 4) Paramount Chief – 126,546,329.70; and 5) Landowners – 421,821,141.30. However, the report does not state how many landowners were paid and how much each landowner received.

<sup>73</sup> The youth leader pointed out that, due to the extended family system land is not owned by a single person. This means that if six million leones is paid to the “land owner” as surface rent, “over 55 family members shar[e] it], by the end of the day each gets one hundred thousand leones” (group interview, youth

satisfy the Paramount Chief, the MP, council and government. It is policing the Paramount Chief and she is not raising her voice” (emphasis mine).<sup>74</sup> In the absence of adequate government regulation, transparency, accountability, consultation as well as the failure to involve landowners in decision-making or in shaping mining agreements, there is bound to be mistrust, suspicion, resistance and conflict.

Youths in the host communities have engaged in civil disobedience including blocking the main road to the dredge, demanding just mining policies and practices that recognise their needs, welfare, rights and interests. However, the state has used coercion to stop them from engaging in any acts of open resistance, accusing them of wanting to scare away investors and sabotaging the state: “The LUC [Local Unit Commander - police] and police officers had to be called, threatened us and dismissed people” (personal interview, youth leader, 21 November 2010). Such complaints and resistance from host communities are direct challenges to the legitimacy of the state since the state has failed in its obligation to promote welfare and interests of its citizens. This failure of the state to promote welfare of its citizens can be attributed to its continued dependency on foreign donors and its adoption of a neoliberal agenda which requires it to create an enabling environment for foreign investment

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leader, 21 November 2010). During my fieldwork in 2010, a standard 50kg bag of rice (the country’s staple food) cost 150, 000 leones which is 66.7 per cent of such landowners’ annual surface rent payment, based on the figures the youth leader gave me.

<sup>74</sup> Yet, the same critics of the Paramount Chief are quick to point out that “we do not disregard the Paramount Chief, though respect for her has been reduced a bit” (group interview, deputy youth leader, 21 November 2010). Further, such critics have acknowledged that she is good in some way, for instance, in the absence of ambulance services in the chiefdom she sometimes uses her pickup truck to transport sick villagers to the hospital, that she has established a good working relationship with the youths and also that she knows how to talk to the people. In my interview with her, she pointed out that she supports the government of the day, although some Paramount Chiefs resist this and also that she is working on bringing her followers together (personal interview, Paramount Chief Hawa Kpanabom IV, 21 November 2010). This (supporting the government of the day), of course, sometimes comes into conflict with the interests of her followers who despise central government. In addition, she noted that payments from the rutile mining company for chiefdom development have been used to build a guest and a chiefdom cell. However, for critics this is not enough and most of the funds meant for chiefdom development are being abused by the “so-called figure heads” – the Paramount Chief and Treasury Clerk as well as senior men and women around them (personal interview, confidential source, 21 November 2010).

including removing restrictions on them at the expense of welfare and rights of its citizens.<sup>75</sup> As such, the state enters business agreements with foreign companies in a weaker position. Yet, international state builders want a strong liberal state in Sierra Leone that is supposed to offer democracy and security to all its citizens.

In addition, the erasure of welfare, rights and needs through the use of dominant state-centred and (neo)liberal peace-centred abstractions I mentioned above as well the existence of a neo-liberal hegemony implies that the state will continue to favour foreign extractive companies that will “help” *Mama Salone* (Mother Sierra Leone) move out of the least developed countries category over ordinary people. In addition, the state regards strikes as threat to national security (personal interview, ONS District Coordinator, 20 November 2010). The state also views those who engage in strike action as attempting to sabotage the government as well as scaring away investors justifying the use of coercion against them (personal interview, confidential source, 08 November 2010).<sup>76</sup> This has effectively silenced the voices of most of the citizens as well as undermined their freedoms including the freedom of expression that the liberal peace is promoting in Sierra Leone. Indeed, in the absence of consent, for instance, from landowners, state institutions such as the police are called in to use force to suppress resistance, further undermining the locals’ rights and access to traditional land use.

Rather than reducing poverty and inequality, economic liberalisation in Sierra Leone has worsened the economic marginalisation of most of the population, particularly, the rural

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<sup>75</sup> For instance, in the case of Sierra Rutile mining company, the state has privileged the company’s “interests and profits [...] through legislation, cheap pricing, tax holidays and reduced royalty payments” (Akiwumi 2011: 59).

<sup>76</sup> The same source told me that he has secretly encouraged mine workers to go on strike as he feared that if he openly encouraged them he would get into trouble and at times he encourage them to engage in hidden forms of resistance, such as stealing from their employers.

populace. Indeed, attempts at creating a (neo)liberal economic order in areas where large-scale farming and mining operations are interacting with small-scale communal farming in which the (neo)liberal economic order is playing a dominant role will not promote a stable economic peace. Rural farmers who continue to be marginalised from mainstream economics have been resisting this. In this case, the failure of the Sierra Leonean state to develop a self-reliant development policy and its adoption of an “open door” economic policy will leave “Sierra Leoneans in a state of economic dependence on the industrialised states [and IFIs such as IMF and World Bank] for most of the satisfactions to which they aspire[...]” (Cartwright 1978: 75).<sup>77</sup> State elites’ acceptance of a neo-liberal economic order could be a result of their strategic calculation based on their recognition that the costs of resisting or rejecting it outweigh the benefits of accepting it. For example, the withdrawal of the much needed national budget support from IFIs, such as the World Bank and the weakening of their political power could far outweigh the costs of accepting it. In addition, a few state and economic elites are using (neo)liberal peace and corruption as instruments for their self-enrichment with most of the population turning to the informal economy and resisting to pay taxes citing corruption and lack of development in their communities.

Peace, in this case, will remain fragile in the country. Given that the state is in a weaker position, vis-à-vis, neoliberals, donors and multi-national corporations, and its continued use of (neo)liberal peace-centred abstractions such as security, investor friendly, economic growth and development will mean the continued attempts at erasing welfare, needs and interests of most of the population. This can explain the state and its institutions’ failure to

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<sup>77</sup> For instance, a Paramount Chief noted that sustainable peace could only be achieved in Sierra Leone if Sierra Leoneans were self-sufficient and accommodated each other (personal interview, Paramount Chief Joe Kangbai Macavoray III, Tikonko Chiefdom, 09 November 2010). He further pointed out that self-reliance is important since it limits outside interference – which also could mean an interest in local ownership and autonomy.



address most of the root causes of the civil war. Despite attempts at erasing local agency, welfare, interests and needs, the locals have expressed agency through open forms of resistance, such as open strikes as well as hidden forms of resistance, for example, workers who steal from their employers. Further, they have also been able to take initiatives to deal with challenges that are not only related to welfare and needs but, also to the re-establishment of community harmony and cohesion, and the creation a form of peace that is relevant to them as I will show later in this chapter.

### **Sierra Leone, a Hybrid Political Order**

A number of respondents, particularly in Freetown noted the need for Sierra Leoneans to engage in a nation building project as a means to promote national cohesion and peace. However, the central authority that is supposed to play a leading role in the nation building project is being resisted by disaffected rural communities which often associate it with corruption and Freetown. Although such rural communities want the state to provide them with basic services as well as promote their welfare, they have remained loyal to customary governance and authority. In addition, such communities have turned to ethnic, church and family networks as well as (neo)traditional civil society organisations such as secret societies for the provision of welfare, security, peace, reconciliation, individual/community ritual cleansing and order, thus preventing the liberal peace from creating impersonal Western-forms of official relations beyond the capital city. Despite the fact that customary forms of governance particularly, the office of the Paramount Chief, were implicated in the outbreak of the civil war<sup>78</sup>, rural communities trust them more than the state. In addition, customary governance acts as a balance of power in the country's domestic politics and remains relevant

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<sup>78</sup> All the three Paramount Chiefs and five sub-chiefs I interviewed acknowledged the role of Paramount Chiefs for the country's descent into civil war.

to the rural populace with regard to the provision of security, justice and social order since the state and its institutions cannot control the entire territory. Such rural communities have paid attention to establishing a social peace that meets their everyday physical and social needs, and enables the restoration of relationships and community harmony and cohesion as well as re-establishing relationships with the supernatural agents such as ancestors/God. In these rural communities, the locals have relied much on a different framework of peace and politics understood in local terms to address their situation, at the same time they have partially accepted some elements of the liberal peace which I will discuss later in the chapter.

In this thesis, I regard Sierra Leone a post-conflict situation based on the definition of post-conflict that I adopted in chapter 2. It is crucial to make this clear here since state and business elites, and the World Bank view the country as having made a transition from a post-conflict situation to a development one. State and business elites consider it wrong to view Sierra Leone as a country in a post-conflict situation (personal interview, Sierra Leone Business Association, 03 December 2009). In this case, states elites' current response to the situation reflects their understanding of it as past the post-conflict phase and their need to maintain relations with donor agencies. As such, they have been increasingly privileging the (neo)liberal peace aspects of economic development and liberalisation over peacebuilding. This has meant enacting or reforming laws in relation to trade and commerce aimed at encouraging foreign investors to invest in the country, particularly, in its natural resources sector – fisheries, mining, tourism and agriculture.<sup>79</sup> According to a respondent, most of the people in government are coming from the private sector (personal interview, Sierra Leone

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<sup>79</sup> The government of Sierra Leone (2007a: 22) states that the *General Law (Business Start-up) (Amendment Act), 2007* is an act to “amend certain enactments in order to eliminate barriers to the expeditious establishment, growth and development of business in Sierra Leone”; also see Government of Sierra Leone (2004a)'s *Investment Promotion Act, 2004*. Further, the country has set up a national investment promotion agency called the Sierra Leone Investment and Export Promotion Agency, and has also established the Sierra Leone Business Forum with the aim of promoting dialogue between the state and private sector.

Indigenous Business Association, 03 December 2009). The private sector background of many states elites may also explain why they have quickly embraced privatisation and the establishment of a free market system in Sierra Leone. Indeed, President Ernest Bai Koroma has even gone a step further to declare that he wants to run the “government according to private sector disciplines” (International Crisis Group 2008: 10) as prerequisites for peace, development and democracy.<sup>80</sup> At the same time, such state elites have maintained patrimonial relations with influential non-state actors such as chiefs, secret societies heads and religious leaders, thus creating space for such local non-state actors, customary law, indigenous and traditional approaches to peacemaking. In fact, the liberal peace has not had a dominant role on the “margins of the state” where the state has limited power.

While liberal interventionists have adopted a state-centric approach since they need the state and states elites as their agents for the creation of a liberal peace, in Sierra Leone, the existence of multiple sovereignties and authorities makes it difficult for the state and state elites to ignore non-state actors such as chiefs who command a lot of respect and legitimacy at the local level. Since the central problem of the Sierra Leonean government is its legitimacy, particularly in the hinterland, the state needs such non-state actors for its legitimacy and survival. Indeed, despite the liberal peace attempt at creating an impersonal political system in Sierra Leone, the institutional culture continues to be influenced by traditional patterns and institutions.

For instance, in response to my question about why the state is not keen on abolishing the institution of the chief despite abuses associated with Paramount Chiefs before the outbreak

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<sup>80</sup> For instance, President Ernest Bai Koroma has experience in the private sector as an insurance broker. In 2007, during his presidential campaign he told *Reuters* that “We have to run [Sierra Leone] like a business concern” (Manson 2007). The risk is that if a state is run like a business entity, then it becomes accountable to its “shareholders”, the donors and less interested in the welfare of its citizens.

of the war, a state official pointed out that the hinterland people will not welcome it since for them its “interference in the nature of societies”, and any move to dismantle the institution of the chief will be met with resistance which could lead to chaos in the country (personal interview, State House, 10 November 2009). He further pointed out that the state’s approach to non-state institutions such as the chiefs, religious leaders, village elders and secret societies has been to “be friend them” (co-opt), “recognise them” (accept) and “give them their own space” (respect their autonomy/accommodate them) as a means to consolidate peace: “if you abolish [them] you will be voted out of power [...] leave them where they are and do not disturb”. According to him, the state is working “indirectly” with these non-state institutions including the chieftom as a means to consolidate peace, order and security. In addition, a Sierra Leonean friend pointed out that,

It will be [...] political suicide for any political party opting for the abolition of the institution of paramount chiefs. The institution exists by law, permeated by tradition, a legacy of colonial rule. In fact, there are twelve (12) paramount chiefs in the parliament of Sierra Leone. They seem to be the keepers of political victory in the country. Although they abuse their offices, they love and are loved by the locals (email, 07 May, 2010).

