ODI

Development Progress

Security progress in post-conflict contexts

Between liberal peacebuilding and elite interests

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Cover image: Citizens and
UNMIL destroy voting materials after a
presidential election in 2006, Brewersville.
Photo: © Eric Kanalstein for UN

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Acknowledgements

Abbreviations

CPA	Comprehensive Peace Agreement	**LIC**	Low-income country
DDR	Disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration	**MIC**	Middle-income country
DFID	Department for International Development	**ODI**	Overseas Development Institute
DRC	Democratic Republic of the Congo	**OECD**	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
GDP	Gross domestic product	**PFM**	Public financial management
HIC	High-income country	**RPF**	Rwandan Patriotic Front
HRW	Human Rights Watch	**SJSR**	Security and justice sector reform
HSR	Human Security Report	**SSR**	Security sector reform
ICG	International Crisis Group	**TAF**	The Asia Foundation
IDP	Internally displaced person	**UNDP**	United Nations Development Programme
IDPS	International Dialogue on Peacebuilding and Statebuilding	**UNHCR**	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
IFI	International financial institution	**UNMIL**	United Nations Mission in Liberia
INTERFET	The International Force for East Timor	**UNODC**	United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime
JAM	Joint Assessment Mission	**UNTAET**	United Nations Transitional Authority

Abstract

The Overseas Development Institute (ODI) has been conducting a four-year programme of work funded by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation which explores drivers of progress across a range of development sectors, including security. The programme seeks to draw lessons from countries that have achieved progress in personal security from physical violence or threat of physical violence. It aims to contribute to research on how security progress is in fact achieved in post-conflict contexts, with a view to informing development partner support to peacebuilding processes.

This report synthesises findings from two country case studies, which focus on how security improvements have been achieved in the challenging post-conflict contexts of Liberia and Timor-Leste. It also draws on wider literatures on liberal peacebuilding and the role of elites, which have polarised debates over how countries achieve peace. Using the two case studies, as well as examples from other post-conflict contexts, this report maps out potential ways of overcoming these contrasting approaches. This starts from the reality of how security progress has actually been achieved in post-conflict countries, but also maintains a focus on moving towards more inclusive security in future.

Of course, security progress in both Liberia and Timor-Leste has been limited and tentative, coming from low starting points. Citizens in both countries continue to face various forms of insecurity. Nonetheless, it is important not to underplay the significance of the security improvements that have been achieved, given the multitude of competing priorities post-conflict countries contend with, as well as the many threats to the peace they face. These progress stories are thus necessarily relative and modest, but nonetheless important in helping to deepen our understanding of how states emerging from conflict build peace.

Much of the existing literature and donor practice supports (either explicitly or implicitly) a liberal peacebuilding approach, in which democracy, economic liberalisation and rule of law are promoted as the foundations for peace. Yet this overlooks the fact that elites may reject change and be incentivised to retain the capabilities for violence, and that historical processes of state formation have tended to be violent. An examination of the drivers of security progress in our case study countries reveals a more nuanced picture, in which factors at the international, national and sub-national levels have contributed to varying degrees to improved security. Of these, domestic political factors emerge as the most important in creating an enabling environment for peace. Key factors include the credibility and legitimacy of leadership personalities, as well as their ability to use patrimonial networks to buy elites and potential spoilers into the peace. At the sub-national level, local security providers support conflict resolution that can prevent minor disputes from escalating, thus contributing to stability. And finally at the international level, peacekeeping forces can provide a window of stability on which national leaders can capitalise; and security sector reform (SSR) processes can facilitate early improvements in security providers. However, despite these important contributions to security progress, peacekeeping and SSR are unlikely to exert a strong influence on peace in the longer term, with national and local factors playing a much stronger role. These international factors have thus played a more limited role in building security in Liberia and Timor-Leste than is often assumed. Yet while these drivers have enabled improved security in the short term, they have not fundamentally addressed the underlying causes of conflict and there are concerns about whether they can lead to more inclusive, and thus more sustainable, peace.

To address this, the report sets out three approaches to help overcome the tension between how security progress is achieved in practice in the short-term and the kinds of equitable and inclusive security that are more sustainable in the longer term. These include:

1. Working with but not for elite interests.
2. Viewing support for security institutions as long-term processes of change.
3. Incrementally increasing the inclusivity of development processes from the outset.

While these do not resolve the impasse between the liberal peacebuilding and elite-focused approaches, they provide some ideas as to how to bridge them in a way that is realistic about the role of elites and yet aspirational about what can be achieved for citizens in future.

A Ghanaian peacekeeper with the UN Mission in Liberia (UNMIL). Photo: © Staton Winter for UN

1. Introduction

Peacebuilding has long been a priority of the international community – both to prevent the recurrence of conflict and to lay the foundations for wider development. The dominant approaches to peacebuilding are, however, based on liberal assumptions that are often not appropriate in post-conflict contexts. Many post-conflict countries that have achieved some degree of security progress appear to have done so through largely illiberal means, at least in the short term. There is thus a tension between the liberal approach to peacebuilding the international community currently favours as a means to promote more lasting peace (Cramer, 2006; Berdal, 2009) and the reality of how improved security is often achieved in post-conflict contexts (Paris, 2004).

This paper explores this tension drawing on case studies in Liberia and Timor-Leste, where security progress has been achieved, at least in the short term, through the continuity of national leadership, an elite political settlement that brings key stakeholders into the peace (including former enemies), and the temporary deployment of international forces to deter further violence. While helping to ensure initial improvements in personal security, the risk is that this illiberal mix may also sow the seeds of future grievances that can undermine longer-term sustainable and equitable peace. The factors that underpin security progress in the short to medium term in the aftermath of armed conflict do not necessarily contribute to longer-term security that is both sustainable and equitable. The challenge, then, is to reconcile the long-term goal of inclusive security with the reality of the illiberal means through which security is often, at least initially, improved in practice.[1]

This raises two key questions. First, how can post-conflict rulers be incentivised to enact the sort of inclusive and empowering policies that create a greater stake in their polity for those at the centre of power as well as for those at the margins? Second, how can the dominant international assumptions about how security should be established be reconciled with the more illiberal reality of how security imperatives actually play out in most post-conflict settings?

We address these questions from the perspective of how improvements in short- and long-term post-conflict security can be linked. Of course, these are complex and much debated issues and we do not claim here to have resolved the many tensions and trade-offs involved.

> **Box 1: Security and the 'Development Progress' programme**
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> The paper is part of 'Development Progress', a Gates Foundation-funded programme at the Overseas Development Institute (ODI), one dimension of which investigates the nature of security progress in the broader context of how development is achieved. For this project, a background paper (Valters et al., 2014) supported country case studies in Liberia and Timor-Leste (Barnes Robinson and Valters, 2015; Valters et al., 2015). Field visits were made to Monrovia in Liberia and to Dili, Baucau and Ermera in Timor-Leste throughout 2014 and were complemented by a literature review. Much of the information is inevitably country-specific, but the case studies and literature review reveal several important themes that transcend the particular context and form the basis of this paper.

However, in an effort to begin to move beyond the impasse that appears to exist between liberal peacebuilding and elite-focused approaches to improving security, the paper sets out three tentative strategies: (1) working with but not for elite interests;[2] (2) engaging in support for security institutions as processes of political change; and (3) focusing on inclusive development processes that nurture new groups of stakeholders from the start.

The paper is structured as follows. Section 2 questions what counts as security progress and outlines what this has meant for our case study selection and research approach. Section 3 examines the assumptions underpinning the dominant international view on how to achieve security progress in post-conflict contexts, based on the core components of democratisation, liberalisation and the rule of law. Section 4 discusses what our research found has influenced short-term improvements in personal security in Liberia and Timor-Leste. Finally, section 5 analyses what makes security progress sustainable and equitable, suggesting a difficult balancing act between working with elite interests and gradually creating more effective institutions that serve collective interests.

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1. In this paper, initial security progress in the immediate post-conflict period refers to achieving stability, which is understood as a major reduction in conflict-related violence as well as an opening up of (informal) channels for political negotiation and dialogue. Sustainable security progress refers to the gradual achievement of a measure of security provision, resources and accountability that is seen as meeting popular demands, affordable over time and holds the potential for further development gains.
2. Elites can be defined as 'the small group of leaders – rarely more than 3% in any unit of analysis – that occupy formal or informal positions of authority and power in public and private organizations or sectors and who take or influence key economic, political, social and administrative decisions' (Leftwich, 2009). The relation between the nature of elite pacts, elite privileges and the level and type of public goods provision is discussed in more detail in Putzel and Di John (2012) and Khan (2010).

Students in Monrovia play on a swing set. Photo: © Staton Winter for UN

2. What counts as security progress?

For the purposes of this project, we are interested in examining where relative progress in security has occurred and what it looks like in order to better inform support to building security worldwide. A focus on security is important in its own right, but also because insecurity can be a powerful inhibitor of equitable socio-economic development (Lockhart and Ghani, 2009).[3] Our focus is on 'personal security', understood as 'personal safety from physical threat and fear of physical threat' (Valters et al., 2014). This approach to security is human-centred, with the aim of reflecting individuals' experiences and perceptions of security, rather than the state's. Our approach, however, is more limited than a human security perspective; while we sympathise with such an approach, it is generally too ambitious a goal for capturing more incremental security progress in immediate post-conflict contexts with low starting points.[4]

Regardless, measuring what counts as 'security progress' is both methodologically difficult and controversial, in part due to contestation over the meaning of security itself (Cramer, 2006; Valters et al., 2014).[5] There are established datasets on battle deaths (although civilians deaths are difficult to gather with accuracy), rates of homicide and sexual violence, as well as political terror and the like. Indicators that measure people's perceptions are also an important complement in seeking to understand their experiences of security. Yet several challenges remain:

- Certain data are not always available, particularly in post-conflict countries where national statistics offices seldom collect routine data on personal security.
- Statistics on security progress do not always match improvements in people's experiences on the ground. For example, an increase in official crime rates, while seemingly indicating a rise in criminal activity, may actually represent higher reporting rates on the basis of improved police–community relations.
- The correlation of 'personal security' indicators (both objective and subjective) with micro- and macro-political crises can take a number of forms. Often it is a lagging indicator, and sometimes it is unrelated. This may limit what such indicators can tell us about a country's resilience to such crises.
- Internationally agreed standards of data and locally determined metrics can operate in tension, or even competition (Price, 2015). Both are necessary, but international actors tend to trust the former over the latter. This can create international narratives of change that do not match local realities.
- Measuring security raises the important question of 'security for who?' Security progress involves trade-offs, often reinforced by socio-economic, gender, regional, ethnic and religious divides (Luckham, 2009: 3), and this can result in an inequitable distribution that eventually provokes further violence (Stewart, 2008).

For these reasons, attempts to analyse security progress need to be appropriately modest, clearly specify data limitations and triangulate sources as much as possible.

