



## The Liberal Peace Security Regimen: A Gramscian Critique of its Application in Africa

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### Abstract

Current security regimens are grounded in the advancement of liberal peace. All inter-governmental organizations, most states and most donor agencies more or less accept as common sense the self-evident virtuosity and truth of the liberal peace project. However, there is a profound contradiction within this project in Africa in that while this security regimen might reflect the impulses of a neoliberal hegemony, the very basic foundations of a domestic hegemonic project are in the main wholly absent. Equally, the nature of underdevelopment and dependency in the continent continues to undermine even basic autonomous state formation. These disjunctions mean that there is a distinct contradiction in promoting the current dominant security regimen in post-conflict scenarios in Africa. Instead, the liberal peace needs to be understood as a transnational project aimed at opening up African spaces for continued foreign penetration and exploitation.

### Résumé

Les régimes de sécurité actuels reposent sur l'avancement de la paix libérale. Toutes les organisations intergouvernementales, de nombreux États et la plupart des organismes donateurs, acceptent plus ou moins le sens commun donné au projet de paix libérale. Cependant, il existe une contradiction profonde au sein de ce projet en Afrique. Alors que ce schéma de sécurité pourrait refléter les impulsions d'une hégémonie néolibérale, les fondements vitaux d'un projet intérieur sont en général absents. De même, la nature du sous-développement et la dépendance du continent continuent de compromettre la formation d'un état basique d'autonomie. Ces disjonctions signifient qu'il y a une contradiction dans la promotion du régime dominant

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de sécurité dans les scénarios post-conflit en Afrique. Au lieu de cela, la paix libérale doit être comprise comme un projet transnational visant à ouvrir des espaces africains pour la mobilité continue des étrangers et l'exploitation.

The promotion of the liberal peace as a security regimen and as an integral part of external attempts at peacebuilding, reflects the hegemony within the developed world *vis-à-vis* the best way to organize the polity. Hegemony here is understood to be ideological and moral leadership of society (Gramsci 1971). It is reflected when ‘a certain way of life and thought is dominant [and when] one concept of reality is diffused throughout society in all its institutional and private manifestations, informing with its spirit all taste, morality, customs, religious and political principles’ (Williams 1960:587). In short, ‘The concept of hegemony... means political leadership based on the consent of the led, a consent which is secured by the diffusion and popularisation of the world view of the ruling class’ (Bates 1975:352).

The intellectual origins of the liberal peace are found in the peace research literature, with figures such as Johan Galtung (see e.g. Galtung 1975). A basic precept of this work is that there is a difference between what is called negative peace and positive peace. Negative peace is simply the absence of direct conflict, whilst positive peace seeks to address the *structural* causes of violence. These ideas can be found in the current liberal peace agenda, where stopping war is no longer adequate. Rather, crafting an ostensible long-term and sustainable positive peace is the goal. This has unavoidably meant that post-conflict management within Africa requires close engagement to transform the socio-economic conditions of the affected country. Inevitably, the two overlapping spheres of capitalist societies, ‘political society’ (which governs through force) and ‘civil society’ (which governs via consent) are intimately involved. Manufacturing the liberal peace is achieved through the execution of a security regimen, which constitutes a particular vision of positive peace, which might be briefly summarized as the creation of a liberal democracy; the growth of ‘civil society’, the promotion of liberal human rights and the support for market liberalization (Ramsbotham 2000). This article aims to examine some key contradictions in the imposition of the liberal peace as a security regimen in Africa.

## **The Liberal Peace Defined**

The liberal peace is composed of various gradations: the victor’s peace, where the victor’s terms are forced upon the vanquished; the constitutional peace, based on the Enlightenment; institutionalized peace; and civil peace, grounded in civil society peace (Richmond 2005). All four depend on external interventions, elevating external actors to an omnipresent (if not

omnipotent) position. The variants of the liberal peace serve as discourses that often silence discussion of other alternatives and place the options elevated by the capitalist core at the heart of any dialogue. In Africa this has meant that African input into the construction of peace has often been subsumed and/or sidelined and ignored, with the imposition of Western notions of what constitutes 'real' peace – the liberal peace, in other words – achieving unquestioned status.

This project reflects the hegemony of liberal values that reigns in global politics. All inter-governmental organizations, as well as Western states and donor agencies, more or less accept as common sense the self-evident virtuousness and truth of the liberal peace project. This hegemony is reinforced and amplified by fact that the liberal peace is the foundation upon which the International Financial Institutions (IFIs) operate. This normative agenda is equally dominant within the United Nations system, with a broad consensus on what peacebuilding is, as well as what constitutes the fundamentals of any sustainable peace. All of this fosters an intellectual climate at the policy level in which the basic assumptions of what is effectively a security regimen go unproblematised, indeed are hegemonic. The key hypotheses behind the liberal peace and its security regimen fit with this situation and are deemed virtually unquestionable.

