Resistance as a Constructive Source of Change in a Post-War Environment?

Assessing the Integration of Resistance by the United Nations Intervention in Liberia

DRAFT ONLY!

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Abstract

Peace operations intervene in contexts, in which the state is highly fragile and its ability to provide basic services has failed. Government and administration are weak or non-existent. International organizations, such as the UN, often find themselves de-facto "taking over" the work of government and public administration even though their mandate is only to "support the government". It is no big surprise that such international dominance provokes resistance. The aim of this paper is to include an analysis of the disparate forms of resistance in post-conflict intervention settings into the study of peace building along the case of the United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL). We differentiate between rule abiding (disobedience and obstruction) and rule breaking (informal parallel structures and violence), and between constructive (informal parallel structures and disobedience) and destructive (obstruction and violence) forms of resistance. Our findings indicate that international dominance tends to provoke and react on destructive forms of resistance. Constructive forms of resistance, such as public protest, are rarely acknowledged, as long as they do not break the rules and threaten the security of the country and the mission. Shaping politics in the intervention state often prevails in informal bargaining processes within the bureaucratic structures of the intervening organizations and the government. The set-up of the international intervention, intended to build a liberal democracy, fails to build an environment conducive to such a condition. The peacekeeping environment in Liberia provides few structures to take resistance into account and use it as constructive force of change.

Introduction

Peace operations intervene in contexts, in which states are highly fragile and their ability to provide basic services has failed. Government administrations are non-existent. In some cases, armed factions have taken over political power, many with limited knowledge on how politics and administration work in a time of peace. Security needs to be guaranteed, a state needs to be rebuild and basic services need to be delivered to the people. Most processes and institutions need to be built from scratch. This is a tremendous task in an already fragile set-up (Paris 2004; Paris and Sisk 2009; Krause and Jütersonke 2005; Schwarz 2005).

It is very likely that international organizations, such as the UN, and their locally based staff find themselves de-facto "*taking over*" the work of government and public administration even though their mandate is only to "*support the government*", which denies any formal executive rights. This was surely the case in Liberia. The first SRSG of UNMIL, Jacques Paul Klein, was acting like an "*imperial pro-consul*" (International Crisis Group 2003, 12). UN officials in Liberia "*took over*"[1] the work of their national counterparts in the state administration, advising them but also drafting letters and memos, in initial years of the mission (Neumann and Schia 2012; Boas 2009). This was regarded as necessary support due to the massive lack of capacity of the national ministries. The UN mission was highly visible and perceived as responsible for the security and development of the country by the public, regardless the official terms of the mandate. Much of this "*taking-over*" work happened behind the scenes. The formal cover of the mandate was preserved, but UNMIL was de facto "*running the government*"[2].

It is no big surprise that such international dominance provoked resistance. Resistance and conflictive behavior are normal socio-political processes and actions in an intervention state. Interveners are only one political player amongst many others within the societal context of the intervention state (Bonacker et al. 2010; Barnett and Zürcher 2007). Resistance can not only be found between national actors and the mission. Resistance within the international community is equally common and occurs between e.g. the Security Council, UN headquarters with their Department of Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO), international donors, mission headquarters and mission field offices (Winckler 2011a; Trettin and Junk 2011; Schlichte and Veit 2007). Likewise, resistance between the different national actors is observable. The government is no monolithic block, civil society groups have different perspectives, economic interests are involved and local priorities differ from national ones. Resistance is a normal part of political life, especially in democracies, the declared ideal of peace interventions (Paris 2004; Newman, Paris, and Richmond

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[1] Senior CA officer, Monrovia 2011

[2] CA officer, Monrovia 2011.

2009; Jarstad and Sisk 2008). However, the existence and value of resistance has been widely neglected by the literature on international peace operations so far (Richmond and Mitchell 2012).

The aim of this paper is to include an analysis of the disparate forms of resistance in post-conflict intervention settings into the study of peace building. Our objective is to explore the different forms of existence that occur during an intervention of a UN peace operation and their effects on political life. Our leading research question is: *How are different forms of resistance integrated into the political processes of interaction between different stakeholders in a post war intervention state?*

For the purpose of our study, we define resistance pragmatically as *behavior that is intentionally not complying with formal rules and structures*. This definition assumes that a peace operation is based on specific rules and mutually acknowledged formal structures, which lead to a specific aim or desired outcome (i.e. sustainable peace and security, protection of civilians etc). We differentiate between three *levels of interaction*[3] for analytical purposes: (1) the international level, including the Security Council, DPKO/DFS and Mission Headquarter, (2) the national level, including international donors, Mission Headquarter, the national government and national CSOs and (3) the sub-national level, including local offices of INGOs and UN agencies, the Mission Field office, the county government and local CSOs. Our focus is on the political processes of peace keeping, state building and early peace building.[4] This relates to the Security Council mandate 1509 of 2003 and later updates on which the mission is formally based.

We address our research question through a structured qualitative case study of the UN Peace Operation in Liberia, which is based on our field research in Liberia conducted in several travels between 2009 and 2011.[5] In a first step we identify and cluster forms or resistance which may occur in postwar context, illustrating these forms through examples of resistance common in Liberia. In a second step, we explore how the forms of resistance affect the political processes on the different levels of interaction and are included in the strategies and policies of the different stakeholder.

Our findings indicate that international dominance tends to provoke and react on destructive forms of resistance. Constructive forms of resistance, such as public protest, are rarely acknowledged, as long as they do not break the rules and threaten the security of the country and the mission. Shaping

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[3] The main criterion for a *level of interaction* is not so much the inclusion of specific actors, but rather integration of separable and identifiable means of communication. This means that the same actor can be part of several levels of interactions, if the rules of communication allow its multiple participation. Thus the international level is formally dominated by rules and methods of diplomacy, whereas the national and sub-national level include e.g. mission-government negotiations, committees and meetings.

[4] There is an increasing consensus that the peacekeeping/peacebuilding nexus is an artificial divide, and in reality, civilian peacekeepers can be considered early peacebuilders. The Accord issue 3/2011 was dedicated exclusively to the peacebuilding-peacekeeping nexus (Accord 2011)

[5] These research trips were funded by DAAD, DSF, FES,NUPI and the State of Berlin.

politics in the intervention state often prevails in informal bargaining processes within the bureaucratic structures of the intervening organizations and the government. The set-up of the international intervention, intended to build a liberal democracy, fails to build an environment conducive to such a condition. The peacekeeping environment in Liberia provides few structures to take resistance into account and use it as constructive force of change.

