

Intervention and dreams of exogenous statebuilding: the application of Liberal Peacebuilding in Afghanistan and Iraq

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Abstract. The central thesis of this article is that when faced with state collapse, rising violence, and a complex stabilisation effort, the US, UN, and NATO in Afghanistan and the US and Britain in Iraq, deployed the dominant, if not only, international approach available, Liberal Peacebuilding. The article traces the rise of Liberal Peacebuilding across the 1990s. It argues that four units of analysis within neoliberal ideology, the individual, the market, the role of the state and democracy, played a key role within Liberal Peacebuilding, allowing it to identify problems and propose solutions to stabilise post-conflict societies. It was these four units of analysis that were taken from the Liberal Peacebuilding approach and applied in Afghanistan and Iraq. The application of a universal template to two very different countries led directly to the fierce but weak states that exist today.

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Introduction

In their introductory and concluding articles for this Special Issue, John MacMillan, George Lawson, and Luca Tardelli seek both to define intervention and more importantly avoid the intellectual sins of ‘presentism’ by historicising the practise, placing it within the distinctly modern international system that gave rise to it. MacMillan examines how a hegemon, wrestling with the ‘increasing complexity’ of the system, deploys coercive intervention as a tool for reimposing order. Lawson and Tardelli,

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using the nineteenth century as an example, examine the ways in which intervention has been used in two contrasting ways, for both the maintenance of international order and its transformation. Intervention was deployed in the periphery of the international system to transform 'backward', 'illegitimate' or 'deficient' targets.

In the immediate aftermath of the attacks on 11 September 2001 (9/11), the Administration of George W. Bush was divided about the extent of their newly declared war against terrorism. Coercive intervention was certainly going to be deployed against Al-Qaeda and their Afghan hosts, the Taliban. Yet the question remained, was the ultimate aim the re-establishment of systemic order and American security? Was the Global War against Terror seeking to vanquish the transnational forces of Al-Qaeda and control the increasingly violent complexity of the globalised international system? Or was 9/11 going to be used as a catalyst to transform the international system as a whole and the deficient states within it?

The day after the attacks themselves, leading hawks, most notably Vice President Richard Cheney and Secretary of Defense, Donald Rumsfeld, certainly made a strong case for the broadest possible definition of terrorism, going well beyond the immediate hunt for Al-Qaeda in Afghanistan.¹ But this ambition sat within their goal of re-establishing order and controlling transnational violence. The nature of these goals complied with Bush's 2000 presidential election campaign, where he had sought to place clear limits on what American power could be used for. There would be no 'foreign policy as social work', no extended forays into the nation building that had bogged the Clinton Administration down in far-flung countries that were of little direct interest to the US.² In the immediate aftermath of 9/11, Bush repeated this injunction, 'I don't want to nation-build with troops.'³

However, within the Administration there were those with an agenda that focused on international transformation. Deputy Secretary of Defense, Paul Wolfowitz, the most influential neo-Conservative in government, put the case for using 9/11 as a catalyst to transform the international system.⁴ For Wolfowitz, the US was 'not just going to pick off individuals. We intend to drain the entire swamp.'⁵ After what was viewed at the time as a successful invasion of Afghanistan, President Bush's position shifted from reimposing order to a commitment to transforming the international system. By the time Bush gave the State of the Union Address on 29 January 2002, terrorism had not only been defined in the broadest sense but had been tied to a set of rogue states, the 'axis of evil', Iraq, Iran, and North Korea. It was these states 'and their terrorist allies' who posed a grave danger to America.⁶ In the State of the Union Address and then more clearly in *The National Security Strategy of the United*

¹ See Bob Woodward's description of the National Security Council meeting on 12 September 2001 in *Bush at War* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2002), pp. 43 and 48.

² See Condoleezza Rice, 'Campaign 2000: Promoting the National Interest', *Foreign Affairs* (January/February 2000).

³ Bush quoted at a National Security Council meeting on 15 October 2001, Woodward, *Bush at War*, p. 229.

⁴ On neo-conservative understandings of international relations and their relationship to neoliberalism see Toby Dodge, 'The ideological roots of failure; the application of kinetic neo-liberalism to Iraq', *International Affairs*, 86:6 (November 2010), pp. 1273–6.

⁵ Paul Wolfowitz, Remarks delivered at the American Jewish Congress, Westin Fairfax Hotel, Washington DC (22 October, 2001), available at: {http://avalon.law.yale.edu/sept11/dod_brief96.asp}.

⁶ See The President's State of the Union Address, The United States Capitol Washington, DC (29 January 2002), available at: {<http://georgewbush-whitehouse.archives.gov/stateoftheunion/2002/>}.

States, published that September, the issues of rogue states, weapons of mass destruction, and terrorism had been forged into one homogenous threat to the continued security of the American people.⁷ The response to this threat was the Bush Doctrine. It proposed a new ‘grand strategy’, with pre-emptive intervention at its core, which would meet these threats with a transformation of the international system as a whole. The ‘right’ to sovereignty would now only be granted when a state had met its ‘responsibilities’ to the international community.⁸ These responsibilities now encompassed the suppression of all terrorist activity on their territory but also the transparency of banking and trade arrangements and the disavowal of weapons of mass destruction.

Military intervention would be deployed to show the ruling elites of errant states that it was in their interests to conform to these new demands or US forces would remove them. Iraq became the first target of these plans to transform the international system. To quote the Under Secretary of State for Defense Planning, Douglas Feith,

one of the principal reasons that we are focussed on Iraq as a threat to us and to our interests is because we are focussed on this connection between three things: terrorist organisations, state sponsors, and weapons of mass destruction.⁹

In seeking to define intervention, MacMillan examines its ‘schizophrenic’ relationship with liberalism. On one hand, as both MacMillan and Little point out, liberalism, when applied to the international, has been deployed in support of self-determination and the universal application of sovereignty. However, MacMillan makes the case that during the 1970s and 1980s, liberalism was also used to further a transformational or ‘civilisational’ project, anchored into its

cosmopolitan notion of a universal human subject . . . , which has in turn sponsored or rationalised interventions in the name of human rights and democracy promotion.

This article is based on the clear distinction between the application of liberalism to the international and neoliberalism’s understanding of how the rational individual’s relations with the market and the state should be organised domestically. It argues that the US-led interventions in Afghanistan and Iraq were initially conceived as limited exercises in the reimposition of systemic order in the wake of the 9/11 attacks. Under this rubric, comparatively small numbers of US troops would be sent into each country to remove those who posed a threat to the United States’ reassertion of international order, the Taliban in Afghanistan and the Ba’ath Party in Iraq. Initially it was thought that in the aftermath of regime change there would be no ‘foreign policy as social work’, no extended use of American troops for nationbuilding. However, once troops had reached Kabul and later Baghdad, events on the

⁷ See Robert S. Litwak, ‘The New Calculus of Pre-emption’, *Survival*, 44:4 (Winter 2002–3); and *The National Security Strategy of the United States of America* (September 2002, available at: {<http://www.whitehouse.gov/nsc/nss.html>}).

⁸ See Remarks by the President at 2002 Graduation Exercise of the United States Military Academy West Point, New York (1 June 2002), available at: {<https://www.mtholyoke.edu/acad/intrel/bush/westpoint.htm>}; *The National Security Strategy of the United States of America*, Richard N. Haass, Director, Policy Planning Staff, ‘The 2002 Arthur Ross Lecture, Remarks to Foreign Policy Association New York, April 22, 2002’, available at: {<http://2001-2009.state.gov/s/p/rem/9632.htm>}; and G. John Ikenberry, ‘America’s Imperial Ambition’, *Foreign Affairs* (September/October 2002), p. 52.

