THE ROLE OF INTERNATIONAL POLICING IN POST-CONFLICT DEVELOPMENT: THE CASE OF LIBERIA

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Abstract

The United Nations has utilized international policing contingents in post-conflict peacekeeping missions for many decades. Their utility in stabilizing peace and the rule of law has been well recognized. Their direct impact on economic development, however, has been less discussed in the academic literature. This article explores the role that the policing element of the United Nations Mission in Liberia has had on the economic development of that country. This is discussed with special attention to Paul Collier's concept of the 'conflict trap' and how international police can help post-conflict states escape it.

1. Introduction

Since the 1960s police officers have been used in United Nations peacekeeping missions to help stabilize post-conflict situations. In the first missions in which they were deployed, police officers served mainly as monitors and instructors. Their missions and responsibilities have evolved over time and have grown so far as to include what are called executive policing missions, in which international police take over full law enforcement responsibility in the recipient country. In the past 40 years international police officers have been sent to Haiti, Kosovo, Cambodia, Mozambique, East Timor, Iraq, and Panama among many other places. The responsibilities of the police have varied with the goals of the given mission.

One of the roles of international policing contingents that doesn't get enough attention is the important part they play in economic development. Their importance to stability and peace has of course been recognized, that is usually their main purpose, but this has rarely been explicitly seen as directly contributing to economic development as it should be. The role that peace and

stability play in economic development has received attention in the scholarly literature most especially by Paul Collier who has detailed the problem of the "conflict trap." Yet even he, though he speaks at length about the need for peacekeeping soldiers, fails to realize the importance that international policing plays in helping to overcome these traps.

The current United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL) provides a perfect opportunity to explore this function of international police officers more closely. UNMIL has been active in Liberia since the end of the most recent civil war in 2003 and the policing element of it has widely been considered to be one of its most important components. The establishment of an impartial and effective police force has been a cornerstone of Liberian development and much rides on the success of the international policing mission there.

This article will explore Liberia's development problems, especially as they relate to the conflict trap, and how international policing is contributing to Liberia's current and future economic growth. The paper is divided into three main sections. The first section describes Liberia's long struggle with civil war and how this has devastated the Liberian economy. It also outlines Paul Collier's argument about conflict traps and how Liberia serves as a perfect example of a country that has been caught in such a trap. The second section explores how conflict traps can be escaped and discusses the need for external intervention, particularly with international police contingents, for doing so. The third section describes the current United Nations international police force in Liberia, what it has already contributed to Liberian economic development and why it is essential if Liberia is to permanently escape its debilitating conflict trap.

2. Liberia's Conflict Trap

Liberia has been one of the most underperforming countries in Africa and is today considered not only underdeveloped but failed. Though there are many reasons for Liberia's failure, there is a strong argument to be made that conflict is most to blame. World Bank economist Paul Collier has explored how conflict

stunts development, especially in the poorest countries of the world. He describes a vicious cycle of poverty leading to conflict and conflict leading to more poverty which then leads to even more conflict. He calls this the "conflict trap" and argues that it can be triggered by civil wars, rebellions, and coups. Collier discovered that low income, low growth societies are the most likely to experience internal conflict and civil war. Once such a conflict begins, growth is retarded even further and conflict becomes even more likely in the future. Collier writes that "wars and coups keep low-income countries from growing and hence keep them dependent upon exports of primary commodities. Because they stay poor, stagnant, and dependent upon primary commodities they are prone to wars and coups. Wars and coups feed on themselves in other ways that make history repeat itself."[1]

There is perhaps no better example of a country caught in the conflict trap than that of Liberia. Conflict has been rife in Liberia since black settlers from the United States arrived in 1822 and then declared an independent republic in 1847. The attempt by these settlers to impose their authority over the indigenous population instantly lead to prolific and long-lasting political and military conflict. As Jeremy Levitt describes it,

> the Republic of Liberia's political and jurisdictional authority was limited, as indigenous nations…had no interest in becoming subjects of the settlers' nation-state, which they considered to be their competitor and enemy. Throughout the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, indigenous Liberians, most notably the Gola, Bassa, and Kru, generally believed that the settlers should integrate with them rather than erect a hostile competitive nation. However, integration did not occur, and for the latter part of the nineteenth century, the majority of indigenous village-states remained legally, politically, economically, and militarily independent, as the republic did not possess the military capacity to conquer them or their territory.[2]

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1 Paul Collier, *The Bottom Billion: Why the Poorest Countries Are Failing and What Can Be Done About It*, (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2007), 37.