The security dimension of the Development Progress programme undertook case studies in Liberia and Timor-Leste. These countries were selected following data analysis of nine indicators of security to determine where progress had been achieved over the last 10–20 years (see Box 2 overleaf). From the resulting list of countries, we then explored the qualitative aspects in order to get a sense of the nature of progress. It is important to note that Liberia and Timor-Leste were not chosen for their comparative potential. Indeed while they are both commonly understood as 'post-conflict', they have markedly different histories and current political dynamics.

We were particularly interested in how countries emerging from conflict have improved citizens' security – rather than, for instance, how countries at peace have reduced criminal violence – although both are important.

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3. This is not to suggest that violence happens only in low-income countries (LICs). In fact, many contemporary conflicts take place in middle-income countries (MICs) (Parks et al., 2013; Fearon, 2010) while levels of organised crime are significant across LICs, MICs and high-income countries (HICs) (Muggah, 2012).
4. This is discussed in more length in the background paper for this project, see Valters et al. (2014).
5. Over the past decade, a number of studies have suggested that there has been a decline in violence at the global level (e.g. Themnér and Wallensteen, 2013; HSR, 2013). This view has been popularised by Pinker (2011), who argues that there has been a millennia-long decline in various forms of violence, including homicides, warfare, and a wide variety of non-lethal acts of violence. However the considerable methodological problems associated with such studies mean that the results are probably best seen as inconclusive.

We also took into account the spread of countries being studied in other dimensions of the Development Progress programme in making this choice.

It is important to note that security progress has been limited and tentative in Liberia and Timor-Leste, coming from low starting points. In such contexts, we had concerns that the very label of 'progress' may misrepresent the troubling realities in many post-conflict countries. While both countries represent examples of security progress, both also continue to have security problems. Prolonged periods of violence left deep legacies and histories of insecurity, as well as reduced social and institutional capacities needed to (re)constitute society. In fact, the term 'post-conflict' tends to disguise a range of unresolved grievances and continuing violence behind a neat delineation between pre-, in- and post-conflict phases.[6] Nonetheless, it is equally important not to underplay the significance of their security improvements, given the multitude of competing priorities that post-conflict countries contend with, as well as the many threats to the peace that they face. Indeed, a country's ability to handle significant shocks relatively successfully can be seen as an important dimension of progress.

Villagers in Oecusse within an unresolved area on the border between Timor-Leste and Indonesia. Photo: © Martine Perret / UN Photo

Box 2: Security indicators

Nine datasets were used to determine whether progress appeared to have taken place in relation to aspects of personal security:

- Battle deaths (Uppsala Conflict Data Program)
- Homicides (UNODC)
- Sexual violence rate (UNODC)
- Refugees and IDPs (UNHCR)
- Rule of law index (World Bank World Governance Indicators)
- Global peace index (Vision of Humanity)
- Political terror scale (Gibney, Cornett, Wood and Haschke)
- Confidence in local police (Gallup World Poll)
- Perceived safety walking alone at night (Gallup World Poll).

These databases combine both objective and perception indicators, which is important in gaining a fuller understanding of how people experience (in)security. While far from complete, they provide a picture of security that fits our definition of personal security (see above). Examination of these indicators was not, however, sufficient, and the data analysis was followed by qualitative analysis of several countries that appeared to show progress according to several of these indicators.

For example, Liberia has seen an end to large-scale organised violence, as well as some improvements in the experiences and perceptions of other forms of violence, including some crime-related and interpersonal violence since the end of two civil wars in 2003 (Vinck et al., 2011). Despite the improvements, however, violence and crime remain genuine threats in the daily life of many Liberians, particularly women and girls. Similarly, since 2008, Timor-Leste has achieved notable reductions in political violence, but various other forms of violence persist, including sexual violence, violence perpetrated by the security forces and urban violence, often linked to youth groups or land disputes (ICG, 2013; Valters et al., 2015). Our analysis thus draws on post-conflict countries that have made security progress in some important respects, but are far from free from violence more broadly. The progress is, therefore, modest, but nonetheless important.

In this paper, in addition to detailed analysis of Liberia and Timor-Leste we also refer to a number of other post-conflict countries demonstrating similar trajectories in order to draw out the relevance of our arguments beyond the case study examples. The aim is to paint a broad picture of how many post-conflict countries have achieved some degree of security progress in order that others may learn from this. This paper seeks to demonstrate how the reality we outline above is in tension with much of the liberal peacebuilding orthodoxy that guides most international efforts to build security in post-conflict countries. While it is beyond our scope to resolve that tension, in the final section we propose some ways to appreciate the reality of how security is established at least in the short term, while retaining the aspirations of liberal peacebuilding efforts to achieve more inclusive and equitable security in the longer term. We begin, in the next section, by examining the assumptions behind liberal peacebuilding.

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6. Hence, we understand conflicts as cyclical phenomena that alternate between periods of lower and higher intensity, in which the causes of conflict are not necessarily resolved (Van Creveld, 1991; Kaldor, 1999; Smith, 2007; Zaum and Cheng, 2012). This approach makes it possible to understand security progress as a trajectory along which certain types of violence decline, while others stabilise or may even increase.

3. Making security progress: international orthodoxy continues to prevail

The provision of effective support for both short- and long-term improvements in post-conflict security depends on understanding the assumptions that underpin current international interventions.[7] We contend that these interventions are shaped by thinking that is no longer strongly articulated in Western development discourse, but still informs its practices. On the one hand, there are sophisticated donor strategies for engaging in fragile states. On the other hand, there remains a multitude of competing policy priorities,[8] limited change in working methods (such as programme design) and little innovation in toolkits (such as the continued absence of serious political economy analysis that is structurally woven into aid programmes) (Leftwich and Hudson, 2014). This persistence of outdated thinking may be because the cost of failure is felt more by the general populations of developing countries than by the elites, whether in developed or developing countries. It may also be because donor bureaucracies tend to favour compliance and replicate routine patterns of intervention and behaviour.[9] As institutional representatives of vested interests, skills and practices, this makes them powerful barriers to change.

3.1 The core components of liberal peacebuilding: democratisation, liberalisation and the rule of law

This paper situates 'post-conflict security progress' in the wider context of 'peacebuilding', which in turn has become a key category of the even broader notion of 'development' (Paris, 2010), with the specific characteristic that it takes place during or after conflict or high levels of violence with the aim of consolidating peace. The hypotheses underpinning international peacebuilding efforts – sometimes explicit but often implicit – are typically framed in an optimistic narrative that places significant faith in the possibilities of social engineering and the power of emulating normative models (Lockhart and Ghani, 2009). The assumption seems to be that radical and synchronised progress in political democratisation, economic liberalisation and establishing the rule of law in the short to medium term is both possible and likely to accelerate transitions from fragility to stability (Krause and Jütersonke, 2005; Van Lieshout et al., 2010). These core components of liberal peacebuilding are seen as critical to building effective state institutions (DFID, 2010), and continue to guide much international support in post-conflict contexts despite long-standing critiques (for instance Cramer, 2006; Suhrke, 2007; Campbell et al., 2011).

Its first element, political democratisation, is assumed to reduce the legacies of conflict and marginalisation and to build a sense of civic identity by creating empowered, benign and representative institutions that can replace personalised power relations. International pressure often centres first and foremost on the need for elections (Rocha Menocal, 2013). These may well be relatively successful and be an important signal of a change in how politics will be conducted in a given country: post-conflict elections in both Liberia and Timor-Leste arguably did just that. Yet many of the assumptions outlined above fail to take account of how clientelism and corruption are intensified by the competition that inevitably comes with elections, the potential for clampdowns on activists inspired by electoral considerations, as well as the possibility – some might say likelihood – of escalation to violent competition between historically opposed groups (Booth and Golooba-Mutebi, 2011). Even if a form of democracy develops, it cannot be assumed that it will automatically lead to policies that favour increased security and broad-based development (Rocha Menocal, 2013).

Its second element, economic reform and liberalisation, is anticipated to create macroeconomic stability, improve economic governance and enable private entrepreneurship.

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7. Clearly, development processes are typically highly endogenous and security improvements are largely rooted in a mix of country-specific social processes and cross-border influences, which we discuss in greater detail in Section 4. Consequently, the scope and impact of international influence tend to be limited. Nevertheless, such support can be significant (consider, among others, the cases of Aceh, Liberia, Mali, Macedonia, Sierra Leone or Timor-Leste) and it is clearly important to maximise the effectiveness of international support.

8. Consider the Christmas tree nature of the various Afghan National Development Strategies See the 'Afghanistan National Development Strategy: An Interim Strategy for Security, Governance, Economic Growth and Poverty Reduction' (2008) at: www.embassyofafghanistan.org/page/afghanistan-national-development-strategy (consulted 18 December 2014).

9. For a more in-depth discussion see Natsios (2010) and Andrews (2013).

This is expected to generate the economic growth that can reduce the need for patronage politics and conflict over resources (Cramer, 2006). In terms of the formal economy, there has been a strong emphasis on improving the regulatory and governance framework of economic activity, market liberalisation and, often, privatisation of state-owned enterprises in developing or conflict-affected countries, partly at the behest of the international financial institutions (IFIs) (Middlebrook, 2012). Such approaches are often dangerously ideological and ahistorical: for example, in 1999, the Joint Assessment Mission (JAM) macroeconomic background paper for East Timor stated: 'Any plan for the future must start from zero... it would be more useful to treat the problem as a post-natural-disaster situation, where a vicious hurricane destroyed all buildings and most crops and removed all records and institutional memory' (JAM, 1999: 2).[10] Such approaches have continued despite evidence of the widespread elite capture of privatisation and liberalisation processes (Pugh, 2005; Pugh et al., 2008; Booth and Golooba-Mutebi, 2011).[11]

Its final element, establishing the rule of law, is expected to lay the foundations for transparent and rule-bound political and economic action, curtailing the possibilities for favouritism, corruption, discrimination and marginalisation (Carothers, 2003). This approach commonly includes the establishment of new legal frameworks, for instance constitutions, as well as attempts to codify customary law and institutions. The danger is that such initiatives often fail to examine legacy issues of security and justice provision, ignore deep distrust of the state and underestimate the nature and politics of customary justice. In Timor-Leste, for instance, it took until 2002 before the United Nations Transitional Authority (UNTAET) engaged with the deeply embedded customary justice system as part of justice reforms (Hohe and Nixon, 2003: 8–9). Where customary justice systems are engaged, as in Afghanistan and South Sudan, efforts often focus on formalising them, extending state influence to the local level and often triggering community-level resentment (Isser, 2011; Gaston et al., 2013). Legal frameworks that seek to facilitate economic liberalisation often prioritise the protection of property and investors' contract rights over those of local populations (on the basis that this will attract investment and lead to job creation and economic growth), causing new grievances to accumulate while deploying resources that could otherwise be used to meet communities' more immediate justice needs. This is particularly pertinent in relation to resource extraction – a process that often promises benefits for citizens but is fraught with issues of land appropriation, including in Liberia and Timor-Leste.