⁹ Quoted by Nicholas Lemman, ‘After Iraq: The Plan to remake the Middle East’, *The New Yorker* (17 February 2003), available at: {http://www.newyorker.com/archive/2003/02/17/030217fa_fact}.

ground forced a transformation of these missions. The absence of coherent state structures in Afghanistan and the collapse of the Iraqi state, coupled with rising levels of politically motivated violence forced the United States to expand the ambition of its occupation. Both Afghanistan and Iraq needed to be rebuilt, order had to be exogenously imposed, elections had to be held so that the US could extricate itself from what were quickly becoming strategic quagmires. It is during this expansion of US ambition that the domestic aspect of a neoliberal discourse rose to the fore. The US, in its efforts to transform the previously 'illegitimate' and 'deficient' states they now controlled, looked not only to neoliberalism for a blueprint but to the dominant approach in conflict resolution and statebuilding, Liberal Peacebuilding. It was the model of Liberal Peacebuilding that had evolved during the 1990s that became the template for US attempts to transform Afghanistan and Iraq. However, the application of a universal template to two very different countries led directly to the fierce but weak states that exist in Afghanistan and Iraq today. The deployment of a Liberal Peacebuilding approach recreated the state's despotic power but singularly failed to reconstruct its infrastructural capacity or positively change the state's relations with its own society.

The ramifications of failure in Afghanistan and Iraq are far reaching, in spite of a substantial and extended exogenous civilian and military presence lasting between eight and thirteen years and the billions of dollars spent, the interventions in Afghanistan and Iraq neither stabilised nor transformed state-society relations in either country. As international interventions increased in number, scope, and ambition after 1989, a doctrine of conflict resolution through state transformation has cohered around a distinctly neoliberal approach to peacebuilding. If this dominant model cannot deliver stability or meaningful change in two of the most extended and generously funded interventions of the twenty-first century, then its central position in shaping policy must be placed in question.

The birth and evolution of Liberal Peacebuilding

The Bush Administration's reaction to the attacks of 9/11, the shift from attempts to re-establish international order to the transformation of the system, were foreshadowed by the transformation of interventionism itself during the 1990s. The end of the Cold War in 1989 triggered the rise of a new form of muscular interventionism that increasingly focused on the abrogation of state sovereignty in the name of reforming 'rogue' or failed state's relations with their own societies. The 1990s not only saw an increase in United Nations peacekeeping missions but also a steady expansion in the ambitious goals they were created to achieve. Berdal and Zaum estimate that of the 49 UN-mandated peacekeeping operations undertaken between 1989 and 2011, 34 had a commitment to statebuilding in their remit.¹⁰

There is however, an analytical controversy about how to categorise these missions and explain the ideational influences driving the growth of post-Cold War interventionism and the ambitious attempts to reform target states. Oisín Tansey has argued

¹⁰ See Mats Berdal and Dominik Zaum, 'Introduction', in Mats Berdal and Dominik Zaum (eds), *Power After Peace: the Political Economy of Post-Conflict State Building* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2012).

that works identifying a specifically 'liberal' approach to intervention, conflate academic and philosophic literature with those documents written by policy practitioners.¹¹ Dominik Zaum, accepts that the rise in peacebuilding has indeed resulted in 'an elaborate institutional architecture at the global and regional level'. However, those who attempt to identify a specifically liberal approach to peacebuilding deliver 'little analytical purchase', instead, he argues, they have created an 'effigy' for critical academics to attack, distracting scholarship from the main task at hand, which should be to examine 'the highly problematic consequences of contemporary peacebuilding practices'.¹²

However, the majority of the academic literature on intervention not only identifies a growth in the ambition of peacekeeping interventions but also an increasing coherence guiding those interventions. This was shaped by a distinctly neoliberal approach to peacebuilding: the goal of reforming the relationship between the individual, the market, and the state in countries that have undergone intervention. The influence of neoliberalism on Liberal Peacebuilding can be traced back to a growth in the transformational ambitions of the international financial institutions during the 1980s and 1990s.¹³ Starting with the Mexican debt crisis of 1982, the external imposition of disciplinary 'market reliance' on financially errant states slowly cohered into the 'Washington Consensus', whose aim was to deliver a 'good governance agenda' reforming public sector management in the name of efficiency, transparency, and accountability.¹⁴

Within the historical evolution of intervention, the growing coherence of Liberal Peacebuilding can be traced through two to three generations of change. This marks an attempt to move away from interventions aimed at system maintenance before 1989, to bold attempts at transforming states across the international system during the 1990s. Traditional, pre-1989 'Westphalian' peacekeeping was used as a mechanism for great power management, imposing order on conflicts that threatened to destabilise the international system. When the threat of disorder was sufficiently dire to bring consensus to the United Nations Security Council, multilateral military forces would be inserted between warring factions to monitor ceasefires.¹⁵ Oliver Richmond argues that 'post-Westphalian' peacekeeping has gone through two subsequent transformations, from conflict resolution to peacebuilding, in an attempt to find increasingly complex solutions to conflicts through the construction of a post-intervention Liberal Peace.¹⁶

¹¹ Oisín Tansey, 'Debate: Reply and Response to Jahn's "Tragedy of Liberal Diplomacy"', *Journal of Intervention and Statebuilding*, 2:1 (2008), p. 91.

¹² Dominik Zaum, 'Review essay; beyond the "Liberal Peace"', *Global Governance*, 18 (2011), p. 122.

¹³ See Susan L. Woodward, 'The IFIs and post-conflict political economy', in Mats Berdal and Dominik Zaum, 'Introduction', in Berdal and Zaum (eds), *The Political Economy of State Building; Power after Peace*, pp. 143–4.

¹⁴ See Berdal and Zaum, 'Introduction'; Michael Mastanduno, 'Models, markets and power: political economy and the Asia-Pacific, 1989–1999', *Review of International Studies*, 26:4 (2000), pp. 493–507; and David Williams, 'Aid and sovereignty: quasi-states and the international financial institutions', *Review of International Studies*, 26:4 (2000), pp. 557–73.

¹⁵ Edward Newman, Roland Paris, and Oliver P. Richmond, 'Introduction', in Edward Newman, Roland Paris, and Oliver P. Richmond (eds), *New Perspectives on Liberal Peacebuilding* (Tokyo: United Nations Press, 2009), pp. 5–10.

¹⁶ Oliver P. Richmond, *The Transformation of Peace* (Houndsmills, Basingstoke: Palgrave MacMillan, 2007), p. 86.

If part of Liberal Peacebuilding's ideational roots are to be found in the 'Washington Consensus', then the international debut of post-Cold War neoliberal intervention, with its transformational goals, arrived in the aftermath of the 1990–1 Gulf War. Both George Bush Senior and his National Security Adviser, Brent Scowcroft, were consciously using the war as a precedent for transforming the post-Cold War system, a new world order was to be built where US-led interventions would transform the international.¹⁷ This ambition was heralded by Operation Provide Comfort. Buoyed up by a display of US battlefield dominance during its war against Iraq, the UN Security Council gave its backing for a suspension of Iraq's sovereignty to provide humanitarian relief and protection to the Kurdish population in the north of the country. This suspension of sovereignty lasted for 12 years and was responsible for the creation of a Kurdish quasi-state.