2 Jeremy I Levitt, *The Evolution of Deadly Conflict in Liberia: From 'Paternaltarianism' to State Collapse*, Durham, N.C.: (Carolina Academic Press, 2005)., 3.

From the arrival of the settlers in 1822 until 2003 when the United Nations sent its peacekeeping force to Liberia, there were 18 deadly conflicts in Liberia which Levitt records in a chart that is reproduced in Figure 1 below. While most of these conflicts did not reach the level of casualties typically used to define civil wars (at least 1,000 deaths with each side suffering at least five percent of these casualties[3]), they do demonstrate a cycle of violence that has been present in Liberia since even before its official founding. The most devastating of these conflicts were the *coup d'etat* in 1980, the Great War of 1989-97, and the second incarnation of the Great War lead by the LURD and MODEL insurrectionists in 1999-2003.

Figure 1. Liberian Conflicts[4]

Conflict	Years
Dei-British/Settler "Water Battle"	1822
Dei-Settler War	1822
Dei-Gola-Settler War	1832
Bassa-Settler War	1835
Kru-Settler "Fish" Conflict	1838
Vai-Settler Battles	1839-40
Bassa-Government War	1851-52
Kru-Government War	1855
Grebo-Maryland War	1856-57
Gedebo Reunited Kingdom Revolution	1875-76
Grebo-Government War	1893
Kru-Government Battles	1909
Grebo-Government War	1910
Kru-Government Conflict	1912
Kru-Confederacy-Government War	1915
Coup d'etat of the Tolbert Regime	1980
Great War	1989-97
The Great War continued: LURD and MODEL	1999-2003

From the end of the Kru-Confederacy-Government War in 1917 until the *coup d'etat* of 1980 the country enjoyed relative peace

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3 Collier, *The Bottom Billion*, 18.

4 Levitt, *The Evolution of Deadly Conflict in Liberia*, 6.

and stability as the Americo-Liberians were able to consolidate their control over the government. The government, however, developed as a paternalistic and exclusionary oligarchic democracy that provided for the maintenance of Americo-Liberian dominance and repressed indigenous groups.

By 1980, ethnic tensions and traditional animosities were beginning to bubble to the top of Liberian consciousness again. This tension was magnified by the incompetence and perceived corruption of President Tolbert and his regime. A decision to increase the tax on rice, the primary staple food in Liberia, and the invocation of a 150 year old law which prevented poor and landless Liberians from voting, resulted in wide-spread rioting and mass protests in Monrovia.

Samuel Doe, a Master Sergeant in the AFL (Armed Forces of Liberia) and an ethnic Krahn, capitalized on the discontent and lead a *coup d'etat* which successfully overthrew the Tolbert Presidency on April 12, 1980. During the *coup* President Tolbert was brutally murdered and the leader of the Senate, the Speaker of the House of Representatives, the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court, and other high-ranking officials of the government were seized and imprisoned. However non-inclusive the previous oligarchic government had been, it had been much better than what was to come.

The government was immediately turned into a system of personal patronage to Samuel Doe. Author John-Peter Pham writes that immediately after the coup, "despite the wretched state of public finances, the new rulers raised military salaries by 150 percent and civil service salaries by 100 percent. In addition...between 1980 and 1983, the number of people drawing a government salary went from 18,000 to 56,000. Not surprisingly, the Liberian government's international debt increased from $750 million to over $1.4 billion during the same period."[5]

Doe also rewarded his ethnic brethren, the Krahn, and gave them favored positions in government beyond what their proportion of

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[5] John-Peter Pham, L*iberia: Portrait of a Failed State*, (New York: Reed Press, 2004), p 81-82.

the population would normally dictate. Though constituting only five percent of the total Liberian population, within a few years of Doe coming to power they filled one-third of government positions and lead all four of the AFL's infantry battalions. Krahns also lead the Executive Mansion Guards and the Special Anti-Terrorist Unit.[6]

The new government was financially incompetent and the GDP suffered negative growth every year of Doe's presidency.[7] Any prospects of legitimate governance and economic development in Liberia died with President Tolbert in April 1980 and Samuel Doe's resultant assumption of power.