It is often assumed that not only are all these things necessarily 'good', but that all 'good things go together'.

Despite protestations about the importance of context, international actors implicitly assume that the three elements will be achieved by transforming the DNA of the government, economy and society on the basis of international norms and standards, including selected forms of electoral democracy, state-provided security and justice, and impersonal bureaucratic accountability (Van Lieshout et al., 2010; Andrews, 2013). It is furthermore often tacitly believed that the post-conflict period offers a relatively blank slate that facilitates such transformations because peace agreements are seen as new starting points rather than markers of exhaustion or continuity. Finally, it is expected that external actors can stimulate such progress by applying technical approaches that focus on building the institutional capacity of the state, including conditionality.[12]

The international community recognises that this is an ambitious – and partially flawed – set of assumptions (IDPS, 2011), and yet these assumptions continue to guide international action.[13] This can be seen in processes such as disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration (DDR), security and justice sector reform (SJSR), election assistance and monitoring, public financial management (PFM), transitional justice, loans-for-liberalisation packages and even the imposition of transitional authority in small states that are perceived to be particularly new or weak (Feith, 2013). Such interventions represent the short-term methods used by the international community in order to realise the three longer-term objectives of liberal peacebuilding outlined above. Although there have recently been qualitative advances in the thinking and policy of international intervention in post-conflict environments (see, for instance, the 2011 World Development Report (World Bank, 2011) and the New Deal for Engagement in Fragile States (IDPS, 2011)), by and large these have yet to be translated into improved practice.

3.2 The challenges of elite incentives, violence, state reputation and history

The general difficulties outlined above have often been discussed in the debates on 'liberal peace' (see for instance Campbell et al., 2011). However less attention has been paid to four additional challenges that draw out the considerable contradictions between statebuilding and peacebuilding agendas (Rocha Menocal, 2010).

Elites may not support change
Some of the transformations sought by the international community would reduce elite privileges, increase

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10. This background paper was the product of the Joint Assessment Mission of specialists from what was then East Timor, bilateral donor countries, UN agencies, the Asian Development Bank and the World Bank.
11. Examples include Rwanda (Booth and Golooba-Mutebi, 2011), Yemen (Hill et al., 2013) and Syria (Briscoe et al., 2012)
12. (Critical) underpinnings for this paragraph can be found in Duffield (2001); Annan (2002); Fukuyama (2004); Paris (2004); Richmond (2008); Middlebrook (2012); and Marshall (2014). For more policy-oriented publications see UN Secretary-General (1992; 2004; 2009)
13. In some places these ideas have even regained influence: see David Cameron's 'Golden Thread' arguments (Cameron, 2012).

It is often assumed that not only are all these things necessarily 'good', but that all 'good things go together'.

accountability and extend public goods/services to all citizens of the country in question. So it remains far from clear why ruling elites would support changes that come at their own cost. It is important to bear in mind that ruling elites often demonstrate high levels of continuity across pre-conflict, conflict and post-conflict episodes and it is therefore likely that their actions contributed to the outbreak of armed conflict and insecurity in the first place.[14] Neglect of this dynamic is apparent in the idea that war is 'development in reverse' (see Collier et al., 2003; World Bank, 2011), which fails to adequately acknowledge that war is not simply the collapse of peacetime order but is often the emergence of a different kind of order that follows its own political and economic logic, from which some benefit and which often persists into peacetime (Kalyvas, 2003; Cramer, 2006; Keen, 2008; Berdal and Zaum, 2012). The question of how elites can be encouraged to support change – beyond generic appeals to abstract norms – remains one of the great challenges that the liberal peacebuilding agenda has failed to address convincingly, which we discuss in Section 5.1.[15]

It is often necessary to retain capacities for violence

The incentives to maintain an ability to initiate or threaten violence in fragile environments, including in post-conflict periods, are both powerful and structural. This is because elites in particular compete with each other under the threat of a resurgence of violence, because they have little protection against violence inflicted upon them by others, and because popular accountability does not significantly restrain people from resorting to violence (Bates, 2008; Jones and Elgin-Cossart with Brown, 2011; De Mesquita and Smith, 2011). The ensuing security dilemma can create a recurrent struggle for power and wealth in which periods of violence alternate with periods of apparent stability. Stability tends to prevail when elites can seal an effective bargain with each other concerning the division of rents generated in a given society, in part through the (ab)use of political and economic assets (Olson, 1993; Khan, 2010). For example, in Liberia, such a bargain between elites (including many implicated in the civil wars) has enabled stability, although the continued existence of dormant but functioning command structures and networks and the prevalence of small arms and light weapons points to the retention of the capabilities for violence (Utas, 2008).

Box 3: Retaining capabilities for violence: the case of Yemen

The retention of violent capabilities, the negotiation processes notwithstanding, is apparent in Yemen. After the resignation of President Saleh in 2012 and under pressure from the international community, Yemen entered into an 18-month process of National Dialogue, resulting in over 1,800 recommendations for improving the country's governance. Yet today, Yemen continues to face several civil wars and insurgencies and elites maintain their ability to mobilise violence to settle disputes and power contests. Indeed, had certain elites opted to give up their capacities for violence following the National Dialogue, they would have been marginalised by unfolding events. This highlights the self-reinforcing cycle of violence that is difficult to break.
Sources: Van Veen (2014); Gaston (2014); ICG (2014)

The state is often contested, absent or predatory

In many post-conflict settings the state has either been absent in large parts of its territory for significant periods of time, or has been oppressive (Bates, 2008). In some contemporary conflicts, notably in Iraq and Syria, the very idea of the post-colonial, Westphalian state has become ideologically disputed. Thus, viewing the state as the

Box 4: Resurgence of civil war in South Sudan

The outbreak of ethnic conflict in South Sudan in December 2013 illustrates the violence that can accompany statebuilding efforts. It highlights in particular that the resulting states can be the product of a particular coalition of groups imposing its rule and views on others through the use of force, which can in turn provoke violent reactions.

During the Sudanese civil war (1983–2005), there were major conflicts in what is now South Sudan over issues of power and resources. The integration of the South Sudan Defence Forces into the Sudan People's Liberation Army provided some relief after the Comprehensive Peace Agreement of 2005. However, the resurgence of violence after just three years of independence (since 2010) demonstrates that the causes of earlier intra-South conflict have merely lain dormant and have since returned with a vengeance despite the international peacekeeping presence and significant international support.
Source: Hutton (2014)

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14. The Development Leadership Program (DLP) has produced some instructive case studies on how elites influence developmental-type change to their advantage: on Yemen see Phillips (2011), on Zimbabwe see Bratton and Masunungure (2011). See also Kets and de Vries (2014) on the DRC; and Pretoria and Vorrath (2014) on Liberia and Sierra Leone.
15. Despite work such as that of North et al. (2014) and North et al. (2009).

These countries now find themselves in a messy space from which incremental improvements towards more sustainable security progress may or may not emerge after important advances in security in the immediate post-conflict period.

appropriate fulcrum for the radical changes discussed above is problematic on at least two counts. First, it will generally mean that the international community ignores customary systems for the provision of security and justice, both on principle and because of operational difficulties (Isser, 2009). This is despite the fact that these are often more relevant to addressing local development issues (including security) than the state may be for a long time to come. Second, a weak state means that a social backlash against norms that are (or are perceived to be) externally imposed is easily created.

Statebuilding processes have historically been violent

Processes of social change and state consolidation are often violent (Tilly, 1993; Scott, 2011; Fukuyama, 2012). Although allowing local actors to 'fight it out' (Luttwak, 1999) may have untenable humanitarian consequences, international insistence on peace may also dampen or slow down process of social change. This perspective is clearly not an argument for stimulating or ignoring violence, but it does make it easier to understand the slow pace, tensions and challenges of attempts to leap from violence to democratic, rights-respecting and accountable states in deeply contested environments in short timeframes. It also helps understand the risks of seeking to contain or resolve the social tensions characteristic of such environments through the promotion of institutions that are not likely to be appropriate or effective (Newman, 2013).

3.3 A reality check

These four challenges suggest that the assumptions under-pinning much international peacebuilding support in post-conflict countries fails to engage with the local legacies of violence and incentives for change – and as such do not represent a realistic starting point in trying to build security in fragile, post-conflict settings. Our case studies suggest that efforts to address elite incentives, violence, state reputation and history – on their own terms – resonate more with how security progress has been achieved. Debates on liberal peacebuilding tend to fall into two main camps: those who accept the goals of liberal peacebuilding but question how interventions to date have contributed to those goals;

and those who question the fundamental assumptions underpinning liberal peacebuilding. We suggest there may be merit in both positions, but there is a clear need to move the debate forward. We should not view post-conflict societies as deficient in some way – failing to achieve the much sought-after 'liberal' peace – but rather on their own terms and as contexts deserving of explanation in their own right (Hameiri, 2011). This is a call for both modesty and realism.

A more realistic perspective would acknowledge that, in the immediate post-conflict period, it will never be possible to achieve wholesale security progress overnight. Rather, we might see:

- Reductions in conflict-related and perhaps political violence (insofar as it is associated with conflict), but far less in domestic or criminal violence. The latter wil require, among other things, changes in the attitudes that are embedded in prevailing social norms, as well as more professional, citizen-oriented and trusted security forces.
- Modest professionalisation of security forces that largely amounts to less violent abuse on their part, less communal distrust and more professional pride, but without much in the way of reductions in force size and corruption, or better accountability.
- Changes in perceptions of the security situation from insecure to more secure despite continuing poor performance of security forces and significant levels of domestic and crime-related violence.
- Modest strengthening of fringe voices through limited representation in government and security forces, or formal accommodation of customary actors.