The rapid expansion of international intervention that followed was 'an enormous international experiment', a 'macro shift in peacebuilding strategy'.¹⁸ The new doctrine of liberal interventionism evolved during a number of UN-sanctioned missions in Somalia (1992–3), Haiti (1994), Bosnia (1993–5), East Timor (1999), and Sierra Leone (2000–1).¹⁹ Running parallel to this, where consensus could not be found in the Security Council, Western states deployed the rhetoric of liberal interventionism to justify the use of military force without international agreement and beyond mainstream interpretations of international law, first in Kosovo in 1999 and Iraq in 2003.²⁰

Throughout the 1990s, the Security Council consistently expanded its interpretation of what constituted a threat to international peace and security, allowing Chapter VII of the United Nations Charter to authorise intrusive interventions into what had been sovereign territory.²¹ This muscular humanitarianism reached its peak with a series of lectures given by Kofi Annan in 1998 and 1999. In the face of a looming war in Kosovo and with the failures in Somalia, Rwanda, and Bosnia to the forefront of his mind, Annan deliberately set out to change international norms, shifting the emphasis from state sovereignty to liberal interventionism justified in the name of individual human rights.²² If the first generation of international interventions had been centred on the maintenance of international order through conflict mediation and the second generation on conflict resolution, a temporary post-Cold War consensus in the Security Council during the 1990s allowed for the birth of a third generation of intervention based on the transformational promise of Liberal Peacebuilding.²³ This sought to use intervention to permanently rid the target states of the causes of the conflicts that plagued them.

¹⁷ See George Bush and Brent Scowcroft, *A World Transformed* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1998), pp. 400, 490, 491.

¹⁸ Roland Paris and Timothy D. Sisk, 'Understanding the contradictions of postwar statebuilding', in Roland Paris and Timothy D. Sisk (eds), *The Dilemmas of Statebuilding: Confronting the Contradictions of Postwar Peace Operations* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2009), p. 1.

¹⁹ See Chris Brown, 'Selective humanitarianism: in defence of inconsistency', in Deen K. Chatterjee and Don E. Scheid (eds), *Ethics and Foreign Intervention* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), p. 32.

²⁰ See Kofi Annan with Nader Mousavizadeh, *Interventions; a Life of War and Peace* (London: Allen Lane, 2012), pp. 95, 357–8.

²¹ Bellamy tracks this process from the intervention in Bosnia, through Somalia to Haiti. He sees Kosovo as a watershed moment because Russia and China who, up to this moment, had allowed Security Council resolutions to pass refused in this instance. See Alex Bellamy, 'Responsibility to protect or Trojan horse? The crisis in Darfur and humanitarian intervention after Iraq', *Ethics & International Affairs*, 19:2 (2005), p. 34.

²² Annan, *Interventions*, pp. 84, 90, 97, 116.

²³ Richmond, *The Transformation of Peace*, p. 86.

In harmony with its liberal roots, this new approach to peacebuilding was given ideational and instrumental coherence when it identified the main drivers of increased humanitarian suffering and conflict after the Cold War: the myriad sins of the state itself. An increasing number of states were labelled weak, failing, or collapsed.²⁴ A neoliberal reading of globalisation was deployed to explain why states were ‘deteritorialising’, giving rise to ‘new wars’, allowing for the securitisation of human suffering worldwide.²⁵

With the definition of suffering and conflict now focused on the state as the major perpetrator, intervention in the name of humanitarianism had to be much more strident. Conflicts could not simply be mediated in the name of order maintenance but their root causes identified and banished in the name of domestic but also international transformation.²⁶ These root causes lay in malfunctioning, weak, or malign states. Over the 1990s, in a series of documents produced by United Nations, think tanks and NGOs, a checklist or method for reforming such states evolved and Liberal Peacebuilding was born.

Identifying the ‘Liberal’ in Liberal Peacebuilding

Tansey and Zaum’s argument against critiques of a specifically *Liberal* Peacebuilding asserts that academic works on interventionism and state reform are conflated with specific policies pursued by states and international organisations. This, they argue, does great damage to reality by collapsing wide and diverse policy approaches and specific case studies into one undifferentiated whole, which is then labelled ‘Liberal Peacebuilding’.

With this critique in mind, a coherent way to gauge the influence of Liberal Peacebuilding practice would be to subject both policy formation and its application to a form of discourse analysis. This would seek to identify the main units of analysis shaping policy and judge their affinity with a wider liberal ideology. Within Foreign Policy Analysis, the Cognitive School has attempted to trace the influence that the process of categorisation has had on policy formation and application. The Cognitive approach to policy analysis starts from the truism that ‘any individual must necessarily simplify and structure the complexity of [her and] his world in order to cope with it’.²⁷ This leads to the vast majority of information processing and analysis being subconscious, shaped by pre-existing units of analysis. Cognitive consistency is thus achieved by solidifying and stabilising the analytical frameworks used to process information.²⁸ The Cognitive approach is, however, dominated by an individualist

²⁴ Ken Menkhaus, ‘State failure and ungoverned space’, in Mats Berdal and Achim Wennmann (eds), *Ending Wars, Consolidating Peace; Economic Perspectives* (Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge for the International Institute for Strategic Studies, 2010), p. 175.

²⁵ See Annan, *Interventions*, pp. ix and 84, Thomas G. Weiss, *Humanitarian Intervention* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2012), pp. 66–110; Jan Aart Scholte, *Globalization: a Critical Introduction* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 2000); and Mary Kaldor, *New and Old Wars: Organised Violence in a Global Era* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1999).

²⁶ Richmond, *The Transformation of Peace*, p. 14.

²⁷ Alexander L. George, ‘The “Operational Code”: a Neglected Approach to the Study of Political Leaders and Decision-Making’, *International Studies Quarterly*, 13:2 (June 1969), p. 200.

²⁸ Jerel A. Rosati, ‘The Power of Human Cognition in the Study of World Politics’, *International Studies Review*, 2:3 (Autumn 2000), p. 51.

ontology that understands the schemas needed to process information as idiosyncratic and easily replaceable if they prove to be fallible.¹⁹ The *via media* between this individualist ontology and an understanding of a society-wide process of socialisation is provided by Alexander George's work on operational codes. This examines the role that a decision-maker's 'philosophical beliefs' has on their subconscious processing and analysis of information.³⁰

To develop this method further and separate it from its individualist ontology, the role of ideology in shaping the units of analysis, in prioritising which categories are used to understand the world, is central. The analytical categories generated from within an ideology identify problems that are important enough to need policy solutions and the ways in which these problems can be solved.³¹ Roy C. Macridis argues that the role of ideology is to take the key concepts of a doctrine and simplify them, to deliver operational policies, rules of behaviour, and basic categories of judgement.³² Or as Gramsci puts it, dominant ideologies shape 'common sense', 'the diffuse uncoordinated features of a generic form of thought common to a particular period and a particular popular environment.'³³

For liberalism, the move that Macridis identifies, from doctrine to operative ideas, or for Gramsci from high philosophy to common sense, is a move from the liberal normative theory of the academy to neoliberalism, 'a positive project of government', a programme for societal transformation.³⁴ The influence of the most famous liberal philosophers, people like Mill, Locke, or Smith, are still detectable after this move from high theory to active programme but their works are simplified, their insights reduced to robust and applicable units of analysis that drive the identification of problems and suggest solutions. In keeping with liberalism, a universal rationalist individual is placed at the centre of this ideology. The main target of the project is the removal of anything that hinders the exercise of this individual's free will and hence their liberty.³⁵ In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, liberals would have targeted superstition, religion, or culture. In the contemporary world, the main threat to individual liberty identified by neoliberalism is likely to come from malfunctioning or overbearing states.