Collier argues that once a coup is carried out, further violence becomes more likely. This turned out to be the unfortunate case with Liberia. Doe's regime was first challenged by the NPFL (National Patriotic Front of Liberia) in 1989. The group was lead by Charles McArthur Taylor, who had once been a member of Doe's government until 1983 when he was accused of embezzling nearly a million dollars in government funds. He fled to the United States where he was imprisoned and held for fifteen months until he managed to escape in 1985. He then eventually made his way back to Liberia where he was able to play on the ethnic grievances of his fellow Gola and other tribal groups that had been excluded and repressed by Doe.

The insurrection lead by Taylor was a long and bloody one that did incalculable damage to the Liberian economy. Attempted intervention by regional groups, such as that of ECOMOG (Economic Community of West African States Cease-fire Monitoring Group) only seemed to add an additional party to the fighting. ECOMOG did, however, manage to arrange a short-lived truce in 1991 that allowed for the election of Amos Sawyer as President. The NPFL resumed hostilities in October 1992 and a long period of guerilla warfare followed. Taylor used revenues from the sale of timber, iron ore, diamonds, rubber and gold, which is estimated to have equaled around $250 million a year, to finance his rebellion.[8]

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6 Pham, Liberia:, 83.

7 Pham, Liberia:, 84.

8 Pham, Liberia:, 114.

A negotiated settlement was finally reached in 1997 and an election was held. Because people were afraid that the war would continue if Taylor was not elected, he won with a landslide victory of just over 75% of the vote. The vote was overseen by the UN and other outside groups and individuals, such as former U.S. President Jimmy Carter, to ensure its fairness and legitimacy. Even so, many Liberians remained unsatisfied with Taylor's continuation in power and the peace was a fragile one. In early 1999 a group calling itself Liberians United for Reconciliation and Democracy (LURD) launched attacks in northern Liberia from their base in Guinea. Another group, MODEL (Movement for Democracy in Liberia) composed of former Doe supporters, also rebelled against the Liberian government and Charles Taylor in particular.

After another six years of fighting, Charles Taylor resigned as President of Liberia on August 11, 2003 after being indicted for war crimes by the International Court of Justice for his involvement in atrocities in Sierra Leone and after strong pressure from U.S. President George W. Bush to step down. LURD and MODEL both signed a peace agreement on August 18 and the long civil war finally came to a conclusion, but only after it had resulted in hundreds of thousands killed, many more thousands of internally and externally displaced refugees, and almost complete economic melt-down. The Great War had made Liberia a failed state.

Paul Collier and fellow researchers at the World Bank make clear the exorbitant costs that conflict has on development. One of the primary costs is that of paying for the military forces themselves and then for the damage that they cause. "During a civil war a society diverts some of its resources from productive activities to destruction. This causes a double loss: the loss from what the resources were previously contributing and the loss from the damage that they now inflict."[9] Both of these costs obviously have a severe negative impact on economic growth and development. Instead of the average military expenditure among

9 Collier, Paul, V.L. Elliott, Havard Hegre, Anke Hoeffler, Marta Reynal-Querol, and Nicholas Sambanis, *Breaking the Conflict Trap: Civil War and Development Policy, A World Bank Policy Research Report*, Washington, D.C.: The International Bank for Reconstruction and Development/The World Bank, 2003., 13.

developing countries of 2.8% of GDP, states involved in civil conflict typically spend 5% of their GDP on the military, and this does not include the expenditures of the rebel groups. Over a seven-year period it is estimated that this level of growth in military expenditure causes an overall loss of 2 percent of GDP.[10]

The most obvious economic costs of conflict are seen in the destruction of infrastructure. A functional infrastructure is essential to economic growth. When this infrastructure is destroyed it disrupts trade, communication, and travel. Collier and his colleagues make particular mention of Liberia in this regard. "During the war in Liberia in the mid-1990s," they say, "all major infrastructures were damaged and looted. Monrovia, the largest port, suffered major damage during the first few months of the war, most of the electricity generating capacity of the Liberian Electricity Corporation was destroyed, and looting removed much of the distribution and transmission systems. Infrastructure," they conclude, "is an important determinant of economic growth and so destruction of infrastructure on such a scale is bound to reduce incomes."[11]

Figure #2: Key Economic Ratios and Long-Term Trends[12]

	1986	1996	2005	2006
GDP (US$ billions)	0.93	0.16	0.53	0.63
Gross Capital Formation/GDP	--	--	16.5	--
Exports of goods and services/GDP	50.1	--	38.0	27.8
Gross domestic savings/GDP	4.5	--	2.4	--
Gross national savings/GDP	--	--	39.9	--
Current account balance/GDP	--	--	-1.7	-11.6
Interest payments/GDP	1.6	0.2	0.0	--
Total debt/GDP	155.0	1,321.6	487.9	--

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10 Collier, et al, *Breaking the Conflict Trap*, 14.

