

UNIVERSITY OF BELGRADE

Faculty of Political Science

Belgrade, September 2024

At the meeting of the Department of International Studies, held on August 29, 2024, the Master Thesis Defense Commission (hereby the Commission) for the candidate Uroš Popadić was formed with the following members: prof. dr Filip Ejdus, assist. prof. dr Marko Kovačević and prof. dr Nemanja Džuverović. The Council for the Second and Third Cycle of Studies has accepted the proposal made by the Department.

After reading the master thesis, the Commission is submitting the following report.

R E P O R T

The master thesis of Uroš Popadić entitled "A Defense of Liberal Peace Building: A Case Study of Two African UN Missions" is 73 pages long and comprised of six chapters, along with the Introduction, the Conclusion and accompanying list of references.

The thesis aims to defend the concept of liberal peacebuilding by analysing it in order to find those sub-concepts within it which are worth preserving in future peace building. It examines two recent UN missions which had parameters based on liberal values, of which one was fully liberal and the other partially so while at the same time being a mission of the stabilisation turn. The thesis critiques the critics of liberal peacebuilding and attempts to provide a *bona fides* critique of the concept to find how it could be preserved and reformed in light of the local turn in peacebuilding, and the failures which exposed its limitations. The author provides a theoretically informed empirical analysis of the two near-contemporaneous missions, by carrying out a comparative case study. The research question focuses on the adaptation of liberal norms through UN peacebuilding, and whether the adoption of such norms through reforms and through interaction with the UN as an international organisation can improve the prospects for peace and reconciliation.

The literature review examines the theoretical postulates of liberal institutionalism in relation to liberal peacebuilding, noting the main concepts and predictions of liberal theory, and applying them to the process of peacebuilding. The smaller part of the review focuses on liberal theory itself and enumerate its various ideas and debates, as well as the main

theoretical concepts which are developed within it. The larger part focuses on peacebuilding in general, and compares liberal-based peacebuilding to its competitors, namely the stabilisation turn and the local turn. This is done to provide an antithesis to the main thesis, and in order to enable a synthesis whereby liberal peacebuilding can be adjusted to contemporary advances in peacebuilding, all the while remaining relevant and useful rather than discarded. This is followed by the explanation of the methodology, which argues for the case studies and the primary method selected. The two missions occurred partially at the same time and quite recently, the two countries recipient of them are in the same region and have cultural similarities, and the mandates of the missions were quite similar and with interesting differences. By juxtaposing a purely liberal mission with one which was liberal in part and partially a stabilisation mission, the author can qualitatively assess the value of liberal norms and processes in relation to peace and reconciliation. Process tracing allows for the missions to be examined in their entirety through the theoretical framework, yielding a wide and widely encompassing context for the examination of the changes inspired by the missions.

The empirical part is separated by the two missions being analysed one by one, and then finalised through a comparative analysis of the main processes. In both cases this begins with an overview of the overall situations in the two countries through secondary sources, in order to provide a general context and to introduce the readers with the countries and their problems. The problems which led the two countries to become in need of international help are noted here, and the immediate causes for their acute crises as well. This is followed by a detailed analysis of the missions by the extensive use of primary sources, chronicling all the events over the entire length of the missions, and the responses of both the UN missions and the local governments to said events. In this way the author constructs a chronological narrative which is theoretically informed and contributes to the overall analysis. The case studies for both countries are themselves divided into two logical halves, as two periods of the respective missions are divided to highlight the changing situations and the development of the missions over time.

The Ivory Coast mission is divided around the middle of it by democratic overthrow of the undemocratic president who attempted to retain power after losing the presidential elections. This allows the juxtaposition of the development of the mission and the reconciliation process under democracy and under authoritarianism, showcasing the different approaches and results within the same mission. The analysis continues after the end of the mission to show the positive results that remained even after the mission's end, as Ivory Coast not only enjoyed peace and democratisation, but became a more constructive member of the

international community. The Mali mission is likewise divided roughly in half by the re-election of the president in the conditions of a hybrid system and of a limited democracy. The author takes this point as after this troubled election the democratic process entered a crisis and the situation in Mali rapidly deteriorated. This section follows the mission right up to the end of the mission, which ended no more than a year from the writing of the thesis.

The final part of the analysis is the comparative process tracing, where the author highlights the main processes which took place during the missions, and overviews them individually. The processes themselves together make up the whole of the process of the mission, and being separated like this allows for an in depth look and for an easier comparison than a general comparison of the missions would give. These processes are based on the mission parameters of the UN missions, which are themselves based on the liberal norms which are inherent to LPB and originate in the UN charter and basic documents. The seven sub-chapters mostly include not only one process at a time but several smaller connected processes which are analysed together. By analysing these processes, the candidate analyses not only the effectiveness of the missions, but also the acceptance of the norms that underline them.

Finally, the discussion provides insight into the theoretical implications of the empirical results in the qualitative case studies, and extrapolates certain results to provide theoretically informed conclusions, which can provide benefits both to the theory and practice of peacebuilding in general and liberal peacebuilding in particular. The most useful elements of liberal peacebuilding are highlighted in order to argue for their continued importance, and care is given to qualify those arguments and to contextualise them in the broader critique of liberal peacebuilding. This is done in reference to the criticisms and limitations of liberal peacebuilding which were set forth in the earlier parts of the thesis, and on the whole while liberal peacebuilding is recommended as useful, at least based on the case study provided, it is argued that it is not always beneficial nor can it be applied without a local turn anymore, instead suggesting an evolution of the concept through the incorporation of alternative theoretical views. The conclusion gives an overview and summation of the thesis, appealing once more for the preservation of the positive and useful elements of liberal peacebuilding.

Based on this report, the Commission concludes that the master thesis "A Defense of Liberal Peace Building: A Case Study of Two African UN Missions" by Uroš Popadić fulfils all the formal criteria for the public defence.

The Commission:

prof. dr Filip Ejdus

assist. prof dr Marko Kovačević

prof. dr Nemanja Džuverović