

Transgressive Norms and the Labels of Liberal Peacebuilding

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Abstract

This paper examines the process of norm diffusion in international peacebuilding to assess why it is often unsuccessful or incomplete. Although there is a strong international consensus on the norms that compose peacebuilding, the practical record shows that international actors have difficulty transferring that consensus to the local context. Close analysis suggests that diffusion gets stuck in its initial stages, in large part because the mechanisms through which it usually takes place are not effective in the peacebuilding context. Processes of competition, learning, and emulation are all inhibited through peacebuilding, in part because of international reactions to conflict and in part because of local obstacles to liberalization. The ultimate result is that the local behaviors developed within peacebuilding contexts often violate the very norms they purport to represent, creating states defined by labels rather than substantive consolidation of the norm. An important implication for future study, is that states that experience peacebuilding can themselves become models of negative emulation and ultimately undermine rather than further the expansion of the relevant norms.

International peacebuilding is defined by a specific set of norms that have evolved over the last two decades to become the essential pillars of peacebuilding strategies. These norms are bundled into two distinct categories - political liberalization and economic liberalization - and reflect “the perceived triumph of liberal market democracy as the prevailing standard of enlightened governance across much of the world” (Paris, 2004: 19). Relying on the theory of the liberal peace, governments and organizations alike have pushed liberal reforms as a means of ensuring political stability by tying the government to its citizens through participation and accountability and creating economic opportunity by opening the door to private trade and entrepreneurship. The bundle of peacebuilding norms has been applied consistently in cases across both time and distance, ranging from one of the early articulations of broad-based reform in Bosnia in 1995 to more recent efforts in Afghanistan. They are widely applied as a remedy for conflict and instability and have helped form a consensus on justified intervention (Chesterman, 2001; Falk, 2005; Annan, 2005). The embrace of the concept of liberalization as the focus of peacebuilding has also been increasingly unabashed since 1995, leading to the now common label of “liberal” peacebuilding, though that is not without critics (see Paris, 2004; Newman, Paris, and Richmond, 2009; Richmond, 2010; Bowden, Charlesworth, and Farrall, 2009).

One problem with these norms, however, is that their diffusion through peacebuilding seems spotty and incomplete. It is easy to look at the practical record of peacebuilding and question whether liberalization has been effective in either the political or economic arenas. Continued problems in places like Haiti, East Timor, Democratic Republic of the Congo, and Afghanistan, to name but a few, suggest that

in spite of international consensus there are significant obstacles to consolidating the norms international actors intend to convey. Although the academic literature suggests some important contributions for peacebuilding, it also shows a high rate of recurrence for internal wars (Mason, Gurses, Brandt, and Quinn, 2011). In addition, evidence suggests that democratization is not successful as a result of external intervention, and that what progress may be made fades over time (Bueno de Mesquita and Downs, 2006; Pearson, Walker, and Stern, 2006; Enterline and Grieg, 2008). It therefore seems relevant to question the effectiveness of peacebuilding as a vehicle of norm diffusion, and examine how norms are conveyed from international actors to the local context. Why does peacebuilding fail to consolidate the norms it endorses in spite of a great deal of time and money being spent in some cases? What factors impede norm diffusion in peacebuilding and what consequences ensue from incomplete diffusion? These questions are the essential starting point for analyzing norm diffusion via peacebuilding, and form the central inquiry here.

This article examines the difficulties of norm diffusion in peacebuilding to demonstrate how the liberal norms that guide international strategies can in fact be transgressive, allowing actors to appear to embrace the norms even while continually violating international prescription. By looking at the specific categories of norms - political, economic, or social - conveyed in peacebuilding, it analyses which diffusion effects are most relevant to each category and how they work. It further shows that these outcomes have consequences for norm diffusion elsewhere by twisting the emulation dynamic and undermining the value of competition. In the long run, international peacebuilding as practiced thus far serves to weaken the international ability to diffuse liberal norms and legitimizes countries that practice the façade of democracy over a reality of personalization and corruption. The article will examine this problem by looking at the case of Sierra Leone. This case was chosen precisely because it is a most likely case. It had begun moving toward democracy well before the international intervention, as evidenced by its election in 1996. It has also been the site of what is commonly considered one of the most well-funded and coordinated international peacebuilding efforts to date. It has a population that is interested in democracy and has expressed a desire for a participatory, regulated, and accountable body politic. And it also had a dose of coercion that was lacking in some other cases by virtue of the British military presence and involvement in ending the violence and retooling the military. It therefore offers a context where norm diffusion would be likely. If that does not hold true in this case it will tell us a great deal about less likely cases.

The Diffusion of Norms

Norms, particularly the socially prescribed kind, are often described as oughts. They define how states ought to behave, for example by establishing an expectation of non-aggression or defining slavery as a crime. An ought can become an is, as the history of the abrogation of the slave trade shows, and even though states do sometimes violate norms that does not diminish their power. In spite of continued violations through history, for example, the non-aggression/non-intervention norms

remain touchstones of international politics. One of the central questions in the study of norms, therefore, is how the change takes place from ought to is. How does prescribed behavior become common? This question matters in the study of international peacebuilding precisely because the critics are correct in pointing out that peacebuilding has not led to the consolidation of liberal behaviors that seem to be its primary purpose. Indeed, in some cases the effort to instill peacebuilding's constituent norms has led instead to continued instability and even violence. Although international actors have succeeded in tamping or even ending violence in some cases, there is little evidence of the prescribed norms taking hold in anything other than a relatively token form (Olson Lounbery, Pearson, and Talentino, 2011).

The term norm in international politics can refer to both what is normal - common and accepted behaviors - and what is socially prescribed - guides or rules of behavior that have moral sanction and wide approval (Florini, 1996). International peacebuilding corresponds to the second meaning of norm, and occurs when the condition of state collapse provides the opening for international actors to deem a state in need of international intervention and thus subject to liberal reform. Liberal practices are widely considered better systems of governance, and thus the purpose of international involvement is to achieve stability through political change (Paris, 2004; Peceny, 1999). The imposition of liberal practices has increasingly come under critique from academics, who either argue that the imposition of liberal norms is continued evidence of domination and exploitation, or note more benignly that the approach simply does not take adequate account of local needs and interests, which must in the end be the driving elements of local change (see Newman, Paris, and Richmond, 2009; Richmond, 2010; Bowden, Charlesworth, and Farrall, 2009). In spite of these critiques, however, liberal norms remain the defining aspect of international peacebuilding as practiced thus far, and a central part of the wider focus on conflict resolution at the international level.

In examining the question of how norms spread, scholars tend to divide along theoretical lines. Realist scholars tend to see states as resistant to norms and adherence a mere matter of interest at any given time, while liberal and constructivist scholars tend to give more credence to norms as shapers of action, whether due to instrumental or identity-based reasons (Mearsheimer, 1990; Waltz, 1979; Keohane, 2002; Wendt, 1999; Katzenstein, 1996; Florini, 1996). Both sides recognize the role norms play in conveying legitimacy, but differ primarily in evaluations of why norms become widely accepted and how they become stronger or weaker over time. Though the debate continues, there is certainly evidence that states can be affected by normative trends and expectations and that their interests may change accordingly (see Risse, Ropp, and Sikkink, 1999; Katzenstein, 1996). The "hard shell" of the nation state is permeable, even though the interests that a nation defines for itself may stem from a variety of motives. (Starr, 1991: 377).