It is this kind of tentative security progress that is seen in countries that have achieved a level of security progress, such as Liberia and Timor-Leste. Basic security has been consolidated to different degrees. Widespread armed and political violence are no longer a threat, but troubling drivers of conflict and various forms of violence persist. These countries now find themselves in a messy space from which incremental improvements towards more sustainable security progress may or may not emerge after important advances in security in the immediate post-conflict period. In the following two sections we explore the factors that have been important in getting these countries to this point, as well as the changes needed to make deeper shifts towards achieving sustainable security.
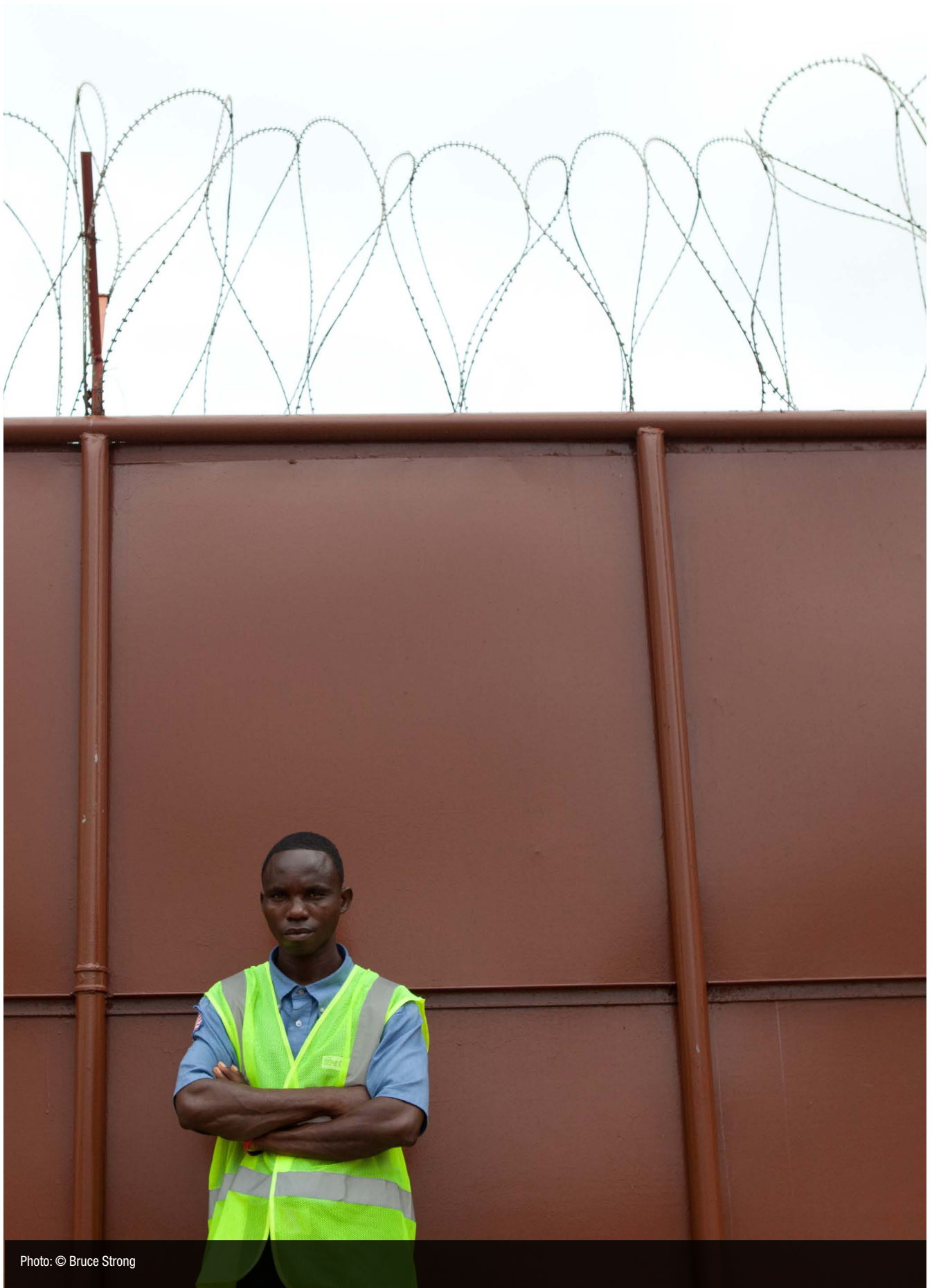
Photo: © Bruce Strong

4. What influences security progress following conflict?

We suggest that what drives security progress in the short- to medium-term post-conflict period often contrasts with what international actors assume to be the case. These drivers, drawn from our case studies and the wider literature, demonstrate the primacy of domestic politics and local (often non-state) actors and include (a) domestic politics, in particular leadership personalities and the nature of the political settlement; (b) local security and conflict-resolution structures; and (c) international support for peacebuilding and reform of the security sector. The role of international actors, while crucial at key moments, is relatively modest.

4.1 Domestic politics determine what security improvements are possible

Two domestic factors often make a particular difference for post-conflict security progress: (a) the personal approach and credibility of post-conflict leaders; and (b) the extent of appeasement and incorporation of former adversaries into the post-conflict political settlement.

The personal approach and credibility of post-conflict leaders to rule

When Ellen Johnson Sirleaf came to power in Liberia in 2005, there were huge national and international expectations that she would accelerate peace and development (Ejigu, 2006: 1). This was in no small part based on her credibility among Western donors, who saw her as an effective and strong leader who was committed to reform. President Sirleaf's previous connections, particularly at the World Bank and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), were a key point of leverage in accessing international investment (Johnson Sirleaf, 2010). It also helped that she was the first democratically elected female African president. However, Sirleaf still had to negotiate with formal and informal networks of power in Liberia, and also to rely on the continuation of personalised politics and patrimonialism. She largely avoided the Truth and Reconciliation

Commission recommendations, not least because they suggested that she (along with 48 others) should be barred from holding public office for 30 years. At the same time, Sirleaf has promoted a relatively liberal reform agenda, resulting in greater transparency, more respect for human rights, less political persecution and unprecedented freedom of speech (ICG, 2011). These mixed agendas and practices show that there is rarely a good fit between liberal peace narratives and a conflict-affected setting. As one academic expert on Liberia put it, 'the way politics works in Liberia might not be the way that the West would want [the] state to be run, but it is what is creating stability in this context' (Barnes Robinson and Valters, 2015: 20).

In the 2007 elections in Timor-Leste, former resistance leader (and the country's president since 2002) Xanana Gusmão became Prime Minister leading a coalition government. His government took charge of the revenues accruing from Timor-Leste's significant oil and gas reserves and demonstrated its willingness to spend them to keep the peace, offering cash incentives for internally displaced persons (IDPs) to return home and to disgruntled soldiers associated with the 2006 political-military crisis, and ramping up a pension scheme for resistance veterans (ICG, 2013; Valters et al., 2015). Xanana also used his personal authority as former resistance leader to contain tensions between the police and the army, making himself Minister for Security and Defence, and unifying the police and army in 'joint command' operations. These initiatives have been controversial at the international level, but have been important, at least in the short term, in limiting political violence and promoting stability (Valters et al., 2015; ICG, 2013). Despite growing opposition, Xanana has remained a 'father of the nation' in the eyes of much of the population. Rwanda similarly shows signs of this personality-driven leadership (see Box 5).

Strong and credible leaders can take decidedly illiberal and/or non-inclusive measures in the interests of ensuring short-term security. This is arguably critical in the immediate post-conflict moment when maintaining a fragile peace is a central priority. It does, however, raise questions about the subsequent prospects for political succession, potentially authoritarian tendencies, and whether they have long-term commitment to equitable

socio-economic development – all of which can create grievances that have the potential to trigger conflict in the future. A prime example is the fragile stability that prevailed in many of the countries whose regimes were in part swept away in the Arab Spring (particularly Egypt, Libya, Tunisia and Yemen).

Ongoing power and patronage in the political settlement

In both Liberia and Timor-Leste, at first glance it would seem that important improvements in personal security made in the aftermath of critical junctures have profoundly changed the nature of power relations in the political settlement.[16] In 2002, Timor-Leste declared independence after decades of occupation and three years of UN stewardship. In 2003, the main warring parties in Liberia signed the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA), shortly followed by the deployment of the United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL). In both cases, this signalled a significant decline in armed and political violence and suggested a radical overhaul of the system of governance.

However while such events may have formally moved these countries from war to peace, they did not necessarily change the key political actors and their relationships with each other. Inevitably, in managing post-conflict politics (and their potential for violence) deals are struck. These deals largely relate to how political positions

and economic assets and opportunities are divided. Historically, the range of underlying problems in Liberia relating to the division of power across the elites and between Monrovia and rural areas were not resolved with the signing of the CPA (Jaye, 2009). Successive leaders kept power, decision-making, and resources highly centralised and distributed them on the basis of patronage networks (Rocha Menocal and Sigrist, 2011; Sawyer, 2005), not least the benefits of natural or resource wealth. As Jörgel and Utas (2007: 7) highlight, 'big men' networks exist in all communities and at all levels, and draw in businessmen, politicians, customary leaders, and others, including criminals or those operating in shadow zones. While they can present a security threat, and it is therefore crucial to engage them and give them incentives to cooperate with the government, these networks can also be 'security stabilisers' (Jörgel and Utas, 2007: 14).

The cases of Liberia and Timor-Leste suggest that powerful actors – sometimes those most responsible for violence during a war – will often retain power in some way (although this depends on how the conflict ends and probably does not so readily apply where a 'victor's peace' prevails, as in Sri Lanka). In Liberia, the CPA led to a two-year transitional government which included roles for the warring parties in order to 'buy them into' the peace. Sirleaf has demonstrated exceptional skill in negotiating the competing demands and interests of power-holders across Liberia's formal and informal political landscape, partly by selecting city mayors who are party followers, striking deals with former generals, and keeping control over key parts of the economy (Jörgel and Utas, 2007; Utas, 2008). It is clear that although Charles Taylor is no longer 'head of a political network and possible rival of President Johnson Sirleaf […] his senior associates have been integrated into the government patronage network, albeit on subaltern levels' (Gerdes, 2011: 48). This has served to deter Taylor's followers from creating unrest, albeit at the cost of reinforcing existing power structures based on political affiliation (as opposed to merit or democratic vote).

In Timor-Leste, making sense of the political settlement means looking beyond Xanana to understanding how the political elites derive their political capital and legitimacy from their participation in the resistance struggle and the political economy of oil and gas resources. Interpersonal relationships between high-level former combatants have been at the root of the various conflicts and bargaining that have taken place since independence. There is an understanding among elites that everyone will benefit from the burgeoning oil and gas wealth, including government ministers and parts of the civil service, former resistance fighters (who receive pensions and government contracts), gang leaders and other threats

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16. Acemoglu and Robinson (2012) argue that critical junctures 'are major events that disrupt the existing political and economic balance in one or many societies'.

to the peace (who receive government contracts), along with vulnerable groups such as IDPs (through cash transfers) (Valters et al., 2015; ICG, 2013; IPAC, 2014). The coalition government headed by Xanana since 2012 is widely perceived as the 'big tent' party, willing to distribute benefits liberally to those who work within the political consensus (ICG, 2013.) A less discussed aspect of this 'big tent' approach relates to government contracting of (often major infrastructure) projects (ICG, 2013).[17] As one gang leader and businessman stated, 'The police, army and veterans are getting contracts for three reasons: one, if they are well known people or have the right connections; two, if people respect them; and three, if people are afraid of them' (Valters, et al., 2015). Such a process has been a pragmatic response to multiple security threats but has also continued to concentrate power and resources in the hands of a relatively small number of elites in the face of growing opposition.

Continuing patronage and personalised politics do not fit a liberal peacebuilding agenda, although there is a need for nuanced debate about the trade-offs required to build peace in the aftermath of conflict – and an acknowledgement of both the possible benefits and dangers of this in the longer term. For example, Cheng and Zaum (2012: 9) note that 'corruption' can have a useful stabilising effect in immediate post-conflict settings, but be corrosive and potentially destabilising in the longer term. A similar danger may be inherent in building security that is based on patronage networks and personalised politics.