The current agenda advanced by the main actors in any peacebuilding initiative in Africa is premised on the notion that liberalization i.e. liberal democracy and the 'free market' will facilitate positive peace. In this formulation, external actors are granted a pivotal role in wholesale attempts at societal transformation. It can be said that 'peacebuilding is in effect an enormous experiment in social engineering – an experiment that involves transplanting Western models of social, political, and economic organization into war-shattered states in order to control civil conflict: in other words, pacification through political and economic liberalization' (Paris 1997: 56). This has taken on an evangelistic fervour in most Western capitals. Indeed, as Eric Hobsbawm asserted:

We [the West] are at present engaged in what purports to be a planned reordering of the world by the powerful states.... The rhetoric surrounding this crusade implies that the system is applicable in a standardised (Western) form, that it can succeed everywhere, that it can remedy today's transnational dilemmas, and that it can bring peace rather than sow disorder. It cannot (Hobsbawm 2007:115).

This conceived reorganization of the world by the West is what Samir Amin has described as the 'liberal virus' (Amin 2005). In the context of post-conflict reconstruction efforts, this virus however is promoted as the cure for all ills.

However, the sort of policies being advanced as part of the liberal peace in post-conflict spaces cannot be readily implemented on populations in normal circumstances where popular resistance might disturb the process. Privatization, the 'free market' and other elements of the dominant discourse rather tends to stimulate greater societal dislocation, alongside exploitation, growing inequality and other pathologies. Two twin processes are thus required: a deeply traumatized population that is in a state of vulnerability and a form of politics that insulates elites from societal pressures and dissipates resistance. I shall first discuss the former element, before moving on to how 'democratic politics' in post-conflict spaces is the actual antithesis to self-realization by societies emerging from war.

### **Shock and Awe**

Naomi Klein's *The Shock Doctrine* (2007) makes a compelling argument that societies emerging out of traumatic experiences, be they natural disasters, wars or major economic crises, are more prone to the implementation of neoliberalism than other social orders. Klein asserts that because of the intrinsic social contradictions inherent within neoliberal policies, political turmoil and a disoriented citizenry that spring from processes such as war may act as coercive pretexts for implementing neoliberal reforms, the type of which most of the affected public would in general reject under 'normal' conditions. Klein demonstrates that neoliberalism has continually been applied in the absence of the compliance of the governed by taking advantage of a range of types of national 'shock therapies'. To dazed populations emerging out of conflict, governments in league with external actors are more able to force through radical (and in due course damaging) 'free market' policies that would never otherwise be put up with.

In post-conflict spaces, what is presented to the IFIs and the UN system is a *tabula rasa* upon which the promoters of neoliberal capitalism believe their programmes can be implemented with minimal resistance. Klein uses the examples of Chile under Pinochet, Argentina under the military juntas, post-apartheid South Africa, post-Solidarity Poland, Russia under Yeltsin, the 'reconstruction' of Iraq post the US invasion, Sri Lanka after the tsunami and New Orleans post-Katrina. I suggest that we might also regard post-conflict spaces in Africa as fitting with Klein's thesis and as offering the proponents of neoliberalism a great opportunity to reconstitute society along approved lines. What we see in such countries is a de-patterning of societies caused by war and this facilitates attempts to remake them from scratch.

After all, Milton Friedman (1962) wrote in his preface to *Capitalism and Freedom* that ‘Only a crisis – actual or perceived – produces real change ... our basic function [is] to develop alternatives to existing policies, to keep them alive and available until the politically impossible becomes politically inevitable’. The politically impossible, in Friedman’s calculations, is for the state to vacate as much of the public space as possible, the economy in particular. As part of this project, governments must eliminate the rules and regulations (labour rights, safety standards etc.) that may reduce profit accumulation. Secondly, any state activity that the private sector *could* be running at a profit *should* be privatized. This includes health care and education and may be extended into other social realms. Thirdly, state spending on social programmes should be considerably reduced. As such policies are intrinsically destabilizing and deeply unpopular, the opening that a conflict affords those in favour of such measures is immeasurably valuable. This is recognized by USAID’s Bureau for Democracy, Conflict, and Humanitarian Assistance for example, which states that ‘In support of US foreign policy, the Office of Transition Initiatives (OTI) seizes emerging windows of opportunity in the political landscape’ in traumatized societies (USAID 2017). As part of the attempt to remake societies in crisis along neoliberal lines, as per Klein’s thesis, there is a need to insulate the elites imposing such programmes from popular resistance. This is where ‘democracy’ comes in.