He further noted that,

It is glaring for example when in the politics that preceded the 2007 presidential election...the leader of the People’s Movement for Democratic Change Charles Francis Margai proposed to make the paramount chief’s position an [electable] one after every five years, he lost the election hopelessly. Some schools of [thought] believe that it was one of the reasons why he was also denied the leadership of SLPP (email, 10 June, 2010).

State elites’ approach contradicts and is in conflict with the Western notion of the modern state (that of a single sovereign) that the British and other internationals want to create in Sierra Leone. However, for most rural Sierra Leoneans the chieftom has remained the most

salient political unit (see Manning 2009). Interestingly, in the immediate aftermath of the conflict, the government of Sierra Leone was able to convince international donors such as the DFID to support a Paramount Chiefs restoration programme (the chieftaincy system had crumbled during the war) that aimed at restoring chiefdom administration arguing that it would help the state re-establish itself in the hinterland. Faced with the realities on the ground, internationals such as DFID had to support the government of Sierra Leone's move to re-establish the institution of the chief. Besides recognising the vital role of Paramount Chiefs in helping the state re-establish itself in the interior, it was also recognised that Paramount Chiefs played an equally important role in enabling rural people to return to normal life, and encouraging refugees and IDPs to return to their villages.

In addition, given that most of the population in Sierra Leone has greater access to the informal justice and governance systems than the formal ones, rather than calling for their elimination, international actors such as the DFID have recognised the importance of Paramount Chiefs in the governance of the hinterland communities and have adopted strategies aimed at reforming the informal justice system. However, reforms are biased towards international human rights norms and governance systems in order to make the informal justice system more relevant to the modern state that internationals are building in Sierra Leone. For instance, besides sponsoring the Paramount Chiefs Restoration Programme in the immediate aftermath of the war, the DIFD is also sponsoring the Justice Sector Development Programme (JSDP) which the British Council manages. JSDP also includes a project aimed at enhancing the capacity, efficiency and effectiveness of local courts as well as providing professional training to chiefdom police. Similarly, in its joint vision for Sierra Leone, the UN family for Sierra Leone noted the need to establish a justice system in Sierra Leone that "incorporated more systematically the traditional court system of Sierra Leone

that services approximately 70% of the population through increased codification of customary law and procedures as well as through better training of local court officials” (UN 2009: 14).<sup>81</sup> This has meant the incorporation of customary law and chiefdom institutions into the modern state.

However, critics have pointed out that since the institution of the chief in Sierra Leone has been associated with abuse and patrimonial politics which contributed to the civil war, by supporting the restoration of Paramount Chieftaincy, the internationals were aiding to the recreation of the preconditions for war in the country (Hanlon 2005). Yet, the same critics have not argued for the elimination of the state in Sierra Leone which also has been associated with abuses that largely contributed to the conflict (chapter 5). Instead, they have argued for the need to re(build) it and its institutions making them more effective, strong and efficient. This shows the hidden politics of liberal peacebuilding that portrays chieftaincy as backward, oppressive, native and barbaric in order to justify its elimination since it is competing for political space with the liberal peace. Such critics fail to realise that African states like Sierra Leone cannot operate without the institution of the chief since it represents the community. As such, the Sierra Leonean state which is dysfunctional has no option but to make more visible such “hidden” forms of governance by bringing them on board since it needs them.

Indeed, state elites’ use of non-state actors, particularly Paramount Chiefs, to protect regime stability as well as promote order and security does not mean that the Sierra Leonean state has failed because it has not become a liberal state, but indicates different understandings of

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<sup>81</sup> The UN family for Sierra Leone consists of 14 UN agencies and programmes plus UNIPSIL as well as three financial institutions – AfDB, IMF and the World Bank.

what would promote peace, social order and stability in the country.<sup>82</sup> As noted in chapters 2 and 3, liberal internationalists note that, if liberal institutions and practices are established durable peace will ensue. While state elites appear to have consented to the liberal peace principles and norms, they have accommodated and maintained neo-patrimonial relations with traditional political authorities in a society that does not recognise a single sovereign. In addition, state elites are aware of the struggle between the liberal peace and traditional/local paradigms, and are also aware that it is impossible to entirely dismantle customary practices and institutions without meeting stiff resistance from the hinterland. At the same time, state elites must accept the practices and institutions of the liberal system to ensure continued international assistance and recognition. Without much local legitimacy, the state needs internationals for some form of legitimacy (international legitimacy). The outcome of state elites' facilitation of the institutionalisation of the Western model in the name of creating a modern Sierra Leonean state while maintaining close ties with traditional formats is a hybrid political order that is quite different from both traditional and liberal forms. Despite the liberal peace's hegemony and attempts at sidelining traditional values and institutions, the internal dynamics in Sierra Leone have not allowed adequate political space for the liberal peace to do so. Can such a hybrid political order/regime that is based on a neo-patrimonial system of governance lead to perpetual peace in the country?

### **Liberal Peacebuilding and a Multi-ethnic Bipolar Political System**

In addition to the above, international peace initiatives in Sierra Leone have not been sensitive to the fact that the country is a multi-ethnic bipolar political system (Bangura 2000). A multi-ethnic bi-polar polity exists where two roughly equal ethnic groups dominate a

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<sup>82</sup> For example, in the absence of adequate police force in the chiefdoms (some chiefdoms have one or two police officers) the police gets support from chiefs to effect arrests (personal interview, LUC, 18 November 2010).

multi-ethnic setting (Bangura 2000: 553). In Sierra Leone, the two dominant ethnic groups are the Temne from the north and the Mende from the south and east. As noted in the previous chapter, the country's two main political parties, the APC and SLPP have often appealed to northern/Temne interests, and south and east/Mende interests respectively. As a result, the re-introduction of multi-party democracy and the existence of winner-takes-all politics in such a multi-ethnic bi-polar political system have witnessed a fierce inter-ethnic (Mende-Temne) and regional contestation as well as electoral violence between APC and SLPP supporters. While the liberal peace has viewed political elites as political engineers who can play a significant role in building an inclusive state that is crucial for establishing and maintaining sustainable peace, the practice of winner-takes-all politics in Sierra Leone has resulted in the opposite: it has excluded the opposition and its supporters, and those who have not established patron-client relationships with state elites. Since politics is based on regional/ethnic lines, the politics of winner-takes-all has seen a segment of the population (those in the south and east – traditionally SLPP stronghold) feeling excluded from the state.

For those in the southern and eastern areas, the current APC-led government has become more synonymous with Temne and northern interests than national interests. Some critics have pointed out that the APC government which won most of its seats in the north has not done much in terms of promoting national cohesion, but instead has established a cabinet that is very northern biased, despite the fact that it did not win the 2007 election by a wide margin (personal interview, confidential source, 08 December 2009).<sup>83</sup> The feeling of being under-represented in government has generated bitterness in the southern and eastern areas. This has also resulted in the politicisation of Mende identity. The Mende complain about being

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<sup>83</sup> In the parliamentary election the APC won 59 seats, SLPP won 43 seats, the People's Movement for Democratic Change won 10 seats and 12 seats were reserved for Paramount Chiefs (National Democratic Institute Sierra Leone 2008).



marginalised and excluded from political power, and are increasingly becoming uneasy over what they view as the north/Temne political domination.

The general feeling among the Mende is that they have no stake in the state. For instance, a TA pointed out that, “Whatever they do is their business. We will take care of our own problems” (group interview, 28 November 2009). A number of Mende respondents and journalists raised concerns about the personalisation of government, which according to them, has witnessed people being offered jobs based on political affiliation or loyalty more than competence. In addition, there are concerns about politically induced sackings of the Mende in the civil service sector. The same TA cited above said that the APC-led government “thinks that the Mende benefitted from the previous SLPP-led government” and as such, “most of them [the Mende] have been kicked out of jobs [senior positions in the public sector]” and if someone has an eastern name he or she “gets kicked out of the job” and “a northerner gets it” (Group interview, 28 November 2009). For an SLPP official the 2012 national election is “a matter of do or die” (personal interview, 03 November 2010). He further noted that “We will be armed to teeth. Our children will not go to school for the next five years. APC is pacifying one region and has to be kicked out by any means”. A state official acknowledged that it is true that “many in the government are from the north” and justified this on the grounds that “the president has not been in politics for long to know people all over [...] he was born in the north, went to school in the north and has businesses in the north” (personal interview, State House, 10 December 2009). He further pointed out that when President Koroma took over power he was in a dilemma about the people to put in

government and given his strong northern background, naturally he called people whom he knew.<sup>84</sup>

Post-war Sierra Leone is witnessing the re-ordering of state-society relations along ethno-regional clientelist lines (see Kandeh 1992). The use of cabinet posts as rewards for APC supporters and ethnic clients has also led to an intense struggle for access to state resources and jobs between ethnic groups. Indeed, the situation on the ground shows that it is difficult for liberal peacebuilding to establish a liberal democratic citizenship that eliminates ethnic identity as well as democratise Sierra Leone along liberal democratic lines as the liberal peace envisions.

Although Sierra Leone is portrayed as a “success story” of international peacebuilding and statebuilding, it should be pointed out that the complex dynamics on the ground (noted above) have impeded the establishment of a liberal democratic state in the country that liberal-internationalists have envisaged. Rather, a hybrid polity has emerged – an outcome of the interaction between liberal peace institutions, and local politics, culture and organisation. While political elites have adopted the language of the liberal peace (and embraced neo-liberal economics) which, as noted earlier, to some extent is aimed at ensuring political credibility and the provision of material assistance by internationals essential for their consolidation of political power, they have maintained space for autonomous action allowing them to engage in local forms of politics, relations and organisation. In this case, rather than mobilising citizens through state institutions, political elites have combined both state and

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<sup>84</sup> President Koroma could also have learnt a lesson from the previous SLPP government whose demise an SLPP official partly blamed on its emphasis on distributing political power evenly in order to avoid regional politics and a return to conflict (personal interview, SLPP Official, 03 November 2010). He further pointed out that this brought dissatisfaction within the party since some party members felt SLPP leadership was not being grateful to those who had fought for the party. In addition, according to the SLPP official, it led to defections and also the formation of a break away party, PMDC, under the leadership of Charles Margai.

non-state institutions, though giving much preference to non-state institutions and networks, particularly the institution of the Paramount Chief, and social and former militia networks.<sup>85</sup> This has meant, either establishing or strengthening political ties with non-state actors such as, Paramount Chiefs, former combatants, secret societies and trade union/grassroots associations leadership as well as engaging in corruption, ethno-/regional and patronage politics, political clientelism and neo-patrimonial politics. As such, such a hybrid polity has combined aspects of the liberal peace, neo-liberal economics, and local forms of governance and political culture like ethno- and patronage politics, clientelism, indigenous political and social organisations and patrimonialism.

Such dynamics of local agency and institutions, for instance, chieftaincy, secret societies, patronage and patrimonialism have come into conflict with the liberal peace. This has witnessed liberal peace proponents such as DFID expressing concerns about political elites' use of negative political practices particularly corruption, patronage and patrimonialism threatening to withdraw financial support to Sierra Leone (see DFID 2008). Rather than engaging patrimonial groups in the country, such internationals have sought to establish a "patrimonial free" political system in Sierra Leone – which is not possible.