Norms penetrate states through demonstration and diffusion effects that are driven by four primary mechanisms: coercion, competition, learning, and emulation. Coercion is, as it sounds, based on power asymmetries that allow stronger states to impose their interests on weaker states (Simmons, Dobbin, and Garrett, 2007; de Nevers, 2007). Coercion may involve the use or threat of force, but more often comes in the form of economic incentives and disincentives. It is a particularly important

mechanism to consider in the context of peacebuilding, because the fact of having international civilian personnel based in a country, often accompanied by military personnel as well, is obviously coercive. Even where international actors do not have a direct hand in establishing or implementing peace terms they still have a great deal of power in providing or withholding aid and expertise and have the potential to exert significant influence over local decision making. A growing body of critical literature has developed recently to address this issue and examine the extent to which international actors impose or prescribe certain behaviors without concern for local preferences (Richmond, 2010; Bukovansky, 2007; Newman, Paris, and Richmond, 2009).

Competitive mechanisms of diffusion work through some of the same economic means but are based on different relationships. Rather than international actors making independent decisions based on their view of which actors “deserve” assistance, competition results from decision making internal to the state in question. States essentially compete against other states for international benefits, which come most often in the economic realm but are heavily influenced by political systems (Jensen, 2003). Competition diffusion means that a state might make policy choices designed to make it look more compliant with international preferences - more democratic, more attractive to business - thus giving it greater access to aid or markets, or otherwise maximizing the largesse and attention it can expect from the international arena. Adhering to or adopting widely held norms may make a state look more in tune with international trends, provide external actors with a greater sense of stability, and make the overall environment more appealing for engagement. States can therefore use norm adherence to increase their attractiveness vis a vis other states and gain international benefit. This too is relevant in peacebuilding, as the more a state seems to play the game in terms of accepting liberal norms the more likely it is to garner attention, aid and investment. But competition has its limits in this context. One problem is that international actors tend to tire of peacebuilding relatively quickly, especially as new crisis spots are never in short supply. Regardless of a state’s attempt to continue to woo benefits through competitive policies, it may not be able to sustain international attention for a long time.

A second problem is that all states that are the targets or possible targets of peacebuilding are essentially in the same situation. All will be subject to the same set of normative expectations and will see their political and economic structures altered along liberal lines. There is less competitive distinction across states in such circumstances, therefore, and little capacity for any one state to create a decisively different climate and thus gain greater material advantage, especially with significantly weakened political capacity. Further, the aid they get is often not connected to their degree of change, since international aid tends to flow to areas of humanitarian crisis regardless of political trends. Finally, regional dynamics matter as well and may negate the value of competition, either because other states are even less attractive already, as in the highly unstable West Africa region, or because spillover effects from neighbors’ problems may make a state unable to make competitive changes. On the other hand, if peacebuilding became more selective, competition could become an important factor in determining which countries had access to assistance. Then there might be a real value to competition because not all states

could expect to have the same access to international resources that, at present, is conveyed simply by the fact of protracted conflict.

Competitive mechanisms require policymakers to have some sense of who they are competing with and what those actors' policies are. States that are undergoing peacebuilding are being asked to create the framework for a similar set of economic and political behaviors and they are all proceeding, more or less, from a similar condition of breakdown and violence. Many characteristics do differ and may impact competition, notably the extent of regional involvement, presence or absence of ethnic or identity issues, degrees of factionalization, and extent of violence. But competition among the targets of peacebuilding will have many similarities, with states often equally hampered by incapacity and fragmented authority. The greatest competition may therefore come from inside states, as sub and non-state actors jockey for authority and access alongside the central government. The state's effort to adopt norms from a competitive standpoint - and thereby gain greater international assistance - may therefore be in direct conflict with its need to ignore those norms in order to consolidate its hold on a fractured and tenuous political environment.

Learning mechanisms work precisely as they sound - norms are adopted because policymakers develop new ways of thinking based on information they receive through a variety of sources. In some cases international actors may actively try to teach certain behaviors, as intergovernmental or non-governmental organizations (IGOs, NGOs) typically do, or repeated interactions and discussions could simply develop new channels of action. For example, Alexandra Gheciu demonstrates how North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) militaries actually served as a means of encouraging learning on broader democratic habits in Eastern Europe. Notably, a key part of learning is that the learners self-identify as students. That is, the members of the group that it is hoped will embrace certain norms need to see themselves as willing participants in a process of passing information from the more expert to the less expert (Gheciu, 2005). Where they do not identify as such the process is likely to be less successful, though not necessarily ineffective. Learning may also take place through the process of trying other approaches and then readjusting to get closer to success. In this case norms would not be adopted as the result of a moral commitment but as the result of trial and error (see Simmons, Dobbin, and Garrett, 2007). In either case, however, policymakers would choose to adopt a behavior because of its perceived value, whether philosophically or practically.

The final mechanism of diffusion is emulation. This approach adheres to constructivist analysis, which argues that states are influenced by the actions and beliefs of others in a process of continual shaping and reshaping (see Finnemore and Sikkink, 2001; Wendt, 1999). Epistemic communities figure prominently in emulation because they can influence policy in states as well as between them, and help reinforce the symbolic power of certain norms. "Like states" also matter, as there is some evidence that policymakers identify certain other states as like them and may strive to copy their behavior (Simmons and Elkins, 2004). One problem with emulation, however, is that the meaning of endorsement can be difficult to unpack if a state adopts a norm but is unable to implement it. That may indicate the power of the norm and its ability to encourage emulation even where not entirely possible (Strang and Chang, 1993). But it may also indicate a calculated effort to appear compliant

with normative expectations accompanied by little commitment to the idea. The emulation mechanism therefore seems to be a bit of a wildcard in peacebuilding. The epistemic communities within the states in question often have limited reach and capacity to influence change. In addition, affected states likely have precious few to emulate, either because other regional actors are weak and unstable (notably in sub-Saharan Africa) or because like states, ie. those that are also targets of peacebuilding, likely have not progressed very far. If Cote d'Ivoire were to emulate the Democratic Republic of the Congo, for example, the result would likely be to emphasize the appearance of reform over the substance and allow for the perpetuation of anti-liberal practices. The model the latter provides teaches that benefits can be won at little cost. Emulation thus seems as likely to have a negative effect as a positive effect on the diffusion of norms in peacebuilding.

One other important issue to consider is why some norms catch on while others do not. Legro (1997) demonstrates that norms are not dichotomous, existing or not existing, but come in various strengths that can be enhanced or decreased by the impact of tradition and culture. His study of which norms matter highlights an important point - culture often predicts outcome more accurately than the robustness of the norm itself. By examining how several states used force in World War II, Legro shows that though the strength of the norm had an impact on decision-making, the practical interpretation of it was shaped by the organizational culture of the militaries involved. This accounts for why the German military pursued a restrictive strategy on strategic bombing and an unrestricted strategy on submarine warfare at the same time, in both cases acting counter to normative trends (Legro, 1997: 44; see also Florini, 1996).