11 Collier, et al, *Breaking the Conflict Trap*, 15.

12 World Bank, "Liberia at a Glance."

Though statistics during Liberia's war years are difficult to come by, some numbers provided by the World Bank, and reproduced in Figure 2, provide a partial picture of how badly conflict has damaged the Liberian economy. The dramatic decline in GDP from 1986 to 1996 is one of the most tangible demonstrations of the cost that the civil war has had on the national economy. Even by 2006, three years after the conflict had ended, the GDP was still nearly one-third less than it was twenty years earlier. In fact, Collier and his World Bank colleagues argue that the end of a conflict by no means indicates the end of economic decline. Instead, they argue that the "economic and health costs of conflict are not usually compensated by any postconflict improvements in economic policy, democratic institutions, or political freedom. On the contrary, all three usually deteriorate. The typical civil war starts a prolonged process of development in reverse."[13]

It is for this reason, the reverse development that post-civil war societies can face, that Collier and his colleagues argue that international intervention is essential. There is likely no other way to get such societies back on their feet and functioning properly. If left to fend for themselves without intervention, these countries will continue to suffer negative growth and therefore be even more likely to fall back into conflict – as Liberia has done throughout its bloody history.

3. Breaking the Conflict Trap

If it is recognized that the conflict trap is the primary cause of Liberia's underdevelopment and poverty problems then it must also be recognized that finding its way out of that trap will be essential to the country's future economic growth. The problem is that conflict traps are self-sustaining. Collier and his colleagues find that "once a country has had a civil war it is far more at risk of further war. This is partly because war leaves the society divided and embittered, and partly because war creates interests that favor continued violence and criminality."[14] In fact, their

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13 Collier, et al, *Breaking the Conflict Trap*, 12.

14 Collier, et al, *Breaking the Conflict Trap*, 22.

research indicates that there is a 44% chance that a country emerging from civil war will return to conflict within five years.[15]

Because of this high likelihood of renewed war, it is extremely difficult for states to escape a conflict trap without external assistance. Countries emerging from civil conflict are much more likely to remain on a peaceful path that is conducive to economic development if they are the recipients of outside intervention. Not just any type of intervention, however, will be effective. According to Collier's research, "in many postconflict environments neither aid, nor policy reform nor even new democratic political institutions can realistically secure peace during the first few years. External military intervention may be the only practical guarantor of peace."[16]

There are several reasons that external intervention is so important. One is that the maintenance of peace requires a robust military presence. Yet fielding such a sizable force is costly and has major budgetary repercussions which impact the country's ability to spend money on needed development initiatives. Maintaining a large army also reduces the labor force available to other sectors of the economy.[17] It has been demonstrated that high military spending reduces growth and reduced growth is precisely the opposite of what a post-conflict society needs.[18]

In addition to the economic costs of maintaining high levels of military spending, such spending has itself been found to actually *increase* rather than decrease the chances of reverting to war. Collier and his colleagues provide a possible reason for this. They argue that high levels of military spending "inadvertently signals that the government lacks confidence in the persistence of peace. An important post conflict problem is that neither side trusts the other, thus the more the government spends on the military, the more the rebel organization may think that it too has to prepare

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15 Collier, et al, *Breaking the Conflict Trap*, 83.

16 Collier, et al, *Breaking the Conflict Trap*, 10.

17 Collier, et al, *Breaking the Conflict Trap*, 161.

18 Collier, et al, *Breaking the Conflict Trap*, 86.

for the renewal of conflict. Such mutual military escalation can easily trigger incidents that re-ignite the conflict."[19]

Post-conflict societies find themselves in a position in which they require a robust military force to maintain peace but face the dilemma that by actually fielding such a force they will be retarding their own economic development and may actually fuel renewed conflict by unintentionally threatening opposition groups. The use of external forces avoids these problems. The presence of external forces reduces the financial costs of maintaining a large indigenous force thereby freeing up money for other essential budgetary concerns. External forces are also less likely to rouse the fear of opposition groups and may help put an end to the vicious cycles of militarization fueled by various competing groups.