Indeed, patrimonialism has endured in post-war Sierra Leone. Since it is difficult to eliminate patrimonial politics in the country, Bangura (2000) suggests the need to ensure that such groups are transparently managed and held to account for their public behaviour. In addition,

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<sup>85</sup> Ex-combatants who have faced marginalisation in their communities have moved to cities where they have established "new families" consisting of fellow ex-combatants. They have also established their own networks – often calling each other "brother" and "sister" or "colleague". In 2007 elections APC and SLPP political elites re-mobilised and co-opted them as well as ex-prisoners and other marginalised youths for the purpose of providing security to political elites and also for mobilising votes with violence being used for this purpose (Christensen and Utas 2008: 515). According to Christensen and Utas (2008) Ernest Koroma (presidential candidate for APC) mobilised RUF combatants while Solomon Berewa (SLPP presidential candidate) mobilised West Side Boys. A former RUF commander told me that, "Politicians still need us. We are the youths" (personnel interview, 23 November 2010).

for him the state system needs to be structured in ways that enable it to provide basic services to groups that completely depend on it for such public goods and infrastructure as health care, welfare, electricity, sanitation, safe drinking water, education and jobs (Bangura 2000). It is crucial to note that, nurturing such a political system can be a source of political stability, eventually durable peace. In addition, this can help maintain peace without the need for the liberal internationalists to transform Sierra Leone into a political system that fits the liberal peace framework. However, the challenge is how to make such a neo-patrimonial system transparent (see Taylor 2007).

Another challenge in Sierra Leone, as noted above, is that politics is increasingly revolving around questions of ethnicity with some ethnic groups, particularly the Mende, becoming restive about central government's alienation of its interests and are making political demands for development, services, jobs and resources – partly a result of ambiguities that exist in the democratisation process of Sierra Leone. This can partly be attributed to the liberal peace's failure to engage with local politics as well as its failure to understand the complex social dynamics in Sierra Leone which has not led to the creation of a social contract that resonates with the local. Rather, the outcome has been a predatory state that fails to meet the needs and interests of most of the population, but state elites and their patrons.

### **“Watermelon Politics” and Ambiguity**

The predominance of ethnocentric/regional politics, clientelist politics, corruption, patronage and neo-patrimonial politics above state modernisation and democratisation entails that, as the liberal peace supports the state and its institutions in Sierra Leone, whoever controls the state wins, leading to a power struggle which again mainly excludes citizens unless they are clients. In response to this, those who are being excluded from the state and are not part of the

clientelist networks have expressed agency through the politics of ambiguity dubbed “watermelon politics”.<sup>86</sup> Ordinary people have used ambiguity as a tool for survival, for contesting pressure from political elites as well as a means to maintain their autonomy which shows their resistance to permanent exclusion. A former CDF commander said the following about “watermelon politics”:

Sometimes you see the red [the inside colour of the watermelon, also APC party colour], sometimes the green [the outside colour of the watermelon, also SLPP party colour]. Sometimes I say I am green. When this man is in power I just remove the green and put on the red. Politicians are not stagnant. They are here today. There tomorrow. (personal interview, Former CDF commander, 23 November 2010).

For another respondent, it is an “idiomatic expression” which means that “What I express in the open is not what I am internally” and in the present context it relates to “stomach politics” (personal interview, confidential source, 26 November 2010). Talking about “watermelon politics” as “politics of survival” or “politics of the belly”, a local businessman pointed out that, people will “openly support a political party which they think will help them earn a living though privately they are supporting a different political party” (personal interview, local businessman, 23 November 2010). For instance, a Sierra Leonean contact informed me that a nurse in charge of a clinic in the south told him that she is red (APC) so that the clinic continues to receive medical supplies from the APC-led government and she will go green at election time (will vote for SLPP). He also said that a Paramount Chief who was wearing a green vest and a red t-shirt told him that he was red outside and green inside, showing him the green vest he was wearing inside – this was after the chief had attended an APC meeting.

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<sup>86</sup> Christensen and Utas (2008) have observed in 2007 the re-mobilisation of ex-combatants and other marginalised saw this as an opportunity to improve their lives and social status. In order to fully benefit from this, former combatants had to make use of “watermelon politics” through “manoeuvre[ing] between various influential politicians and thus to receive immediate benefits from different sources”, at times using violence against political opponents (Christensen and Utas 2008: 530).

In this case, the excluded or weak are utilising the traditional practices of ambiguity and secrecy in order to deceive those who have control over state resources into believing that they have established patron-client relationships with them. As such, the practice of “watermelon politics” can be viewed as a strategy of concealment that those who have been excluded from the peace dividend or the state are using in order to access it or gain power.<sup>87</sup> This can also be viewed as a hidden form of resistance to the politics of exclusion and dominance that political elites are pursuing which liberal internationalists are unintentionally bolstering through their focus on building state institutions and an effective state which up to now has remained absent from the people’s everyday lives. The practice of “watermelon politics” can be linked to the practices of secrecy/concealment and ambiguity that anthropologists like Shaw (2000) and Ferme (2001) have observed in Sierra Leone (see chapter 1). Ferme (2001) observes that among the Mende (and Sierra Leoneans, in general) the use of the cultural logic of ambiguity and dissimulation tends to govern their political and social relations. She writes that in such societies “[...] the effective use of ambiguity has been – and continues to be – more productive than the pursuit of social ideals of transparency” (Ferme 2001: 2). This also reflects the agency and skills that local actors (including elites) have used in response to exclusion, power struggles and instability. In this case, although the practice of “watermelon politics” can be viewed in the negative sense as indirectly promoting patronage politics and can serve as an instrument of instability, it can also be a strategy for political emancipation.<sup>88</sup>

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<sup>87</sup> There is a potential danger with regard to the use of “watermelon politics”, such as violence against those who practice it, if they are caught which demonstrates the risks associated with the cultural logics of ambiguity (also see Ferme 2001).

<sup>88</sup> During my fieldwork the Temne were often cited as “clever” as they successfully used “watermelon politics” to fool the previous SLPP government into believing that it had their support, but voted for APC in the 2007 elections. This also shows how the central bureaucracies based in Freetown were not aware of the realities on the ground, hence, their impression that they had legitimacy in the north.

Besides ordinary people's use of the cultural logics of concealment and ambiguity through "watermelon politics" as means to avoid political marginalisation, they have also partially accepted some of the liberal peace's tenets. Although the rural populace appears not to understand what the liberal peace is, modern and neo-traditional civil society organisations have introduced liberal peace tenets including human rights, democracy, accountability, transparency and rule of law through community sensitisation programmes and awareness raising campaigns. Political liberalisation has enabled them to find new social spaces such as the radio and the street (where vendors also playing protest music), the market and public transport, among others to voice their concerns and critique the state and state officials.<sup>89</sup> They have also internalised some elements of the liberal peace demanding good governance, respect for the rule of law, anti-corruption, accountability and a state that meets their needs and welfare. As a result of the massive sensitisation programs and awareness raising campaigns on the radio and at NGO workshops with the grassroots, and government anti-corruption billboards across the country, the grassroots is well aware of the existence of state institutions such as the ACC as well as their functions. For instance, with regard to the ACC and corruption, while the current government of Sierra Leone has made efforts to deal with corrupt public officials including the enactment of the Anti-corruption Act 2008 that empowers the ACC to prosecute and punish corrupt officials, on the street, radio, market and public transport as well as through protest music critical voices have emerged that question why some "big fish" are being left off the hook and treated as "sacred cows". Civil society organisations have at times sought the help of UN and the British's International Military Training Team-Sierra Leone (IMATT-SL) when state elites make efforts to co-opt their committee members or use coercion or threats as means to get support from them. Resistance

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<sup>89</sup> Ordinary rural respondents often compared the past in which Sierra Leone was a one party state and authoritarian with the post-war multi-party system has created opportunities for them, but their acceptance of political liberalisation does not necessarily mean a rejection of their traditional political institutions.

in this case, is more to elite predatory behaviour rather than the liberal peace, though the purpose is for their own benefit. As such, the excluded locals want to use elements of liberal peace that they have partially accepted to their own advantage and at the same time, they have remained protective of their culture, institutions and custom.

In addition, at the local level citizens in rural areas, particularly youths with the support of liberal civil society organisations such as CGG and Network Movement for Justice and Development have argued for the democratisation of the Paramount Chieftaincy (at the same time, retaining the idea of ruling houses which they regard as their “tradition”) as part of reforming the institution of the chief.<sup>90</sup> This includes elections based on universal suffrage as well as the use of 5 year terms for Paramount Chiefs. It is believed that doing so will make Paramount Chiefs more accountable to their followers as well as be able to meet their interests and needs (group interview, youth leaders, 21 November 2010).

### **Political elites and the Cultural Logic of Ambiguity**

In addition to the above, it is crucial to note how political elites have also adopted the cultural logics of ambiguity and concealment in response to liberal internationalist calls for political liberalisation and also in order to deal with competing demands from local and international actors. In this case, state elites have partially accepted the liberal peace precepts, at the same time, subverting them through maintaining traditional institutions, customary law, informal networks and patronage politics. This has been the case with interactions that are happening at the local governance level (chiefdom authorities and district councils). In response to international demands for political decentralisation and local resistance to the sidelining of

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<sup>90</sup> Calls for the democratisation of the chieftaincy are not new in Sierra Leone. The APC government under Siaka Stevens also made similar proposals to democratise the chieftaincy system, though this was a top-down approach as opposed to the recent calls (see APC 1982).



the institution of the chief, political elites have adopted the cultural logic of ambiguity. Since the liberal peace has attributed the civil war to the chieftaincy system, it has prioritised political decentralisation over the restoring, maintenance and reforming of the chieftaincy system. This is could be partly due to the internationals' view of custom as illiberal and antithetical to democracy as well as a tool for the oppression of rural Sierra Leoneans. As a result, custom is viewed as a threat to the democratisation process and the creation of conditions for sustainable peace in the country.

In 2004 the previous SLPP government (with the support of international agencies such as the World Bank) adopted decentralisation by re-establishing elected town and district councils as a way of addressing issues of exclusion and marginalisation from political power of people in the hinterland. At the same time, the SLPP government remained protective of the chieftaincy system. The adoption of decentralisation would in this case mean bringing democracy to the rural people. As noted earlier, international support of the restoration of the chieftaincy system was for instrumental purposes – the state needed Paramount Chiefs to restore order and secure the return of the displaced to their rural homes.

Despite the above criticisms, the institution of the chief has continued to command support from the rural populace. Although a number of rural interviewees grumbled about chiefs' abuse of chieftain development funds, among other things, they expressed more loyalty to their chiefdoms than local councils. For such people, the chieftaincy system is “our tradition” (group interview, youth leaders, 21 November 2010). Further, a councillor pointed out that rural people are more loyal to their chiefs than councillors since chiefs are in office for life and councillors for four years, and as such, the rural populace had rather maintain their relations with their chiefs than councillors (personal interview, 28 November 2009).

However, for some, most rural people's continued support of chiefs is a result of a lack of education and the nature of power that tradition allows chiefs to have in Sierra Leone. As a Sierra Leonean friend noted:

[...] the rural community people who are direct subjects to these chi[efs] are *grossly illiterate*, and therefore *can hardly even identify their rights*. In most cases, *this renders them gullible and unable to challenge the excessive authority of their [chiefs]*. The institution is historic and now permeates the tradition of the people who seem not to live without it. A paramount chief in the Mende land for instance is called *Maada*, [m]eaning Grand Pa, or better still father of the chiefdom whose authority no one will dare. Because of this, the people are made to accept that they must do and accept what he decrees [...] (email, 10 June 2010, emphasis mine).

Such claims tend to overlook the following: 1) the agency of the rural communities – their capacity to resist and influence their chiefs; 2) their desire for autonomy from the state; and 3) their need to maintain their tradition, culture and customs.