As norms are diffused there are also specific causal mechanisms through which they are incorporated in state behavior. Risse, Ropp, and Sikkink (1999) define a three-part path through which norms are adopted, starting with processes of instrumental adaptation and strategic bargaining and then moving to processes of moral consciousness-raising, dialogue, and persuasion, and ultimately, institutionalization and habitualization. The instrumental process generally comes first, though the latter two may happen in sequence or somewhat concurrently. Risse, Ropp, and Sikkink look particularly at human rights norms, and argue that the instrumental adoption of those norms "sets in motion a process of identity transformation" (1999:10). That concept is particularly important to consider in the context of peacebuilding, where the process does not appear to lead so clearly from instrumental to moral adoption. The *prima facie* evidence from peacebuilding suggests that the adoption of liberal norms (including human rights norms) gets stuck in the instrumental process and does not move far beyond that point. Local actors often find that they get enough international rewards and attention from their instrumental adoption of norms and then may be unable or unwilling to go further. At the same time, the context of instability and uncertainty that often accompanies peacebuilding operations prevents the emergence of non-state actors who can put pressure on policymakers to change or build momentum for norm consolidation. In fact, such local actors may even at times be discredited by their connection to international actors and so may have limited traction with which to push agendas (Richmond, 2010). Peacebuilding may thus present a conundrum for the usual

process of diffusion and internalization. By virtue of their status as peacebuilding sites, states already have access to the benefits that norm adoption would generally bring. And it is difficult for the international community to shame laggards, as is done in other contexts, because the former can itself be blamed. Peacebuilding thus seems to create a context in which it is actually easier not to go beyond instrumental approaches and yet local leaders can still gain benefits.

The salience of norms at the international and local level is an important piece of the puzzle. Salience depends on the perceived strength of a norm's legitimacy in both the international and national arenas and the willingness of actors to adapt to the prescribed behavior. Strong legitimacy at one level may not carry over to the other, or may be affected by an entity's capacity to act upon the norm. Notably, states may embrace certain norms for symbolic reasons even when they cannot put them into practice (see Simmons, Dobbin, and Garrett, 2006; Cortell and Davis, Jr. 2000). That presents a problem since a state that is willing to adapt its behavior but does not have the ability to do so is substantively different than a state that is unwilling but able. Salience may not always be easy to determine in such a case, because the rhetorical adoption of the norm does not necessarily indicate whether a state supports it or not. Notably, however, even an instrumental or cynical embrace of a norm could lead to salience over time, so moral commitment need not be present for a norm to be meaningful (Simmons, Dobbin, and Garrett, 2006; Cortell and Davis, 2000).

Salience also needs to be present on different levels. Lisa McIntosh Sundstrom finds that when foreign assistance is used on behalf of norms that are not universal, it does not lead to a significant domestic movement or rising support for that norm (2005). A compatible sense of salience at both the international and local level is a necessary component for success, and shapes the ability of IGOs and NGOs to propagate norms. Salience is also relevant in understanding how national choices may be interdependent and the extent to which the choices of others may influence how one state behaves (see Simmons, Dobbin, and Garrett, 2006). The international consensus behind a norm and the number of states, particularly neighbors, that adhere to it can help shape national choice. Sundstrom (2005) also notes, importantly, that when norms are not shared between different levels, resistance to the norms is manifest not just among government or elites but also among society itself. This dynamic certainly seems relevant in peacebuilding, where the wider society is often caught between normative perspectives and may resist international reforms because survival depends on playing by local rules. An alternative view comes from Ikenberry and Kupchan, however, who examine the normative socialization evident in British colonialism. They suggest that the distance between the proposed norms and elite outlooks are the most important factor of outcome and that socialization is an elite phenomenon rather than a mass one (Ikenberry and Kupchan, 1990). This would accord with analyses of peacebuilding that focus particularly on elite spoilers as the main impediments to transition (see Zahar, 2006).

The literature on norm diffusion thus reveals several important issues of relevance to peacebuilding. First, in terms of adoption mechanisms, instrumental adherence to norms should come first and be followed by more internalized commitments. Second, the diffusion processes of coercion, competition, learning, and emulation may be limited in their ability to help propagate peacebuilding norms. The

extent of the first process may vary widely from case to case, while the latter three are hamstrung by the local and regional environment. Third, local culture matters, regardless of the salience of a norm, and may inhibit the ability to adopt norms even where some elites want to do so. We might thus theorize that norm diffusion will stall at the first stage and create “label” states that provide negative examples for future diffusion. But it also seems likely that diffusion mechanisms will function differently, or perhaps be more relevant, with different categories of peacebuilding norms. The question is not simply which mechanisms work or don’t work, therefore, but where and how they work. By teasing out the different areas of focus for peacebuilding norms, and the respective mechanisms of diffusion, we can get a better sense of peacebuilding’s impact. The primary areas to examine are politics, economics, rule of law, human rights, and social reconciliation. Each of these is specifically targeted by peacebuilding norms and are the claimed objectives of peacebuilding as in international strategy.

Peacebuilding Approaches

The term peacebuilding covers a wide-range of approaches, from limited observation and monitoring missions to broad-mandate operations that include robust military forces and extensive civilian rehabilitation missions (Talentino, 2004). The continuum of approaches range from a minimalist prevention and observation focus, as seen in Macedonia, to the maximalist approach of enforcement and transitional trusteeship, as seen in Kosovo (see Call and Cousens, 2008). Dennis Sandole provides a five-part categorization across this continuum that includes prevention, management, settlement, resolution, and transformation (Sandole, 2011: 33-34). He notes, however, that most peacebuilding operations fall on the low to mid-range end of the continuum and likely do not move beyond settlement of the precipitating crisis, if indeed they even get there. Regardless of type, moreover, for a variety of reasons peacebuilding has an “overall tendency to leave unaddressed the complex, interconnected causes and conditions of violent conflict,” thus resulting in high rates of recidivism (Sandole, 2011: 78).

In terms of whether minimalist or maximalist approaches work best, there is no easy answer. Intuitively, broad-based approaches backed by military force may seem likely to yield the desired change, at least in form, but there are a number of endogenous and exogenous factors that affect outcome. Obstacles such as coordination problems among international actors, resources, and at the local level, willingness to adopt new systems, social divisions, and levels of institutionalization exist in every case (see Jarstad and Sisk, 2008; Paris, 2004; Marten, 2004; Stedman, Rothchild, and Cousens, 2001). Although it is often true that the international approach does not fit the needs, it is also often true that the local context is not able or willing to absorb changes that might be useful. Local actors split across several levels of agency, and while the mass of citizens might desire peace and democracy there are often vested interests among the elites that thwart those desires, as the enduring legacy of warlords in Afghan politics attests (Talentino, 2007).

Most obviously, perhaps, international approaches that combine military force with wholesale political change may meet significant local resistance, as can be seen in the stalled transition in Bosnia. Much of the recent critical literature on peacebuilding focuses on the combination of external imposition and international disengagement with local interests and needs as a failure of the fundamental guiding principles of peacebuilding (Newman, Paris, and Richmond, 2009; Richmond, 2010). But there is also evidence that operations that engage broader political and economic areas of reform do have better outcomes, particularly when conducted under UN aegis (see Doyle and Sambanis, 2006; Peksen, 2011; Pickering and Kisangani, 2006). This strand of the literature suggests that there may be a golden mean on the continuum, where operations do enough to generate lasting change but not enough, or in such a way, as to alienate and frustrate the population. At the same time, the overall record for the success of democratic transitions is poor, regardless of how they are undertaken or by whom. Quantitative and qualitative studies suggest that intervention yields very little change in overall political system or quality of life, and that democracy is accepted as the lowest common denominator to gain international support but may not necessarily be enthusiastically endorsed in practice (Olson Lounsbury, Pearson, and Talentino, 2011; Pickering and Kisangani, 2006; Bueno de Mesquita and Downs, 2006; Enterline and Grieg, 2008).

