

Making Plans for Liberia—a Trusteeship Approach to Good Governance?

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ABSTRACT Since the end of the Liberian civil war in August 2003 the international community has been ‘making plans’ for Liberia. However, it rarely questioned whether these plans were in accordance with the political and economic logic of the peace agreement and the subsequent transitional government. The consequence was that corruption continued and a much more intrusive economic management plan was established. The Governance and Economic Management Assistance Programme (GEMAP) is supposed to combat corruption and facilitate good governance, but it also limits the range of policy options for the new democratically elected government of Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf. The irony is that the best and most legitimate government that Liberia has ever had is subject to stronger external control than any of its predecessors. The probability that this scheme will remain sustainable when donor interest shifts elsewhere is low, and what is needed is a more pragmatic approach that draws a wider segment of Liberian society into anti-corruption management and creates checks and balances between them.

We’re only making plans for Nigel,
we only wants what’s best for him (XTC)

In August 2003 Liberia emerged from a devastating 14-year civil war with almost every single piece of institution and infrastructure broken or bent. In the aftermath of the peace agreement and the National Transitional Government of Liberia (NTGL) that was established, the international community started planning various policy interventions—implementations that ended in frustration when the new Liberian government failed to implement what were seen as proper policies for the country. This was not bound to happen, but the international community was so busy ‘making plans for Liberia’ that it never actually questioned whether these plans were in accordance with the situation prevailing in the country and the political and economic logic of the peace agreement that created the NTGL.

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