Besides the above, the institution of the chief continue to play a role in chiefdom development (for example, road maintenance) justice, customary law, social order and security. All the five town chiefs I interviewed pointed out that their roles and responsibilities included mediating and settling domestic and land disputes, supervising community labour (development work), and making and enforcing chiefdom bye-laws which have also incorporated human rights.

Given these interests (often competing) of the various domestic groups – chiefs, councillors, citizens and political elites – and internationals, state elites face dilemmas that they need to deal with. In the context of political decentralisation, state elites have been caught up in such conflicting interests since internationals have an interest in building liberal local government institutions through political decentralisation while the hinterland people are interested in the

continued existence of their customary institutions. The dilemma here is that if politicians publicly resist or reject international calls for political decentralisation that undermines or weakens chieftom governance, then as noted earlier, they will lose donor support and credibility essential for their consolidation of power. However, if they eradicate the chieftaincy system, they will face stiff resistance in the hinterland which may create chaos in the country, thus threatening their power and the establishment of durable peace in the country. In order to avert this and in response to the competing interests from various actors (local and international) political elites establish institutions, policies and legal documents which are ambiguous or introduce new laws without political will to enforce them<sup>91</sup> or delay enacting new laws.<sup>92</sup> For instance, as noted earlier, the previous SLPP government adopted political decentralisation – which the current APC government has also endorsed – at the same time remaining protective of the chieftaincy system. However, ambiguity exists in

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<sup>91</sup> Post-war Sierra Leone has produced a number of new laws in response to the liberal peace's demands for good governance, transparency, political and economic liberalisation, gender equality and anti-corruption. These laws include the three gender acts – the Registration of Customary Marriage and Divorce Act (amended in 2009) (2009b), the Domestic Violence Act (2007c) and the Devolution of Estates Act (2007d), the Child Rights Act (2007e), the Anti-Corruption Act, 2008 and The Local Government Act, 2004. However, a number of respondents, including women activists and leaders pointed out that political elites lack commitment to enforce most of these laws which also have come into conflict with customary law. As with anti-corruption campaign, a respondent pointed out that the absence of mechanisms to protect witnesses has resulted in people not willing to testify against corrupt public official since in the past some have received deaths threats (personal interview, confidential source, 02 December 2009). As with regard to institutions of law and justice, such as the Attorney General (AG) and the Ministry of Justice, there is no separation of power. It is an ambiguous institution in which the Minister of Justice is the AG. State elites have not been willing to reform it. According to the same respondent I cited above, there are fears that the Minister of Justice as an AG interferes with the work of the ACC, particularly when it is dealing with the “sacred cows”. Examples of such “sacred cows” include former Minister of Energy and Power, Haja Afsatu Kabba who awarded a contract to Income Electrix, a Nigeria Company without going to the National Public Procurement, but was neither indicted nor sacked. Rather she was transferred and appointed as Minister of Fisheries and Marine Resources (a lucrative ministry). In 2010, she got sacked and fined for abusing her new position. In 2008 the government enacted an Anti-corruption Act which empowered the ACC to independently prosecute and punish corruption, but has not separated the powers of the AG and the Minister of Justice.

<sup>92</sup> For instance, the state has continued to use “the seditious libel provisions of the Public Order and Security Act of 1965 [...] against journalist[s]” (HRCSL 2009: 48). Since 2003 there has been local and international pressure on the state to de-criminalise libel. In addition, international actors including the World Bank, UN and EU and local civil society organisations have put pressure on the government to enact a Freedom of Information law that would allow citizens to have an unhindered access to information which public officials hold, enabling Sierra Leoneans to hold them to account for their actions. It is believed that this is essential for promoting participatory democracy as well as good governance, transparency and accountability of public officials. Although in June 2010, the cabinet approved the Freedom of Information Bill (FOI), Sierra Leonean parliament is yet to endorse it.

relation to the powers of Paramount Chiefs and district council chairpersons, as well as the roles and responsibilities of chiefdoms and councils. Part 20(1) of the *Local Government Act* states that,

A local council shall be the highest political authority in the locality and shall have legislative and executive powers to be exercised in accordance with the Act or any other enactment, and shall be responsible for promoting the development of the locality and the welfare of the people in the locality [...] (Government of Sierra Leone 2004b: 16).

However, the state's failure to define the powers of Paramount Chiefs vis-à-vis local councils has resulted in a struggle for power between councils and chiefdoms. Paramount Chiefs have declared that they are the highest traditional authorities in their respective chiefdoms refusing to recognise the authority of district council chairpersons. As a respondent pointed out, "The district council chairman is the overall authority. Chiefs are not accepting the role of council chairmen. They say this is my small boy. The roles have been clearly defined" (personal interview, district council chairperson, 19 November 2010). Yet, chiefs have pointed out that they have overall authority in their respect chiefdoms. As such, the lack of clarity on how power should be distributed between councils and chiefs has witnessed the two groups clashing over development projects and revenue collection (including local tax and market dues). This, according to one Paramount Chief, is creating a lot of problems in the entire country since the government gave a lot of powers to councils in haste (personal interview, Paramount Chief, 18 November 2010). He further pointed out that the government is revising the local government act and it will repeal the powers of the council to collect revenue. Yet, a local council Chief Administrator pointed out that the revised act will be in councils' favour

(personal interview, 18 November 2010) – evidence that politicians have preferred to rely on ambiguity in order to manage competing interests of various groups.

Ambiguity is also reflected in the state's recent move to reintroduce the office of the District Officer (DO). Questions have been raised about the lack of clarity on how DOs are going to share power with district council chairpersons and Paramount Chiefs (personal interview, SLPP official, 03 November 2010). The SLPP is critical of the APC's attempts to re-establish the DO system since based on past experience<sup>93</sup>, it views the system as "a hallmark of the centralised system" (personal interview, SLPP official, 03 November 2010). Since pre-war DOs acted as agents of central government, their re-introduction is viewed with suspicion. Critics also view the re-establishment of DOs as state elites' attempt to subvert political decentralisation. However, for state elites, the re-introduction of DOs is "part of the decentralisation process which has received much attention today" (*The New Citizen*, 25 June, 2010). The roles and responsibilities of DOs include settling disputes in chiefdoms and supervising chiefdom institutions and NGO activities. Critics are concerned about an overlap of responsibilities between DOs and local council chief administrators and Paramount Chiefs which might create chaos at the local level. For some, the re-establishment of the institution of the DO is a step in the right direction since it is a form of employment creation and as such, they have dismissed SLPP concerns (informal conversations). However, this raises questions about whether this will result in significant changes in the rate of unemployment in the country and who will benefit from the DO system.

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<sup>93</sup> During the colonial period, DOs (then District Commissioners) acted as agents of central government.

Indeed, state elites have been able to frame the contentious issue of DOs in such a way that it appeals to the unemployed, though the main motive could be to re-centralise power and authority, and even to extend their patronage networks. In addition, by manipulating the language of the liberal peace, such as decentralisation, and creating ambiguous power and legal structures/institutions (in addition to deceiving and resisting internationals), state elites could be doing this for their own purposes including the need to maintain their autonomy and to consolidate power.<sup>94</sup> As such, it is crucial to note that in the context of post-war Sierra Leone the “actual” state policy might not be the one that appears on the surface (that the liberals have imposed on the state), but that which is “underneath” it. Indeed, these ambiguities should not be viewed as expressions of dysfunctionality which need more liberal peace “doses”, but as forms of resistance to external impositions or deliberate rejection of the liberal peace project – as “local” claims for autonomy and indigenous forms of peace-making through the management of competing interests of various local groups through the cultural logics of ambiguity which if ignored can be sources of instability. In other words, rather than rejecting such practices of ambiguity and concealment in Sierra Leone,<sup>95</sup> it is significant to view them as having potential in peacebuilding and that these can also be used to realise “local” agency that can result in hybrid forms of peace – if carefully managed and without much interference from the liberal peace.

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<sup>94</sup> In their framing of the issue of DOs as part of decentralisation (which resonates with the liberals), state elites expect support from them. In this case, state elites’ efforts are likely to be effective when they use the language of the liberals. Literature on social movements has shown that this is an effective strategy for social movement activists to achieve their goals (see Keck and Sikkink 1998).

<sup>95</sup> For instance, in order to promote transparency, a Sierra Leone working for an international NGO pointed out that his organisation organises activities that are open to everyone in the society and that there is no secrecy in these activities since it is negative and counter-productive (personal interview, confidential source, 02 December 2009) . As such, his organisation has supported “good” cultural activities that include people beating drums, wearing masks and dancing openly in an attempt to promote openness – interestingly anthropologists such as Ferme (2001) have associated masks with the cultural practice of concealment.

## **An Emerging Hybrid Local Government System**

As noted above, political decentralisation and the restoration of the chieftaincy system has resulted in ambiguous institutions (local councils and chieftaincy) at the local level. In addition, it has undermined the power of Paramount Chiefs. Despite the clashes between local councils and chiefdoms, especially over revenue collection and its usage, a lack of clarity on how chiefs and councillors share power and the rural populace's mistrust of local councils, there appears to be an improvement in the relations between local councils and chiefdoms. All the Paramount Chiefs and sub-chiefs I interviewed pointed out that there has been a significant improvement in their relationship with councils, though conflict over authority, revenue collection and its usage remains. This improvement in their relations can be partly attributed to the various groups' attempt to manage their conflicts by drawing lessons from their culture (for instance, councillors are reminded to respect their chiefs/elders as in "you are my small boy")<sup>96</sup> and the use of indigenous and traditional approaches to peacemaking as well as the informal relationships that exist between councillors and chiefs. For instance, the Paramount Chief of the Jong Chiefdom and the Bonthe District Council Chairman have often clashed over issues of tax collection, its usage, and power. On the 19<sup>th</sup> – 21<sup>st</sup> of November, 2010, a local NGO, Hope Sierra Leone, facilitated a "heart to heart dialogue" in Mattru Jong which brought chiefs from Bombali District (northern Sierra Leone) and Bonthe District (southern Sierra Leone) to engage in a dialogue aimed at promoting peace and reconciliation between the two regions.<sup>97</sup>

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<sup>96</sup> A local human rights activist told me that the council chairman needs to respect the chief. Since the Paramount Chief is the overall traditional ruler in their respective chiefdoms and also host district councils, councillors are expected to respect them. In addition, among the Mende, a Paramount Chief is addressed as *Maada* (grandfather) and as such, he should be respected. In this case, despite that a council chairperson holds a powerful political position he/she is expected not to lose track of the society's traditions and culture of respect for chiefs/elders.

<sup>97</sup> While Hope Sierra Leone calls its peace initiative "Moral Foundation for Democracy" and uses the language of the liberals such as democracy, human rights and rule of law in its campaign for the promotion for

This also provided an opportunity for the Bonthe District Council Chairman and the Paramount Chief of Jong Chiefdom to reconcile. According to the district council chairman, despite the intervention of the Provincial Secretary, there were still problems between him and the chief, and as such, he decided to raise the issue at this public meeting for the sake of reconciliation and peace. The district council chairman who was critical of the chief pointed out that “the chief should be the unifier of the people” and should not take sides, and later begged for forgiveness: “Chief if I offended you, I’m sorry” and further said, “If I have done wrong to anyone, I beg you to forgive me”. After his speech, he shook hands with the chief and both embraced to jubilant cheering and clapping of hands from the audience – a form of traditional approach to peacebuilding and reconciliation which in this case was used to deal with a conflict over political authority resulting from the ambiguous institutions.<sup>98</sup> Interestingly, the council chairman was from a ruling house and had campaigned for the chief after the council chairman’s brother withdrew from the paramount chieftaincy contest.

As Manning (2009) has observed, there is a link between local councils and traditional sources of power and authority in rural Sierra Leone – some councillors come from ruling houses and some have lived in the chiefdoms most of their lives.<sup>99</sup> In this case, the locals prefer that those appointed in the councils are indigenes (locals) and not outsiders, and this is not what the liberal peace wants. As such, the liberal peace is being co-opted for the locals’

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tolerance, nonviolence and respect for diversity and cohesion, traditional ways of resolving conflicts dominated the process including chiefs offering prayers to God through ancestors for unity, protection and durable peace. At this “Heart to Heart Dialogue”, Hope Sierra Leone pointed out that it believed in tradition, that “we do not lose focus”, that “We are not Britain or America” and “we need to deal with the issues between ourselves” (Hope Sierra Leone, 20 November 2010).