Spoilers are a particular obstacle to successful peacebuilding outcomes, but notably, may be created by the process itself rather than simply existing outside of it. Precisely because international strategies often neglect issues of paramount concern to local populations, notably social justice, they are perceived as inequitable and focused on a type of justice more relevant to international actors than appropriate to the local context. That perception then colors how local actors work with internationals, and can either cast them as obstructionist or lead them to pursue international preferences at the expense of their own in the interest of accessing resource assistance. The concept of spoiling therefore cannot be understood in isolation from the particular peacebuilding processes themselves, and may not necessarily indicate a vested interest in undermining liberalization. Although in some cases it may, in many spoiling simply represents the divide between international and national preferences and the options available to express that difference in a context of asymmetrical resources and leverage (Newman and Richmond, 2006).

It is thus impossible to state definitively that any single approach is best in terms of expected outcome. The reality of peacebuilding is more nuanced, and depends for success on matching international strategies with local needs and ensuring communication between them. This is also why it is particularly important to examine diffusion across specific categories of peacebuilding norms. There are, nonetheless, two ideas that emerge from the literature. First, we need not know why or how spoilers develop in a particular process to recognize that when they are absent, outcomes are likely to be improved. And second, recognizing that many variables may still be unsatisfied, we can nonetheless expect that the better the fit in terms of international coordination, funding, preparation, and respect for local interest, the better the likely outcome. The question is really the extent to which spoilers and international approaches may affect the process of diffusion and the effectiveness of each specific mechanism.

Sierra Leone is a useful case through which to analyze the diffusion of norms via peacebuilding because it stands out as a most likely case. Endogenous factors were relatively propitious, as the country has a tradition of a relatively robust civil society and began its own halting transition to democracy in the 1990s, before international actors undertook peacebuilding operations in the country. Exogenous factors were also positive. The operation began in coordination with regional forces and, after a difficult beginning, was recognized as one of the more coordinated and well-funded UN operations (ICG, 2000; 2002; Olanisakin, 2008). Its ability to enforce the peace was also aided by extensive involvement from Britain, the former colonizer. British forces were important factors in eliminating the Revolutionary United Front (RUF) as a viable military challenge and subsequently undertaking the training of the Republic of Sierra Leone Armed Forces (RSLAF). The peacebuilding operation sits in the middle of the continuum mentioned above, as it combined broad political and social rehabilitation with enforcement capabilities provided by the British. Although the UN operation began with a relatively limited mandate, and shortly after deployment had 500 peacekeepers captured in what one observer calls its “midnight hour,” it subsequently adjusted its approach and gained a reputation for “innovation and genuine impact” (Olanisakin, 2008: 115). In many ways the United Nations operation is regarded as a model of peacebuilding efforts, because it both adjusted to events on the ground in order to provide appropriate assistance and worked to achieve adequate coordination and funding, factors notably lacking in many other international efforts.

In addition, 13 years have now passed since the peacebuilding effort began, allowing a reasonable time frame for assessing the change and incorporation of norms. Finally, Sierra Leone’s civil war was not driven by ethnic or identity divisions but by the more general problem of a weak state functioning on a patrimonial system in the context of lucrative resources (see Reno, 2000; Keen, 2005; Richards, 1996). With full recognition that factors such as funding are never wholly adequate, this case nonetheless stands out as one that had the most things going right. It seems a perfect place to test the effectiveness of norm diffusion in peacebuilding. Given the context, norms should be moving toward moral traction and institutionalization. If we find that that is not the case, and that even where effective norm diffusion is most likely it nonetheless does not work, that will tell us a great deal about the less likely cases.

Peacebuilding in Sierra Leone

The international peacebuilding effort in Sierra Leone began in October 1999 when the UN authorized a fully-fledged peacebuilding operation, the United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone (UNAMSIL), as an accompaniment to the peace agreement signed in June. Prior to the UN’s entry, the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) had been working toward resolving the conflict through its Monitoring Group (ECOMOG), authorized by the Security Council in 1997. A UN observer mission had also been present from mid-1998. Neither UNAMSIL’s initial mandate nor size was adequate, and its first year was marked by lack of security and extreme flares of violence. Within months of deployment UNAMSIL was in crisis,

with hundreds of its personnel taken hostage and security rapidly deteriorating. The original mandate tasked UNAMSIL with overseeing disarmament, ensuring security, protecting humanitarian aid, and assisting as requested with elections. It had an authorized strength of 6,000 military personnel. The mandate was revised in February 2000 to include more specific tasks of security as well as oversight of law enforcement authorities, and the number of military personnel was expanded to just over 11,000. Importantly, this expansion of the mandate took place under Chapter VII of the UN Charter, giving UNAMSIL the right to take all necessary action to carry out its tasks, including the use of force. In conjunction with this adjustment, international actors began to adopt a security first model that was much more effective in quelling violence and laid the basis for successful elections in 2002. The mandate was then revised once more, in 2001, to provide a blanket right for UNAMSIL to assist the government in extending its authority, aid in the process of political reconstruction, and oversee elections. Its strength was increased to 17,500 military personnel. The operation eventually closed in 2006, after an outlay of \$2.8 billion, and was replaced by the United Nations Integrated Office for Sierra Leone, which helped oversee the last push to the elections and ultimately gave way to the UN Integrated Peacebuilding Office in 2008, which remains operational.

As the above suggests, the road to peacebuilding was not initially smooth. The initial peace agreement collapsed in 2000 when the RUF kidnapped UN peacekeepers and reclaimed the capital of Freetown. That was the trigger for the initial expansion of UNAMSIL as well as the British intervention, which secured the capital and led to the British taking over the task of professionalizing the armed services. The security first approach developed with UNAMSIL's expansion proved far more effective because it concentrated on the complete disarmament of all warring groups, the full deployment of UNAMSIL throughout the country, and the restoration of government authority throughout the countryside. It also took far greater consideration of the regional context, notably the impact of instability in neighboring Liberia and Guinea, and allowed attention to border control and limiting spillover. In addition, and importantly, the power-sharing agreements that had been part of the earlier peace accord did not play a role in the settlement after 2000. The British intervention served to eliminate the RUF as a viable fighting force and secured a monopoly on violence for international actors. The RUF was not able to effectively transition to function as a political actor after its military defeat and became a much smaller player after mid-2000. Most importantly, it was not incorporated as a party in the final political settlement. That outcome was crucial as it meant Sierra Leone had fewer obstacles than other post-conflict countries in terms of integrating rebel actors into the policy realm and managing multiple sovereignties, and should have aided in the diffusion of norms by eliminating a large category of spoilers.

