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New Barbarians at the Gate: Losing the liberal peace in Africa

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Abstract

Within contemporary liberal peace discourse, poverty and underdevelopment are being constructed as 'new threats' that feed conflict and terrorism. This perception has encouraged a growing convergence between the security and development policies of the major donors. However, in Africa, where the need to simultaneously tackle conflict and underdevelopment is most pressing, the global institutions have failed to acknowledge that the neo-liberal policies that they pursue have been instrumental in structuring the domestic political and economic tensions that have contributed to violent conflict. Moreover, the current preoccupation with the war on terror has encouraged the co-option of development resources for security functions resulting in the incremental securitisation of development policies. Regardless of its expanding base and the process of mission creep, the liberal peace complex has failed to secure sustainable peace in Africa. Into the vacuum created by failure, the 'new barbarian'

agenda that underpins the 'war on terror' has surreptitiously moved, expanding its reach and its wake of pillage and destruction.

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Notes

1. The British military has engaged in peacekeeping operations in Sierra Leone but on an independent basis and not as Blue Helmets.
2. James Wolfensohn, keynote address at the Woodrow Wilson International Centre in March 2002.

Additional information

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