<sup>98</sup> Initially the chief appeared to be unhappy with what the district council chairman had said as this contradicted what the chief had said earlier in his speech to the public – that he was a democrat and had a sense of fairness. The chief walked out of the meeting with everyone disapproving, after a few minutes he came back to embrace the district council chairman since the district council chairman had apologised to him and everyone he had wronged.

<sup>99</sup> The same also applies to some political elites, for instance, the Vice President of the country comes from a ruling house, and even former Prime Ministers such as Milton and Albert Margai were from ruling houses. In this case, there is a link between some state elites, councillors and traditional sources of power and authority in Sierra Leone.



own purposes including the need to safeguard their autonomy and interests considering that in Sierra Leone relationships (including obligations to the community and extended family) are strong. Manning has further noted the heavy reliance of local councillors on chiefs on collection of tax, mobilisation of labour for community development work and the chiefs' ability to enforce compliance from rural people to participate in development work through communal labour. It is difficult for local councils and development agencies to start or succeed in doing development projects in the communities without prior permission from the chief. Although local councils and NGOs have at times imposed projects, this has often been met with local resistance including villagers' refusal to contribute their labour and construction materials such as quarry stones and sand for the project, citing lack of consultation and ownership. As a result, "such projects do not go anyway" (group interview, TAs, 28 November 2009; also see Manning 2009).<sup>100</sup> Resistance in this case, should not be taken to imply that the rural populace is not committed to the concept of development,<sup>101</sup> but as an attempt on their part to express their agency. In addition, it relates to the agents of the liberal peace's unwillingness to genuinely engage with the local. Faced with local resistance, councillors (and development agencies) have no option, but to engage with Paramount Chiefs and communities before starting a development project. By so doing, councillors are able to mobilise community labour via Paramount Chiefs and in most cases, do so on community labour days which resonates with local custom and chieftom bye-laws. Manning has observed that, "Councillors also engage extensively and often constructively with chiefs and

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<sup>100</sup> Such imposition of development projects on the locals contradicts the idea of local participation as a means to promote democratic governance that the liberal peace intends to promote in rural Sierra Leone through political decentralisation.

<sup>101</sup> At a Community Leaders workshop that I attended in Kailahun, participants showed commitment to development including hospitals, roads, adequate sanitation and schools. This is a general feeling in the rural areas I did fieldwork since development resonates with their everyday life. Whilst proponents of the liberal peace advocate accountability, transparency, rule of law, good governance and so on as means to promote democracy and peace, for most of the rural poor, democracy makes sense if their welfare and needs are met.

other local leaders, both as a matter of pragmatism and because they share with the majority of Sierra Leoneans an acceptance and respect for the legitimacy of chiefs” (2009: 19).

In addition to the above, the introduction of political decentralisation has resulted in hybrid chiefs with a number of them seating on council meetings – some with decision making powers, while others are nominated as *ex officio* members and seating on ward development committees. This provides them with an opportunity to represent the interests of their followers as well as protect their own interests. For instance, in Kenema, a chiefdom co-exists with both district and city councils. This forces both councils to make decisions in consultation with chiefs (personal interview, town chief, 23 November, 2010).

Indeed, in Sierra Leone the rural populace and chiefs’ resistance, partial acceptance and refusal to cooperate with local councillors in order to maintain some form of local autonomy and power as well as the persistence of the chiefs’ legitimacy in rural areas, chiefs’ ability to infiltrate the structures of a “rational” local council and the mutual accommodation between chiefdom authorities and councillors have created space for the emergence a hybrid form of local government which integrates traditional and modern forms of governance that internationals had not envisaged. This “local-local” level arrangement has seen relations between councillors and chiefs improving thus, undermining the state-centric model of local governance that the liberal internationalists want in Sierra Leone.

### **Indigenous/Customary Means to Peace in Rural Sierra Leone**

The Sierra Leonean civil war was largely fought in the villages among neighbours and relatives who shared everyday life, culture, customs and needs. This negatively affected the

various webs of social relations that existed in such rural communities. After the end of the civil war such societies needed to commit themselves to restoring relations and social harmony in order to establish peace at community as well as inter-community levels. The liberal peace has not been keen on supporting such communities engaging in peacebuilding activities aimed at restoring social harmony through reconciliation, cleansing ceremonies, appeasing ancestors, truth telling, forgiveness and healing. As noted earlier, its main focus has been on building an effective state and strong state institutions with the assumption that peace will trickle-down from the top to the bottom. As such, the liberal peace has distanced itself from such “local-local” contexts giving the “local-local” an opportunity to deal with their situation in accordance with their traditions, culture, custom and processes. These processes that the liberal peace has largely ignored are essential for such communities to build peace and restore social harmony.

### **Sites for Creating Peace and Managing Conflicts**

In rural sites I visited emphasis was placed on societal relationships, welfare, human needs and governance. In addition, “community” was considered to be the most significant social unit, not the individual. The liberal peace’s failure to have a strong influence “up country” (despite the presence of local and international NGOs which are acting as its agents) and its lack of interest in customary law and governance, and traditional forms of peacemaking as well as the failure of the state to provide basic services, particularly, in rural areas, has seen people despising the state and relying on local customary institutions such chieftaincy and secret societies for social order, justice, security and the promotion of community harmony. In other words, certain post-conflict peacebuilding processes are happening at the “local-local” level in defiance of the liberal peace precepts. As noted above, such peacebuilding

initiatives in rural communities include community-based reconciliation, cleansing ceremonies and the establishment of local mechanisms for peacebuilding (with the support of NGOs) such as “peace committees”, “peace trees”,<sup>102</sup> “peace huts” (or *palava* huts), court *barrays*<sup>103</sup>, “peace mothers’ farms” and “peace clubs”. While in rural Sierra Leone concepts such as “peace hut” and “peace tree” are new/post-war concepts which NGOs introduced in order to establish sites for bringing villagers/community together to make and sustain peace, these concepts resonate with traditional practises of settling disputes and discussing important community/village issues in a *palava* hut and under the shade of a traditional village tree, such as a cotton tree.

As a respondent pointed out, traditionally, villagers/communities met and sat under the shade of a cotton tree to settle disputes, engage in open dialogue over critical community issues, appease their ancestors and discuss secret society issues (personal interview, Alpha Ndoleh, town chief and Kailahun District Chairman for Fambul Tok, 12 November 2010). In post-war Sierra Leone, according to chief Ndoleh, “People sit under a peace tree and discuss problems in their community instead of going to the court”. He further pointed out that after the civil war NGOs revived this traditional practice through “transform[ing] the cotton tree to a peace tree”, particularly in rural communities that had court *barrays* destroyed during the war and had no funds to rebuild them. The same applies to the *palava* hut which prior to the war was a place where villagers or the community met to settle individual or community *palavas* (disputes) and also to discuss important community issues. In the post-war period the *palava* hut has been transformed into a “peace hut”. This has become a site for reconciliation,

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<sup>102</sup> Some NGOs such as Hope Sierra Leone call them “peace and reconciliation trees” and such trees have been/are being planted in the middle of the village/“town” after a reconciliation ceremony. These “peace trees include cocoa, kola nut and mango trees.

<sup>103</sup> A court *barry* is a building where the local court sits and official meetings take place. In addition, offices for chieftdom administrators such as the Paramount Chief and Chieftdom Speaker are housed at the court *barry*.

building and maintaining peace/community cohesion and planning issues such as development which are crucial for sustainable peace.

Whereas, the cotton tree was located closer to the bush, the peace tree is located in the middle of “town”. The idea of locating the “peace tree” in the middle of “town” could be viewed as an attempt by NGOs to remove such dialogues from close to or from the bush which is associated with secrecy/secret societies. This could be for the purpose of enhancing transparency, openness, accountability, inclusion and participation of various stakeholders in the community including women and children as understood in liberal terms. However, as a TA pointed out, there are certain traditions and practices that they cannot do in town, but in the secret society bush (group interview, 28 November 2009). For instance, secret societies continue to hold secret courts (if disputants are members of the same secret society) as well as conducting cleansing rituals in the bush that are essential for reconciliation and social peace.<sup>104</sup> This could be an expression of such locals’ autonomy and agency since it is difficult for the liberal peace to influence them when they engage in such activities in places where the liberal peace cannot reach. Or it can be viewed as an attempt to create space that enables them to create their own peace which allows them to hold secret knowledge that is essential for social control and order (see chapter 1).

It is also crucial to point out that, since the post-war practice of discussing issues such as peace, democracy and development under the shade of a “peace tree” fits into the traditional practices of engaging in dialogue, consensus-building, mediating and resolving disputes

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<sup>104</sup> Despite the onslaught from the liberal peace, secret societies remain significant ritual cleansing experts essential for transforming the wrongdoer and the victim, thus allowing individual/social healing to happen crucial for communal peace. As such, such societies could be viewed as also representing local understandings of peace. This does not mean to romanticise them, but to also bring out certain positive aspects of them essential for peacebuilding.

under the shade of a cotton tree, the idea has been well received in rural areas. The locals own such peace processes with NGOs acting as facilitators and also providing modern equipment such as the public address system (PA). This highlights the existence of “local-local” agency and capacity for peace.

Indeed, rural Sierra Leoneans have been able to reassert their traditional practices of peacemaking such as “hanging heads” (consensus-building), dialogue and community participation as well as settling disputes under a cotton tree or at a court *barry* or a “secret society bush/court” (though this one has a limitation that it is only accessible to members of the secret society). As such, the “peace tree”, “secret society bush/court” and “peace hut” (or “court barrys”) have become sites for creating and maintaining peace, open dialogue aimed at mediating and resolving conflicts, participatory democracy, rebuilding and strengthening relationships, and promoting community development as well as social harmony and order. This has enabled the interaction between the local and the liberal peace tenets of development, human rights, democracy and good governance. The liberal peace has relied on civil society organisations/NGOs to promote its agenda. Such civil society organisations, particularly the neo-traditional ones which understand the local context and culture are engaging in a conversation with custom, culture, local politics and tradition.

Besides the sites I have mentioned above, a Sierra Leonean human rights NGO called Forum for Conscience which works in partnership with the Catalyst for Peace, a US-based organisation recently established “peace mothers” farms for rural women. “Peace mothers’ farms”, according to Chief Ndoleh, were established in response to the marginalisation and stigmatisation of women for publicly speaking about being raped or subjected to other forms

of sexual abuse during the war (personal interview, 12 November 2010).<sup>105</sup> The organisation decided to group the women and called them “peace mothers” and established “peace mothers” farms for them, helping them as a group and contributing to their empowerment and respect within their communities as well as food security and development. This, according to Chief Ndoleh, has also witnessed their communities changing their attitude towards them. Indeed, “peace mothers farms” have become sites for relationship building, promoting local peace, dialogue, restoring the dignity of women victims, enhancing community development and food security, tolerance and acceptance. In addition, the concept of “peace mothers” farm resonates with the communitarian values of rural communities.