The role of external military intervention in the extrication of countries from conflict traps is fairly well established in Collier's work. Conspicuously absent, however, has been discussion of the role of police officers in this task. While the military is indeed important, police officers often play an even more primary role in establishing internal stability, especially in democratically oriented societies. International police officers have much to offer in terms of helping countries escape from conflict traps and their potential value should not be underestimated.

Police officers are inherently less threatening than heavily armed military personnel. They are also likely to have more frequent interactions with common citizens and play a more visible role in society. Police officers often serve as the public face of government and the extent to which they are trusted by the population will have a major impact on that population's trust of the government as a whole. Public trust, in turn, is essential to the maintenance of the internal peace and stability necessary for economic development. Furthermore, police are also responsible for cracking down on corruption and stemming violent crime; two vital tasks in preventing resumptions of conflict. The international police officers assigned to UNMIL, the United Nations Mission in Liberia, have played a major role in helping Liberia

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19 Collier, et al, *Breaking the Conflict Trap*, 152.

escape its decades long conflict trap. The following section describes the make-up of the UNMIL police mission and details how police officers have been utilized to break Liberia's conflict trap and to provide the necessary societal conditions for economic development.

4. UNMIL

In October 2003 the United Nations Security Council passed resolution 1509 authorizing the establishment of UNMIL for a twelve-month period. Its mandate has been renewed every year since that time and its mission remains on-going. An election was organized and held in 2005 that culminated in the inauguration of Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf, a Harvard educated Liberian who had previously worked for the World Bank, as the new President. President Johnson-Sirleaf vowed to rebuild Liberia into a functioning state and has taken numerous measures to spur economic development. One of her first priorities in this regard, and a top priority for UNMIL as well, has been to restore the Liberian National Police (LNP) to being a trusted, effective and professional policing organization.

All involved in the country's post-war development have recognized that an effective and impartial police department is a necessary first step for economic recovery in Liberia. The police are seen as essential to the maintenance of peace and in preventing a return to the conflict that so ravished the Liberian economy and society for most of its history. A report by the non-profit organization Refugees International, for example, argues that "progress on development in Liberia will not be sustainable if there is no rule of law."[20] Trusted police are important for both economic development and for democratic stability as John Mueller notes in an article published in the *Journal of Peace Research*. "Stable democracies," he writes, "almost by definition have effective policing forces."[21]

Policing is an especially important issue in Liberia because the LNP's reputation as an impartial police force was badly tarnished during the long years of conflict. Festus B. Aboagye and Alhaji

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20 Refugees International, 1.

21 Mueller, 511.

M.S. Bah note that "former President Taylor's first move when he came to power was to infuse the LNP with his loyalists, thereby compromising their neutrality and professionalism. In addition, the LNP was often accused of corrupt practices and human rights violations as its officers, with meager remunerations falling into arrears for many months on end, tried to make ends meet. Consequently, by the end of the civil war public confidence in the LNP was at its lowest."[22] Along the same lines, a UNMIL document notes that during the civil wars of the past "ordinary Liberians could not distinguish the gun-totting rebel combatants who killed, raped and maimed indiscriminately from the country's police personnel."[23]

Lack of trust in the police department is a serious problem, especially immediately following a civil war when stability is at its most fragile and the country is struggling to free itself from the conflict trap. If a democratic government is to take hold and if the peace and stability necessary for economic and social development are to survive, then a police force recognized as legitimate by the people it is meant to protect is essential.

Michael Kelly, an expert on international policing, makes the crucial point that:

> ...a common feature in the cause of conflict has been the insecurity felt or attacks endured by one particular ethnic, religious, or national group. This is often because the group has lost confidence in the administration of justice to secure their human rights, protect their cultural identity, and guarantee their physical safety. In these cases, or in the case of rebellion against an authoritarian regime, the problem has been that the mechanisms of 'justice' have been the instruments of repression in the first place. Addressing the issue of the administration of justice therefore goes to the

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22 Aboagye and Alhaji, 8.