The multiple dimensions of the United Nations Intervention in Liberia

The Accra Peace Agreement in 2003 opened the path for a new attempt to foster and sustain a peace process after more than a decade of war in Liberia. The United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL) is the second peacekeeping attempt by the UN, after the United Nations Observer Mission in Liberia (UNOMIL), which operated together with Nigerian-led peacekeeping troops of ECOWAS, was not able to prevent a renewed round of war in early 2001. UNMIL's legal basis is the Security Council Resolution 1509, which gives the mission the mandate under chapter VII of the UN Charta, including the provision of security and the support of the government "*in reestablishment of national authority throughout the country*"[6]. This rather simple mandate translates into a complex interplay between different institutions, actors and interests on the ground. A sketch of this interplay serves as background to describe resistance and its integration into the peace building efforts along three analytical levels of interaction: 1) the international level; 2) the national level; and 3) the sub-national level.

(1) The international level

At the center of the international level stands the UN mission, which formally reports to the Security Council (SC) through DPKO in New York. The mission and DPKO are in constant consultation with international donors.[7]

The international level consists of a web of delegated authorities, which are not always clearly defined, highly political and delicate to handle. The SC delegates the set-up of the mandate to DPKO and the Department of Mission Support (DMS) who build up the mission in Liberia that is tasked with the implementation on the ground. The situation is further complicated through the involvement of international donors. The mission is no donor and project implementer itself. It serves as mediator between the government of Liberia and the international donors. This complex framework of interaction and negotiation sets the rules and context for the international intervention. Different

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[6] United Nations Security Council Resolution 1509, adopted unanimously by the Security Council at its 4830th meeting, on 19 September 2003

[7] The government of Liberia is a further international actor, especially through its internationally highly respected president that has won the Nobel Peace Prize 2011.

coordinating bodies try to bridge the interests and authorities of the different actors involved (Winckler 2011b).

The mission has a high amount of autonomy in its actions. The interpretation and implementation of the vague mandate is primarily the mission's task. The day-to-day management of the mission and its actions is completely in the hands of the mission. The mission is careful to defend and preserve its autonomy within the international interaction level. The current leadership of the mission tries to protect its autonomy by a strict internal hierarchy. There are very few (normally formally assigned) working level contacts between the mission and New York. The information-flow is supposed to stay within the formal hierarchical communication lines.

The task of DPKO in New York is merely oversight and support of the mission. They do not intervene in national processes, unless they see the necessity to do so, e.g. proposing a change in a stalemate situation. The task of DPKO is twofold: they serve as mediator between the mission and the SC and they define the portfolio of peacekeeping within UN organizations. This portfolio sets the frame in which the mission can interact independently. It consists of specific policies on concrete issues (such as DDR, SSR, RoL, Elections, protection of civilians etc.) and describes peacekeeping as a package of measures for peace and security that can be drawn on by international politics with the UN administration as the central player. The involvement of DPKO and the UN administration introduces requirements, which do not necessarily comply with the realities on the national level or the requirements of the mission on the international level.

(2) The national level

The national level refers to the interplay between mission, government, donors and civil society organizations on all issues of national relevance. The mission is supposed to support the government and coordinate donor efforts. The government is formally governing the country and CSOs are consulted in this process. Donors provide the bulk of expertise and financial support to keep the national government and development policies going. Security is seen as the main goal of the peacekeeping intervention. Security, according to the rules of UN involvement in Liberia, does not only mean security of and in Liberia, but also the security of the mandate of UNMIL.

The UN mission itself is build up as a complex organization, which serves as a shadow bureaucracy with interlinks to the government administration on nearly all hierarchical levels (Winckler 2011a). Its legal background is set by its mandate. Its legitimacy in the country is determined by its political acceptance by the government. The national government formally asked UN for support. The role of the UN is to support the government in the extension of state authority. On this basis, the UN

bureaucracy has no formal executive rights. A senior advisor in the mission describes the official role of UNMIL as follows:

> *Essentially the UN is here to support the government of Liberia. So we do not take action. The government takes actions. The UN may provide some kind of support, direct or indirect, in terms of advice, by acting on high levels. So we do not do policies. We do not take policies. We do not implement policies. […] So in that respect we do not control. (Interview with Senior Advisor, UNMIL, Monrovia 2010)*

The informal power of the mission goes far beyond. The abstract strategic goals of the intervention are pre-set by the programmatic portfolio of UN peacekeeping. This abstract outline is not negotiable (Sending 2009). The strategies to reach these goals are equally based on the organizational know how of UN-Peacekeeping. There might be differences in the implementation of strategies, but peace operations very commonly include strategies such as elections, rule of law, security sector reform, poverty reduction, or protection of civilians. The procedures to reach such strategical goals are equally dominated by international processes. International experts and know-how heavily impact on the conceptualization of concept papers, reporting and steering committees.

> *"So, a lot was done by the international institutions. In terms of making commitments in funding, they know who has to sit at the table to make sure money is coming. This is to ensure the funding is coming. Only 1/3 is coming from the government. So when you have the money you have the lead." (Interview with the head of a national CSO network, Monrovia, September 2011)*

This puts the mission in a difficult position between rhetoric, action and perception of others.

The complicated processes underlying policy papers, development agendas and processing guidelines are often overstraining the capacities of the national ministries. They are supported by international consultants, paid by the donors, who assure that finals papers are in line with donor interests and funds can be assessed.

> *"Government institutions have capacity challenge. So they have international consultants working along with them. (…) of course they had influence on priorities." (Interview with a leading Liberian political analyst, Monrovia, September 2011)*

What seems as a win-win situation at first sight is often impeding true ownership of the Liberians. What is planned as "doing with" ends up as "doing for" (Wilén and Chapaux 2011).

> *"In the first time in our history, people could make some suggestions. It was a determined effort to get citizen to participate. (…) But then most was lost on the way in the effort to adapt to Worldbank standards. People were just asked 'do you want schools' and they said 'yes'. Who doesn't want school? But maybe they would have liked something else better. Something that was not on the Worldbank list." (Interview with a Leading CSO representative, interviewed in Monrovia in 2011)*

Put differently: the national government formally is *"in the drivers seat"*[8], but the mission, donors and international consultants are largely *"running the ministries"*[9].