4.2 Local security providers offer important conflict resolution functions

In many countries, the formal, state security sector represents just one element of the security apparatus and is complemented by additional layers of customary, informal and formal (but non-state) security actors that deal with an estimated 80% of disputes in developing countries (Baker, 2009; Albrecht and Kyed, 2011; Scheye, 2009). It is often these local security providers that have the most direct influence on peoples' experiences of security (Lund, 2006). This is important since 'elites' are not limited to formal state-based actors. Equally, domestic and international approaches to peacebuilding need to take account of how security is assured in

practice – and engage with the full range of relevant actors and institutions (Boege, 2006).

Historically, the state security sector in Liberia has been primarily concerned with regime security, with power and decision-making concentrated in the executive (Ebo, 2005). This has resulted in a highly urban-centred state security apparatus, which is only now beginning to change as the security sector reform (SSR) process unfolds. Similarly, in Timor-Leste, the fact that large parts of the country are inaccessible due to geography and poor infrastructure means that communities developed their own security and dispute-resolution mechanisms that continue to exist alongside state structures. In both countries, the security architecture includes formal and informal elements that co-exist, overlap, and intertwine (Jaye, 2009; Jörgel and Utas, 2007; Kraushaar and Lambach, 2009).[18] The agents of state security are often considered woefully inadequate, not least because they have often been a source of insecurity in the past.[19] The long list of relevant local-level security actors includes the police and government officials, customary leaders, community security groups, vigilantes,

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Box 6: Informal security providers in Sierra Leone

In Sierra Leone, the state security apparatus is complemented by a wide range of local security actors, connected to varying degrees with the state. Most apparent are chiefs, who are constitutionally sanctioned and have played a strong role throughout Sierra Leone's history. Chiefs are permitted to mediate disputes, but not adjudicate – in practice, however, it is common for chiefs to fine and even incarcerate citizens (Denney, 2014). Local Courts are also endorsed as part of the customary legal system, with an elected Chairman judging cases according to chiefdom-specific customary laws, provided (in theory) that they do not conflict with formal legislation at the national level (Denney, 2014). In addition, a wide range of secret societies, trade associations and youth groups also perform various security and conflict resolution functions (Baker, 2005). It is to many of these local security providers that citizens first turn with disputes or crimes and who thus play a critical role in maintaining the peace, especially in the aftermath of conflict when the state is unable, or unwilling, to extend its reach.
Source: (Baker, 2005)

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17. There are interesting parallels with Indonesia, where the Free Aceh Movement (Gerakan Aceh Merdeka, GAM) guerillas have, since the 2005 Helsinki peace deal, achieved dramatic success as construction contractors (Aspinall, 2009)
18. The recognition that security is provided by a range of actors aligns with an increasing focus on different forms of public authority. New terms have emerged to capture this, such as 'twilight institutions' and 'hybrid political orders' (Lund, 2006; Boege, 2006).
19. For example, in Timor-Leste, The Asia Foundation surveys of 2008 and 2013 show a dramatic increase in the proportion of people who perceive citizens themselves as having the primary responsibility for maintaining security: 51% of the general public and 66% of community leaders now hold this view, compared to 8% and 12% respectively in 2008 (TAF, 2008; 2014).

Photo: © Bruce Strong

women's groups, business protection groups, and secret societies (Reeve and Speare, 2011: 42; Lund, 2006). These can play a key role in personal security, primarily in rural but also urban areas (Jaye, 2009). They are often at the frontline in defusing and controlling conflicts at the local level, preventing their escalation.

Both in Liberia and Timor-Leste the question of who is perceived as responsible for security very much depends on the threat: in the case of 'family business', few turn to the police, overwhelmingly preferring to resolve such issues through informal means (Isser, 2009).[20] On the other hand, significant criminal acts such as manslaughter and homicide, or political violence, often go beyond the powers of customary security actors and may either be referred to the police or district governor, or be resolved through collaboration between the state and customary systems (Cummins and Leach, 2013: 172). Importantly, Isser et al. (2009) also note that individuals may move between the formal and customary systems, jumping from one to the other, creating a particularly fluid security and justice landscape. Similar trends have been noted in Sierra Leone's security system (Denney and Ibrahim, 2013).

Of particular note is the role of what are often seen as the darker side of security provision: vigilantes, youth groups or gangs. Examples from the case studies include community watch teams in Liberia (often young men who have organised themselves with the tacit support of local authorities) and Timor-Leste's martial arts groups, drawn from a cross-section of society, including disenfranchised youths, police and army officers, and members of the political and economic elite (Barnes Robinson and Valters, 2015; Kantor and Persson, 2010). Typically, such groups are seen as threats to security by governments, donors and some community members, but our research indicates a much messier picture. Ultimately, in post-conflict (and other) contexts, these various actors are often the local-level face of

security and have a major influence on people's experiences and perceptions of security across different contexts. They tend to be drawn from historically embedded cultures of dispute resolution or other practices, and should not be seen as aberrations. They are one of many possible providers of security, and need to be understood and engaged with in post-conflict peacebuilding efforts (see also Box 6).

The emphasis on the relevance of local and customary security providers does not mean that they necessarily produce fair and appropriate outcomes, or protect the rights of women or minority groups (Wojkowska, 2006: 41). Local systems are often used for a variety of reasons – such as being more accessible, affordable and mirroring local norms. But as with the state security sector, local systems tend to reinforce structural social inequalities, even if they prevent some of the more obvious forms of violence. Nor would we argue that local providers of security are always successful in managing insecurity. Indeed, it was striking in both Liberia and Timor-Leste that many citizens felt that security arrangements – state and non-state – were largely inadequate (Pham et al., 2011; TAF, 2014).[21] Despite this, it is clear that local security providers are often the first point of call in many post-conflict (and other) contexts, and are thus important in resolving disputes during the fragile post-conflict period. Dominant peacebuilding approaches to building security that focus overwhelmingly on state structures will often prove inadequate for building post-conflict security if they ignore these local peacebuilding capacities.

4.3 International engagement: limited windows of stability

The case studies on Liberia and Timor-Leste demonstrate how international support can provide a critical window of stability, during which national leaders and coalitions may be able to build security and initiate some security and development processes.[22] We focus here on peacekeeping and SSR, which represent the most direct external engagements with security in these two countries. In Liberia and Timor-Leste there have been multiple peacekeeping interventions and donors have invested millions of dollars on SSR. External actors can have a profound effect on a country's post-conflict transition whether by enforcing, guiding or implicitly forming a wide range of politics and policies. We argue, however, that peacekeeping and SSR are unlikely to exert a strong

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20. Clearly this category covers a number of differences. Domestic violence, for example, very often extends beyond the home.
21. In Liberia, a large population survey found that 34% of the sample indicated that nobody provides security in their area (Pham et al., 2011). In Timor-Leste, a survey found that 51% of the general public and 66% of community leaders perceive citizens as having the primary responsibility for maintaining security (TAF, 2014).
22. Such a window of stability is often predicated on a particularly close relationship between a post-conflict and a donor country.

influence on domestic dynamics in the longer term, as these are determined much more by national and local factors. This is not to suggest that peacekeeping and SSR do not matter, but rather to note that they often play a more limited role in building security than is often assumed.

Peacekeeping

Although peacekeeping operations operate in very different contexts and have different mandates, many studies point to their positive effect on the short-term reduction of violence, and a significantly reduced likelihood of a return to war (Doyle and Sambanis, 2000; Fortna, 2008: 101; Fortna and Howard, 2008).[23] Our case studies highlighted that peacekeepers played a powerful role in deterring violence, while also being an important symbol of international commitment and a sign of peace. Critically, international forces need to be seen as largely legitimate by those whose peace is being kept (Clapham, 1998).

While UNMIL did not arrive in Liberia until two months after the end of fighting on 1 October 2003, after which there were no major battles, the peacekeeping force is still widely credited with contributing to the end of the armed conflict, as well as sustaining and consolidating relative peace over the last decade (Mehler, 2012; Smith-Höhn 2007; KAICT, 2014; Mvukiyehe and Samii, 2010).[24] More than 75% of urban Liberians believed UNMIL to be the main guarantor of security in 2005 (Hohn-Smith, 2007: 92). Its presence has deterred future violence, and had a more direct impact on security by intervening at key moments, such as during elections in 2005 and 2011. UNMIL has also provided back-up and capacity support to the Liberian police, which has been particularly important given the large resource and logistical constraints the police face, and their inability to make an adequate independent response to security threats (Barnes Robinson and Valters 2015).

Timor-Leste has been the subject of five UN missions and two international peacekeeping interventions. The initial huge presence of peacekeeping forces – INTERFET had a force of approximately 12,600 personnel (Kelly et al., 2001) – helped to halt the mass violence being perpetrated by withdrawing forces and looters and signalled a longer process of state legitimisation, which has helped Timor-Leste build to where it is today. As one prominent Timorese academic argued, 'the whole UN intervention until withdrawal was a process of legitimisation [of Timor] as a state and as a people…

The UN presence has made East Timor a country and that is something to be proud of' (Valters, et al., 2015).

In both these cases it is clear that peacekeeping has been effective in stopping and deterring violence, but this has also been heavily dependent on a range of other dynamics. As noted by Alex de Waal (2007), 50 years of UN peacekeeping operations have confirmed a basic requirement for success: there must be a peace to keep, and a clear national agreement that armed conflict will cease. This in itself is likely to depend on regional security dynamics (see Box 7). There also needs to be a national leader or coalition with relative legitimacy to support the intervention. And, perhaps most importantly, there needs to be clear national appetite and capacity for peace. As a result, peacekeeping interventions can

Box 7: The role of regional stability

A country's capacity for peace is likely to depend heavily on regional dynamics. The stability of the political settlement in Liberia has been, in part, dependent on tentative regional stability that has been forged in the Mano River region (Liberia, Sierra Leone, Guinea and Côte d'Ivoire) over the last decade. Historically, regional instability has played a major role in patterns of conflict across the region (Jorgel and Utas, 2007). Improvements in regional security have to an extent been due to a greater acknowledgement of the interconnectedness of violence across the region, leading to increased regional cooperation, particularly focused on border areas. This represents significant progress from previous years when many of the actors involved in the conflicts used neighbouring countries to channel funds, arms, and combatants, as was apparent in the civil wars in Liberia and Sierra Leone. Equally, Timor's 25-year resistance struggle was waged in the context of the implicit (and sometimes explicit) support for Indonesia by Australia and the United States, both of which were well placed to act as brokers for Timor's claim to self-determination. Moreover, it was only in the context of the fall of Suharto in 1998 after economic collapse and the advances of democratisation in Indonesia that the Timorese were eventually given the right to vote on their future in 1999.
Source: (Valters et al., 2015)

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23. 'Peacekeeping' refers to the deployment of international military, police and civilian personnel to help maintain peace and security, typically with a UN mandate and implemented through regional organisations, or state-led coalitions. Viewing military intervention from a long-term perspective there is, however, 'a strong, negative and significant association between military interventions and democracy. Military interventions have tended to destroy a state's conflict-resolution mechanisms, often unleashed forms of politics incompatible with democracy, upset political settlements and critically weakened state systems in general' (Putzel and Di John, 2012).