23 Washington, J. Wesley, "Police Training Crosses Target," *UNMIL Focus*, Vol. 3, No. 4, June-August 2007, pp. 6-7, downloaded from:

http://unmil.org/documents/focus/unmilfocus12.pdf on 12/2/07.

heart of the conflict resolution objective of a peace operation.[24]

This has definitely been the case throughout Liberia's history. Each authoritarian regime that has come to power has rewarded members of its own ethnic group with positions in the LNP at the expense of other groups and has relied upon the police as a mechanism of political repression. A failure to break this trend would almost certainly result in renewed conflict and a consequent decline in economic development, making the intercession of an external and independent police force all the more necessary.

Liberia is also in special need of a functioning police force due to the high level of unemployment, especially among youths, and the extremely high crime rates. An explosion of crime is typical in post-civil war societies. Many of the rebels that were involved in the previous civil wars have no skills other than shooting guns and these young men pose a dangerous criminal threat to the country. Collier notes that the rate of homicides is higher in post-conflict countries[25] and Liberia has also had severe problems with other violent crimes such as armed robbery and rape.

As a report completed by the RAND corporation puts it, "Liberia faces a present danger of growing lawlessness and poor public safety, owing primarily to its large pool of jobless and unschooled youth, whose only experience is fighting. If public safety and the rule of law are not established and maintained, odds are all too good that more severe domestic threats will arise."[26] If criminal behavior goes unchecked, criminal gangs are likely to develop and to eventually evolve into full-fledged rebel groups. This would have the potential of leading right back into the type of civil conflict that Liberia has struggled for so long to escape. In addition to being key to ending conflict traps, the maintenance of law and order is essential to economic growth in other ways as well. Foreigners will not invest in Liberia if they do not believe

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24Michael J Kelly,., "Legitimacy and the Public Security Function," *Policing the New World Disorder: Peace Operations and Public Security,* Robert B. Oakley, Michael J. Dziedzic and Eliot M. Goldberg (eds.), Honolulu: University Press of the Pacific, 2002., 400.

25 Collier, *The Bottom Billion*, 34.

26 Gompert, et al, xiv.

that their assets will be protected. Likewise, Liberian businessmen will not be able to make a profit if they are vulnerable to vandalism, theft, or extortion. Lawlessness prevents economic development and economic development is necessary in preventing a backslide into conflict.

If Liberia is to escape the conflict trap it must overcome its legacy of police corruption and involvement in repression. This is necessary to increase the public's trust of government overall, to reduce criminality, to prevent the formation of large criminal groups that operate with impunity, and to lay the foundations needed for economic development. The obvious need for a totally rebuilt Liberian police force is what prompted UNMIL to add a strong contingent of international police officers to its peacekeeping mission.

As of August 2007 UNMIL had an authorized contingent of 14,875 military personnel and 1,240 police officers. These officers have been contributed to the mission by sixty-four countries around the world.[27] The UNMIL mission also has attached to it the first ever all-female Formed Police Unit comprised of 103 women police officers from India. It is hoped that the women will help recruit Liberian women into the LNP and that female officers will improve the investigation of rape cases, which remains one of the biggest criminal problems in Liberia. The primary mission of the UNMIL police force is to monitor and train the LNP. The officers also engage in joint-patrols, especially at night, and conduct riot-control operations. The only international police officers that are armed are those responsible for riot control, about 600 officers in total. The officers do not have full law-enforcement authority, but they do have the authority to detain people in conjunction with an LNP officer.

In its primary task of training police officers for the LNP, the UNMIL force has already passed its initial goal of 3,500 police officers, about 200 of which are women. The goal has since been increased to 6,000. About 300 officers have received specialized training in riot control and tactical operations. A functioning

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27 Nicholas Cook, "Liberia's Post-War Recovery: Key Issues and Developments," CRS Report for Congress, August 30, 2007, downloaded from:

http://www.fas.org/sgp/crs/row/RL33185.pdf on 12/2/07., 4-5.

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police academy has been developed, with a separate cafeteria and dorm-rooms for female recruits, that will enable more efficient and effective training in the future. Additionally, Liberia has decided to develop a Quick Reaction Unit within the LNP of about 500 officers. The members of the unit will have substantial firepower and they are meant to be half way between police and military units. Their primary purpose will be to respond to fledgling insurgencies and other domestic disorders.