Michel Waltzer argues that liberalism gains its intellectual coherence 'through a certain way of drawing the map of the social and political world'.³⁶ It divides social complexity into a small number of analytical units that gives a coherence or 'family resemblance' to liberal analysis and policy. Macridis argues these units are moral, political, and economic. David Williams identifies four main units of analysis that

²⁹ See, for example, Deborah Welch Larson, 'The Role of Belief Systems and Schemas in Foreign Policy Decision-Making', *Political Psychology*, 15:1 (March, 1994), p. 27.

³⁰ George, 'The "Operational Code"', pp. 199, 212, 221.

³¹ See Mark Laffey and Jutta Weldes, 'Beyond Belief: Ideas and Symbolic Technologies in the Study of International Relations', *European Journal of International Relations*, 3:3 (1997), pp. 193–237.

³² Roy C. Macridis, *Contemporary Political Ideologies: Movements and Regimes* (London: Harper Collins, 1992), p. 9.

³³ Antonio Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*, trans. and ed. Quintin Hores and Geoffrey Nowell Smith (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1998), pp. 330 and 419.

³⁴ Barry Hindess, 'Neo-liberal citizenship', *Citizenship Studies*, 6:2 (2002), p. 134; David Williams, *The World Bank and Social Transformation in International Politics: Liberalism, Governance and Sovereignty* (London: Routledge, 2008), p. 1.

³⁵ Alan Ryan, *The Making of Modern Liberalism* (Princeton NJ: Princeton University Press, 2012), p. 9.

³⁶ Michael Walzer, 'Liberalism and the Art of Separation', *Political Theory*, 12:3 (August 1984), p. 135.

provide the ideology with coherence, these are the individual, the market, the state, and democracy.³⁷

Neoliberal ideology homogenises and simplifies the high philosophy of liberalism's intellectual founders and turns it into a limited number of robust units of analysis that shape policy solutions. The rise to influence of neoliberal doctrine and policy solutions in the late 1970s, saw the aggressive defence and extension of individual liberty but also a celebration of a trans-national market beyond the control of territorial governments. The state would be radically reformed, its bureaucracy shrunk and its role limited to guaranteeing property rights and the proper functioning of the market through the imposition of law.³⁸

For neoliberals, the individual, *homo economicus*, is the primary and irreducible category of analysis and as such is imbued with a universal and uncomplicated utility maximising rationale.³⁹ The defence of individual freedom is liberalism's 'highest political value'.⁴⁰ This leads to the second category, the role of the market. The market is the main arena where rational individuals interact for their mutual benefit. Freely functioning markets, both at a national and global level, are the only coherent mechanisms for creating and distributing wealth. Both Michel Foucault and Hindess argue that for neoliberalism, the market has a disciplinary effect, catching individuals in 'an economic grid', creating a supposedly 'spontaneous order ... inculcating such virtues as prudence, diligence, punctuality, self control'.⁴¹ For Hayek, on the other hand, the market is simply the best mechanism for preserving individual liberty.⁴²

The spectre that haunts this neoliberal vision of rational individualism and market equilibrium is, of course, the role of the state. However, for neoliberalism, the power of the state is both a threat and a constitutive asset. The potential for abusive state power poses a major threat to the freedom of the individual and the market. However, neoliberal policies of reform and the operational coherence of liberalism itself, are dependent on state power to impose order on society, discipline errant individuals, and uphold the rule of law.⁴³ Therefore the state has to both guarantee the freedom of the market and individuals interacting within it whilst restraining its own actions, remaining outside the market itself, guaranteeing its functions but not interfering with individual free will. Hayek sees a contrast between the state's crucial role in subjecting both itself and the population to the rule of law, as it keeps to a minimum the negative creep of the state's growing bureaucracy.⁴⁴ Minimising the role of the state and maximising the influence of individual liberty is ultimately guaranteed by the fourth and final liberal category, democracy. Democracy, as with rationality,

³⁷ Williams, *The World Bank and Social Transformation*, p. 25; Macridis, *Contemporary Political Ideologies*, p. 25; Robert Latham, *The Liberal Moment; Modernity; Security and the Making of Post-War International Order* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997), p. 17.

³⁸ Andrew Gamble, 'The free market economy and the strong state: the rise of the social market economy', *Socialist Register*, 16 (1979), p. 9.

³⁹ Williams, *The World Bank and Social Transformation*, p. 20; Michel Foucault, *The Birth of Biopolitics' Lectures at the College de France, 1978-1979*, trans. Graham Buchell, ed. Michel Senellart (New York: Picador, 2004), p. 252.

⁴⁰ Ryan, *The Making of Modern Liberalism*, pp. 23, 35, 36.

⁴¹ Foucault, *The Birth of Biopolitics*, pp. 163; Hindess, 'Neo-Liberal citizenship', p. 135.

⁴² John Agnew and Stuart Corbridge, *Mastering Space: Hegemony, Territory and International Political Economy* (London: Routledge, 1995), pp. 199-200; Gamble, 'The free market economy and the strong state: the rise of the social market economy', p. 9.

⁴³ Williams, *The World Bank and Social Transformation*, p. 13.

⁴⁴ Gamble, 'The free market economy and the strong state', p. 7.

is a 'universal value'. Given the choice, liberals see populations everywhere opting for a democratic system with regular elections that limit the power of the state and keep it out of the market.⁴⁵

The neoliberal core of peacebuilding is to be found in the influence of these four categories. Its policy prescriptions for reordering states following intervention are ordered around the protection and enhancement of individual liberty. A functioning market then has to be reconstituted as the most efficient allocator of resources. The state is reconstructed so that it guarantees the rule of law without hindering the functioning of the market and individual liberty. The state will ultimately be constrained by the imposition of democratic structures of governance.

The neoliberal categories that give Liberal Peacebuilding its ideational coherence and allow it to identify problems that need solutions gained dominance as Liberal Peacebuilding itself cohered across the 1990s. These same categories are suffused in the Bush Doctrine's major statement of intent, the *National Security Strategy* issued in 2002. Liberal Peacekeeping came to shape the United Nation's own approach to reforming failed and rogue states after 1992. *An Agenda for Peace*, published by UN Secretary General Boutros Boutros-Ghali in 1992, committed the UN to Liberal Peacebuilding.⁴⁶ However, it was Kofi Annan, first as assistant secretary general, Peacekeeping Operations (March 1993 to December 1996) and then as secretary general (1 January 1997 to 31 December 2006) who oversaw the rise to Liberal Peacebuilding. In Annan's own narrative, the UN and more importantly its member states, were not seriously committed to Liberal Peacebuilding from 1992 until 1999. This led to the debacles in Somalia in 1993, Rwanda in 1994 and Bosnia in 1995.⁴⁷ Annan's response was to push for greater commitment to an ambitious Liberal Peacebuilding doctrine, as indicated by the *Brahimi Report* of 2000.⁴⁸

The series of documents, *An Agenda for Peace*, the *Brahimi Report*, and US *National Security Strategy*, are all given coherence and their policy agenda's shaped by neoliberal categories of analysis. The cause of the problems they wish to solve are rendered in neoliberal terms, the threat posed by authoritarian or failing states.⁴⁹ Their solution is to guarantee the liberty of the individual by placing human rights at the centre of peacebuilding.⁵⁰ The free market is then to be rebuilt. The state then needs to be reformed, in the words of *An Agenda for Peace*, to place 'good internal governance and the requirements of an ever more interdependent world', at the core of its goals and constrain its actions through the rule of law.⁵¹ Finally, the state's relations with society will be constantly monitored and constrained through the imposition of democracy.⁵² The state as the source of the problem and its reform

⁴⁵ Tony Smith, *A Pact with the Devil. Washington's Bid for World Supremacy and the Betrayal of the American Promise* (New York: Routledge, 2007), pp. 80, 95.