### The ‘Democratic Agenda’

Within the liberal peace security regimen, the discourse of ‘democracy’ has been central. Until the end of the Cold War, authoritarian and dictatorial styles of government were often seen as prerequisites for security in Africa (read: Western interests), hence Western support for a litany of brutal dictatorships across the continent was widespread. However, since the latter part of the 1980s, and after a much-hyped ‘wave of democracy’ washed over the continent, liberal democracy is now seen as the panacea for all of Africa’s ills. Most mainstream analyses have taken for granted a specific definition of democracy, taking Western models of liberal democracy as the normative standard by which democratization processes can be evaluated. This is then unthinkingly and teleologically transposed onto Africa (see e.g. Harkness 2015). What such analyses share is an extremely naive assumption that procedural models of electoral activities constitute ‘democratization’. Such a preoccupation with the technical formulae fits with the agenda being advanced by Western actors, whose political repertoire is dominated by references to ‘good governance’ as the foundation of the liberal peace.

However, this ‘good governance’ agenda comprises only very hollow democratic institutional forms (if existing at all), crafted to advance a specific type of democracy harmonious with the further promotion of capitalist liberalization (Abrahamsen 2000). Yet the type of neoliberal precepts that underpin the contemporary liberal peace project helps contribute to a continuation of profoundly undemocratic systems. This is quite deliberate and understandable given that ‘struggles for popular democracy around the world are profound threats to the privileges of US-led Northern elites and their junior counterparts in the South’ (Robinson 1996:649).

A means by which struggles against the imposition of key precepts of the liberal peace and privileged internal and external interests can be defended is required from the elite perspective. In the context of neoliberal reforms, whereby the state is ‘rolled back’, traditional forms of social control need to be reinvented and consent secured alongside coercion. This consensual mechanism of social control is part and parcel of the globalizing neoliberal economic project, adding legitimacy via liberal democratic systems to a specific economic (though not necessarily developmental) model. For Graf (1996:41), ‘Democratisation nowadays has become ... a hegemonic discourse allowing the North to define the South in its own image’. In support, Hyden (1997:236) avers that ‘support for [democratization] efforts in Africa is part of a global strategy to promote “Western” values and institutionalise political regimes that are likely to be non-belligerent and generally positive towards the realisation of the liberal paradigm’.

Indeed, ‘the framing and circumscribing of democratic thought and discourse in terms of the precepts of polyarchy can be understood as an effort by core state elites to solidify and stabilise the hegemony which safeguards their positions of power and privilege’ within the global economy (Neufeld 1999).<sup>1</sup> Polyarchy aims to soothe the social and political pressures that are created by the neoliberal order and creates a state of ‘low intensity democracy’ (Gills, Rocamora and Wilson 1993). Such an analysis echoes the assertion that ‘the construction of a corporate-dominant order would ... require the neutralisation of social forces precipitating persistent and effective questioning of the established order’ (Harrod 1997:108). By its very nature, polyarchy dissipates the energies of those marginalized by the ongoing order into parliamentary procedures that are in themselves acted out by political fractions whose power and prestige are dependent on the polyarchical model.

Furthermore, polyarchy is based on a conscious divorce of ‘economics’ from ‘politics’ (at a time when neoliberalist impulses push for a greater interpenetration of the two, if not a domination of the former over the

latter). By doing so, the polyarchical process limits itself to the ‘purely political’ except on assenting or dissenting over trivial modifications to macro-economic policy. As Bukovansky (2007:181) notes,

Liberal democracy is often presented as a technical prescription for curing a host of ills, rather than as a political value to be debated and adapted to particular conditions. Use of the term ‘technical assistance’ to describe a broad array of policies designed to disseminate proper institutional forms from the liberal core to the non-liberal or quasi-liberal periphery is symbolic of the prevailing wisdom. Sending advisors who show local authorities how to set up elections or courts or banking systems is presented as a *technical* rather than a *political* act. Calling such dissemination of ideas ‘technical’ links them to science and engineering, rather than politics and ethics. It gives them an aura of value-neutrality and scientific validity.

Through this process, the type of politico-economic arrangements being crafted as part of the liberal peace are legitimized – after all, suffrage has been universalized and hence grievances are remedied via the ballot box, not mass action or self-development:

[T]he combination of economic and political liberalism [in polyarchy] is ... not democracy *per se* ... but that is not the point; the point is that the dominant discourse has determined that it is. And of course economic liberalism is but another term for capitalism, so that capitalism appears as the economic face of democracy, thus downplaying the negative associations, in the South, between capitalism and imperialism and collapsing the elite ideological construct into [an] amorphous but demagogically effective concept of democracy (Graf 1996:44).