The work of both the UNMIL officers and the LNP officers that they have trained seems to be paying off. According to the Millennium Challenge Corporation's scorecard on Liberia, the rule of law in the country has improved. Compared to a median score of 0 for all African countries, Liberia scored -0.64 in 2004 in the rule of law category. The score remained the same in 2005 and then worsened in 2006 (-0.9). The 2007 score (-0.75) was an improvement over the 2006 score but was still worse than the original score in 2004. The worsened scores in these two years may reflect better reporting practices as the reporting system in 2004 was still very dysfunctional and there was little trust of police amongst the population.[28] It is possible that within a few years Liberia will be above the median and have a positive score in the area of rule of law.

There remain, however, serious challenges to the Liberian justice system. Despite the emphasis on training, professionalism is still sometimes a problem with the LNP. A prime example of this is an incident that occurred on July 8, 2007 between the LNP and the Liberian seaport police (LSP). LNP officers were attempting to investigate allegations of theft at the port, which the LSP thought was under its jurisdiction. The police director, Beatrice Munah Sieh, was apparently taken hostage by the LSP and the LNP attempted to arrest Ashfold Peal, the port's security chief. Nearly forty officers from both forces were hospitalized in the subsequent melee.[29] These types of incidents obviously impact the public's perception of the police and their ability to enforce the law in an impartial and professional manner. Clear lines of authority need to be established in order to prevent future jurisdictional confusions.

28 Millennium Challenge Corporation.

29 The Economist Intelligence Unit, 11-12.

Crime itself continues to be a problem. Armed robbery and rape still occur at extremely high frequencies despite multiple programs to reduce the incidence of these crimes. The increased emphasis on recruiting female officers will hopefully lead to better investigations of rape cases. The President has also launched two special operations "Operation Calm Down Fear," which has increased random security checks and patrols in Monrovia, and "Operation Sweeping Wave," which involves heightened day and night-time patrols and increased search activities, to help reduce all manner of crimes.[30]

Equipment procurement also remains a difficult challenge. In an August 2007 UN report to the Secretary-General it is noted that "although significant progress has been made in meeting the training benchmarks for the Liberian National Police, its operational effectiveness is constrained by the lack of adequate funding, vehicles, communication equipment, and accommodation."[31] As an example of the chronic under-funding experienced by the LNP the report points out that "in Grand Cape Mount County, where the police have only one vehicle and a motorbike for use by 42 officers, the county commander pays for the fuel and maintenance of the vehicle from his own salary. He also provides the fuel for a donated generator and food for detainees from his personal resources."[32] Fewer than half of police personnel have basic equipment available for their use.[33] Another challenge facing the rule of law in Liberia is beyond the control of the LNP or the civilian-policing element of UNMIL. This has to do with the weak judicial system and correctional system. The latest UN progress report notes that:
the development of the judicial and correctional systems has been very slow. The judicial system is constrained by limited infrastructure, shortage of qualified personnel, lack of capacity to process cases, poor management and lack of necessary will to institute reforms. As a result of these shortcomings, many Liberians have little confidence in the justice system.[34]

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30 United Nations Security Council, . 3.

31 United Nations Security Council, 16-17.

32 United Nations Security Council, 6.

33 Refugees International, 1.

34 United Nations Security Council, p9.

The justice system functions as a whole and whatever strides the LNP makes toward professionalism and effectiveness will be largely irrelevant if the rest of the system does not also improve. Reform in this sector must be comprehensive and include police, corrections officers, attorneys, and judges. Attorneys and judges are obviously the most difficult to reform since they require a great deal of training and education and because judgeships are often highly politicized.   Even with these severe challenges, the UNMIL policing unit has accomplished quite a bit in a short period of time. They have exceeded their goal of training 3,500 LNP officers, they have established a working police academy, they have made concerted efforts to recruit women, and perhaps most importantly, they seem to have developed some respect with the civilian population. The Economist Intelligence Unit report on Liberia indicates that the new police force "is generally viewed by Liberians as a post-war success story" and that UNMIL "has given crucial support to the LNP."[35] These achievements have contributed substantially to maintaining the peace in Liberia and providing for the necessary environment for economic growth. So far UNMIL, and the police officers that have served in it, have prevented Liberia from falling back into the conflict trap.

5. Prospects for Liberia's Future Development

It is possible to be cautiously optimistic about the prospects for Liberia's future economic development. The latest UN progress report states that "Liberia's economy has begun to rebound. The growth rate, which was 5.3 per cent in 2005, has increased to 7.9 per cent in 2007. The gross domestic product (GDP) at current prices is estimated at US$ 574.5 million, with a per capita income of US$ 163."[36] This fast-paced growth rate is expected to rise even higher in 2008, up to 11%.[37] This rate of growth is quite an achievement for a country that has just emerged from a two-decades long civil war and long-term economic decline.