Sierra Leone's history is defined by extreme patrimonial orientation and fits the definition of a shadow state, one in which institutions are eroded and all power, money, and decision making is channelled through the individual ruler who then redistributes benefits to his chosen constituency (see Reno, 1995, 1998). Patron-client relations traditionally formed the basis of political interaction and were highly personalized and also often highly localized, with central authority limited in the countryside and local actors filling the gap. Economic access was also highly

privatized and became more so during the war, as rebel and regional actors took control of diamond mines and mineral extraction (Reno, 1995). These dynamics formed the backdrop for the program of international peacebuilding, which was confronted with three immediate problems - rebuilding the political structures of the state, bringing economic interactions, specifically the extraction and trade of resources, back under state control, and establishing human rights standards applicable to both government and rebel groups. International actors focused first on the political side, and followed standard peacebuilding strategy in overseeing democratic elections and retraining and restructuring the security services. The first task was carried out by UNAMSIL, which provided logistical support and maintained a highly visible armed presence throughout the country to deter any possible violence. The predictable problems of coercion, fairness, and independence of voters were certainly present during balloting, but the International Crisis Group (ICG) considered the elections effective and essentially well-run (ICG, 2002).

The British undertook primary responsibility for the security services and employed two different approaches for the army and police respectively. The restructuring program for the army was overseen by an International Military Advisory and Training Team (IMATT), which provided extensive oversight and direction and was quite intrusive in its handling of retraining. With the police, by contrast, the British led the reform effort but focused on local ownership and did not engage in the internal restructuring process. Consultants were brought in for short term contracts rather than providing consistent oversight, and did not engage in the level or scope of programs the IMATT undertook (ICG, 2002, 2003). The consequences of this approach will be discussed below.

The international effort to reinstate democratic procedures appears effective. Eighty-five percent of the eligible population was registered for the 2002 elections. Ahmed Tejan Kabbah, the president first elected in 1996, won with over seventy percent of the vote, while the RUF was decisively rejected and won less than two percent of the vote (ICG, 2002). The success of the election system was further solidified in 2007, when Ernest Bai Koroma and the All People's Congress won the second post-conflict presidential election, marking the first time an opposition party had won without prompting a constitutional crisis or military intervention. In that sense the outcome of the intervention can be judged a success. The transition to electoral procedures went fairly smoothly and seems to be on the way to consolidation. That is very significant as it represents an acceptance of electoral procedures and a willingness by politicians and citizens alike to abide by the outcome.

Sierra Leone has clearly adopted the appearance of liberal reform; the question is how far it has embraced the substance. The process of peacebuilding did not begin in earnest until after the 2002 election, as that event provided a legitimate government and the structure for undertaking necessary programs that could make the consolidation of government reform possible. Once balloting was complete, UNAMSIL focused on assisting in the extension of government authority and capacity, and continuing, with British involvement, the restructuring and professionalization of the security sector. In following the causal mechanisms detailed above, we should expect an instrumental embrace of peacebuilding norms, to be followed by a process of eventual internalization. Further, we should expect to see

the dynamics of diffusion - coercion, competition, learning, and emulation - at work in driving the causal mechanisms and moving policymakers and elites in Sierra Leone from the point of rhetoric about norms to something more substantive. There is of course a time limitation here, in that only 13 years have passed since the decisive end of conflict and creation of a new government. However, it should be possible in that time to see the beginning of the process.

Rhetoric versus Reality in Norm Acceptance

Returning to Risse, Ropp, and Sikkink's processes of norm acceptance, it is clear that policymakers in Sierra Leone have embraced peacebuilding norms on an instrumental level. During the election campaign in 2002, President Kabbah pledged to focus on service provision and inclusive governance, and the sense that he would push reform played a role in his election (ICG 2002). However, the actual behavior of the government revealed little commitment to such principles. Kabbah reneged on calls for a broad-based government after the election, relying instead on a cabinet dominated by members of his Sierra Leone People's Party (SLPP). Various pieces of legislation were passed to target accountability and transparency, for example the Human Rights Commission of Sierra Leone Act (2004), the Anti-Money Laundering Act (2005), and the Independent Media Commission Act (2006, 2007) but remained little actualized in practice. Perhaps most importantly, a national anti-corruption strategy was developed in frame but had few teeth. Although the government pointed to the creation of the Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC) as a major accomplishment, the body was appointed by the government, had no independent prosecutorial powers, and was dependent on the linked position of the Attorney General and minister of justice to undertake its mandate. The ACC quickly became a political tool used by Kabbah's inner circle, known as "The Untouchables," and reflected the problem of theory versus reality in peacebuilding. And in spite of the effort to create accountability and control mechanisms, particularly in the finance ministry, government officials continued to engage in graft and corruption. One international official commented that the reform effort was a "façade because of the perpetual tendency of individual politicians and high-level civil servants to continually undermine the structures and mechanisms that have been set up to improve transparency and accountability" (ICG, 2002: 16).

In examining how reforms were instituted, it seems clear that few of the processes necessary for norm diffusion actually took place in the first years. Coercion was present to some extent but was relatively minimal. While it is true that international actors were present to oversee and facilitate reform, they did not have a direct role in either passage or implementation of legislation, and served as advisors only. UNAMSIL had no direct control over governmental processes, as for example international actors had in places such as Kosovo and East Timor, and thus had little direct capacity to effect change. The most coercive activities took place in the restructuring of the RSLAF, where the British assumed direct control and developed and initially ran the new Armed Forces Training Center (AFTC), modeled after the Royal Military Academy at Sandhurst. British personnel initially ran all the hands-on

teaching and organizing at the AFTC, and now remain active as mentors and advisors (UK Ministry of Defence, 2011). Beyond that, direct coercion was more limited, particularly in the restructuring of the police. Although a British officer served as Inspector General, the Commonwealth Police Development Task Force he oversaw worked simply to “support” capacity building, and decision-making authority was held by an Executive Management Board composed of senior Sierra Leonean officers (Fakondo, 2008).

Competition was not an effective mechanism because Sierra Leone had no need to compete. The onset of peacekeeping/building and the election brought international investment to its door. For example, the country went from receiving approximately \$181 million in official development assistance in 2000, to \$437 million in 2009 (World Bank, 2011). The World Bank committed \$363.7 million to projects between 2001-2006, up from \$120.2 million in the 1996-2000 period, and UNAMSIL itself spent \$2.8 billion assisting the country, half of which came before the 2002 elections (UN DPKO; World Bank). Kabbah did balk at accepting conditionality requirements from the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and thus lost some access to international funds, indicating a limitation on his willingness to accede to coercion or competition, but he also had many other potential sources of support (BTI, 2012). Foreign direct investment inflows as a whole went from approximately \$1 million in 2001, to \$60 million in 2004. (FDI.net). There are obviously other relevant indicators in terms of access to foreign funds, but it is clear from this small selection that Sierra Leone did not have to compete very hard in order to attract financial assistance and attention. If we were to dig deeper to find the contributions of non-governmental organizations, other agencies of the UN, and all bilateral state aid, the total would be much higher.