This process acts to bolster the structural position of those African political elites that enjoy the status and trappings of power through involvement in this arrangement. Their activities are shifted away from active democratic intercourse with their constituencies and further and further towards identification and solidarity with external actors. Post-conflict spaces are of interest in this process as it is here that we might observe – via the imposition of the liberal peace project – the imperialist nature of neoliberalism at its most naked with regard to the security regimens that are implemented. Here, imperialism ‘is defined not by the export of capital, but by the export of *capitalism*: the social relations of production that define it and institutions devised to promote and sustain them. Second, as the central role of the UN suggests, it is led not by states but by international organizations committed to capitalism as a *global project*’ (Cammack 2006:230). Embedding these policies in post-conflict spaces is at the heart of the liberal peace security regimen in Africa.

## Civil Society: Winning Hearts and Minds

According to Cammack (2006: 230), ‘the leaders of the [neoliberal] project, in their efforts to embed and legitimise it, have worked as much through NGOs and “civil society” as through governments’. Moreover, ‘[s]pecialists, operating out of policy groups, foundations, think-tanks, university research institutes, and government agencies, bring long-range political considerations and issues concerning social stability to the attention of the dominant classes and their inner core in the corporate community’ (Robinson 1996:27). By doing so, such activities constitute the vital mediating link between agency and structure in the development of policy and the building of hegemony. By acting within the realm of civil society, these activities are engaging the territory where hegemony is contested and (eventually) achieved, for ‘in times of crisis the institutions of civil society remain as the primary site of the cohesion of new political forces that may create a new order’ (Murphy 1994: 31).

This understanding tends to undermine the naïve belief that civil society is in itself a ‘good thing’, which mechanically enhances democracy and accountability. Instead, such a scenario can actually strengthen the position of the economic/political elites whilst providing a useful façade of legitimacy in the form of ‘civil society’. As one analyst wrote on the tactic by the West of strengthening civil society in Africa, ‘Assisting [elements within civil society] will lead to better economic decisions as well as strengthen governance: letting a hundred flowers bloom on the capitalist side of the civil society will help establish the rule and norms enabling societies to run themselves along the lines required by capital’ (Moore 1996:140).

Of course, in many African countries, the bourgeois-like ‘autonomous agentic individual’ described by the dominant paradigm, the essential prerequisite in the making of civil society itself, is absent (Fatton 1999: 3). This is where donor funding of ‘acceptable’ organizations and/or the outright manufacture of such bodies is crucial as a means of informing and directing public debate towards neoliberal solutions to post-conflict crises. Such bodies can also serve as helpful mediating agents (organic intellectuals) for establishing a hegemonic project. In Africa, the proliferation of NGOs has seen them behave similarly to non-profit consultancies, taking instructions from their funders in the West. This is nothing short of latter-day imperialism (Hearn 2007).

Exercises around such processes are integral to both the closure of debate during post-conflict transitions and to shaping the discourse around which post-war policies are formulated. The importance of this aspect of civil

society is ‘that the consensus forged by these experts over the identification [and solution] of problems shapes the way that interests of states are defined’ (Mittelman 1997:255). By acting thus, and in the absence of any strong alternative, business-aligned and donor-friendly elements within civil society – invariably donor-funded – contribute to the marginalization of any contrary impulses during the transition.

This limiting of the terrain of debate is essential for the elite classes as many of the conflicts that the advocates of liberal peace are seeking to resolve were predicated at the grassroots level around a form of resistance and revulsion of the anodyne form of democracy previously practised and abused by incumbent elites. In the absence of even nominal democracy, very often revolts were based on a deep antipathy towards the extant social order. Installing a popular democracy would thus pose a real threat to the ongoing capitalist order and the wider class interests that benefit from such a milieu (Friedman 1987). Indeed, very often amongst the rebel factions fighting in conflicts, capitalism and elitist forms of government were viewed as aggregate aspects of oppressive systems. Liberation rhetoric in such circumstances was then consciously anti-capitalist. Yet as a result of such aspirations, a means by which struggles can be undermined and privileged interests defended becomes imperative for the local elites, acting in tandem with their senior partners in the North. In such milieus, local groups within civil society that can marshal impressive international allies to contest the definition and uses of democratic institutions impose boundaries within which the discourse on what constitutes ‘democracy’ is defined, discussed and promoted (Koelble 1999:10).