⁴⁶ United Nations, *An Agenda for Peace; Preventive Diplomacy, Peacemaking and Peace-Keeping*, A/47/277-S/24111 (7 June 1992), available at: {<http://www.un-documents.net/a47-277.htm>}.

⁴⁷ Annan, *Interventions*, pp. 84, 90, 97, 116.

⁴⁸ United Nations, *Comprehensive Review of the Whole Question of Peacekeeping Operations in all their Aspects*, A/55/305-S/2000/809 (21 August 2000), available at: {http://www.un.org/peace/reports/peace_operations/docs/full_report.htm}.

⁴⁹ See *An Agenda for Peace*, pp. 2–4; and the *National Security Strategy of the United States of America*, pp. 1–2.

⁵⁰ *An Agenda for Peace*, p. 4; *Comprehensive Review*, pp. 3, 7.

⁵¹ *An Agenda for Peace*, pp. 4, 12; *Comprehensive Review*, pp. 3, 13–14.

⁵² *Comprehensive Review*, pp. 3, 7.

through extending individual liberty, free markets and democracy became the universal template that ran through key UN Liberal Peacebuilding documents and informed the policy prescriptions of the 2002 National Security Strategy.

Liberal Peacebuilding in Iraq and Afghanistan

There has been a sustained effort to separate the abrogation of sovereignty placed at the heart of the Bush Doctrine after 9/11 from the growth of liberal interventionism that preceded it. Those scholars who have sympathy with the application of Liberal Peacebuilding in postconflict societies, have almost unanimously rejected any comparison or ideological affinity between the rise of Liberal Peacebuilding from the 1990s onwards and the US-led interventions in Afghanistan in 2001 and Iraq in 2003. Attempts at maintaining this distinction revolve around analysis of the motives that drove George W. Bush and Tony Blair to seek violent regime change in Kabul and Baghdad and facts on the ground in Afghanistan and Iraq before the interventions took place. Roland Paris, Timothy D. Sisk, and Edward Newman argue that because the initial interventions were not a response to civil war or to support a peace settlement and were not triggered by requests from inside the country they 'are profoundly different from those of most state building operations'.⁵³ If anything, Iraq is regarded as an even greater aberration than Afghanistan, since human rights abuses under the Ba'ath regime were not judged grave enough in 2003 (as opposed to 1989 or 1991) to trigger an intervention. For those promoting humanitarian intervention, the justificatory rhetoric used by Bush and Blair was little more than 'a convenient sleight of hand' that hid more nefarious interests. By seeking to justify the invasion of Afghanistan and Iraq in humanitarian terms, both governments did great damage both to the norm of Liberal intervention and perceptions about the motives of the interveners.⁵⁴

A more nuanced position would firstly recognise that there were clear affinities between George W. Bush and Tony Blair's ideological convictions and the developing norms surrounding humanitarian intervention.⁵⁵ Both the Taliban and Ba'ath regimes were damned by London and Washington for their grave abuse of human rights. Regime change was thus justified in the name of the populations to be liberated and the neoliberal reform of state-society relations after liberation. However, of even greater significance for the analysis at the centre of this article, beyond the ideological motivations of those who ordered the invasions of Iraq and Afghanistan, are the Liberal Peacebuilding discourses that shaped their approach to stabilising the country once military action had removed the ruling regimes.

Roland Paris accepts that attempts to stabilise Iraq 'bore at least a partial resemblance to liberal peacebuilding strategies pursued elsewhere by the United Nations

⁵³ Paris and Sisk, 'Understanding the contradictions of postwar statebuilding', p. 11; Edward Newman, "'Liberal" peacebuilding debates', p. 33.

⁵⁴ Weiss, *Humanitarian Intervention*, p. 142; Bellamy, 'Responsibility to protect or Trojan horse?', p. 39.

⁵⁵ See Bush quoted in Annan, *Interventions*, p. 348; Nicholas J. Wheeler and Justin Morris, 'Justifying the Iraq war as a humanitarian intervention: the cure is worse than the disease', in Ramesh Thakur and Waheguru Pal Singh Siduh (eds), *The Iraq Crisis and World Order: Structural, Institutional and Normative Challenges* (Tokyo: United Nations University Press, 2006); Toby Dodge, 'Coming face to face with bloody reality: Liberal common sense and the ideological failure of the Bush Doctrine in Iraq', *International Politics*, 46:2/3 (2009), pp. 253–75; and Toby Dodge, 'The ideological roots of failure'.

and other international agencies'.⁵⁶ Michael Ignatieff is perfectly happy to lump Iraq in with Afghanistan, Kosovo, and Bosnia as imperial exercises in the imposition of democracy and sustainable self-government. Robert Muggah quite rightly describes Iraq and Afghanistan as 'archetypal stabilisation missions'.⁵⁷ RAND, in an influential book on nationbuilding published just after the invasion of Iraq, made the case even more explicitly, the US was forced to transform the international system through intervention and statebuilding,

Since the end of the Cold War, the United States has felt free to intervene not simply to police cease-fires or restore the status quo but to try to bring about the more-fundamental transformation of war-torn societies, . . . each successive post-Cold War US-led intervention has generally been wider in scope and more ambitious in intent than its predecessor. 'Nation-building, it appears, is the inescapable responsibility of the world's only superpower.'⁵⁸

The RAND book was part of a sustained attempt to persuade the Bush Administration to expand its ambition, to apply Liberal Peacebuilding methods to post-regime change Afghanistan and Iraq, as part of a wider goal to transform the international system. This effort was needed because leading policymakers in the Administration had previously distanced themselves from Liberal approaches to postwar reconstruction. Until 2003, George W. Bush's foreign policy team were expressly against the extended commitment needed for Liberal Peacebuilding.⁵⁹ The temporary ideological aversion of the Bush Administration to what they understood to be 'nationbuilding' shaped the initial policy planning in both Afghanistan and Iraq.

In the planning for the invasion of Afghanistan, the initial policy objectives were shaped by hostility to Liberal Peacebuilding.⁶⁰ In the National Security Council meetings there was a working assumption that US troops would be withdrawn as soon as possible.⁶¹ On the ground in Afghanistan, from November 2001 until June 2003, this antipathy towards the Liberal Peace led the US to deploy the minimum amount of troops and resources. In December 2001, there were only 1,300 US troops in the country. For its first four months of existence, from December 2001 to March 2002, Hamid Karzai's provisional government had no budget to pay civil servants or police officers.⁶²

This minimalist approach to governing Afghanistan was supported by the policy of the United Nation's Special Representative in Kabul, Lakhdar Brahimi. He argued that a heavy international presence in the country was neither possible nor desirable. Instead, there should be a 'light footprint' with the emphasis placed on indigenous capacity building exogenously funded.⁶³

⁵⁶ Roland Paris, 'Does liberal peacebuilding have a future?', in *New Perspectives on Liberal Peacebuilding*, p. 105.

⁵⁷ Michael Ignatieff, *Empire Lite: Nation-Building in Bosnia, Kosovo and Afghanistan* (London: Vintage, 2003), p. 23; Robert Muggah, 'Stabilising Fragile States and the Humanitarian Space', in Mats Berdal and Achim Wennmann (eds), *Ending Wars, Consolidating Peace*, p. 43.

⁵⁸ James Dobbins, John G. McGinn, Keith Crane, Seth G. Jones, Rollie Lal, Andrew Rathmell, Rachel Swanger, and Anga Timilsina, *America's Role in Nation-Building: from Germany to Iraq* (Santa Monica: RAND, 2003), pp. xiv–xv.