### **Cases of “Local- Local” Peace Processes**

This section will provide two interesting examples of “local-local” peace initiatives. It is significant to note that civil society organisations have also been involved in peace processes in rural communities without taking a leading role. In such rural sites, peace initiatives have taken place without the state being involved or in the presence of state officials who are marginally involved. For instance, in 2008, Forum for Conscience developed the Fambul Tok (a Creole term which means “family talk”) project that draws from traditional approaches to conflict resolution and community healing through family dialogue. The project is being conducted in the hinterland. Fambul Tok is a response to the failure of the TRC and the Special Court for Sierra Leone to reach those who live on the margins of district headquarters and the state, but constitute the bulk of war victims. Forum for Conscience facilitates traditional cleansing ceremonies (done according to the traditions and norms of the community in question) and brings perpetrators, victims and other members of community

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<sup>105</sup> In rural Sierra Leone there are social taboos against speaking publicly about sexual violence such as rape.

together to engage in bonfire truth-telling and “family talk” aimed at promoting forgiveness and reconciliation, and addressing the root causes of conflict at local level as well as restoring the dignity of war victims (personal interview, Chief Alpha Ndoleh, 12 November 2010). The programme involves traditional and religious leaders, secret society leaders including the “mummy queen” (leader of the female secret society) and a village youth chairperson who continue to play mediation roles in their communities after the reconciliation ceremonies (personal interview, Chief Alpha Ndoleh, 12 November, 2010). Such people are also trained in human rights and conflict resolution indicating the interface between the local and the liberal peace.

As with regard to women participation, Chief Ndoleh pointed out that, the “mummy queen” cannot be excluded from participating or from being part of the decision-making process in such significant processes since women resist if she is sidelined. This includes boycotting the peace processes. In this case, the involvement of the “mummy queen” is crucial in the sense that it encourages other women to participate in public decision-making processes and is also an indication that women are not totally marginalised in Sierra Leone as is often portrayed in the literature. Proponents of the liberal peace have portrayed Sierra Leonean women as having a weak social position and victims of custom. In this regard, using the language of universal human rights, internationals have depicted black women in need of saving from black men and custom, to paraphrase Spivak’s statement: “White men saving brown women from brown men” (1988: 297). Indeed, saving black women has become one of the driving forces against custom in Sierra Leone. This has seen internationals pushing for laws that protect the rights of women, for example, the recent “three gender laws”, I noted earlier. In addition, internationals have funded human rights NGOs that monitor local courts and offer programs on gender based violence (GBV), as well as push for the inclusion of women into



the structures of local courts and other customary power structures. In addition, NGOs have emphasised women's rights over those of men resulting in men resisting the values that the international human rights discourse is promoting.<sup>106</sup> This has also meant the relocation of rural women from their communities into the international arena which does not resonate with their everyday life.<sup>107</sup> Internationals have failed to look at the implications of eliminating patriarchy since in such societies patriarchy comes with responsibilities. In rural Sierra Leone this is creating a whole range of problems including the disruption of marriages and family life with the state and internationals not keen on building on existing customary law that protect women, for example, from rape, beating and deprivation. For instance, traditionally, the Mende regarded rape as a taboo and perpetrators were banished; men who beat their wives were fined and people who deprived their families were summoned to the chief's court (personal interview, 04 November, 2010). However, this does not mean that patriarchy's negatives should not be exposed and dealt with.

In this regard, internationals have raised gender (as well children) issues as a means to delegitimise custom obscuring Sierra Leonean women's agency (see Shaw 2000; chapter 1) and customary institutions that are already in place including female secret societies and the

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<sup>106</sup> Men point out that such rights are an imposition from outside noting that "human rights are for whites" or "its Western culture" and also as an attempt to undermine their custom. Local and international NGOs' sensitisation programmes and training workshops on issues such as gender equality, property rights and some aspects of children's rights that have targeted men and community leaders have at times witnessed men resisting them by either walking out of the workshops in protest or disagreeing with the NGOs (group interview, TA, 28 November 2009). At a community leaders workshop that I attended in Kailahun District in November 2011, all 14 male participants were opposed to the new laws.

<sup>107</sup> A woman leader pointed out that poverty is a big challenge for women and it is one of the main causes of domestic violence (personal interview, Theresa Tucker, church and community leader, 21 November 2010). She further noted that women have not received much support from the state and NGOs to meet their material needs. In order to survive, according to her, women have adopted strategies aimed at advancing their productivity and welfare as well as the survival of their families, including, creating rotating credit associations. In addition, she pointed out that peace between husbands and wives can only be built if wives are productive and helping support their families. In this case, there is the need for liberal peace and state elites to put more emphasis on women's socio-economic needs than rights. This also shows internationals' failure to understand the local realities in relation to violent conflict in the home.

institution of the “mummy queen” that provide space for women to express their agency as well as act as checks on patriarchy. In addition, such institutions act as women’s means to counter social and political exclusion. This shows the complex nature of the social position of women in Sierra Leone.

A TA pointed out that the government want to abolish secret societies (group interview, TAs, 28 November 2009). This could be a result of pressure from international actors who criticise secret societies for encouraging “harmful” traditional practices, particularly female circumcision and see them as vehicles for the abuse of the rights of the girl child. However, such internationals have not given attention to the positive aspects of female secret societies and the institution of the “mummy queen”. Abolishing them will also mean disempowering women as well as undermining their agency which is expressed through the powerful position of the “mummy queen” and the institution of female secret society which bring women together and resonates with the communitarian values of their society. Anthropological research in Sierra Leone (West Africa, in general) has shown that women are effective when engaging in collective action (Shaw 2001; Ferme 2001; Moran 2006).<sup>108</sup> In other words, women in rural Sierra Leone have used such established customary institutions and engaged in collective action to defend their rights as well as express their needs and interests (also see Shaw 2001; Moran 2006). This explains why they are able block processes that exclude the “mummy queen” who is there to represent their interests.

In addition to the above, a counsellor for a local NGO, Community Association for Psychosocial Services (CAPS) told me a case of Sengema village in Kailahun where serious local tensions had remained in the post-war period (personal interview, 12 November 2010).

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<sup>108</sup> A respondent told me that youths in his community have devised a strategy of using “our sisters” (female youths) to air their grievances in their community since “Wherever there is a group of women their voices are heard” (personal interview, confidential source, 21 November 2010).

In 2010, more than eight years after the official end of Sierra Leone's civil war and the introduction of the liberal peace project in the country, villagers invited CAPS to facilitate a cleansing ceremony in the village in order to end civil war-related tensions among community members. CAPS, a neo-traditional civil society organisation, offers psychosocial services to victims of war, rape and domestic violence through the utilisation of modern/Western and traditional mental health practices. The organisation has played a critical role in promoting reintegration and reconciliation as well as the restoration of the well-being of war victims which the liberal peace has not paid much attention to. CAPS also sensitises people on human rights as a means to deal with rape and domestic violence, and uses modern/Western mental health techniques that provide medical solutions to human suffering. In addition, it has also adopted a strategy that involves the use of traditional healing ceremonies such as culturally appropriate community cleansing ceremonies as means to promote reintegration, reconciliation and psychosocial healing.

According to the CAPS counsellor I cited above, in 2010 villagers from Sengema village asked CAPS to facilitate a community cleansing ceremony aimed at ending local tensions. The locals linked the tensions with the intra-village conflict that erupted during the war. This witnessed atrocities and violations of social norms being committed in the village including the shading of blood, incest, "violating the bush" by having sex in the bush and mass graves (personal interview, CAPS Counsellor, 12 November 2010). This localised sub-war that developed in Sengema village was due to the fact that its inhabitants had joined rival militia groups, particularly the CDF and the RUF. According to CAPS counsellor, since the village was not close to the highway, villagers felt safe and decided not to flee their village during the war. However, the village became a battleground between Kamajor warriors (CDF) and RUF rebels who came from that village. Since post-war peacebuilding initiatives in Sierra

Leone privileged the state and its institutions over such localised sub-wars, it meant that such conflicts as in Sengema could not be addressed. As such, local tensions continued after the civil war was officially declared over in 2002. In the post-war period warring parties would fight against each other, even over minor issues.

In 2010, a group of young men from the village approached CAPS for support. The organisation visited the village and engaged in a community dialogue in order to identify the root causes of the tensions. Villagers identified the civil war and its consequences as the main causes of tensions within the village. In addition, villagers attributed their problems, including poor harvests, to angry ancestors. In most African societies ancestors or what Mbiti (1969) calls the “living-dead” are believed to actively participate in the world of the living creating “communities of both the living and the dead” (Kopytoff 1971: 129). Ancestors are believed to act as guarantors and the basis of peace and security. It is crucial to note that the relationship of ancestors to the living is often described as ambivalent, “both punitive and benevolent and sometimes even capricious” (Kopytoff 1971: 129). In general, in order for ancestors to guarantee individual and social peace as well as security, the living ought to maintain harmonious relationships with fellow members of the community ensuring that they do everything possible to address threats or breaches for the purpose of maintaining such relationships. In addition, it is crucial for community members to respect social norms and values. Failure to do so is believed to attract punishment from ancestors. Peace in this case is conceived as a gift from ancestors.

As noted above, during the war Sengema villagers violated established norms and rules including committing incest, killing and “violating the bush”, thus, undermining social harmony. The villagers noted a causal link between social enmity and misfortune. They

believed that ancestors punished them for the various violations that happened during the war, hence the poor harvests and violence in the village. As such, for the villagers the solution lied in conducting cleansing ceremonies and reconnecting with the ancestors who, as noted earlier, are believed to be the custodians of peace and security. Doing so would mean replacing social enmity with social harmony. As a result, they invited CAPS to facilitate community cleansing ceremonies with various stakeholders attending including their Paramount Chief, section chiefs, NGO workers and women. CAPS also provided a PA system upon the request of the villagers to be used at the cleansing ceremonies. CAPS counsellor I cited above, pointed out that the cleansing ceremonies included perpetrators being asked to publicly confess their wrongdoings, showing remorse and seeking forgiveness from their victims, appeasing ancestors and offering libation. For example, he pointed out that a former RUF confessed that he committed atrocities under the influence of drugs, and asked for forgiveness from those he wronged. For such communities forgiveness is prioritised since it is essential for building peace and the restoration of harmonious relationships. However, the liberal peace has not paid sufficient attention to this, thus has failed to have much impact on the “margins of the state” where culture, tradition and custom are prioritised.

Three months later, CAPS visited the village to assess the situation and found out that tensions had ceased and there was some cohesion in the village. In addition, the villagers had established a “peace hut” where villagers now meet to discuss issues affecting them and their community as well as settle disputes instead of resorting to violence. The villagers did not appeal to the liberal peace to establish peace, but drew from their customary institutions and ways of dealing with conflicts which allowed them to enter a social contract amongst themselves as well as their ancestors for the purpose of establishing and maintaining harmonious relations. In addition, after the cleansing ceremonies they accommodated modern

mental health practices since CAPS has established three psychosocial counselling groups in the village. This has allowed modern/Western and traditional mental health practices to interact, though the traditional one tends to dominate enabling them to retain agency, autonomy and ownership. It is crucial to note that peace for such a community is not just a moral value, but also a spiritual one and is perceived in relation to both social and spiritual harmony.

In summary, contrary to the liberal peace proponents' view of the "local" as lacking capacity for peace, these initiatives that involve the "local-local" (with the support of civil society organisations) actively finding solutions to their problems are evidence of local capacity, ownership and non-state agency as well as resistance to the liberal peace. Traditional leaders take a leading role in such peace initiatives with politicians attending as invited guests and local NGOs such as CAPS, Forum for Conscience and Hope Sierra Leone acting as facilitators. In such processes, the community initiates, organises and controls the peace process, and at the same time, accommodates "outsiders" such as civil society organisations, thus making them part of the process as facilitators. In addition, NGOs, particularly neo-traditional ones are playing a significant role in encouraging and facilitating informal dispute resolution, holding awareness raising campaigns and sensitisation workshops, and at times have acted as arbiters through their alternative dispute resolution (ADR) programs and free justices services generating resentment from chiefs. The next section is the concluding section of the thesis.