24. In a later quantitative evaluation of UNMIL carried out in 2010, 97% of respondents believed UNMIL helped end the war, 93% reported being safer than before UNMIL's arrival six years earlier, and 65% considered UNMIL the primary security provider against threats specifically from armed groups (Mvukiyehe and Samii, 2010, 12). This is despite the fact that UNMIL has rarely intervened in local-level conflicts, suggesting that UNMIL's presence has predominantly acted as a deterrent to violence.

play an important role, but this is highly dependent on a range of other factors.

Despite the relatively positive experiences of peacekeeping in Liberia and Timor-Leste, these examples also raise important questions about what comes next. In Liberia, while it looks likely that the Security Council will withdraw all troops after the 2017 presidential elections, this decision may hang on the Ebola crisis affecting the country. There are also concerns that Liberia's security sector does not have the finances, capacity or civilian-oriented attitude to manage this transition (Barnes Robinson and Valters, 2015). In Timor-Leste, a second Australian-led intervention during the 2006 political-military crisis failed to stem the violence, which was contained only after the Timor-Leste government reinstated a police rapid-response unit. In both cases, these challenges reveal that peacekeeping operations can be important temporary stabilisers but rarely create sustained transformative change in a post-conflict setting.[25] It remains an open question whether a peacekeeping intervention can contribute to sustainable peace, or whether it can eventually lead to other perceived goods, such as development or democracy (Putzel and Di John, 2012). In our case studies, peacekeeping made an important contribution to security progress, but one that was ultimately more limited than domestic factors over the longer term.

Security Sector Reform

SSR, often led or supported by donors, seeks to make the security sector in conflict-affected contexts more effective, transparent and accountable (Valters et al., 2014; Van Veen and Price, 2014). However, we found that even in Liberia and Timor-Leste – which are often held up as post-conflict 'success stories' (UN, 2012; Berger, 2006: 6) – SSR is rarely considered to have had a strong impact on how the security sector functions. We argue that while international actors have had some useful influence on the direction of the security sector in post-conflict countries, it has ultimately been modest.

The main value of international support for SSR appears to be twofold. First, greater international engagement with state security services may decrease their level of abuse and dysfunction. This does not necessarily equate to improvements in how they provide security or becoming more citizen-oriented. It simply means a lower level of direct predation, in part because of greater scrutiny and in part because of greater awareness, capabilities and governance – however modest. This is not insignificant in contexts where the security sector may previously have been a source of insecurity. In Liberia, despite numerous problems, the reform and retraining of the army and police has been an important part of the process of ending the practice of using the security sector as a means of repression. Most reports available indicate that throughout the country, the Liberian police are now rarely seen as perpetrators of mass violence. Despite their history of abuse and continuing concerns about corruption, it appears there is a widespread desire for the police to play a role in security provision (HRW, 2013; Reeve and Speare, 2012).

Second, SSR can create new interests and stakeholders that can stimulate more significant change in the long term. For instance, many saw the SSR process following the 2006 political-military crisis in Timor-Leste as a chance to 'repair mistakes of the past', including a greater role for and professionalism of the police (Lothe and Peake, 2010). There are several elements of the police force that appear to be pushing citizen-oriented policing, although this has not yet taken hold in the service more broadly. Partly as a result of international support, there have been some promising institutional reforms and emerging 'community policing' practices (Wassell, 2014). Importantly, however, positive change in Timor-Leste appears to be related to growing national ownership of SSR: our case studies indicate that the Timorese police force became more mature once the UN peacekeeping force left in 2012 (Valters et al., 2015). It is important to note, that these positive steps are tentative: for example, the lack of adequate financing for the expansion of community policing in the 2015 budget raises questions about the government's commitment to community policing principles (Valters et al., 2015: 29).

In spite of the potential SSR holds, as a usually externally driven intervention, it generally suffers on at least three counts. First, programme design often fails to consider local political incentives that act as barriers to progressive change in the security sector, particularly at the executive level (Sedra, 2011). This failure hinders efforts to reorient the police towards protecting citizens rather than regimes. Second, donor-led approaches tend to focus on the technical rather than the political aspects of reform and suffer from a lack of consultation with civil society (Barnes Robinson et al., 2015; Jaye, 2009). Finally, SSR efforts are often either ignorant of or unable to engage with customary providers or multi-layered security provision (Bakrania, 2014; Denney, 2014; Van Veen and Price, 2014).[26] Given these limitations, SSR tends to have some important but ultimately limited impacts and plays a more modest role in building security in post-conflict contexts than international peacebuilding actors often assume.

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25. Whatever the case, military interventions do reconstitute power relations between political (often armed) groups, and therefore have the potential either to escalate violence or to mitigate it.

26. The fundamental values and institutions of indigenous East Timorese culture and custom were key part of the struggle for independence and remain fundamental to people's sense of collective meaning and management of community life, are being 'overlooked' by 'new' values and institutions (Boege et al., 2009: 25).

5. What makes security progress sustainable in the long term?

The previous section demonstrated how relations between key leaders, exclusive deals that buy elites into the peace, local dispute-resolution mechanisms beyond the state and international support were critical factors in building security in the immediate post-conflict period. It is questionable whether these factors also provide a foundation for achieving sustainable security in the longer term. This is largely because they do not address the fundamental grievances that underlie conflict or the array of deeper post-conflict challenges that tend to centre on the need for better and more inclusive governance, greater social justice and corresponding budgetary allocations (Darby and MacGinty, 2008; Jones and Elgin-Cossart with Brown, 2011). Therefore they risk (re)creating and/or reinforcing interests that are likely to hinder or block the deeper change needed in the medium to long term to make security gains sustainable.

We propose three complementary approaches that can help to overcome the tension between how security progress in post-conflict countries is achieved in practice and the kinds of equitable and inclusive security that are more sustainable in the longer term. First, working with but not for elite interests. Second, viewing support for security institutions as long-term processes of change. Third, incrementally increasing the inclusivity of development processes from the outset. Because the present state of knowledge offers no clear answers to the question of what generally helps to achieve more sustainable security progress, this section develops ideas that build largely on the existing literature, where possible combining this with the case-study evidence from Liberia and Timor-Leste. Next research steps would include translating the analysis below into propositions that could be tested in further case studies.

5.1 Working with but not for elite interests

The extent to which elite interests are in opposition to security that meets the needs and interests of the population will depend on the nature of the political settlement. Elites often have powerful and structural incentives to maintain the capacity to initiate or

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Box 8: Elite interests in Lebanon: the parallel pursuit of self-interest and development

Lebanon's modern political history can be characterised as a struggle for power between the political elites and armed factions that represent the country's different sectarian groups (mostly Maronite Christians, Sunni, Shi'a and Druze). It was only after the Lebanese civil war (1975–1990) that the Ta'if agreement (1990–1991) restored a measure of stability in Lebanon. Within its framework of consociation, Lebanon's elites have pursued a mix of personal, group and national interests against the ever-present threat of the use of violence – exemplified for instance by the murder of former Prime Minister Rafik Hariri.

Hezbollah's self-proclaimed role as the nation's defender against Israel long countenanced wide public support. Yet, this has gone hand in hand with a deliberate process in which it has extended its own power, for example by claiming an increasing role in Lebanon's governments and through its armed take-over of western Beirut in 2008. Rafik Hariri's largely Sunni Future Movement also illustrates the simultaneous pursuit of self-interest, through the commercial development of central Beirut via the public–private company 'Solidere', and national interest, in seeking to develop the country as a regional financial and tourist hub.

In short, elite interests do not have to be at odds with the interests of other groups, but will tend to privilege the interests of one more than others, depending on their own identity politics, support base, allegiances, etc., potentially creating imbalances and grievances in the long run.
Source: Kerr and Knudsen (2012)

threaten violence. For this reason, making sustainable progress in security demands that they have a (profitable) stake in the change that is sought, at least initially. Clearly, this does not mean that such interests should necessarily prevail and cannot be contested. They will, however, often need to form the basis for change if initiatives are likely to have a chance of success.

Understanding elite interests

In order to work with but not for elite interests, we need to understand how and why moving elites towards a citizen-oriented security perspective tends to prove difficult in post-conflict contexts. As outlined in Section 3.2, this is partly due to the way in which legacies of violence and fragile institutions combine to encourage elites to retain capacities for violence, prioritise the interests of elite coalitions and prevent broader social groups from gaining sufficient voice and leverage. Moreover, where elite interests are not aligned with those of the wider population, such violence can expose civilians to abuse and predation, making it difficult for them to become a force in their own right. In addition, the social and institutional texture of post-conflict environments is much less dense and resilient than that of more developed ones.[27] This can mean there are fewer peaceful ways to resolve conflict, a reduced ability to absorb growing social tensions through a diverse range of institutions and policies, and a lack of enforceable rules that can govern elite competition peacefully over time and of mechanisms that create a measure of popular accountability of elites beyond specific social groups.[28]

A cautionary note

However this is not to suggest that elite interests should be unquestionably supported or that working with such interests is always 'the right thing to do'. Moreover, elite interests will not always run counter to the interests of wider society, or parts of it – this will depend on the prevailing political settlement. The point is that, in focusing on building short-term security by engaging elites, external actors also need to avoid helping elites sustain their power. They need to be wary of concentrating power and resources in their hands, sending a signal to society that 'violence works' and contributing to neglected grievances (Keen, 2008: 184–7). This cautions against an excessively personalised focus on elites and their place in the political settlement because this may reduce the focus on its outcomes: how rights and entitlements are distributed in society and what effect this has (Putzel and Di John, 2012: 4). It also cautions against a rather top-down view of social change, whereby marginalised populations

must wait for elites to concede rights to them rather than seeing citizens as having an active role in how change happens. Rather, working with both elite and wider interests is necessary in order to engage meaningfully with the competitive and often violent reality of post-conflict environments yet also ensure a more inclusive future.

In both Liberia and Timor-Leste, there are major concerns about who will succeed Sirleaf and Xanana. Their role in binding the elite pacts in these countries has been important in the short term, but over the longer term there will be a need for greater institutional development. The idea of essentially aiming to pick winners – politicians that international actors hope will promote an agenda they can work with – is likely to come up against exactly this transition problem. This is also a rather ambitious agenda, considering the relatively modest impact of international actors on security progress, as outlined in the previous section. The international community should focus more on a brokering and relationship-building role, since elites are neither a homogenous entity, nor do they operate in isolation. In fact, elites are often factional and have diverse outlooks.