Civil Society is only consulted in such processes. They have no active voice and are reduced to mere implementing partners fully dependent on international funds.

> *"It's always consultations. When they need us, they invite us and ask as what do you think about this and what do you think about that. But never for true cooperation, where they are actually negotiating with us and we have a compromise in the end." (Interview with a CSO representative, Monrovia 2011)*

Much policy making and shaping on national level turns out as a negotiation process between national elites and donors, with the donors in the lead.[10] Political elites that intent to liberalize the business environment in Liberia, especially with regards to logging, mining and mineral oil production have recently placed donors under pressure to withhold support from critical or resistant groups within civil society, or at the very least those groups perceived to be part of the political opposition (Richmond and Mitchell 2012, 328).

(3) The sub-national level

The sub-national level remains largely neglected in Liberia. This reflects the increasing urbanization of the country, but it neglects the historical legacy of a state in which centralization of political power in the capital led to numerous conflicts. The state is overly centralized and so are the mission and donors. The government is represented through a Superintendent appointed by the president[11] and a few ministry delegates at county level. The county authorities have very limited funds (Nyei 2011). Poor infrastructure makes communication between the capital and the counties challenging. The international community is concentrating on national processes and has their offices in Monrovia. Very few donors have permanent offices in the counties. UNMIL and its agencies have local Field Offices in each county, usually staffed with a Head of Field Office, who is the highest representative of the UN and coordinates all UN related efforts in the County, and a few national and international staff of different sections and agencies. Further actors at the sub-national level are CSOs and CBOs and alternative authority figures, such as religious leaders, former warlords and elders.

The sub-national level has a mere executive role on the government side. The Head of Field Offices of UN have a little more independence in the implementation of their work plan, but their efforts have little influence on the national level (Neumann and Schia 2012). In general, the sub-national level actors are tasked to implement and monitor national policies. Sub-national actors are rarely involved

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[8] Senior CA officer, Monrovia 2011

[9] Senior CA officer, Monrovia 2011

[10] This is very much like the Peacebuilders contract (Barnett and Zürcher 2007)

[11] 1986 Constitution of Liberia; Art 56 Sec. A

in the development and drafting of such policies and plans. Few consultations were held in the course of the PRS consultations in 2003 and 2012, but those had little impact on final drafts.

> *"They were consulting the people. And then they drafted the County Agendas. But there was not enough money in the national budget to do all of these things. So they mostly cut them down to national priorities. There was no county validation afterwards." (Interview with Senior UNDP staff and former staff at the Ministry of Planning, Monrovia 2011)*

Civil Society Organisations at the sub-national level remain wholly dependent on donor support. They currently even use UNMIL resources to write and receive emails and send project reports to their donors in remote counties.

Forms of Resistance in Postwar Liberia

It is of little surprise that such donor dominance provokes resistance. The formal rules for post-war Liberia are defined by the mission, donors and the government; based on the liberal values underlying international peacekeeping missions. None of these actors is a uniform block and additional actors get involved who are not accounted for in this set-up. Formal rules are often ambiguous themselves (March and Olsen 1989). They can be stretched and adapted to their environment and practically leave actors room to maneuver according to their particular interests (Hüsken 2006). They can further be overstepped, leading to either violence of informal parallel structures. On the basis of our empirical research in Liberia we have identified four major forms of resistance, within and without the formal rules set by the mission and the government:

(1) Disobedience, meaning a non-violent display of discontent or disagreement that stays within the boundaries of what is appropriate.

(2) Obstruction, as behaviour impeding a process by stretching or overstretching given rules beyond their initial intention, but still within the limits of appropriateness.

(3) Informal Parallel structures, as sets of informal processes that provide services and organizing principles parallel to those of formal structures and thus break formal rules and

(4) Violence, as socially and or politically motivated escalation of protest that leads to physical violence and/or vandalism.

Disobedience can be either public or behind closed doors. Open disobedience is rare in Liberia and boarders to violence are fluent. Disobedience behind closed door is very likely in a post-war intervention context but rarely documented. Since the mission started in 2003, no public debate between the president and the mission has been documented. It is very likely however, and informal

interviews confirm, that the government of Liberia and the mission and donors find themselves in heated discussions that go beyond the mandated structure of government support.

Obstruction is a hidden form of resistance and is only possible for those who are involved in processes and have some say. We often encountered accounts of obstruction; plans were not implemented, reports not finalized and forwarded, notes lost on the way, funds not accounted for. The ambiguity of a post-war setting seems to invite obstruction on all levels. Obstruction rarely leads to the evolution of new or alternative policies and processes. Rather, it delays their implementation or even impedes it. This leads to frustration among all actors involved.

Violence breaks the rules openly. Violence is perceived as alarming by most actors as it threatens security. Considering the extremely violent history of Liberia especially in the 1990s, there have rarely been occasions of notable outbreak of violence in the last couple of years. However, there have been some incidents, which show how little it takes in Liberia for a deterioration of e.g. a public protest or demonstration. Security is seen as the main goal of the peacekeeping intervention. Security, according to the rules of UN involvement in Liberia, does not only mean security of and in Liberia, but also the security of the mandate of UNMIL. Thus it again is UNMIL that defines what a threat to security is.

There are other multiple forms of resistance that break formal rules, though less overt, through informal parallel structures. They do not imply an immediate threat to the interventionist setting, but oppose the formal rules and structures in the long run by creating informal parallel structures. At local level in Liberia a lot of customary structures have prevailed, including traditional authorities, justice systems, witchcraft and secret societies. They influence political decisions and social hierarchies up to the national level. Corruption, patronage and informal networks within bureaucratic structures can form equally parallel structures, if systematically applied. All of these parallel structures provide services to their constituents. At the same time, they are undermining the formal institutional setting of peace, security and reconciliation in Liberia, even though they might not impose an immediate threat to its existence.