Some normative learning did take place throughout this period, though the evidence is anecdotal. The ICG reported in 2003 that some officers believed that the RSLAF did have a more democratic ethos and that the officer corps accepted and endorsed the need to keep the army out of political affairs. On the flip side, however, officers estimated that only sixty percent of the army was loyal to the government and suggested that too many officers still believed the army was above the law (ICG, 2003). For government as a whole, the evidence of learning is scarce in the immediate post-conflict years. The citizenry perceived little governmental interest in eliminating corruption or instilling accountability, and the ACC itself accused the government of apathy and non-compliance in its annual report (ICG, 2003). And the one mechanism that seemed to offer a perfect vehicle for learning, the Special Court for Sierra Leone, which paired international and local attorneys, was beset by criticisms about its procedures and handling of suspects. Although many of its weaknesses may have been structural, the Court’s actions nonetheless undermined the value of the model it established in terms of principles of justice and neutral application of the rule of law (Cassese, 2006).

To the extent that emulation may have been relevant, therefore, it was largely to reinforce negative trends. The Court example serves here too, as the international community preached a standard of judicial behavior that it did not fully adhere to. This apparent hypocrisy undermined the possibility of emulation and made adherence to norms much harder to promote (see Bukovansky, 2007; Simmons, Dobbin, and Garrett, 2006). In addition, externally Sierra Leone had no neighbor models it could

look to as having success as a result of reform. It was itself the model for the region as it gained recognition for ending its conflict and moving toward liberalization. The demonstration value of Sierra Leone had broad international appeal, as the ICG suggested that the UN Security Council wanted to be able to declare it a success story in order to reduce its commitments and concentrate on other crises (ICG, 2003). The way Sierra Leone's degree of change may have been represented internationally, therefore, did not necessarily match with the substantive extent of change.

The Kabbah regime thus had to do very little in terms of actual reform. Rhetorical commitment was sufficient to gain both financial benefit and international acclaim and needed no specific translation into practice. The international community was "eager for an ally to help lead Sierra Leone out of conflict" and "reluctant to paint him with the brush of corruption" (ICG, 2002). The ability to diffuse norms boiled down to a simple matter of will. International interests in reform conflicted with the system of rent-seeking and personalization that characterize many African states. As Chabal and Daloz (1999) have noted, the system of personalized control and resource distribution is the essence of many African political systems and inhibits the development of a concept of public office as a public service. The Kabbah government apparently had little interest in actualizing reforms because they impinged on the system of patrimonialism that all its members practiced, and the donor community did not feel able to apply pressure for change because of the need for a local partner and a desire to be able to leave sooner rather than later. This pattern has repeated itself in many cases.

The result is that changes were cosmetic and did not convey any real concept of reform or an increase in accountability and credibility for the government. At the same time, the government received all the benefits of adhering to the preferred norms in the form of international access and money. That in itself became something of an art form, as the ICG noted that the 2004 district council elections "showed how adept the government has become at presenting the appearance of what the international community seeks without much of the substance" (ICG, 2004). On that occasion the government resorted to traditional tactics of coercion and intimidation to influence the voting as it preferred, a clear indicator that the form of normative change was more relevant than the substance. Economic pillage and the shadow state remained the defining characteristic of Sierra Leone, with intended reforms making few inroads in terms of changing governmental behaviors or the perception of citizens.

There is, however, some evidence that a process of moral consciousness raising, persuasion, and dialogue may be in its incipient stages. It is too early to say whether the process is really taking root, and there are a number of significant constraints, as will be discussed below. Nonetheless, since the 2007 election of President Koroma the tide has turned somewhat. Several things are notable since the election. First, the 2007 elections were a success in large part because of the efficiency of the police and the effectiveness of the National Election Commission (NEC). The police apparently managed the logistical aspects well, and the NEC, largely due to the actions of its commissioner, acted to invalidate results in hundreds of polling states that returned more votes than they had voters (ICG, 2008). Both of these trends suggest that some normative change has taken hold. Second, evidence suggests that the vote for the APC was due in part to dissatisfaction with the Kabbah government's ability to

deliver services and tackle corruption, possibly indicating a shift in expectations of government. In addition, patronage networks may have had less impact, particularly in urban areas, where voluntary associations are becoming more robust and focus seems to be increasingly on effective rather than clientalist government. At the same time, “patronage as a moral concept continues to influence the political outlook of urban youth,” who want government to share its wealth and expect to take part in redistribution (ICG, 2008: 24).

Third, Koroma has asserted that the government should be run like a privatized business in terms of its accountability and has instigated and/or pledged changes to improve the performance of civil servants. As part of his effort to revamp government and society the president also instituted a program of attitudinal change designed to both express a commitment to improving the government and catalyze efforts to change perceptions of what government and citizens should do and how they should behave. The goals are to remove expectations of patrimonialism from society, which Koroma has described as equally important to changing the government itself, to build a culture of professionalism in the military, and “to teach the public about good citizenship and respect for one another” (Bah, 2012). Finally, Koroma accepted IMF conditionality and began implementing the development terms negotiated with Kabbah. Though this last had limited practical success, it did indicate a willingness to accept some of the more coercive international efforts to extend liberal economic practices.

All these trends suggest that the new government may be trying to initiate real dialogue on liberal reforms and is undertaking practical efforts to make it a reality. Koroma has offered several specific reforms, notably compulsory asset declarations for all public officials, performance contracts for ministers and civil servants, and separation of the Attorney General and minister of justice. The ACC was also given prosecutorial powers in 2008 and no longer needs the Attorney General’s permission to pursue cases. As of early 2009, a number of senior officials had submitted asset declarations, although compliance remains partial, and all members of the cabinet had signed performance contracts by mid-2009 (Freedom House, 2010; Morris, 2009). It is unclear how those are being used, however, as Koroma undertook a reshuffling of the cabinet in December 2010, removing several ministers but never referring to the contracts or providing a public reason for the change, even when pressed by the media (Hanciles, 2010).

Although there is clearly movement toward greater commitment to peacebuilding norms, here too it is hard to separate rhetoric from reality. Reports of obstructive practices in government are widespread. Rent seeking remains common and is practiced through “Rigid adherence to procedural minutiae and withholding information” (ICG, 2008: 9). Koroma was under pressure from the start to reward his supporters, and so dismissed some competent Kabbah appointees, presumably to provide positions for his own constituency. He gave little explanation for the removals, which the ICG described as a “purge” (ICG, 2008). And although the structures of compliance now exist, notably anti-corruption law, which is relatively advanced, the implementation and enforcement often do not reflect the same level of commitment. The Global Integrity Report for 2009 gave Sierra Leone high marks for its anti-corruption law and agency, as well as whistleblower protections, but it also

noted “deep-seated problems with accountability and transparency across all levels of government” (GIR, 2009). Significant progress in battling corruption came in 2010, when the ACC successfully convicted several cabinet ministers and a judge, indicating a developing capacity to get the so-called “big fish.” At the same time, however, the ACC did not investigate claims against several ruling party politicians or claims concerning potential government interference with the ACC itself. Efforts to develop rule of law also remain weak due to “serious deficiencies in the judicial system,” though citizens now have greater access to legal representation (HRW, 2011). And though laws protecting press freedoms do exist, the state still engages in extensive harassment of critical authors and Sierra Leone ranks in the bottom half of international press freedom rankings (BIT, 2012: 9).