Taxation

A strategy that takes elite interests as its starting point but that can have longer-term and wider effects is to work through the purse of those in power. Post-conflict countries typically feature weak tax revenues (around 10–15% of GDP) that are largely generated through taxation of trade and natural commodities (OECD, 2014). Additional revenue via direct income tax or indirect sales tax might be stimulated and has been suggested as a potentially viable entry point for longer-term progressive change (Putzel and Di John, 2012; OECD, 2014). This would clearly benefit government elites in societies that are organised on a patron–client basis with corresponding political settlements (Khan, 2010). In such environments it is unlikely that all tax revenue will be transparently allocated to public goods and services from day one. However, more taxation that affects citizens directly can also stimulate higher popular expectations and greater demand for government accountability, with ensuing positive impacts on security progress in the longer term. Although it cannot be assumed that governments will be capable, accountable, or responsive because they are fully dependent on taxation for revenues, where they are financially independent of citizen-taxpayers, there is no incentive to be so (Moore, 2007). Since, however, it is not clear what might be the incentives for elites in resource-rich countries to go down

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27. In the terms of North, Wallis and Weingast (2009) they do not feature perpetually lived organisations that have the ability to implement policies and programmes on the basis of the principle of universal access.

28. Informal systems tend to be limited to groups with relatively exclusive membership, such as tribes and ethnic groups. This is likely to create and strengthen horizontal inequalities. See, for example, Stewart (2008).

this path, its feasibility may be limited to resource-poor environments (Berg, 2012).[29]

Stimulate greater citizen engagement

A strategy that works with elite interests but goes beyond them is to cautiously stimulate factors that enable greater citizen engagement – initially within the limits of what elites are prepared to tolerate without resorting to violence and by enlisting the support of those whose interests are already more citizen-friendly (Earle, 2011). Recent research on the role and relevance of citizen engagement offers several useful insights in this regard.[30] To start with, citizen engagement can contribute positively and significantly to development outcomes, even in fragile settings where the international community often assumes that capacity for citizen engagement is (too) low. Moreover, despite its positive potential, such engagement is also likely to result in significant levels of contestation and disorder. While it may increase the prospects of longer-term change, it can also reduce stability in the short term (Gaventa and Barret, 2010; Earle, 2011). As a result, supporting citizen engagement requires being prepared to deal with government repression through laws or direct action

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Box 9: Citizen engagement at its peak: the Arab Spring

The power and limitations of citizen engagement and civic disobedience were well demonstrated by the Arab Spring, in which a combination of mass demonstrations, reluctant security forces, poorly handled responses by repressive regimes and international backlash resulted in the political end of the rulers of Egypt, Libya, Tunisia and Yemen in an extraordinarily short period of time. New virtual methods of protest coordination also provided an additional impulse.

The regression of the political situation since then does not detract from the momentous possibilities for – initially peaceful – change called for by these countries' respective citizens. At the same time, the Arab Spring also points to the weaknesses of spontaneous citizen engagement in societies where it has been repressed for decades, leading to low levels of institutional and leadership development, relations and staying power to influence events beyond simple protests.
Sources: Lynch (2013); Chenoweth and Stephan (2011)

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against activists (Gaventa and Barret, 2010; Earle, 2011). Protests in both our case-study countries over the last year – by workers at a mine in Liberia and by an opposition political party in Timor-Leste – have been met with exactly such security responses. Finally, of four options for citizen engagement – through local associations, social movements,[31] formal participatory government spaces and mixed approaches – local associations appear to have the greatest impact on stimulating positive development outcomes in societies in which democracy is weak (Gaventa and Barret, 2010). This suggests that the general focus of the international community in post-conflict environments on high-level dialogue as a vehicle for, among other things, stimulating state–society engagement, may not always be the most relevant. Rather, it points to the need for more micro-level initiatives (such as trade unions, farming cooperatives and religious associations) that enable individuals and communities to mobilise and scale up (Earle, 2011).

In summary, support for citizen engagement should probably focus on three priorities. First and foremost, it should identify issues on which some common ground exists between at least some elites and groups of citizens in order to pre-empt elites having recourse to violence if citizen engagement proves successful. Second, it should focus on strengthening enabling factors for greater citizen engagement, such as tertiary education and the quality/ openness of the media. Third, it should seek to moderate the disorder that might follow greater citizen engagement, for example by working with governments to increase their willingness to protect the space for it.

5.2 Support for security institutions as processes of political change, not just capacity building

Another key element for achieving sustainable security progress by sowing the seeds of long-term change in the short term is gradually to improve the quality of the institutions directly responsible for providing security by recognising this is as a process of deep political change. The transformational shift required for more citizen-oriented security is often significant. It amounts to taking security forces from being major threats to peace and security to being their guardian. As was argued in the

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29. A desire to reduce the volatility of elite earnings from natural commodities, which result from inevitable global price shocks, might play a role. However, this is not really persuasive. Increasing revenue from natural commodities might be a greater motivator, as evidenced for example in Liberia (OECD, 2014). This suggests greater international support for post-conflict governing elites in negotiating and contracting processes with multinationals on the understanding that there will be greater regulatory transparency and pro-development allocation of (additional) revenues so obtained. The results of such deals merit further investigation.

30. For a broader analysis of the logic of (violent) collective action in the context of social contestation see Tilly (1988; 2003).

31. Concisely defined by Tilly and Wood (2004) as groups that can be characterised by displaying 'worthiness, unity, numbers and commitment'. Adding their socio-political orientation, focus on collective action and their networked nature as key additional factors, this is the shorthand definition used here.

preceding section, international actors tend to struggle on this front, both because it is an inherently difficult task, and because SSR is often treated largely as a capacity-building rather than political, exercise.

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Box 10: Security Sector Development in Burundi as a long-term change process

The Burundian-Dutch Security Sector Development programme stands out as an initiative that was more consciously put on a political footing than most international support for SSR efforts by:

- A duration of eight years (2009–2017), allowing for building trust, learning from experience through several project cycles and establishing long-term relations on a sensitive subject;
- Spending funds flexibly, originally in the form of 'training & education' funds that could be rapidly mobilised as political opportunities arose, such as the need for a Defence Review;
- Institutionalising political dialogue at project, programme and ministerial level in its Memorandum of Understanding to ensure an ongoing conversation about issues, challenges and achievements faced by the programme.

Source: Ball (2014)

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Interventions that engage with security actors (state or customary) need to be treated as deeply political change processes. This means much greater focus on changes in cultural, attitudinal and leadership styles, greater iteration in design and implementation, flexibility in the mobilisation of funds and staff, longer timelines of engagement and less emphasis on setting objectives before programmes have even started (Ball, 2014; OECD, forthcoming; Domingo and Denney, 2012). A major challenge is to improve institutional orientation towards a conception of security as a public good conception when it becomes feasible to do so. This may amount to working with different institutional 'islands' that are characterised by a greater openness to change as appropriate. In short, it means working with what you have – or can attain – while monitoring broader political and institutional opportunities and threats (Andrews, 2013). This can increase both institutional legitimacy and institutional capacity to moderate conflict in an incremental fashion. As noted above, it is necessary at least initially to ensure that such change processes are seen not to oppose elite interests, while at the same time creating new sets of stakeholders and incentives that might give rise to dynamics that lie beyond elite control.[32] In this context, it will be important to find opportunities to sustainably support the involvement of civil society, for example in developing new policies and laws, and in oversight and accountability mechanisms. This may help gradually

Mother and child in Oecussi, Timor-Leste. Photo: © Martine Perret / UN

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32. North et al. (2009) provide some examples but the question of how this can be done is largely under-researched. In short, how can ruling elites be pressured, tempted or brought to agree with measures from which they will benefit in the short term but which may ultimately reduce their influence and power?

It will be important to find opportunities to sustainably support the involvement of civil society, for example in developing new policies and laws, and in oversight and accountability mechanisms.

to improve the checks and balances on elite use and abuse of power (Ball, 2006).

Many current SSR efforts fail to make use of such starting points in two ways. First, many SSR programmes explicitly seek to 'undo' elite control over security institutions without first making this an attractive option by reducing the incentives under pinning the need for it. Second, many SSR programmes follow the currently dominant organisational paradigm of achieving improvements by reinforcing the capacity of the formal security sector on the basis of a 'train-and-equip' logic (Sedra, 2011; Van Veen and Price, 2014). By and large, there has been no internationally led SSR process that has fundamentally transformed the security sector in a sustainable manner.[33] For example, the evaluation of EU-funded SSR efforts over almost a decade suggests that its focus on building the capacity of state institutions and the EU's complex and inflexible procedures place severe restraints on its ability to tailor SSR efforts to contextual requirements, to the detriment of their impact (ADE, 2011). Similar arguments have been made regarding international SSR support to the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) (Kets and De Vries, 2014), security and justice support to South Sudan (Copeland, forthcoming) and UK support to Sierra Leone (Denney, 2014).

These critiques echo through much of the SSR in Liberia and Timor-Leste. In Liberia, donors' financial and technical assistance has acted as a double-edged sword – while necessary to make progress, it has also created serious dependency issues that are proving problematic in the long term (Podder, 2014: 353). This dependence on donor funding also acts as a disincentive for the Liberian government to use its own resources to support SSR. As Downie notes, the government has 'not made the police a top priority, preferring to accumulate political capital by providing health-care services and education and leaving security to the UN and international donors' (2013: 6). This creates the risk that the government is not fully committed to the reform process. In Timor-Leste, Wilson (2012) highlights that international actors have often failed to develop the kind

of political relationships necessary to get any traction on security reforms. As highlighted above, the growing national support for 'community policing' in Timor-Leste over the last year or so appears to be based on increasing local ownership of the process, rather than being led by donor agencies (Wassel, 2014).

5.3 Incrementally increasing the inclusivity of development processes from the outset

A final element of making sustainable security progress – that makes policies rather than elites or institutions the starting point – is to improve the inclusivity of policies geared towards development. The aim is to modify the parameters of the elite pact so that it gradually develops from a closed deal among a limited set of stakeholders to a wider audience including more voices from the periphery via measures that benefit both.

For example, stimulating promising areas for economic growth may provide common ground for making sustainable security progress. Accelerated development in low-income settings tends to require active state management of the economy, in contrast with the liberal markets element of the orthodoxy of progress discussed in Section 3. The case for avoiding heavy-handed liberalisation policies has much evidence to support it. Put bluntly, and taking a long view, 'there are simply no historical examples of development occurring under the conditions of openness and liberalisation promoted in the South by the international development community', with the vast majority of economic success stories requiring '… state involvement, control over the allocation of foreign exchange, subsidies and protection to infant industries' (Putzel, 2004).[34] From an actor-oriented perspective, if it is possible to identify area(s) of relative competitive advantage in which elites hold assets that can be optimised through, for example, better education policies, use of labour and 'smart' regulation, greater profits, employment and legal predictability may ensue. The sting here is that such state intervention is unlikely to be democratic, free of corruption (consider the current case of Rwanda, or the early experiences of Korea) or in line with current international preferences for market regulation. However, the introduction of neoliberal models of open markets can lead to economic shocks that may create longer-term drivers of instability if not violence (Putzel, 2004; Middlebrook, 2012).