In 2004, Liberia only passed one of the fifteen indicators on the Millennium Challenge Corporation's scorecard, that of inflation. It

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35 The Economist Intelligence Unit, 12.

36 United Nations Security Council, 11.

37 The Economic Intelligence Unit, 2.

failed in political rights, civil liberties, control of corruption, government effectiveness, rule of law, voice and accountability, immunization rates, health expenditures, primary education expenditures, primary education completion, economic regulatory control, credit rating, days necessary to start a business, trade policy and fiscal policy. In fiscal year 2009 Liberia is passing in eight categories, including political rights, civil liberties, voice and accountability, immunization rates, health expenditures, inflation, fiscal policy, and, perhaps most significantly, control of corruption.[38] In the categories that it does not yet pass, there have been strong improvements, especially in regards to the rule of law for which it scores a -.2 (much improved over the -.9 of 2006).

The International Monetary Fund's (IMF) conclusions about Liberia are also encouraging. They note that Liberia has performed satisfactorily under the IMF staff-monitored program of 2007 and that this has "supported a continued recovery in real GDP growth, relative price and exchange rate stability, and a significant improvement in public financial management and the financial position of the Central Bank of Liberia."[39]

Another positive indicator is the success in returning internally displaced people. By 2006, nearly all such people have returned to their homes. A report by the Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre indicates that "more than 326,000 IDPs returned to their areas of origin and the 35 camps that had hosted them were officially closed in April 2006, formally marking the end of a 17-year period during which much of Liberia's population of three million had at some time been internally displaced."[40] Internal displacement increases poverty and impedes economic development; their resettlement is therefore a positive indicator for the future.

Despite these positive steps, however, Liberia is still not out of the woods. It typically takes a decade for a country to overcome the legacy of civil war and to escape the forces threatening to pull it back into conflict. Collier notes that "the typical postconflict

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38 Millennium Challenge Corporation.

39 International Monetary Fund, 1.

40 Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre, p. 1.

country has little better than a fifty-fifty chance of making it through the first decade in peace. Indeed, about half of all civil wars are postconflict relapses."[41] If the gains that Liberia has already made are to continue and be made permanent then the international community must remain involved. A commitment of at least ten years should be made in order to ensure that Liberia has escaped the conflict trap for good.

6. Conclusion

UNMIL has made it possible for Liberia to move towards a stable peace and economic recovery. The policing element of the mission has been essential in that it has helped quell internal violence, returned legitimacy to the LNP, and provided the necessary foundation for economic development. In other words, the police officers of UNMIL have helped prevent Liberia from falling back into the conflict trap.

The stability provided by the UNMIL mission, and especially the policing element of the mission, has allowed for significant economic growth. This in turn reduces the likelihood of reversion to war in the future. As noted earlier, research suggests that the typical post-conflict country has a 44 percent chance of falling back into civil war over any given five-year period.[42] We also know that with each percentage point of economic growth this risk is reduced by one percent and with each percentage point of decline the risk is increased by one percent.[43] With annual growth rates of between seven to eleven percent, the risk of reversion to civil war has been reduced substantially since the UNMIL mission began. Liberia was totally devastated by its civil wars, however, and therefore is starting from the very bottom. Its position on the lowest rung of the development ladder makes the likelihood of additional conflict in Liberia higher than normal. Preventing this will require a long-term commitment from the international community.

This article has demonstrated that international policing units can make a substantial contribution to economic growth and

41 Collier, *The Bottom Billion*,. 34.

42 Collier, et al, *Breaking the Conflict Trap*,. 83.

43 Collier, *The Bottom Billion*, 20.

development in post-conflict situations. In so far as these units help reduce the risks of the conflict trap they are contributing to economic development. Peaceful conditions and the rule of law are preconditions for a functioning economy and a reliable, trustworthy, and effective police force is a precondition for peaceful conditions and the rule of law. UNMIL has proven its usefulness in keeping Liberia out of the conflict trap. If that aid, however, were to be prematurely withdrawn then Liberia may once again fall into the trap. It is to be hoped that the international community's commitment to Liberia will stand firm. It is also to be hoped that the contribution international policing missions make to economic development and post-war recovery will be recognized and that these missions will become even more heavily relied upon in future post-conflict recovery missions.

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