These parameters are invariably defined as the ‘middle ground’, and space may be opened up for various contenders to negotiate themselves *within* this framework – a framework that is predicated upon variants of liberal democracy as the ‘common sense’ model upon which any post-conflict dispensation may be based. By doing so the ‘natural’ and ‘superior’ explanations that neoliberalism provides are advanced. After all, the superiority of the neoliberal ideology and its evident common sense has emerged from an ostensibly ‘free’ debate (the mythical free market of ideas, central to liberal delusions about how politics is practised), where alternative viewpoints must surely have been proffered and shown to be lacking upon inspection. This process in fact has seen the elevation of neoliberalism as *la pensée unique* and the market as the ultimate arbiter of what is or is not acceptable, both economically and politically, and, increasingly, socially.

Similar attempts to create ‘realistic’ options for post-conflict policy choices are part and parcel of interventions into civil society by advocates of

the liberal peace, facilitating ideological conditions and a close fit between power, ideas and institutions for the construction of hegemony (Gill 1990). Such activities need not stem from a restricted intellectual base – indeed diversity is important as a self-legitimizing device – ‘narrow orthodoxy or exclusiveness would be a self-defeating criterion’, thus the ideas within the ranks of the organic intellectuals activators ‘reach the outer boundaries of what might be ultimately acceptable’ (Cox 1979: 260). In many respects, it is the *quantity* of advice and the message that is given within a particular remit from a particular epistemic community that counts, as well as the negative shaping of what is not possible.

However, at this point it can be asserted that a project based on liberalization, privatization and representing the dislocating effects of globalization has little chance of becoming hegemonic in Africa. For sure, a hegemonic project in the Gramscian sense needs a ‘politics of support’ as well as a ‘politics of power’, however mighty transnational capital and its state allies may be (Gamble 1988). This fundamental problem in advancing the liberal peace as a successful project in Africa, despite the hegemonic support it may enjoy at the global level, is massively compounded by the absence of hegemony in post-colonial Africa. Such a reality militates against any triumphant application of the liberal peace on the continent. What is left, then, is a virtual peace, satisfactory to donors and external actors, and also to the connected domestic elites, but not broadly sustainable nor able to enjoy hegemonic support. This conundrum is what I now turn to.

### **The Post-colonial African State and the Absence of Hegemony**

Due to the manner in which colonialism created artificial states in Africa and the nature of the independence process in most African countries, the ruling classes lack hegemony over society, at least in the Gramscian understanding of the concept (Gramsci 1971). By the ruling class, we mean the senior political elites and bureaucrats, the leading members of the liberal professions, the nascent bourgeoisie and the top members of the security arms of the state (Markovitz 1987:8). The early years of postcolonial nationalism in Africa were, broadly speaking, an attempt to build a project which bound society together around more issues than simply discontent with the imperial powers. This project quickly collapsed into autocracy and failure, a process accelerated by dynamics linked to the Cold War and to the failure by the new political leaders to make a decisive break from the past. Indeed, ‘the nationalist movement which arose from the contradictions of the colonial economy achieved political independence not economic independence’ (Ake 1981:93). Consequently, ‘unlike the ascending bourgeoisie of Europe,

which transformed all political and economic institutions into its own image and became socially hegemonic, the petit-bourgeoisie in Africa has no criteria of its own, it merely inherited colonial institutions with which the mass of the people did not identify' (Nabudere 2011:58).

Of course, 'Africa's leaders are neither autonomous nor robots; they reflect diverse class and fractional interests located within the continent but separable from their extra-continental connections' (Shaw 1985:5). These interests vary from state to state and within each state too: 'state power rests in the hands of a local class or classes which constitute the ruling class. This class or classes have their own class interests arising from the place they occupy in social production' (Shivji 1980:7). How the centralized organs of the state relate to the external depends on the positions of various domestic classes and the balance of forces between the external and the internal. Indeed, 'African interests can expel and exclude external interests should they wish to do so. In practice they rarely exercise this option, preferring to modify the "balance of power" over time through almost continuous negotiation' (*ibid.*:11). One major reason for this is due to the development of a colonial elite (Amadi 2012), created by the uneven nature of dependent development (Friedmann and Wayne 1977:413). These ruling cliques are attached to the centre often through corruption (Okowa 1995; Ndikumana and Boyce 2011). The connection between these cliques aligns many African nations' economic, political and social policies towards those of the core (Sekhri 2009:248). This is arguably the ultimate cause of failure (Amin 2002).