⁵⁹ See, for example, Rice, 'Campaign 2000: Promoting the national interest'.

⁶⁰ Woodward, *Bush at War*, p. 191.

⁶¹ Under Secretary of Defense for Policy, Douglas Feith, in discussions with Donald Rumsfeld in late 2001, quoted in Seth G. Jones, *In the Graveyard of Empires: America's War in Afghanistan* (New York: W. W. Norton and Company, 2009), p. 112.

⁶² See Ahmed Rashid, *Descent into Chaos: The United States and the Failure of Nation Building in Pakistan, Afghanistan, and Central Asia* (New York: Viking, 2008), pp. 63, 99, 129.

⁶³ Jones, *In the Graveyard of Empires*, p. 118; Astri Suhrke, *When More is Less: the International Project in Afghanistan* (London: Hurst & Company, 2011), pp. 29–32.

A similar dynamic, the initial rejection of Liberal Peacebuilding, is clearly identifiable in Iraq. In February 2003, Rumsfeld laid out the Administration's antipathy to Liberal Peacebuilding. With 'success' in Afghanistan in mind and looking towards the invasion of Iraq, he decried the detrimental effects of 'a long-term foreign presence in a country'. For Rumsfeld, this was 'unnatural', hindering the liberty of individuals and the reform of a country's economy.⁶⁴ As with Afghanistan, this antipathy towards the Liberal Peacebuilding shaped the first working model that the Bush Administration sought to apply postwar.⁶⁵

For liberally inclined academics, the motives that drove the US to invade Afghanistan and Iraq were radically different from previous Liberal interventions. In addition, because the Taliban and Ba'athist regimes were, at the time of the invasions, stable and past the peak of their human rights abuses, the interventions could not be justified in terms of building a Liberal Peace. The Bush Administration's initial planning assumptions appeared to confirm this. President Bush, Secretary of Defense Rumsfeld and National Security Advisor Rice, all explicitly rejected Liberal Peacebuilding as a solution for the preinvasion problems they identified as needing solutions in both countries. However, once preinvasion planning collided with the on the ground realities of Afghanistan and Iraq, the US-led occupations quickly adopted Liberal Peacebuilding methods in an attempt to stabilise the country and extricate their troops.

The arrival of the Liberal Peace in Kabul and Baghdad

A dramatic shift in US policy towards Afghanistan heralded the arrival of Liberal Peacebuilding in Kabul. Policy was reorientated around neoliberalism's four dominant units of analysis, the individual, the market, the state, and democracy and aimed to completely transform a rebuilt Afghan state's relationship with its own society. Adopted in December 2002, American policy was completely transformed by June 2003. At the end of 2002, Secretary of Defense Rumsfeld received detailed briefings indicating that existing US policy was failing. The dominance of the Afghan government by the Northern Alliance and the re-empowerment of warlords across the country had alienated key interest groups and stopped the reconstruction of administrative capacity.⁶⁶ A key player on the National Security Council, Zalmay Khalilzad, began to work on Afghan policy full-time and used his personal influence with President Bush to draw attention to the mounting problems.

In recognition of their failure, President Bush and the National Security Council agreed a new policy, 'Accelerating Success', in June 2003. It saw Khalilzad appointed

⁶⁴ Donald Rumsfeld, 'Beyond nation building', New York City (14 February 2003), available at: {<http://www.defense.gov/speeches/speech.aspx?speechid=337>}.

⁶⁵ See Dodge, 'The ideological roots of failure', p. 1278.

⁶⁶ See United States Government Accountability Office, Report to Congressional Committees, *Afghanistan Reconstruction; Despite Some Progress, Deteriorating Security and Other Obstacles Continue to Threaten Achievement of U.S. Goals* (July 2005), available at: {<http://www.gao.gov/assets/250/247264.pdf>} , p. 10; S. Frederick Starr, 'U.S. Afghanistan Policy: It's Working', Policy Paper produced by the Central Asia-Caucasus Institute; Paul H. Nitze School of Advanced International Studies, Johns Hopkins University, available at: {http://www.silkroadstudies.org/CACI/Starr_Afghanistan.pdf} , p. 3; and David Rohde and David E. Sanger, 'How a "Good War" in Afghanistan Went Bad', *New York Times* (12 August, 2007), available at: {http://www.nytimes.com/2007/08/12/world/asia/12afghan.html?pagewanted=all&_r=0}.

as Ambassador to Kabul, a post he only accepted on the understanding that the US would greatly increase the resources and commitment towards Afghanistan.⁶⁷ The new policy took as its key policy goals the central tenets of Liberal Peacebuilding, underpinned by the core organising concepts of neoliberal ideology.

In outlining the policy, he helped draft and was now appointed to implement, Ambassador Khalilzad simply reproduced the four neoliberal units of analysis that shaped Liberal Peacebuilding as the key aims of ‘Accelerating Success’: political, institutional, economic, and coercive. The political track aimed to bring legitimacy to the new Afghan ruling elite but also constrain their actions by ‘the holding of presidential and parliamentary elections’ as soon as logistically possible. The legitimacy of the state would be enhanced by creating an ethnic and religious balance in the staffing of all key ministries. Institutionally, ‘Our objective is to enable the Afghan government to stand on its own feet, to ... put in place an effective government.’ Thirdly, ‘Our focus is to work with the Afghan government to improve the quality of life of the people and to put in place an economic infrastructure to support a private sector-led economy.’ Finally, the state should be coercively strong enough to deliver stability and the rule of law across the geographic extent of its territory. This would involve the ‘development of Afghan security institutions’, with the rapid and extensive expansion of the Afghan National Army.⁶⁸

The United Nations commitment to a ‘light footprint’ was subsequently dropped. UN Security Council Resolution 1510, adopted in October 2003, stressed the importance of ‘extending central government authority to all parts of Afghanistan’ and authorised the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) to expand its operations from Kabul countrywide.⁶⁹ The resolution had a catch all commitment that mandated ISAF to create a secure environment to facilitate reconstruction ‘and lay the foundations for a peaceful new order’.⁷⁰

For the US, in addition to doubling the amount of US troops committed over the next two years, the ambitious Liberal Peacebuilding agenda placed at the centre of ‘Accelerating Success’ saw a rapid increase in its financial obligations. There was a ramping up of the money spent in the country, specifically designed to reconstitute the institutional capacity of the state. The US would spend \$1.9 billion in 2004, applying the doctrine of Liberal Peacebuilding it had rejected for the first two years of its occupation.⁷¹ Of the \$87 billion successfully requested from Congress by President Bush in November 2003, \$11 billion was allocated for Afghan reconstruction.⁷²

The minimalist approach to reforming Iraq was also jettisoned once US troops arrived in Baghdad. Regime change in the first week of April 2003 triggered an explosion of looting that US authorities did not have the troop numbers nor political will to halt. In the ensuing anarchy, 17 of the Iraqi government’s 23 central ministry

⁶⁷ Rohde and Sanger, ‘How a “Good War” in Afghanistan Went Bad’.

⁶⁸ Zalmay Khalilzad, speech at the Centre for Strategic and International Studies, Washington DC (4 April, 2004), available at: {http://csis.org/files/media/isis/events/040405_afghanistan_transcript.pdf}. See also, Starr, ‘U.S. Afghanistan Policy: It’s Working’, p. 6.

⁶⁹ United Nations Security Council Resolution 1510 (13 October 2003), available at: {<http://daccess-dds-nny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N03/555/55/PDF/N0355555.pdf?OpenElement>}.

⁷⁰ Suhrke, *When More is Less*, p. 85.