As the ICG notes, and as corresponds with scholarship on the issue, clientalism is hard to overcome. The Big Man definition of African politics privileges personal largesse and turns government into a system of reward rather than a neutral provider of service (see Chabal and Daloz, 1999; Reno, 1999; ICG, 2008). Although the patronage system seemed notably weaker in the 2007 elections, analysts are uncertain whether that reflects a true retreat of the system and corresponding demands for real change in government, or simply a readjustment of the system itself. The voting patterns also suggested reinforcement of the North-South divide in the country, which corresponds to identity issues. The Temne and Limba tribes of the north are aligned with the APC while the Mende of the south are aligned with the SLPP (ICG, 2008). In addition, the ICG questions whether the anti-corruption strategy and attitudinal change campaign are focused and effective in achieving their goals (2008).

The country is getting a great deal of attention at the moment for the *Agenda for Change*, its second Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper, which says all the right things about development, government accountability, and security sector reform. The tone of the document, especially when discussing poverty reduction and government accountability, is objective and practical. It takes pains to downplay major changes that have occurred, particularly in regards to economic issues, and notes that few changes are evident at the street level or in popular perception. The language of reform is clearly there, but it is not yet evident how this translates into implementation. One citizen describes the *Agenda* as “UN speak,” because it defines broad aspirations but then treats them as real objectives, with little corresponding effort to carefully map out what they mean and how those goals could be practically realized (Dixon-Fyle, 2012). He notes that the document is quoted “as if it was the Bible itself,” but with little corresponding effort to translate words into policies (Dixon-Fyle, 2012). Two problems have thus resulted. First, the *Agenda for Change* has created an atmosphere where rhetoric substitutes for action. Second, all criticisms of the document are viewed as anti-government rather than as serious efforts to debate what the country needs and how it might get there. The result is a lot of fervor over “empty language” that does not represent actual change (Dixon-Fyle, 2012).

Notably, however, the *Agenda for Change* has garnered international recognition as well as direct benefit in the form of programs from the African Development Bank and World Bank (Newstime Africa, 2009). It has also served as a means of convincing international actors of the sincerity of the country’s norm adherence and as a tool for recruitment of bilateral and multilateral funds (see Jah, 2011). Competition

may be active in this case, as the Africa Governance Initiative (AGI), founded by former British Prime Minister Tony Blair, has hailed Sierra Leone as the most improved government in Africa since AGI began functioning in 2008, and helped funnel money in its direction (Bah, 2012). It is hard to know, therefore, whether the *Agenda* represents a step forward in norm adherence or whether it is largely a tool to get international benefit for little effort. The question of how deep norm diffusion has gone is all the more relevant because other indicators are not so promising. Political stability is unchanged from 2006, and government effectiveness has been virtually stagnant over the same period. Control of corruption did improve significantly from 2008 to 2010, though remains below its high point of 2002 (World Bank, 2010b). Freedom House has documented extensive harassment of the media and noted that corruption, lack of resources, and unqualified personnel continue to undermine the ability to ensure rule of law (BTI, 2012; see also Freedom House, 2010).

Sierra Leone's scores on the Global Integrity Report have improved modestly but consistently over the last several years, and the country has now attained a "weak" rating, up from "very weak." Notably, the implementation gap, which measures the disparity between enacted laws and their implementation, has improved to 21, down from 30 in 2007 (GIR, 2009). One particular positive noted in the 2009 report is the implementation of the whistle blower law, which gives 10 percent of the proceeds recovered from corruption cases to the whistleblower him or herself. That certainly raises potential concerns for abuse as well, but presently is a positive example of efforts to operationalize the campaign to lessen corruption. The country's rating on the Corruption Perception Index has been up and down, with the 2.4 rating in 2010 (ranking of 134) an improvement over that of 2009, but also the same rating as 2005, which had a ranking of 126 (CPI, 2010). And though control of corruption has improved over the previous three years, it remains much lower than in neighboring Liberia. Overall, state actors still enjoy high levels of impunity for "maladministration" and corruption, and democratic institutions remain weak and unstable (BTI, 2102: 9-10). Sierra Leone's risk for state fragility is also rated as high, with serious problems in political effectiveness and legitimacy noted (Marshall and Cole, 2009). Few people worry about the prospect of future violence, though there is some concern that the elections planned for late 2012 could, if not very carefully managed, lead to some upheaval (Dixon-Fyle, 2012).

Even since 2007, therefore, the dynamics of norm diffusion remain quite weak. Coercion is largely absent as a mechanism, as the international presence in-country is now relatively limited and aid seems to be forthcoming based on the hopes for Koroma's reforms. The *Agenda for Change* has received a great deal of international attention and praise but has had little concrete effect. Competition, learning, and emulation are also limited. Liberia has emerged as a potential regional competitor in recent years, and does as well if not better than Sierra Leone on many of the World Bank governance indicators. Sierra Leone still received significantly more official development assistance and net official financial flows in 2009, though it had considerably less foreign direct investment than Liberia (World Bank, 2011). In addition, places like Cote d'Ivoire and the Democratic Republic of the Congo have gotten enormously higher amounts of aid than either Liberia or Sierra Leone, with much less evidence of reform or change, which suggests that competition is not an

effective mechanism for expanding the norms of peacebuilding. Indeed, if the issue is simply access to money, those two cases suggest that a stalemated situation, with little progress in reform, is more effective in garnering aid. And where competition is at work it may have a negative effect. “Sierra Leone’s status as a model for post-conflict recovery has had an insidious effect on its bureaucrats, many of whom waste a lot of time inveigling themselves into delegations to conferences and seminars abroad, where they receive handsome allowances” (The Economist, 2011). Further, the country has little to fall back on beyond aid. “The economic foundation of the country is so weak that thoughts of self-sustaining development seem utopian,” a reality that may indicate that access to international funds would drive policy (BTI, 2012: 11).

The reality thus seems to recall Ikenberry and Kupchan’s comment on the limitations of British rule in Egypt; “The ruling classes cooperated with the British not because they believed in Western values or justice but, rather, because they benefited from their role as collaborators (1990: 311). To the extent that reforms have been implemented, observers worry that they cannot or will not be sustained once external support is withdrawn (Freedom House, 2010). State enforcement of anti-corruption efforts remains weak, even after the strengthening of the ACC and with international financial support, and the agency still has little institutional capacity to investigate cases. Even some of its successes are embarrassing, as it indicted several members of Koroma’s signature Attitudinal Behavior and Change secretariat for stealing funds (The Economist, 2011). The environment is also highly politicized, with all social and political positions viewed as for or against a particular party. Perhaps most worryingly for the future, corruption in the diamond industry remains widespread. Regulations are weakly enforced, government officials are still involved in illegal operations, and armed gangs continue to operate in diamond areas (BTI, 2012; Freedom House, 2010). This is one of the biggest concerns for the future of norm diffusion because it prevents the building of government capacity and perpetuates incentives to undermine accountability and transparency. As long as diamonds are essentially up for grabs, an easily lootable resource that the government cannot control, the incentive for economic pillage remains high, and with it, the incentive to maintain the shadow state (see Reno, 1999; Ballentine and Sherman, 2003). The informal sector and criminal activity are on the rise and state control/influence over the economy remains strong, showing the limits to efforts to develop a liberal, privatized economy (BTI, 2012: 15).

While this analysis suggests limits to Sierra Leone’s change, it also shows that not all diffusion effects are relevant for all types of norms. Coercion was much more apparent in development of the rule of law, specifically the army and its role, and had little impact anywhere else. Competition and learning seemed to play the biggest role across all types of norms, while emulation may have also had an impact. The chart below indicates which mechanisms worked in which category.