Within the realm of the superstructure, moral and political modes that rise above notions of economic–corporate interests, and instead reflect broader ethico-political ones, have remained missing in most parts of Africa even today. Consequently, because the ruling classes have been unable to preside over a hegemonic project that is viewed as legitimate by the majority of domestic society, they have been forced to revert to modalities of governance that seeks to dominate (if not destroy) opponents. These are commonly expressed through both the threat and actual use of violence and the immediate disbursal of material benefits to supporters within the context of neo-patrimonial regimes (LeVine 1980; Jackson and Rosberg 1982; Medard 1982; Callaghy 1984; Sandbrook 1985; Callaghy 1987; Crook 1989; Bayart 1993; Bratton and Van de Walle 1994; Chabal 1994; Bratton and Van de Walle 1997; Tangri 1999; Chabal and Daloz 1999). Without these twin strategies the ruling elites in much of Africa cannot maintain order. After all, 'the state [in Africa], unlike the bourgeois state, is not entrenched in the society as a whole. It is ... a bureaucratic connivance' (Mafeje 1992: 31).

What ideological legitimacy, ‘in the sense of a theoretical legitimization of the status quo ... is expressed in the concept of “development”, which is “that which we are all in favour of” and given statistical respectability in figures measuring the growth of commodity production’ (Williams 1982: 40). But often, beyond such rhetoric, the substance of this belief in ‘development’ is pretty thin.

The sort of political culture that has matured has had important consequences for Africa, further adding to the *problematique* of underdevelopment. In general, the modes of governance in Africa have encouraged despotism and unpredictability. As a result, for most of the postcolonial period, much of Africa has been trapped in cycles of crises, which have stimulated societal conflict. In the absence of hegemony, Africa’s leaders have relied on effected control and patronage. Although Africa’s elites undoubtedly command the state apparatus with varying levels of intensity, their own practices often undermine and subvert the state’s institutions and the effectiveness of its bureaucracy on a daily basis. Because most African elites exercise power in circumstances that lack hegemony, the relative autonomy of the state is absent and their rule is intrinsically unstable (Fatton 1999). This means that there is very little political space to allow reform and autocracy is relied on as a means of control.

Central to this milieu is the fact that class power in Africa is fundamentally dependent upon state power and capturing the state – or at least being linked favourably to those within the state – and is an essential precondition for acquisition and self-enrichment. ‘The absence of a hegemonic bourgeoisie, grounded in a solid and independent economic base and successfully engaged in a private accumulation of capital, has transformed politics into material struggle’ (Fatton 1988:34). As a result, the bourgeoisie in Africa is generally weak and nascent. This translates into an absence of bourgeois hegemony, resulting in autocracy and economic irrationality. ‘Political instability is ... rooted in the extreme politicization of the state as an organ to be monopolized for absolute power and accelerated economic advancement’ (Fatton 1988:35). Instead of a stable hegemonic project that binds different levels of society together, what we have in Africa is an intrinsically *unstable* personalized system of domination. Absolutism reigns and power is maintained through patrimonial power via the illegal commandeering of state resources. Corruption, not hegemonic rule, is the cement that binds the system together and links the patron and his predatory ruling class together (Fatton 1988:36). When this falls apart, what is left is warlordism (Reno 1998). Of course, given that one of the prescriptions of the liberal peace is liberal democracy, the willingness of actors to partake in

competitions where they might lose – and the linked willingness of losers to surrender power – hugely compromises the basic assumptions of the liberal peace. A mythical Africa is the terrain upon which the liberal peace is being asked to navigate.

The fact is that a hegemonic project that encompasses national development and a broad-based productive economy is far less of a concern (and in fact, might stimulate opposition) to elites within neo-patrimonial systems than the continuation of gainful utilization of resources for the individual advantage of the ruler and his clientelistic networks. Where the bureaucracy still exists, it has developed its own set of interests (personal survival) and logic as prebendary organizations that further distort their role away from the ideal-type rational–bureaucratic model inherent in the representations of developmental agencies and the UN family more towards a loose set of skeleton institutions lacking in most capacities other than to act as predators upon the population or gatekeepers to resources. Paradoxically,

Intense processes of class formation based on the struggle to death between contending blocs to capture the state for the establishment of predatory rule, and the utter dependence of African societies on external constellations of financial and military power, have ultimately contributed to the decay of the African state (Fatton 1999:4).

Such a milieu necessarily breeds a deep reluctance to give up state power as capturing the state – or at least being linked favourably to those who command its apparatus – and is usually a precondition for acquisition and self-enrichment. Questions of national development are deemed abstract and unimportant unless they either directly threaten the incumbents' positions or can be utilized to garner increased resource flows. If political elites do ever articulate a vision for the country, 'their notion of emerging out of economic backwardness amounts essentially to Westernisation', where 'the general trend is to try and stimulate economic growth within the context of the existing neo-colonial economic structure' (Ake 1981:139). This is indeed an accurate appraisal of the contemporary 'development strategies' which characterize much of Africa.