⁷¹ See Rashid, *Descent into Chaos*, p. 189; Rohde and Sanger, ‘How a “good war” in Afghanistan went bad’; Jones, *In the Graveyard of Empires*, pp. 139–40.

⁷² Doug Sample, ‘New Afghan Ambassador to help Country “stand on its own feet”’, *USA American Forces Press Service* (20 November, 2003), available at: {<http://www.defense.gov/News/NewsArticle.aspx?ID=27744>}.

buildings were destroyed.⁷³ The total cost of the damage in monetary terms is generally considered to be around \$12 billion, equivalent to as much as one third of Iraq's annual gross domestic product.⁷⁴ Beyond this, the Iraqi state had been subjected to 13 years of UN enforced sanctions specifically designed to break it and the looting, along with three wars in two decades, destroyed the coherence of the state's nationwide institutional capacity. In Iraq, like Afghanistan, the assumptions structuring the US's aversion to Liberal Peacebuilding had to be quickly rethought. This was reflected in discussions George W. Bush held on 6 May 2003, with the man chosen to implement the new policy, Paul Bremer,

the President's instructions to me ... were that we're going to take our time to get it right ... The President had effectively, though perhaps not formally, changed his position on the question of a short or long occupation, having before the war been in favour of a short occupation. By the time I came in, that was gone.⁷⁵

This transformation of US policy towards Iraq was revealed publically on 8 May, when the American and British Permanent Representatives to the UN Security Council sent a letter to its president, announcing the creation of the Coalition Provisional Authority (CPA) that Paul Bremer would run for the next year. The goal set for the CPA clearly sprang from neoliberal units of analysis and reproduced the core solutions at the centre of Liberal Peacebuilding.

the establishment of representative institutions of government, and providing for the responsible administration of the Iraqi financial sector, for humanitarian relief, for economic reconstruction, for the transparent operation and repair of Iraq's infrastructure and natural resources, and for the progressive transfer of administrative responsibilities to such representative institutions of government, as appropriate.⁷⁶

When interviewed in June 2003 about his plans for the country, Bremer laid out a three-step plan that would 'restore electricity, water, and other basic services'. Placed at its centre was the core neoliberal unit, *homo economicus*. Bremer wanted to liberate the Iraqi individual rational actor, by 'put[ting] liquidity in the hands of the people' and weaning them 'from the idea the state supports everything'. He was to build a democracy and a free market, 'If we don't get their economy right, no matter how fancy our political transformation, it won't work.' The delivery of neoliberalism's four dominant categories, the creation of a democracy to restrain the state's new elite, the shrinking of the state's role in the economy and the empowerment of the individual within a free market, was going to take more time, close attention, and resources than Washington had anticipated. Just how long this process could take became apparent in early September, when Paul Bremer published 'Iraq's Path to

⁷³ David L. Phillips, *Losing Iraq. Inside the Post-War Reconstruction Fiasco* (Boulder: Westview Press, 2005), p. 135.

⁷⁴ Larry Diamond, *Squandered Victory: The American Occupation and the Bungled Effort to Bring Democracy to Iraq* (New York: Times Books, 2005), p. 282; George Packer, *Assassins' Gate: America in Iraq* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2005), p. 139; James Dobbins, Seth G. Jones, Benjamin Runkle, and Siddharth Mohandas, *Occupying Iraq: A History of the Coalition Provisional Authority* (Santa Monica: RAND Corporation, 2009), p. 111.

⁷⁵ Paul Bremer quoted in Special Inspector General for Iraq Reconstruction, *Hard Lessons: the Iraq Reconstruction Experience* (Washington DC: US Government Printing Office, 2009), p. 69.

⁷⁶ 'Letter dated 8 May 2003, from the Permanent Representatives of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and the United States of America to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council', S/2003/538, available at: {<http://www.securitycouncilreport.org/atf/cf/%7B65BF9B-6D27-4E9C-8CD3-CF6E4FF96FF9%7D/Iraq%20S2003538.pdf>}.

Sovereignty' in *The Washington Post* indicating that Iraq's 'seven steps to sovereignty' could take at least two years.⁷⁷

Applying Liberal Peacebuilding to Afghanistan and Iraq

The Bush Administration's commitment to 'Accelerating Success' not only jettisoned their own modest initial approach to stabilising Afghanistan but saw a rapid increase in international personnel and funding entering the country. This expansionist commitment to Afghanistan, driven by increasing violence, was further institutionalised with NATO's commitment to a 'Comprehensive Approach' at its Riga Summit in November 2006.⁷⁸ The Obama Administration's announcement of its own Afghan policy review in December 2009 marked the final escalation of troops and resources sent to the country.⁷⁹ This continued expansion in commitment was matched by an increase in money spent by the US government in the country. In the financial year 2001–2, the Department of Defense spent \$2 billion and the Department of State \$0.8 billion. By 2005, this figure had increased to £17.2 billion for Defense and \$2.8 billion for State. In the financial year 2012, the Department of Defense requested \$107.3 billion for Afghanistan and the Department of States, \$4.3 billion.⁸⁰

In line with neoliberal units of analysis and Liberal Peacebuilding doctrine, Khalilzad's implementation of 'Accelerating Success' placed the state at the centre of his policy objectives. However, it was not the threat that the state posed to free market activity and individual liberty that worried Khalilzad, but the need for the state to be strong enough to impose order and guarantee the rule of law. To that end, 'Accelerating Success' set about trying to create highly centralised state institutions in Kabul. It aimed to construct governmental institutional capacity that could drive reconstruction and development forward across the country and simultaneously amass democratic legitimacy from its population. The gargantuan ambitions involved in this vision for a new Afghan state overestimated the ability of the international community to deliver the expertise and commitment needed in the short, let alone medium term. It also failed to register the incapacity of the myriad of non-governmental, governmental, and international organisations to coordinate their actions when attempting to deliver reconstruction and development aid.

The Afghanistan Constitution, drafted in 2003 and approved by a *Loya Jirga* in 2004, also sought to create a highly centralised state. Under Article 64, the president appoints all cabinet ministers, the attorney general, the head of the Central Bank, the National Security director, judges, officers of the armed forces, police, and national security as well as other high ranking officials.⁸¹ Concentrating this much power in

⁷⁷ L. Paul Bremer III, 'Iraq's Path to Sovereignty', *The Washington Post* (8 September 2003), available at: {<http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/yeariniraq/documents/bremerplan.html>}.

⁷⁸ M. J. Williams, *The Good War: NATO and the Liberal Conscience in Afghanistan* (Houndsmills, Basingstoke: Palgrave MacMillan, 2011), p. 104.

⁷⁹ Barack Obama, 'Remarks by the President in Address to the Nation on the Way Forward in Afghanistan and Pakistan', United States Military Academy at West Point, New York (1 December 2009), available at: {<http://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/remarks-president-address-nation-way-forward-afghanistan-and-pakistan>}.

⁸⁰ See Ian S. Livingston and Michael O'Hanlon, *Afghan Index*, Brookings (19 March 2003), p. 17, available at: {<http://www.brookings.edu/~media/Programs/foreign%20policy/afghanistan%20index/index20130319.pdf>}.

⁸¹ See 'The Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan', available at: {<http://www.embassyofafghanistan.org/constitution.html>}.

one set of hands was justified at the time by the need for the centralisation of executive decision-making.