In order to systematize these forms of resistance, we differentiate between two sets of attributes, through which the forms of resistance can be clustered. On the one hand, resistance can either be based on the formal rules of the intervention state or break them. As the example of the outbreak of violence in the March 2011 student protest shows, this borderline can be fluent. Analytically it makes sense to distinguish between rule-breaking and rule-based means of resistance, as rules should provide sanctions for the former and a forum for the latter. On the other hand we differentiate between constructive and destructive intentional outcomes. With "constructive" we mean the

creation of added value, however explicitly without any normative or moral judgment. The added value can consist for example of a stance in discourse, creation of meaning, provision of services as well as maximizing profit and accumulating wealth. On the other hand, destructive forms of resistance do not offer a liable/legitimate alternative, no matter if they only defend the status quo from reform or move against an old policy. Taken together, the four identified form of resistance can be structured as illustrated in table 1:

	Rule based	Rule breaking
Constructive	Disobedience/Public Protest	Informal parallel structures
Destructive	Obstruction	Violence

As disobedience and public protest are often combined with the formulation of an alternative idea or stance within a discourse it can generally be considered as constructive. Disobedience and public protest are also generally based on the rules of the intervention state, which is set out to form a liberal democracy that includes the freedom of speech and expression. Informal parallel structures are also generally constructive, as they add value to those that attain and reproduce them. As they however are not based on the formal rules of the interventionist setting, we can assume that these values are not necessarily regarded positively by the actors involved in this normative setting (i.e. the government, UN-Mission, Donors, INGOs). But obviously, they are perceived as valuable by the actors involved in the parallel structures. Obstruction is an example for a destructive form of resistance, as it does not create an alternative stance or political meaning, but merely leads to the delay or destruction of a reform agenda or policy. As it however takes place behind doors and within the scope of what is allowed or tolerated by the rules of the intervention state, obstruction is hard to challenge or sanction. Finally, violence breaks the rules openly as it threatens security. Even though in some settings it may seem the only possibility to change existing powerful structures (such as the Libyan rebellion against Gadhafi), it is processed predominantly destructively – demolishing assets, lives and a sense of security.

The integration of these disparate forms of violence at the different interaction levels of the mission will be explored in the following paragraphs.

(1) Resistance at the sub-national level

Informal parallel structures are the most prevalent form of resistance at the sub-national level and among ordinary citizens. Such resistance builds on local structures that have existed before the war,

largely survived throughout the war and are now revived in the communities. Many of these structures are not in line with the new liberal set-up introduced by the international community. Resistance is seldom overt and appears as silent resistance through alternative structures, either complementing international efforts or sidetracking them.

> *"Even if we are angry that we have to do things we wouldn't normally do, and plant things we wouldn't normally plant, we do not want to miss the things we need if eventually they come with them. For the things that are important to us, we mobilise our own groups and do the work that way." (local elder, as cited in {Richards 2005: Box 2)*

The prevalence of informal structures is especially visible in the case of dispute resolution and rule of law. A recent survey of 2010 has found that general dispute resolution is regulated through the town chiefs and elders. Police, as the only formal body is involved in only 3% of the cases in rural Liberia (Vinck, Pham, and Kreutzer 2011). Even in most severe cases, such as rape and killing, 30% of the cases are dealt with through the town chiefs in the rural regions. Secret societies are a further form of informal parallel structure. They are widely perceived as religious organizations, but historical and ethnographic studies clearly show that they had, and still have, a strong political and economic influence in Liberia (Little 1966; Bellman 1984; Atkinson and Mulbah 2000; Richards et al. 2005).They have a huge impact on the selection of local leadership and many decisions are made *„in the bush"*[12] (Neumann 2011). Groups, as the Mandingos, that are not members of these secret societies are often excluded from leadership positions.

> *"Lorma people have been the town chief for the town because they say when they want to discuss any major thing, they have to go in the zoe bush where mandingo man can not go as non members of the secret society." (Excerpt of a FGD among rural female youth, 2010)*

Local government officials are themselves involved in these informal parallel structures. Most of them come from local communities and had been socialized into these structures since birth. Their position as members of a formal government and their ties with their communities and their respect for traditional structures often put them in a difficult situation. Many see themselves as pragmatic mediators between the two systems.

> *„You know, everybody loves democracy. But it will be a problem if you start having elections. You will get a young guy who knows to manipulate people and give them some funds. So you elected, but you also broken the traditional hierarchy and the system that says you move from one level to another. It is gonna change and it is gonna be a great problem." (Wilfried Johnson, Head of the Peacebuilding Fund, Monrovia in 2010)*

The international community, especially UNMIL has not yet found an answer to deal with informal parallel structure at the sub-national level. In the case of rule of law, full support went into the formal system. The assumption was, if the formal system would be fully working, people would

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[12] Local elder, Voinjama 2010.

prefer it to informal mechanisms. This assumption was simply wrong and the formal system is still far from working (Isser, Lubkemann, and N'Tow 2009).

The secret societies are even more a challenge for the international community. The aspect of secrecy and reported human rights abuses documented[13] put the international community in a difficult situation. They have for a long time ignored the importance of secret structures, but were faced with the need to work with them and address them as they gained security relevance, especially after the February 26 (of 2010) riots in Voinjama. These riots killed four people and the local population was insisting in traditional conflict resolution aside the formal track. This conflict resolution involved traditional leaders and was finally supported by UNMIL. The fact that traditional conflict resolution has pacified the situation, while the formal track is still ongoing as of March 2012 without a solution in sight, has led to considerable uncertainty among many international staff at the sub-national level:

> *There were all these new phenomena and I was shocked. So I have learned. Much I did before was not appropriate. But most often it's not a matter of being right or being wrong. I mean, who labels right and wrong? (International UNMIL staff, Voinjama 2011)*

Obstruction is a further common form of resistance, mostly prevalent among local government officials, especially the Superintendents. Reports of Superintendents that do not show up at meetings and that do not account for government funds are rampant. The Superintendents are not elected in Liberia, but appointed by the president. Only the president can replace them. This puts many local UN-officers in a difficult position. Their mandate is to support the government "*but if the government doesn't work, there is little we can do*"[14]. Local UN officers keep documenting such forms of obstruction and report to their national counterparts. But generally UNMIL is rather powerless against such forms of obstruction if the president of Liberia refuses to replace the Superintendents, despite their massive abuse of office.