The external domination of Africa's economies and the pathologies of dependency that this engenders, constructed during the colonial period, have proven markedly resilient. 'The root dilemma of Africa's economic development has been the asymmetry between the role of the continent in the world and the degree to which that world ... has penetrated Africa' (Austen 1987:271). Broadly speaking, 'The rigidity of the international division of labour has not allowed African economies to break out of the role

of primary producers, for reasons which include lack of access to technology, the comparative advantage of the industrialised nations in manufacturing, and the constraints of the domestic market' (Ake 1981: 92). Walter Rodney captures this reality:

African economies are integrate into the very structure of the developed capitalist economies; and they are integrated in a manner that is unfavourable to Africa and insures that Africa is dependent.... [S]tructural dependence is one of the characteristics of underdevelopment (Rodney 2012 [1972]: 25).

In short, 'the geo-economy of [Africa] depends on two production systems that determine its structures and define its place in the global system: 1) the export of "tropical" agricultural products: coffee, cocoa, cotton, peanuts, fruits, oil palm, etc.; and 2) hydrocarbons and minerals: copper, gold, rare metals, diamonds, etc.' (Amin 2010:30). This has not radically changed since independence and will certainly not be changed by the liberal peace security regimen.

Indeed, the demands of the liberal peace vis-à-vis procedural democracy (measured by election cycles) and economic liberalization only help cement post-conflict African states into structures of dependency. True development and independence are not on the agenda; in fact the elements of the liberal peace are designed so as to preclude such expressions of African agency. Rather, locking-in neoliberal reforms and granting a thin veneer of legitimacy is at the heart of the liberal peace security regimen. Good governance issues may be seen in this light as a means to 'reformulate and redefine the public sphere and rules for economic policy, according to orthodox market-monetarists postulates in macroeconomics (fiscal and monetary policy) and microeconomics (e.g. trade, labour market and industrial policy)' (Gill 1998: 30). These serve as the vanguard in societal restructuring, further acting to constrain the autonomy of domestic elites, whilst at the same time bolstering the position of those fractions sympathetic to the agenda being advanced by the donors. Either way, the project of rebuilding society after conflict is, in the final analysis, controlled by non-African actors.

## **Conclusion**

The hegemony surrounding what is needed to foster a positive peace can be linked to the broader global political economy. 'Since capitalism encompasses the entire globe, its architects require a universal vision, a picture of a globally conceived society, to join classes in different countries ... [in order] to institutionalise global capital accumulation by setting general rules of behaviour and disseminating a developmentalist ideology to facilitate the

process' (Mittelman and Pasha 1997: 51). The liberal peace can thus be conceived as part of this process, confirming the long-held assertion that capital 'compels all nations, on pain of extinction, to adopt the bourgeois mode of production; it compels them to introduce what it calls civilisation into their midst' (Marx and Engels 2004 [1888]: 38). At issue then is the question of whether or not the promotion of the liberal peace is actually a rather ill-disguised attempt at promoting capitalist restructuring in post-conflict societies in Africa. I suggest that this is indeed so.

Certainly, when we examine the UN, we see that 'systematic institutional reform pursued by Kofi Annan after he became UN Secretary-General at the beginning of 1997 ... effected a shift from security through peace-keeping (Annan's previous remit) to security through capitalist hegemony, and succeeded by 2005 in transforming the UN into the lead agency for the global dissemination of capitalist values and imperatives' (Cammack 2006: 229–30). In the post-Cold War era, it has been possible for the advocates of neoliberalism to reframe the very underpinning of what constitutes peace and post-conflict re-building (the 'liberal peace') in quite explicit directions. The UN's understanding of what peace and security is underscores this point:

In the post-Cold War era, peace and security can no longer be defined simply in terms of military might or the balance of terror. The world has changed. Lasting peace requires more than intervention of Blue Helmets on the ground. Effective peace-building demands a broader notion of human security.... In today's world, the private sector is the dominant engine of growth; the principal creator of value and wealth; the source of the largest financial, technological, and managerial resources. If the private sector does not deliver economic and economic opportunity – equitably and sustainably – around the world, then peace will remain fragile and social justice a distant dream (Annan 1997).