## Conclusion

In this thesis, I set to investigate the practical application of the liberal peace in Africa using Sierra Leone as a case study of liberal peace transition. For the past two decades external peace interventions in war-torn societies have been liberal peace-oriented emphasising on political and economic liberalisation, and statebuilding with insufficient attention to inequality, resource distribution, culture, localised forms of peacebuilding and welfare, among others. The liberal peace has been transplanted from the West to troubled parts of the developing world with the hope that it will create sustainable peace in these countries. Despite the liberal peace's flaws (discussed in chapters 3, 4 and 6), it merits study because today we have violent internal conflict situations, and liberal internationalists who are willing and able to go in. In this thesis, the aim has not been to undermine the liberal peace model since it has played a crucial role in ending overt violence in societies emerging from violent conflict, but instead to open it up and expand on it by looking at other forms of peace and also taking into account the agency of local actors in post-conflict environments. The thesis has used the liberal peace as its primary frame of reference. The notion of hybridity has been employed to help us to pay attention to custom, culture, the "subaltern" who live on the "margins of the state" and to show how local actors in Sierra Leone have challenged the hegemony of the liberal peace. Local actors have not necessarily acted according to the demands of internationals.

This thesis examined the interface between liberal peacebuilding and existing political and cultural systems, identifying forms of agency that local actors are exercising and the forms of peace resulting from these dynamics on the ground. It built from an emerging critical

literature on the liberal peace that is increasingly focusing on “locally-grounded non-state agency and mechanisms of recovery and order” that are of “significance for understanding the empirical conditions for political order and peace” (Moe 2010: 7). This study was largely inspired by the need to observe and engage local actors in Sierra Leone including those who live “on the margins of the state” whose cultural, political and peacebuilding practices the liberal peace has made invisible. I use invisibility, in this case, to refer to the West’s denial of the presence of local capacity to build peace as well as a denial that local actors can provide, for example, security, democracy, human rights and gender equality without external direction. This saw me conducting fieldwork in multiple sites of Sierra Leone including three rural sites (Kailahun, Mattru Jong and Sierra Rutile), and living with and interacting a lot with ordinary people in Freetown, Kenema and Bo in December 2009 and November 2010. The fieldwork aspect of this study helped me to uncover the complex dynamics on the ground which make it impossible for the liberal peace to take root in Sierra Leone. It also helped me to discover the disconnect between priorities of internationals and locals, particularly those who live in the hinterland. For instance, while the internationals prioritise the state, its institutions, state elites, political and economic liberalisation, locals prioritise community, custom, tradition, needs, welfare, customary governance and social harmony. Based on this, the liberal peace’s failure to pay sufficient attention to such “local” priorities and also its failure to understand the dynamics on the ground has resulted in it not having much impact in terms of achieving its objectives in Sierra Leone.

By providing such insights on the interactions, and political and cultural dynamics in Sierra Leone, this study aimed at contributing to the emerging debates on the need to go beyond the liberal peace using concepts such as hybridity and “post-liberal peace” as “a way of understanding contemporary contexts defined by civil war and peace interventions” (Mac



Ginty 2011: 11; see chapter 4). Further, it helped me identify other types of peace and ways of addressing local level sources of conflict.

It is crucial to note that during my fieldwork there were a number of limitations including language and cultural barriers as most people in the hinterland spoke either Creole or Mende, even at public meetings. In order to get a picture of the issues discussed at such public meetings I often asked a participant seating close to me to re-count it for me. I also made use of Mende and Creole interpreters. In addition, I analysed text books and multiple documents, including news articles, legal and policy documents in obtaining data. Below I will summarise the structure of the thesis and research findings, then reflect on the findings and finally, state areas of future research.

The introduction of this thesis outlined the liberal peace debates in which the thesis is located, and the theoretical and methodological approaches that it draws on. In chapter I provided a general historical analysis of political organisation in the pre-colonial, colonial and post-colonial periods and the challenges that a number of post-colonial African states are facing including that of building viable states and sustainable peace. By so doing, I acknowledged the significance of history and set the context for understanding local agency, multiple authorities in most African societies including Sierra Leone and the role of customary governance and law in social order, welfare and stability. In addition, I discussed legacies of the past such as, external intervention in Africa and its negative effects on the continent including the destabilising effects of trade liberalisation on fragile states which has been brought back through liberal peacebuilding, and the creation of states without legitimacy that saw political elites engaging in authoritarian politics resulting in instability in a number of states on the continent.

In chapter 2, I discussed and offered definitions of peacebuilding, statebuilding, post-conflict, liberal peacebuilding and liberal peace. I noted that the concepts of peacebuilding and statebuilding are distinct and should not be conflated. Drawing from Richmond (2005, 2006), I provided a framework of the liberal peace in the same chapter. Chapter 3 was a critical review of literature on the liberal peace agenda in post-conflict environments bringing out the polarisation between mainstream and critical scholars. Chapter 4 discussed the emerging critical literature that argue for the need to shift from merely criticising the liberal peace to examining local and contextual responses to the liberal peace including identifying the forms of peace that are being constructed as a result of the interactions between the liberal peace and local social forces. Such contextualisation is crucial mainly because it helps to show that there is no such thing as universal peace, but various forms of peace. This also provides for a better understanding of the complex dynamics in post-conflict/conflict zones. The chapter adopted the concept of hybridity as way of understanding the agency of local actors in peacebuilding from state elites to chiefs to civil society to ordinary people on the “margins of the state” as well as challenging the hegemony of the liberal peace.

In Chapter 5, I discussed historical factors that laid a weak foundation for the modern state in Sierra Leone. This chapter related with chapter 1 which offered a general historical background on Africa. It also offered a critical account of scholarly debates on the immediate causes of state failure/collapse and the civil war and its aftermaths. It noted the need to understand the crisis in Sierra Leone in terms of the long-term and short-term causes, and state and community failure in order to deal effectively with the situation. In chapter 6, drawing on the theory chapters and fieldwork I discussed the practical application of the liberal peace in Sierra Leone, the complex local dynamics, the interactions between local political and social forces and local forms of peace. I noted that dynamics on the ground have

hindered the full realisation of the liberal peace with more remote areas having some aspects of customary peacebuilding such as cleansing ceremonies operating independent of the liberal state institutions that the liberal peace has established and parallel to mainstream peacebuilding. By so doing, such local actors have expressed “critical agency” and their desire for autonomy.<sup>109</sup>

### **Hybrid Forms of Peace in Sierra Leone**

My findings are similar to that of critical literature about liberal interventionism being partially counter-productive in post-war societies (see chapter 3) and also that, interactions between the liberal peace and local social and political forces are resulting in hybrid forms of peace in such societies (see chapter 4). At the same time, it is crucial to note that not all forms of peace that are emerging in Sierra Leone are hybrid since as noted in the previous chapter there are other peace processes that are operating in parallel to the liberal peace, particularly in rural areas. It is also crucial to note that, there are positive outcomes of liberal interventions in Sierra Leone including an end to overt violence and the establishment of basic security and order. For internationals, “peace” and stability have been understood in relation to elections, particularly the 2007 elections that saw a smooth transition of power and the government’s control over Freetown. Yet, this understanding of peace has resulted in state elites and internationals failing to adequately address the underlying causes of the conflict resulting in dissatisfaction, particularly in rural societies. The state that internationals have created in Sierra Leone has not engaged much with the population based outside Freetown and such population continue to struggle for survival. Its liberal-oriented

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<sup>109</sup> Richmond (2011b: 17) refers to critical agency as “implying a local, contextual subaltern (meaning civil society and the local-local beneath it) capacity to mobilise non-violently, either visibly and in a coordinated manner, or in hidden and fragmented ways”.

institutions cannot relate much with the hinterland rendering the liberal peace less effective in the hinterland. Further, the re-introduction of multi-party politics has polarised Sierra Leoneans since democratic political competition is being practised along regional/ethnic lines making it difficult for politics of inclusion to take root in the country. As with, the externally imposed (neo-)liberal economics, it has ignored welfare, rights, interests and needs of citizens. In addition, (neo)-liberal economic policies have undermined the livelihoods of subsistence farmers in resource rich rural communities since mining companies are displacing people from their customary lands. This has generated grievances among affected groups. The state's failure to protect affected groups from such companies makes it increasingly irrelevant to affected communities.

It is crucial to note that in Sierra Leone local actors have not been passive recipients of the liberal peace and that local dynamics are not only resulting in its hybridisation, but also the hybridisation of customary mechanisms of peacemaking such as the tree (which has been transformed to a peace tree) and the *palava* hut (which has been transformed to a peace hut). Besides being spaces for re-establishing social cohesion, the rebuilding of relations, dispute resolution, dialogue and “hanging heads”, the peace hut and peace tree have become spaces of resistance, autonomy and partial acceptance of the liberal peace. Civil society organisations have been able to utilise them in their human rights, rule of law, gender and democracy awareness raising campaigns. It is in these spaces that hybridisation at the “local-local” level is taking place as the “local-local” has managed to maintain its autonomy and agency. In addition, “local-local” actors have used these spaces to their own advantage or needs. As with regard to international actors, the situation on the ground has forced them to accept and attempt to modify customary law and justice as well as chiefdom police through the JSDP funded by DFID, though much emphasis has been on the liberal peace. By so

doing, the internationals have been able to accommodate custom, though biased towards the liberal peace. In this case, there is some recognition on their part of the crucial role of customary law in peacebuilding since the state remains largely dysfunctional. In this regard, the situation on the ground in Sierra Leone shows that the liberal peace and local actors should not be perceived as essential and fixed entities, but reshaping each other in ways that are leading to hybrid forms of peace.

The state's limited control of "up country spaces" has seen other forms of authority such as chiefs predominantly controlling these spaces and claiming sovereign authority to them. The rural populace has continued to view such non-state forms of authority as more legitimate and important than the state as well as responsible for order, security and welfare in rural communities. In Sierra Leone, the state and state elites who are crucial to the liberal peace project cannot do without these forms of authority resulting in state elites being caught up in relationships of interdependence with chiefs and forging informal alliances and establishing patronage networks with them and other influential non-state actors such as secret society leaders. In this case, state elites are adept at appearing to conform to the liberal peace framework while continuing to pursue illiberal forms of politics and their personal interests. Given that the state has limited power and authority in the hinterland, it is difficult for the liberal peace to assert itself in rural Sierra Leone and it is also hard to build the Sierra Leonean state without non-state actors such as chiefs.

As such, the state in Sierra Leone has remained fragile with a hybrid political order that combine basic tenets of the liberal peace, neo-patrimonialism, ethno-politics and customary governance. Can such a hybrid political order be able to build durable peace? As noted in chapter 6, this form of hybrid political order has tended to exclude a large segment of the

population particularly those in the southern and eastern areas who are either not part of the patronage networks or are not supporters of APC further fragmenting the Sierra Leonean society. This segment of the population that has been excluded from the peace dividend has increasingly become suspicious of the state and state elites utilising the cultural logics of ambiguity and concealment in order to access the peace dividend as well as to gain autonomy. In addition, some local actors who cannot access the peace dividend have engaged in deviant subsistence strategies such as trading sex, stealing and drugs. In Sierra Leone, the political system that is being created tends to resemble the pre-war one which gave rise to the civil war in the country (see chapter 5) – the exception being that locals have noted that the post-war APC government is not as authoritarian as the pre-war one which has been partly attributed to the presence of internationals in the country. In addition, the liberal peace's failure to connect to most of the population's needs and welfare has resulted in its continued support of state elites, statebuilding and neoliberal economics. This has resulted in the further marginalisation and suffering of citizens. Indeed, in Sierra Leone a “virtual peace” has been generated making it hard for an emancipatory variant of the liberal peace to be achieved.