> *Sinoe Superintendent is a good example. He didn't even make the attempt to be accountable. He operated from Monrovia. Everybody knew he is not there. Even for his own fund, for the CDA, he never accounted for it. But they didn't stop him. Now there is a new one, but only in 2010. (International UNMIL staff, Sinoe 2011)*

Conflicts between superintendents and local UNMIL officers can develop into a feud and power struggle on local political level in extreme cases. This puts local UN officers in a difficult situation. They know that local governance institutions, such as the County Development Agenda, will not work without the presence of the Superintendent. Further, they are pushed in into the centre of shaping

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[13] Cases of ritual killing and trial by ordeal have been documented since the end of war. But investigation proofs nearly impossible as secrecy is upheld by most local communities.

[14] International UNMIL staff, Monrovia 2011.

local politics, regardless of their mandate. "*You find yourself dealing with everything*"[15]. This however does not take place overtly, but behind the scenes or formally in the role of the UN officer as mediator to create some sense of accountability in local politics. Obstruction often leads to informal leadership by UN officials, but with limited effects.

There are only few occasions where the UN locally steps forward and openly takes the lead. These incidents exclusively refer to major threats for security of both, state and mandate of UNMIL. The refugee crisis resulting from the outbreak of fighting in Cote d'Ivoire was such an example. The Head of Field Office of the affected county decided to pull the matter out of the formally responsible organ of the CDA and created an extraordinary coordination body under UN leadership with backing of his superiors in Monrovia after ten thousands of refugees had crossed the border. UNMIL and its local HoFO did not trust the local Superintendent, whose obstruction gravely undermined the effectiveness ánd capabilities of the local government to handle the issue.[16]

Cases of <u>disobedience</u> are rare. Local CSO depend on the good will of UNMIL for nearly everything, from printing letters, to sending emails to donors to transportation to remote areas. They honour the support of UNMIL and rarely challenge their mandate and its execution. Local government officials are equally dependent on UNMIL. "*They have given us an idea on how to run a government*"[17]. Local UN-officials however are aware that this often includes a great deal of "*lip service*".[18]

Only a few overt clashes between the Superintendent and UNMIL are documented. This is regarded as last resort from the UN side, if all internal reporting lines fail. There was a public report conveying the impunity of the Superintendent in only one rural county. As the Superintendent continued to have the backing of the president, this however did not have any great effect in inhibiting the superintendent to obstruct the local political processes for his own personal good.

<u>Violence</u> is equally rare. If it happens, it is seldom directed against UNMIL. It is more often a result of frustration with the performance of the government or other formal bodies.

> "*Like the mob actions that taking place in town now. People see someone stealing and the crowed rushed on him and killed him because the police or the court can't help the process. All these things happen because the people don't know whom to turn to. Mob justice has now taken over.*" (BBColley, former executive director of the Resource Center for Community Empowerment and Integrated Development (RECEIVE) and instructor at the Kofi Annan Institute for Conflict Transformation, University of Liberia; Monrovia 2010)

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[15] a Head of Field Office, Monrovia 2011.

[16] UN officials in UNMIL Field Office, 2011.

[17] County Inspector, Greenville 2011.

[18] Interview with UNMIL Field Officers in serveral locations, 2011.

If it escalates, UNMIL gets involved, though less frequently since 2011. UNMIL monitors these events very closely, ready to intervene if they deem it necessary. For UNMIL this is important not only in reference to their mandate to ensure security, but also for their own protection. Monitoring serves the demands of the national and international levels, where security related incidents find a high attention and resonance.[19]

(2) Resistance at the national level

The situation on national level is different as resistance is more strategic. Most resistance remains covert and very few actors make attempts to openly challenge those who bring money and development into the country.

Informal parallel structures are less important on national level. Secret societies might extend their influence on some national players, but they do not actively shape national agendas to our knowledge. Issues of customary justice and town-chief selection are part of the Hinterland regulations and only affect national policies when rural regulations oppose their implementation. But other informal structures exist on national level. One surely is corruption. Liberia remains a corrupt state, although efforts have been made to combat corruption. Corruption remains a common instrument to secure clan and other loyalties and high-level positions are often filled with family members.[20]. A second element of informal structure are strong personal networks, not necessarily based on kinship. Two networks have proven extremely strong in the post-war period, the Americo-Liberians and the diaspora community, both not selective. Both groups do not act as uniform actors, but their strong ties with each other and their superior positions are carefully noted. During 2011 election, both final candidates were Americo-Liberians running with a native as vice-candidate. "*If we are truly united as they say, why don't they be vice president to indigenous? Never in history! They are always first*".[21]

These informal structures on national level are a reason for and a resource of obstruction. The massive power of the intervention on national level makes obstruction the most rampant form of resistance at this level. There are numerous reports on national level of incidents where policies got stuck in parliament or where the lack of government leadership inhibited development.[22] The results of the Truth and Reconciliation Committee are only one prominent example of such an obstruction. They endangered the power of nearly all important persons in government and were quietly

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[19] Interviews with UNMIL officials in Monrovia, 2011.

[20] Liberia ranks 91 in the 2011 corruption perceptions index of Transparency International (http://cpi.transparency.org/cpi2011/results/)

[21] Presidential candidate and former leader of ULIMO-J, Prince Johnson in an interview. Printed in: (Young 2011)

[22] Interview with UNMIL officials, Morovia 2010/2011.

dissolved even though international donors had invested a lot of resources in this process (Aning and Jaye 2011).

Obstruction allows delaying or impeding the implementation of programs without openly confronting donors. Accounts for such obstruction are wide-spread and frustrating both sides. Liberians are frustrated because they have little opportunities to shape their destiny other than through obstruction. Donors and UN officials are frustrated, because a lot of their efforts get lost on their way through Liberian legislature and implementation bodies. Some of the obstruction is surely used to secure personal revenues and safeguard personal networks, but a more nuanced perspective is necessary to account for the forms of obstruction that provide hints to inadequate policies. The decentralization policy, for example is being obstructed. First drafts had been finalised in 2009, but it has not yet been fully ratified. UNMIL is strongly pushing for decentralization, but objections remain on behalf of many Liberians.