The whole point of the liberal peace's security regimen is to construct the institutional framework that will allow the private sector to 'deliver' and work its magic in post-conflict spaces. The liberal peace project cannot be divorced from such realities. However, its true goals are hidden by various discourses, which seek to mask their own partialities and present as wholly commonsensical the components contained within peacebuilding projects. The effect is to present a set of policies infused with the disciplines and class logic of capitalism as if they were inspired by disinterested benevolence. In effect, the liberal peace security regimen ignores and obscures the fundamental fact that 'political power, properly so called, is merely the organised power of one class for oppressing another' (Marx and Engels 2004

[1888]: 60–61). It is, in short, an ideology masquerading as objective facts. Uncovering this and the interests that lie behind it is the essential first step towards proposing alternatives. As Gramsci notes:

For the philosophy of praxis, ideologies are anything but arbitrary; they are real historical facts which must be combated and their nature as instruments of domination revealed, not for the reasons of morality etc. but for reasons of political struggle: in order to make the governed intellectually independent of the governing, in order to destroy one hegemony and create another, as a necessary moment in the revolutionising of praxis (1988:196).

The possibilities of alternative space do exist. As has been noted, there is a profound contradiction within the liberal peace project in Africa, which means that other policies are vital. The contradiction is namely that whilst the liberal peace might reflect the impulses of a transnationalized neoliberal hegemony, in Africa the very basic foundations of a domestic hegemonic project are in the main wholly absent. This disjuncture means that there is a general failure to situate the liberal peace in Africa in its proper context, as well as a distinct naiveté in evaluating its potential to bring about change in post-conflict scenarios on the continent. But this reality opens up interesting possibilities for social organization in Africa.

Scepticism towards the liberal peace is based largely on an understanding of how politics in Africa works under conditions of postcolonial underdevelopment. Unsurprisingly, the empirical state in Africa does not conform to Western conceptions of the Weberian state, something which is a given within the liberal peace. Indeed, it is precisely the rational-bureaucratic and hegemonic state that is taken as an assumed given within liberal peace prescriptions. This is hugely problematic as many of the accepted features of a democratic state are simply not present in large swathes of the continent. As Walter Rodney noted, ‘African economies are integrated into the very structure of the developed capitalist economies; and they are integrated in a manner that is unfavourable to Africa and insures that Africa is dependent’ (2012 [1972]:25). In underdeveloped and poverty-stricken state formations, the superstructure takes on specific features that do not easily lend themselves to the type of governance required for liberal democracy to prosper.

There is thus a profound disjuncture between the hegemonic support neoliberalism, and its manifestation as the liberal peace, enjoys at the global level and the general absence of hegemony locally in most post-conflict spaces. Such a reality militates against any successful application of the liberal peace and calls into question the very viability of most of the project’s policy prescriptions, expectations and basic assumptions. As noted previously,

what is left then is a virtual peace guaranteed by security regimens. These are generally acceptable to donors and other external actors, and also to their associated African allies, but are not maintainable without massive external support (de facto neo-colonialism), nor capable of benefitting from broad-based support by the bulk of the citizenry.

The liberal peace, then, replicates the classic errors of assumption that the IFIs made (and continue to make) vis-à-vis Structural Adjustment Programmes and Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers, as they are founded on a series of deeply imperfect suppositions:

[The externals] posit that development can be “private-driven,” and that African bourgeoisies can suddenly have a change of heart and become the engine of the take-off, whereas these bourgeoisies have never shown any commitment to sustained productive investment. They posit that privatization leads necessarily to rational economic decisions and that private agents are inherently more virtuous and efficient than public servants, whereas revenues derived from the sale of state assets can be stolen and squandered, and private agents are bent on defending their own selfish interests rather than the collective good. They posit that democratic governance is compatible with the imposition of fiscal austerity in an environment which is already suffering from acute material deprivation, whereas SAPs’ huge social costs are unlikely to be tolerated by docile and passive populations. Finally, they posit that trade liberalization will promote more efficient African economies whereas Africa’s small industrial base is incapable of withstanding and surviving foreign competition without public protection (Fatton 1999:4).

Characterized by continued economic crises stimulated by underdevelopment and typified by enduring clientelism and a pattern of ongoing foreign aid disbursements, the ‘international community’ and the continent’s leaders continue business pretty much as usual, even in post-conflict spaces. Sometimes the faces change, but the broad patterns remain. The tenets of the liberal peace and its security regimen are, it is suggested, part of this configuration, confirming Kwame Nkrumah’s description of neo-colonialism, whereby ‘the State which is subject to it is, in theory, independent and has all the outward trappings of international sovereignty. In reality its economic system and thus its political policy is directed from outside’ (Nkrumah 1965:ix).

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