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33. For a brief overview of the historical and current challenges associated with SSR, see Van Veen and Price (2014); Sedra (2010); Schroeder et al. (2014); and Kets and de Vries (2014).
34. Di John and Putzel (2012) discuss this area in more depth and provide useful examples of Zambia and Rwanda. See also Chang (2002) and Maclean (2014).
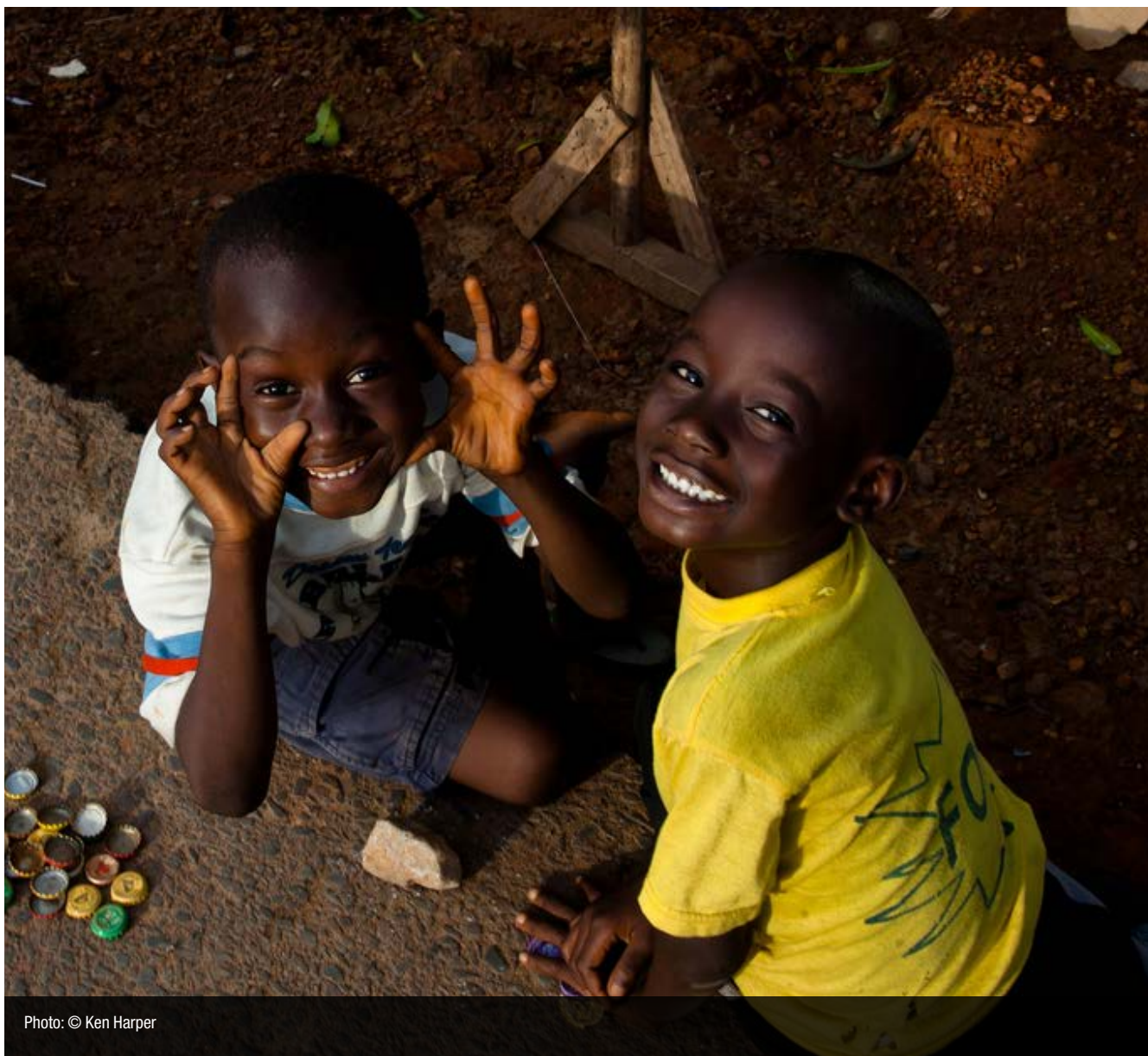
Photo: © Ken Harper

In Timor-Leste, for example, Engel and Vieira (2011) criticise the macroeconomic model that the international community introduced to the new state, claiming that the sudden and unassisted transition towards a limited state and market-driven model away from the previous Indonesian model of state-driven development eliminated essential government services on which rural populations depended for their livelihoods. As such, the harsher living environment meant that state legitimacy was insufficient to supplant the 'antagonism and regionalism previously obscured by the struggle against a common enemy' (Engel and Vieira, 2011), thus swelling the potential for tensions to escalate into conditions for the 2006 crisis. In Liberia, the socio-economic marginalisation of the population that pre-dates the conflicts (and is widely considered a major underlying cause of the civil wars), remains unaddressed. Even now, 11 years after the end of the conflict, Liberia ranks 174th of 186 countries in listed in the Human Development Index (UNDP, 2013). If a significant proportion of Liberians continue to receive little or no benefit from the economic dividends of peace through jobs, infrastructure development, or improvements in basic services, the incentives to maintain the system may be outweighed by the possible gains of a return to violence (Barnes Robinson and Valters, 2015).

The point is that enabling sustainable progress in security will depend on working beyond the security sector itself if and when doing so offers better chances to tweak the parameters of the elite pact and the incentives that underpin it. In consequence, wider socio-economic development initiatives can reduce the incentive to resort to violence by addressing inequality and social justice, and by ensuring that citizens as well as elites have a greater investment in advancing a progressive notion of peace. Security problems should not always be seen to require a security solution.

6. Conclusion

Conflict not only causes death and material havoc but also reduces social capital, creates war economies and strengthens capabilities and interests to engage in violence. It is perhaps not surprising, therefore, that achieving security progress in the immediate post-conflict period is dependent on the personalities and credibility of those in charge, and how effectively a country's elites, often including former adversaries, can be brought or negotiated into the peace (see Figure 1 below). In such highly political environments elite interests continue to dominate, often to the detriment of the public good, and there can be strong incentives to re-engage in violence. While international peacekeeping can provide an invaluable 'window of stability' during which elite deals can be negotiated, and the international community can nudge the security sector towards a stronger citizen-orientation, such a context is clearly not receptive to radical transformation of security institutions, or the introduction of accountability to popular 'beneficiaries', as liberal peacebuilding often attempts to achieve.

Given that the elements for enabling security progress in the immediate post-conflict period are often rather illiberal in nature, this creates a major challenge of putting initial security improvements onto a more sustainable footing. Achieving this requires greater elite trust in violence remaining absent as a tool of political negotiation, greater public service orientation by security providers (both formal and informal) and greater trust on the part of the population. This paper suggests that these aims are unlikely to be achieved in post-conflict environments by adopting the conventional international approach to building security, which is nested within the flawed assumptions that externally-sponsored democratisation, economic liberalisation and the rule of law are the right things to push, are complementary and will be accepted (or at least not undermined) by ruling elites.

Rather, we have argued that three complementary elements can help make the shift from short term stability to longer term inclusive security to greater effect. First, there is a clear need for external actors to understand

Figure 1: Key elements for getting from immediate to sustainable security progress
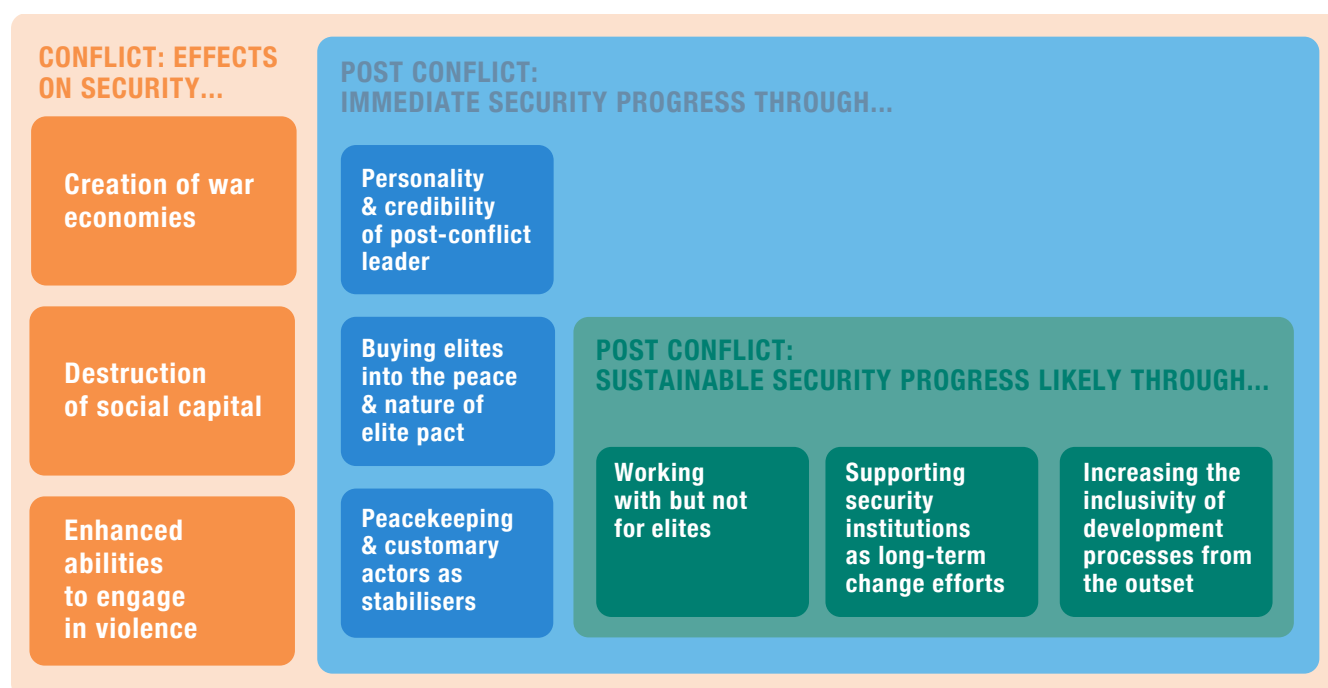
and work with elites to build security, but at the same time to regard the continuation of their power as problematic, in order to gradually increase the equity and sustainability of security progress. This is about being guided by the art of the possible – rather than the 'ideal' – and working with, but not for, elite interests. In addition, international actors need to view support for security institutions as long-term processes of political change, rather than as straightforward technical processes of building institutional capacity. And finally, while at the outset there might be little scope to broaden the range of stakeholders in the sensitive area of security, ensuring that

wider development processes are inclusive from the start and are also considered from a security perspective, can help to build pressure and create space for subsequent reforms in security. In short, stimulating long-term security improvements is likely to require going well beyond the security sector. These elements clearly do not resolve all the tensions between liberal peacebuilding and elite-focused approaches to building security. However, they represent initial ideas for negotiating the path between elite-led and more inclusive approaches to stimulate further debate on how best to support sustainable and equitable security progress.

Children playing on Dili Beach, Timor-Leste. Photo: © Asian Development Bank

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