> *"I have risen that concern from the much more conflict sensitive lens, looking at the national decentralization policy developed. It calls for elections of local officers across the country and now if you go by appointment, it comes from the heads or you can engage the local people who nominate two or three names you select some one from there who will be acceptable to everybody. (…) If you do appointment, you appoint the other tribes and another in the position. But if you do election (…) you will always see that the dominant tribe will take all the positions, and the minority tribe will time to time be marginalized." (Wilfried Johnson, Head of Peacebuilding Office, Monrovia 2010)*

These objections are rarely discussed openly if the position of the donor community is clear on the specific issues. The most common reaction on behalf of Liberian actors is to obstruct subsequent ratification and implementation.

Disobedience on national level is rare, given the dominance of donor funding and interests. The rhetorical set-up of the mission does not allow for substantial disobedience. The national government formally asks the UN for support. The role of the UN is to support the government in the extension of state authority. Public discontent contradicts this relationship. Any disagreement needs to be articulated in non-public meetings. „*I don't remember any public utterances*"[23]. This makes the peace operation a political bargaining process between elites. Bargaining or disobedience happens mostly behind closed doors and rarely documented. Informal interviews confirm that the government of Liberia and the mission and donors find themselves in heated discussions that go beyond the mandated structure of government support. The conditionality of aid clearly sets the frame for such bargaining, as in the case of the Poverty Reduction Strategy of 2008:

> *"In the working groups we developed the matrix. We filled in the gaps with the support of UNMIL and the other agencies. Then we submitted it to the World Bank and they gave their perspective and recommendations. When these were received, the comments from the World Bank, we changed certain*

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[23] Staff at the Resident Coordinators office, Monrovia 2011.

things, not everything, but most." (Senior advisor at the Ministry of Infrastructure and Planning, Monrovia 2011)

Any articulation of disagreement is only conducive when it is linked to either economical or political power. The government can threaten to kick the mission out or refuse to ratify and implement certain policies. The donors (and thus the mission) can threaten to stop funds.

Disobedience, usually behind closed doors, can equally be found by engaged individuals within the hierarchical structures of the UN. Civilian members of UNMIL often refer to such action as "pushing". If they feel that a case is not adequately focused on by their superiors, they continue to raise awareness for this case, also stepping beyond the boundaries of the mission. In such cases they however have to be careful not to pass the rules of authority delegated to them and formally move within mission policy.

Other actors, such as CSOs, have little resources to bargain with, in this process. They are reduced to mere implementing partners in Liberia. They depend on the good-will of both, the donors for funds and the government to authorize donor funding. One of the most prominent examples of successful public disobedience on behalf of CSOs was the protests of women during the Peace negotiations Accra 2003.[24] The different factions sat around the negotiation table in Accra with representatives from UN and ECOWAS for weeks, while fighting continued in Monrovia. A group of women, all dressed in white, camped in front of the venue in Accra and protested to stop fighting and achieve a joint solution. There protest remained without effect until they finally decided to siege the venue and force all parties to stay in the conference room until they reached a final decision. "*We are taking you all hostage on behalf of the women in Liberia*"[25]. A joined agreement was found within two weeks. Such public disobedience is rare in Liberia. Demonstrations and rallies either stay fairly unnoticed or are perceived as danger, as they are likely to turn violent.

The line between public disobedience and <u>violence</u> is a thin one, because many groups feel marginalized in this environment of informal parallel structures and donor dominance on national level. Youth protests in Monrovia in late 2011 escalated because protestors felt they were not given the right amount of attention by the authorities. The youths have been engaged by the government to clean Monrovia as part of a government scheme to provide them with additional funds for the Christmas vacation. Most students were from secondary schools in Monrovia and they were promised an initial US$35, followed by another US$65 when the work was finished. As numbers of those availing for jobs increased, the amount was reduced to a total of US$ 81. Accounts differ to why protests escalated, but obviously students felt they were not given the full amount and afraid

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[24] This was documented in the movie "Pray the Devil back to Hell" that won various international awards.

[25] Leymah Gebowee, as cited in Pray the Devil back to Hell.

they would not receive any money, due to previous problems with payment of public work. The Acting Mayor of Monrovia had insulted some of them and accounts were given of her *"throwing stone at them"*[26]. The youths *"took the streets in demand of their salaries due them by government"*[27]. Some of the youth, allegedly joined by other youths not part of the program, destroyed numerous public buildings and vehicles and installed road blocks over town. President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf herself had to calm down the protestors.

What obviously had happened here was that a protest with a very legitimate cause (make sure they are fully paid) turned violent rapidly. What could have been a public protest within the rules of a democratic state, turned out to break the rules and threaten security because the government and its representatives are not trusted by the local population.

Similarly to the sub-national level, violence is regarded by UNMIL as a security related event and is monitored very closely. Even if UNMIL does not step in, security is the top priority of the mission's objectives and trumps any other activity. Handling smaller events of violence (such as during the elections 2011) is however also regarded as a test of the capability of the national security institutions to take over the main responsibility for security after the withdrawal of the mission.

(3) Resistance at the international level

Resistance on international level is different from national or sub-national level. The government of Liberia is de-facto not involved in this interaction level. Resistance takes place in the bureaucratic structures of the UN and as part of a competition between different international actors to take part and implement their portfolio on the national level in Liberia. Resistance on international level is highly political and it takes place nearly exclusively behind closed doors and the façade of diplomatic communication and interaction.

Informal parallel systems exist as informal networks which facilitate the work on national level and protect positions and processes from requirements of the international level. Resistance against international requirements and policies takes place through national level networks of internationals, who claim a certain territory of action for themselves. They often make it difficult for new staff members to integrate into the working processes on national level. In a UN-Agency, a new section head was hired to lead the implementation of a Rule of Law program that received new financial support by international donors. Instead of implementing the program, the officer found herself in a position of a policy advisor, trying to impose a reform of the programmatic structure of the organization. This reform was perceived by other program lines within the UN Agency as a threat.

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[26] Global News Network Liberia, 27 December 2011.

[27] Liberian Observer online, 22. December 2011.

They resisted the reform e.g. through exclusion of the "bad" person, building on strong informal networks and cohesive group structures, which had grown over the years of working together. The only way to break this resistance was to build an own network, which included the senior leadership and other officials working in the same thematic field throughout the international organizations in Liberia. Especially the attention and support of the senior leadership made it possible for her to impose a position in which she could start to implement her agenda.