	<i>Politics/gov't</i>	<i>Economics</i>	<i>Rule of Law</i>	<i>Human Rights</i>	<i>Social reconciliation</i>
<i>Coercion</i>		IMF conditionality— not accepted by Kabbah but brought back on track by Koroma	Training of Sierra Leone army by British; IMATT		
<i>Competition</i>	Recognized by AGI for making greatest improvements in Africa	<i>Agenda for Change</i> (heralded internationally); diamond/mineral industry (internal competition for profits, control)		Special Court— completed work with Taylor judgment, becoming first special court/tribunal to do so; also compared favorably to Liberia, which has no special judicial system	Internal-North/South divide in 2007 election; Highly polarized citizenry
<i>Learning</i>	Elections; Government platform under Koroma; Legislation on transparency, accountability; National Electoral Commission; Strengthening of Anti-Corruption Commission		IMATT; Police training; Attitudinal change— emphasizing democratic ethos	Human Rights Commission, and strengthening of laws	Attitudinal Behavior and Change (ABC) secretariat, campaign by Koroma
<i>Emulation</i>	Koroma— looking toward other countries as models of free market, emphasis on private enterprise; good governance effort supported by AGI/Tony Blair	<i>Agenda for Change</i> , perhaps-- (driven by private sector)	Perhaps-- creation of Special Court following approved models in other contexts		

Two observations emerge from this analysis. First, Sierra Leone may have been uniquely placed for learning, at least at a relatively early stage, because so many of its internal factors were positive, as noted above. Second, based on this case,

competition and learning seem to be the most important mechanisms for extending and consolidating peacebuilding norms. This table would certainly look different in a case like Bosnia or Kosovo, where international actors took a more direct role and engaged in more coercive strategies, but those are also exceptions to rather than rules for standard peacebuilding strategy. It is far more likely that international actors will encourage or facilitate rather than direct, making cases more likely to follow the Sierra Leone model.

One lesson we might suggest from this analysis is that international efforts could be made to encourage mechanisms that are not currently engaged, such as competition for political change, or emulation for human rights. There are clearly some potential mechanisms for diffusion that are not being engaged, and norm expansion might benefit from efforts to bring those mechanisms into play as well. But a second lesson is perhaps contradictory, as this case suggests that international actors generally have little capacity to influence the likelihood of norm acceptance. Most of what we see on the chart above is driven by internal interest and preferences. Local culture and interest matter most, as Legro and Sundstrom note. Most of the mechanisms here were driven by tendencies internal to Sierra Leone, particularly those deriving from its relatively fertile ground for liberalization. This suggests that, absent active coercion, and perhaps even with it, external actors have limited capacity to extend the norms they hope to through the process of peacebuilding. Liberal practices will be built from within, if desired, and cannot be built from without. As the Iraqi character says to the American at the end of the movie *The Green Zone*, "It is not up to you to decide what happens here."

Whither Diffusion?

What accounts for the inability, thus far, to get real diffusion of peacebuilding norms? Jeffrey Legro defines specificity, durability, and concordance as essential features, with the latter corresponding to what others have defined as the need for norms to have a cultural match (Legro, 1997; Cortell and Davis, Jr. 2000). The problem in this case, and for peacebuilding in general, seems to be with the first and last concepts. The durability of peacebuilding norms seems to be well-established, both in terms of peacebuilding itself and international trends in general. The push for liberal political trends has been attached to conflict resolution for the last two decades and has grown more explicit in articulation at the international level. At the same time, the allure of political liberalization is a trend that is affecting the world as a whole, as the growth in democracies and the most recent uprisings in the Middle East attest.

The problem with peacebuilding norms thus lies in how they are defined and how they fit with local preference. Specificity seems to be a problem; though the norms are defined in a general sense, there has been no international effort to define the essence of compliance. States are rewarded for doing anything that appears to comply with the norm, even something as simple (from the perspective of norm consolidation) as holding an election. But the substance of those actions is rarely assessed or used as a means of determining access to funds or attention. The norm as

articulated at the international level is thus very vague, and the expected implementation very limited. The rewards granted are also out of proportion to the actual degree of compliance, with elections seeming to serve as a proxy for other means of assessment. The lack of specificity thus leaves no real room for coercion, competition, or learning to operate as a means to encourage acceptance. In the absence of clear expectations, policymakers are free to interpret liberalization as they wish, and they generally do so in a way that gives the appearance of change but leaves them full capacity to exploit the system to their own ends.

Along with specificity, concordance is lacking in most cases, as Sierra Leone attests. This case is noteworthy because it is one where we might expect concordance to be most likely. It has a history of democratic transition predating international involvement, a relatively robust civil society, and several characteristics that make it a state likely to embrace liberal change. But it also has a deeply entrenched patrimonial system defined by extreme personalization of power and complete impunity for government actors. In addition, the state's most lucrative resources are easily lootable and provide incentives for actors to circumvent institutions and develop their own networks for political and economic transactions. Even desired changes, such as the attitudinal program, find it difficult to get traction.

The political leadership tries to pursue long-term goals, but it quite often tends to act in contradiction to its stated objectives in order to appease domestic vested interests. The leadership seeks to build democracy and the market economy, but its strategic aims are not commensurate with the country's situation, problems and needs. Very often, attempts at reform are corrupted by the conflicting interests of individuals and groups (BTI, 2012; 22).

The society thus functions in a way that inhibits the normative change that international actors hope to promote. The systems that bring reward directly undermine peacebuilding norms and link even well-intentioned politicians in a system of asset redistribution outside of government systems. Whether because of interests or practical realities, concordance cannot take hold.

Sierra Leone provides us with but one snapshot of norm diffusion through peacebuilding, and the story is of necessity incomplete. It presents some very interesting results, however, as several of the factors we might predict should make norm diffusion more likely are not supported by this case. We cannot say with certainty that these mechanisms are not effective, but this analysis of Sierra Leone suggests that far more effort needs to be devoted to examining how and why norms diffuse in these cases. Thus far it bears many marks of a label state rather than one that has moved toward a moral or habitual adoption of norms. The category of political change is particularly interesting, as it has several initiatives working through three different diffusion mechanisms, yet significant change seems to be stymied by local and cultural legacies. In some ways, the rule of law category, which experienced the most direct coercion, appears to be the most successful. That may be due to coercion, but is likely also affected by the fact that it is the most specific and bounded of the categories, with clear standards of behavior for police, army and courts. Although rule of law also means more than those standards, they nonetheless give it a very concrete basis for measuring progress.

Learning more about how norms diffuse, and in which categories, is important not only for understanding how and why peacebuilding strategies work, but also for evaluating the longer-term effects on norm diffusion and the demonstration value that label states may have on local elites in other peacebuilding contexts. The evidence here suggests that peacebuilding actually creates negative models of competition and emulation, which could have a stifling effect on the international capacity to encourage liberalization elsewhere. The concept of diffusion thus becomes turned upside-down. The incomplete processes of diffusion that characterize peacebuilding seem to have the potential to reinforce transgressive behaviors and ultimately undermine the substance and acceptance of those norms by showing other states that real change is not necessary. Label states can retain their habitual practices even while getting access to international funds and attention, a lesson that has negative implications for a broad range of international efforts to promote liberal practices around the globe.

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