Besides the above, the research findings have shown that there has been a partial acceptance and internalisation of the liberal peace by ordinary people. This should be viewed as a strategy by them to challenge their exclusion, marginalisation and state elites' abuse of state resources and corruption. Ordinary people have shown awareness of the existence of state institutions such as the Anti-corruption Commission as well as an understanding of the precepts of the liberal peace including human rights, good governance, accountability and rule of law. In addition, at the local governance level ordinary people have resisted councillors as legitimate local authorities, but have accepted their role in development. Further, they have continued to view chiefs as their legitimate authorities. It is also crucial to

note that ordinary rural people, particularly youths with the support of local civil society organisations have demanded the democratisation of the institution of the chief. This would include shifting from an Electoral College system to chieftaincy elections based on universal suffrage and limiting the term of office for Paramount Chiefs and sub-chiefs to 5 years. Currently, chiefs rule for life. By transforming chieftaindom authorities, it is hoped that chiefs will focus more on serving their followers' interests than those of state elites since failure to do so will see them being voted out of office. At the same time, such people have resisted the abolition of the chieftaincy system pointing out that it is "our tradition". This not only shows partial acceptance and internalisation of the liberal peace, but also attempts at its modification to produce a liberal-local hybrid that includes custom, traditional governance and culture aimed at promoting the locals' interests and needs. It is these responses of the grassroots to state elites' abuse of state resources and their desire for chiefs to focus more on their needs and interests than those of state elites, their partial acceptance of liberal peace and alliance with the internationals and civil society that may eventually force both local and national elites into reform that may lead to a "liberal-local" hybrid form of peace.

Sierra Leone's civil war devastated the lives of most of the population, especially in the rural areas seriously impacting families and community cohesion. In post-war Sierra Leone, the peasantry continue to live precarious lives experiencing extreme poverty, a lack of basic services and infrastructure. In addition, the state is very distant from them. Yet, the liberal peace with its top-down approach and bias towards (neo)-liberal economics, state elites, the state and its institutions has paid insufficient attention to culture, custom, welfare and basic human needs of most of the population. For many rural Sierra Leoneans, the causes of the civil war remain including marginalisation, poverty, uneven distribution of state wealth, corruption, bad governance, injustice and a lack of accountability.

It is crucial to note that although their role in peacebuilding is often minimalized, the rural populace has used custom and other cultural resources to deal with their situation, particularly post-war challenges such as restoring social relations while demanding the state to meet their basic needs. In addition, the restoration of social relations is also understood in relation to establishing and maintaining good relations with ancestors with the belief that ancestors are the custodians of peace. This has witnessed the “local-local” engaging in “a number of more localised and contextual non-elite processes” (Richmond 2011b). Such processes include reconciliation and community cleansing ceremonies in which secret societies have acted as ritual experts. Despite, the liberal peace’s attempts to eliminate secret societies citing “harmful traditional practices”, particularly female circumcision ignoring their role in promoting social harmony, peace, security and social order, the rural populace have continued to rely on them. In this case, this has seen them continuing to conduct ritual ceremonies aimed at promoting social harmony as well as harmony with ancestors. These rituals are conducted in secret society meetings beyond the reach of the liberal peace. In this case, the form of peace that results is locally-oriented. In these local contexts, customary peacebuilding has put much emphasis on restoring relationships and building a social/communitarian peace. Peace, in the case, is conceived as social cohesion as well as harmony between the individual, community and the invisible world of ancestors.

In addition, where state elites have attended such processes, they have done so as invited guests without taking a leading role in the processes allowing the rural populace to exercise its autonomy. And also where NGOs, particularly neo-traditional ones have been involved, they have played a subordinate/facilitative role allowing locals to take a leading role. By being part of the local peacebuilding process, such NGOs have been able to impart liberal



peace precepts including democracy, human rights, accountability and equal participation in decision-making while not undermining custom and local ways of operating. As such, such neo-traditional organisations have managed to establish legitimacy both locally and internationally due to their ability to speak the language of internationals and locals. In addition, this has allowed them to combine elements of the liberal peace and customary peacemaking with some success. It is this form of engagement on the “margins of the state” that might lead to “local-liberal hybrid” forms of peace in the country. Indeed, the “birth” of a “post-liberal” peace in Sierra Leone. Such a “post-liberal” peace will be more local than liberal since customary peace processes in the hinterland tend to dominate with civil society organisations bringing in some aspects of the liberal peace, particularly human rights, development and democracy. However, the “local-local” will still need the state for the provision of welfare and needs, if a durable peace is to be established.

My findings challenge the liberal internationalist assumptions and assertions about “the local”, particularly ordinary villagers, as lacking capacity and being powerless. Rather than privileging state-centred and liberal peace-centred approaches to post-conflict peacebuilding, a critical theoretical and methodological approach that I adopted in this study as well as research methods that are ethnographic in nature which allowed me to interact with individuals at the lower rungs of the socio-economic hierarchy, provided a useful understanding of post-conflict peacebuilding in Sierra Leone as discussed in chapter 6. The post-conflict experiences of ordinary Sierra Leoneans in villagers and the mining town of Sierra Rutile also provided significant insights on why it is crucial to move/think beyond liberal peacebuilding and think about local peacebuilding initiatives and “post-liberal peace(building)”. In addition, such lived experiences of ordinary Sierra Leoneans discussed in chapter 6 provide important insights on why it is crucial not to think of Sierra Leone as

having moved out of the post-conflict phase into an economic drive as economic and state elites, and internationals such as the World Bank claim. This has led them to blindly adopt neo-liberal economics without much concern about its impact on ordinary Sierra Leoneans. As such, this tends to reinforce the power of internationals, state and economic elites, at the same time, erasing the welfare, interests and needs of the poor. Further, my findings dispute the assumption that the liberal peace is all that there is to peace which mainstream scholars, particularly Paris (2010) and Begby and Burgess (2009) tend to hold (see chapter 3). Such an assumption, I would argue is just incorrect or ill-founded as chapter 6 has shown. Ordinary Sierra Leoneans and political elites have shown their capacity to resist, partially accept, modify and subvert liberal peacebuilding as well as the capacity to build peace independent of the liberal peace based on their own understandings of the social, economic and political situation in which they find themselves. It is also crucial to note that peace research that brings various actors including the marginalised into the picture is crucial for the conceptual development of “post-liberal peace”.

### **Areas of Future Research**

Since all but, one site (Freetown) in which the fieldwork was conducted are in the south and eastern areas (opposition stronghold) further research needs to be done in the northern area (the ruling party’s stronghold and also a region that considers the institution of the chief to be sacred) to find out whether this is the case in the region or grassroots responses in the south and eastern regions targeting state elites and chiefs are merely resulting from exclusion at the state and local level, respectively. It would also be interesting to do a comparative analysis of Sierra Leone and other post-conflict environments in Africa, such as Liberia that operate on patronage politics and have witnessed international attempts at imposing the liberal peace. It

is also crucial that further research be done on the role of neo-traditional civil society organisations in hybridisation and their relationship with internationals.

## Appendix 1

### Interviews (Freetown, Bo, Kenema, Kailahun, Mattru Jong & Sierra Rutile)

<b>Informants Interviewed</b>	
Government	5
Local NGOs	12
International NGOs/Bilateral Org./UN/IFIs	6
Police	1
Ex-combatants	3
Individuals	7
Associations	7
Paramount Chiefs/sub-chiefs/TAs	11
Members of Parliament	1
Political Parties	3
Local Government	3
Media	5
Academics/Teachers	2
Youth leaders	2
Sierra Leone Commission for Human Rights Staff	1
Women Leaders	2
<b>Total</b>	<b>71</b>

#### **Please note:**

1. Group discussions (3) were conducted at a leadership training workshop in Kailahun on 12/11/2010. 17 participants and two facilitators were at the workshop.
2. Group interviews are counted just once.
3. A number of respondents, especially in rural areas and some local NGOs were interviewed with others present. Such interviews sometimes developed into group interviews.

## **Appendix 2**

### **Leadership Training – 12 November 2010, Kailahun District Council Canteen**

**Q1.** What do you understand by the word peace?

**Q2.** What were the causes of the Sierra Leonean war?

**Q3.** As community leaders how are you promoting peace in Kailahun District?

**Q4.** How have people responded to the peace initiatives?

#### **Examples:**

1. Human rights
2. Rule of law
3. Democracy
4. Traditional approaches

**Q5(a)** Which approaches have the people of Kailahun

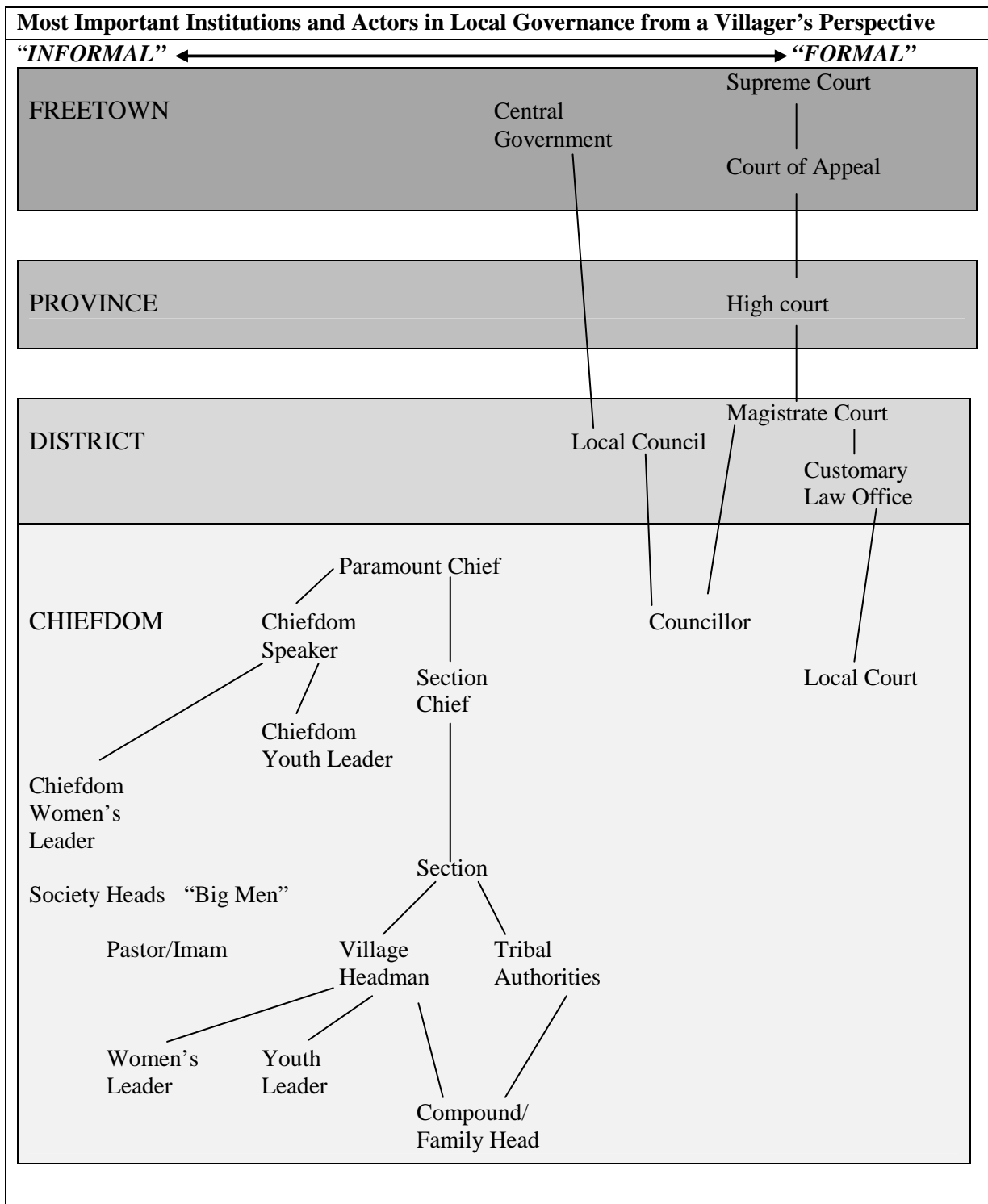
1. Resisted?
2. Accepted?
3. Modified?

b) Where the people have resisted, as a leader how do you deal with this?

**Q6.** Have you experienced any interface between the local and international peacebuilding?

Please note: the workshop organiser had an input in the research questions.

# Appendix 3



Source: Manning (2009: 4)

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