> *"Nothing works here [in UNMIL] without informal communication. You need an informal network."*
> *(Interview with two UNMIL officials in Monrovia, 2010)*

Networks also extensively exist on New York level. The working culture of the UN is built on personal networks and contacts. There are e.g. no functional letter boxes. If you need to contact somebody in a specific function, you need to know the person who is in charge of this function. There are very few informal working contacts between headquarters and the mission. The policy of the mission is to inhibit such communication; contacting people in New York means for middle management breaking the policy of the mission.

The current mission leadership has imposed a very hierarchical structure, in order to streamline the information that goes to New York and comes back to the Mission and Liberia. The mission uses its formal hierarchical structure to minimize the influence of informal networks on its reference requirements. The Office of the SRSG is the central office that mediates between the requirements of New York and the claims of the mission staff. This is not an easy job, because the perceptions of New York on how processes in the mission should work very often do not fit the reality in Liberia. On the other hand, the claims of the mission staff have to be fitted into the reference schemata and requirements of New York.

An example for this process is the debate concerning the drawdown of the mission. UNMIL is generally perceived as a very successful mission in international politics. A fairly secure and stable situation has been enabled through the implementation and strengthening of democratic structures. A massive peacekeeping mission in Liberia becomes increasingly obsolete from the perspective of the member states in the Security Council. There was a substantial debate about the withdrawal of the UN troops from Liberia in preparation of the extension of UNMIL's mandate in 2010. This development brought the mission under strong pressure of justifying its own existence. UN-officials in DPKO, New York play a meditative role. They represent the mission in the Security Council, but they also remind the Mission of their obligations and duties towards their "masters" and push for quick results. In the office of the SRSG they try to forge the different positions and lines of work of the mission together to one position that can comply with the requirements of New York. A member of the office of the SRSG described this work as essential, as here all the different program lines and

processes come together to one big picture. But the different stances of the different persons in charge of the programs are very hard to bring in line with the picture which is required by the IOT in New York and would need extensive diplomatic effort within the mission itself. Through this work the influence of informal crosscutting networks e.g. spreading rumors in New York decreases. Through this hierarchical selection process the SRSG (and her office) also try to take control over the strategy of resistance against the pressure from New York, defending her autonomy and authority. The hierarchical structure of the mission however also protects the daily work of the mission on national and subnational level to be substantially influenced by New Yorker requirements.[28]

Obstruction is a quite common form of resistance especially if it comes to the acceptance of policies and guidelines from New York. The main reason for this form of resistance is that the realities "on the ground" in Liberia, the way how processes are managed and programmers are implemented differs gravely from the way officials in New York think they are (or should be). Even though officials stress that the guidance and policies are made together with the field and for the field, there is a general awareness that the dynamics in the mission and in New York are completely different. This leads to obstructive resistance, as guidance and doctrines remain written documents and no more:

> *"It isn't like in other governmental organisations that a doctrine has major priority or importance. In the UN, nobody directly refers to policy. If somebody needs advice, the usual way would be to call somebody who might know. The triggering down effect of doctrine and guidance is very low." (Interview with UN official in DPKO, New York 2010)*

Especially experienced UN officials in the field ignore these guidelines, view them as an offer rather than an obligation.[29] They know how the game is played and how to do their job. A senior UN official in New York described the UN as the opposite of a rule based Prussian bureaucracy:

> *"It is rather the Byzantine system of loosely connected entities, where someone passes on an information, but the receiver then himself decides if he care or not – and he may as well go on with it as he likes. […]In no national bureaucracy and even in no other multilateral there is such entrepreneurship and autonomy in their [the UN-Official in the Field] work. However, in trying to impose some doctrine or hard basic rules on the basis of information flow and sharing has therefore been very problematic in acceptance." (Interview with Senior UN official in New York, 2010)*

However, policies are to some extent obligatory for the mission and have to be applied to. If they do not fit into the local concept of how processes work, this obligation can lead to obstructive behavior. The Joint Mission Analysis Center of UNMIL, for example, has been assigned to tasks which would formally be part of the Joint Operations Center. The staff of JMAc at that time was better equipped for the job and trusted to fulfill it. This de-facto breaks obligatory UN policy and the mission initiated

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[28] Interviews with UN-officials in UNMIL, Monrovia and DPKO, New York, 2011. See also (Winckler 2011a, 11)
[29] UN officials in New York and Monrovia, 2010/2011.

a reform of these two units. The reform proceeds in a slow process of adaptation that is not expected to be completed before the termination of UNMIL.[30]

Disobedience on the international level often goes hand in hand with obstruction as it never happens overtly in fear of overstretching the authorities of one's individual position. Many references indicate that meetings enable a fairly free discussion on topics and issues. However, this depends very much on the management style of the senior leadership. Interaction in the UN is fundamentally based on the personalities that hold specific positions of authority and on trust relationships and personal acknowledgement. It needs a lot of courage and trust in the supervisor to speak up and criticize specific decisions or processes in the hierarchical structure of the UN as personal opinion can always undermine someone's authority and position.[31] Moreover, the authority over information and interpretation is an important source of power and influence. Especially in a position in which one has to produce long term assessments and analysis, it is essential to have the full backing of the senior leadership. Without such a trust relationship, one gets stuck in a position of minor visibility and recognition, trying to distribute as much business cards as possible without promoting oneself too much and stepping into the territory of somebody else.[32]

Territorial issues also become a relevant source of disobedience together with forms of obstruction in the mission, especially if an issue or policy is pushed by New York. An example is the formulation of the new Peacebuilding Priority Plan for Liberia in 2011.[33] This plan included a restructuring of the programmatic RoL field, as it for the first time in Liberia officially integrates the thematic fields "Security" and "Justice" in one policy document. The initiative includes a great amount of new financial resources. After a negotiation process which included all relevant stakeholders in Liberia, the plan (which officially is a document of the Liberian government) was drafted by a small team led by a delegation of the Peacebuilding Committee in New York. A lot of people in the mission and beyond complained about this process. Many people who are working in the respective thematic field felt that they were excluded from this process and strongly criticized the new concepts. In such a situation *"everybody thinks elbow"*, in fear of losing their individual thematic "territory" and scope of action.[34] In this case, New York however "rammed" this plan very quickly,[35] covering aside disobedience and critique from the personnel involved in the field. It indicates again that within the hierarchical system of the UN with its multiple and sometimes crosscutting authorities it is very

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[30] Interviews with UN officials in Monrovia and New York, 2010/2011.

[31] UNMIL official, Monrovia 2011.

[32] UN official in DPKO, New York, 2011.

[33] For a more detailed account on this process see (Winckler 2011a, 13–14)

[34] UNMIL official, Monrovia, 2011.

[35] Staff member, UN-Agency, Monrovia 2011.

difficult to issue a constructive critique.

Violence is only an issue in the international interaction level if it comes to incidents of breaking the code of conduct and discipline. After several scandals especially concerning sexual abuses by peacekeepers, the UN has developed a strong conduct and discipline mechanism, which intervenes directly from headquarters in New York if it is necessary.[36] Moreover, next to the crisis reaction capacity of UNMIL, DPKO has developed sophisticated methods to rapidly react on incidents of violence.[37] In the event of violence on national or sub-national level, UN-headquarters requests to be directly informed. Even though the actual crisis management is task of the mission, the ultimate responsibility for the mission and its staff lies in the hands of the Secretary General. In the event of a crisis DPKO with its crisis response capacities[38] would step up very close to the mission in terms of reporting. Moreover UN-headquarters would start to intervene on international and national level, using especially diplomatic means, involving the Security Council and the good offices and authority of the Under Secretary General of DPKO and the Secretary General.

Conclusion

The dominance of international actors within Liberia provokes resistance from a variety of actors within the country. The interference of international concepts and policies from NY provokes resistance within UN. These accounts of resistance are central to political debate and could be key to peace building in Liberia. The way peace building currently works, however, provides little mechanisms to deal with resistance beyond discrediting it as obstructive, destructive and spoiling. Resistance is viewed as obstacle to be removed, not as source for alternative practices that might more accurately reflect the needs, goals and aspirations of local actors (Richmond and Mitchell 2012, 327).

Our clustered account of resistance to and within the peacekeeping mission in Liberia has shown that obstruction and informal parallel structures are the most wide-spread forms of resistance. Public discussion, protest or disobedience, the central forms of resistance in a democratic system, are not encouraged by the set-up of the mission. Civilian actors depend on donors to keep their organizations going and refrain from protest. Government actors cannot openly challenge the mission as the mission is formally just supporting the government. Members of the mission cannot openly challenging policies and personal because of the highly hierarchical structure and the importance of assessment protocols for their future career. Violence is discredited on all levels and

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[36] Background talks with former senior UN officials, Berlin 2010, and interview with UN officials in New York, 2010.

[37] The following paragraph is based on several interviews with members of the DPKO Situation Center, officials in the Department of Safety and Security, New York 2011, and officials in UNMIL, Monrovia 2011.

[38] Incuding the Situation Centre (SITCEN), also together with the Department of Safety and Security (DSS).

by all actors and timely suppressed. This leaves little options, but to obstruct for those within the system, or to build parallel structures, for those who are not part of the elite bargaining.

On national and sub-national level, resistance has been integrated into the interventionist setting purely in its destructive form. The main criterion is direct threat for the mission and its mandate. Indirect and productive challenges through an active and capable civil society, a political debate or the inclusion of alternative forms of community organization, are either neglected or solely monitored in the case they could evolve to a direct threat. Especially considering parallel informal structures on the sub-national level one can assume that this also is a result of a lack of knowledge of the interveners. Clearly a learning process is difficult, as these structures often are held under cover by local actors and authorities. An integration of these structures is even more difficult, as these structures in any way do not fit into the rules and portfolio of intervention. For this the UN would have to change its organizational outline from a policy driven to a demand driven approach, putting context specific learning first and implementation second (Campbell 2008). Interestingly however, the interventionist setting of both, government and UN, has little means of sanctioning these informal structures, even though they break the rules of intervention.[39] As peacebuilding fails to sanction or include parallel structures, they continue to exist. If these also provide a local foundation of factional power, this can well turn out to be a threat to the sustainability of the peace process in the long run.

On international level the important line of differentiation are the rules. These rules are ensured by the hierarchical system of the UN and serve as the baseline of individual action by UN officials. Thus rule-breaking behavior such as violence is condemned and the UN-administration has built up capacities to react on outbreak of violence. Similarly the effects of hierarchy breaking informal networks have been minimized by a strict hierarchical information selection processes. This does not mean that informal networks cease to exist. In contrary, informal networks remain a major source of individual influence and creative power in the UN. But under the current leadership of UNMIL it has been able to install an official communication line between the mission and headquarters in New York that brings together all the different stances to one official position. Through this, the mission leadership can ensure the authority and autonomy of the mission. Even if the informal networks are not sanctioned, they are to some extent controlled and thus integrated in the working culture of the UN. On the other hand, rule abiding resistance is tolerated only to a specific extent. It is especially the lack of disobedience which is of concern here, as the organizational and political mix of authorities makes it hard for individuals to stand up for a critical and/or constructive stance without having to fear for their own position. Such constructive disobedience is based on personality and the

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[39] On national level there are some sanction, such as the fight against corruption.

backing and trust of superiors. The result of this is people "scrubbing reports".[40] Disobedience becomes an obstructive behavior, which is tolerated when it serves the organizational survival of the different entities of the UN.

In conclusion we observe that some of the practices of resistance in postwar Liberia are surely destructive (such as violence, corruption etc.) and it is important to reduce and prevent them. This can only be successful, however, if alternative forms of resistance, such as disobedience, are encouraged and successful. The current set-up in Liberia is not conducive to a constructive integration of resistance into the peace building project on both sides; within the mission and between the mission and the Liberians. Resistance is not assessed as indicators of problems, gaps or shortcomings. On international level the UN also minimally encourages such an inclusion of wisdom, as constructive resistance is either sanctioned or neglected. Thus it seems that the priority of the UN is organizational survival rather than constructive openness to the challenging environment they are engaged in. This is to some extent understandable, bearing in mind that the history of peacekeeping especially in the 1990s was accompanied by huge failures and catastrophes. However, one can expect that neglecting the constructive forces of society undermines the peace process of Liberia in the long run. The current set-up of the international intervention, intended to build a liberal democracy, fails to build an environment conducive to such a condition.

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[40] Senior Advisor, UN, Monrovia, 2011.

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