In line with the precepts of Liberal Peacebuilding, the Afghan state was to be legitimised and constrained through the mechanisms of a new democratic system. Hamid Karzai's role as Interim President was accepted at an emergency *Loya Jirga* in Kabul in June 2002, thus he did not face a real electoral test until the first post-regime change presidential elections of October 2004. With all the advantages of incumbency, Karzai won an impressive victory, taking 55.4 per cent of the vote and his nearest rival gained only 16.3 per cent.⁸² However, Karzai's successful re-election in August 2009 was marred by widespread and obvious electoral fraud.⁸³

The tension between a centralised state and the constraining role of a democratic system saw the influence of the Afghan parliament, the *Jirga*, systematically weakened. With the constitution vesting so much power in the presidency, parliament's main power lay in its ability to accept or reject the president's choice of cabinet ministers. Beyond that, the electoral system chosen for parliament, the single non-transferable vote, hindered the formation of collective party interests and fractured voting patterns, severing voters' ties to their elected representatives. This weakness was exacerbated in the 2009 elections by an electoral system that directly hindered the ability of political parties to mobilise voters.⁸⁴

Economically, US policy in Afghanistan followed the free-market prescriptions laid down by neoliberal doctrine. Astri Suhrke argues that what distinguished Afghanistan from other post-Cold War interventions was the 'radical and coherent form that characterised economic policy from the very beginning'.⁸⁵ The contradictions inherent in such an ideologically pure approach to economic development can be seen in USAID's approach to Afghanistan's cotton farmers. USAID refused to invest in the expansion of cotton farming because they thought the country could not develop a competitive advantage in world markets. However, a number of experienced aid workers repeatedly challenged this global free market approach by highlighting the local realities of Afghanistan, arguing that cotton was one of the few sustainable crops that stood a chance of luring farmers away from opium.⁸⁶

As the massive difference between the spending of the US Department's of Defense and State indicate, the final category taken from Liberal Peacebuilding that had the most resources invested in it was the reconstruction of the coercive arm of the state. NATO committed itself to building a 70,000-strong Afghan national army in December 2002. However, this figure was revised upwards to 122,000 in September 2008. The money spent by the United States on creating the force expanded from \$797 million in 2004, to \$2.7 billion in 2008.⁸⁷

⁸² See Ahmed Rashid, *Descent into chaos*, p. 216.

⁸³ Thomas Barfield, *Afghanistan: a Cultural and Political History* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2010), p. 332.

⁸⁴ Suhrke, *When More is Less*, p. 170.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*

⁸⁶ See Rajiv Chandrasekaran, *Little America: the War within the War for Afghanistan* (London: Bloomsbury, 2012), p. 103.

⁸⁷ See Obaid Younossi, Peter Dahl Thruelsen, Jonathan Vaccaro, Jerry M. Sollinger, and Brian Grady, *The Long March: Building an Afghan National Army* (Santa Monica: RAND Corporation, 2009), pp. 12–17; and International Crisis Group, 'A Force in Fragments: Reconstituting the Afghan National Army', *Asia Report*, 190 (2010), p. 7, available at: {<http://www.crisisgroup.org/~media/Files/asia/south-asia/afghanistan/190%20A%20Force%20in%20Fragments%20-%20Reconstituting%20the%20Afghan%20National%20Army.pdf>}.

Upon arrival in Iraq, Paul Bremer imposed the four categories of neoliberalism more aggressively than Khalilzad in Afghanistan. Bremer initially saw state strength as the main threat to the sustainability of his attempt at Liberal Peacebuilding. This led to a radical reform of the state that was far more extreme than Afghanistan. The power of state institutions was deliberately shrunk in May 2003, by a purge of the top four levels of the Ba'ath Party's membership holding government jobs. Former members of the Ba'ath were then banned from occupying jobs in the top three management levels of any government institution. This de-Ba'athification order purged government ministries of their top layer of management, making between 20,000 and 120,000 people unemployed.⁸⁸ However, when faced with the resulting state collapse and rising violence, the US government was then forced to spend \$200.4 billion in trying to reconstruct it.⁸⁹

Bremer prioritised neoliberal economic reform over democratic legitimacy for Iraq's new ruling elite. Elections had to wait until 2005. In conjunction with the United Nations, Bremer did form the Iraqi Governing Council as a receptacle for Iraqi sovereignty in July 2003. Sovereignty was then handed back to members of this council in June 2004 and an interim government was formed. Two sets of national elections were then held in 2005 and a new highly federal constitution was written and passed in a national referendum.

Neoliberal economic reform played the central role in Paul Bremer's plans for a Liberal peace in Iraq. The mechanics of this transformation were announced in September 2003, when Bremer promulgated CPA General Order 39.⁹⁰ This threw the Iraqi economy open to foreign capital investment. It removed any restrictions on foreign investment, allowed for 100 per cent repatriation of profits and legislated for foreign firms to be treated as equal to Iraqi investors. General Order 39 also slated 192 public sector firms for privatisation and allowed for 100 per cent foreign ownership of Iraqi companies that were not involved in banking, insurance, or 'the primary extraction of natural resources'.⁹¹ General Order 37 imposed 'a flat tax that provides for a marginal income tax rate of 15 per cent for both corporations and individuals'.⁹²

Bremer's initial attitude to Iraq's armed forces paralleled his understanding of the civil institutions of the state, they were too powerful and needed cutting down to a size where they would not threaten the liberty of the individual or the working of the free market. In May 2003, Bremer and his military adviser, Walter Slocombe, disbanded both the Iraqi army and the security services and made 400,000 soldiers unemployed.⁹³ Slocombe then announced he would build a new Iraqi army over the next three years. Its central role would be to guard Iraq's borders.⁹⁴ However, in a

⁸⁸ Phillips, *Losing Iraq*, pp. 145–6; Paul Bremer III with Malcolm McConnell, *My Year in Iraq: The Struggle to Build a Future of Hope* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2006), p. 40; Packer, *Assassins' Gate*, p. 191.

⁸⁹ Special Inspector General for Iraq Reconstruction, *Quarterly Report* (30 April 2012), pp. 17, 24, available at: {http://www.sigir.mil/files/quarterlyreports/April2012/Report_-_April_2012.pdf#view=fit}.

⁹⁰ Coalition Provisional Authority Order Number 39 (CPA/ORD/19 September 2003/39), available at: {http://www.cpa-iraq.org/regulations/20031220_CPAORD_39_Foreign_Investment_.pdf}.

⁹¹ See CPA Order Number 39.

⁹² Antonia Juhasz, 'The hand-over that wasn't: how the occupation of Iraq continues', *LeftTurn Magazine* (September/October 2004), available at: {www.leftturn.org}.

⁹³ See 'Letter from L. Paul Bremer to George W. Bush' (22 May 2003), subsequently published in the *New York Times*, available at: {<http://www.nytimes.com/ref/washington/04bremer-text1.html?ref=washington>}.

⁹⁴ See Rajiv Chandrasekaran, *Imperial Life in the Emerald City. Inside Baghdad's Green Zone* (London: Bloomsbury, 2007), p. 85.

process comparable to Afghanistan, in the face of a rising insurgency and increasing US casualties, the training schedule of the Iraqi army was condensed and an additional force, the Iraqi Civil Defence Corps, was created to bolster numbers.⁹⁵ In February 2004, Major General Karl Eikenberry reported that the CPA were not training enough qualified Iraqi troops and suggested the US military take over the role.⁹⁶ In light of the Eikenberry report, a new institution was created to train the Iraqi army, the Multi-National Security Transition Command Iraq (MNSTC-I). The new organisation, run by the US military, was given lavish resources to rebuild the Iraqi security forces. The US government then embarked upon a \$5.7 billion plan to train 270,000 Iraqi troops and paramilitary police units by the summer of 2006.⁹⁷ By 2008, the US planned to increase the target size of the Iraqi military to 560,000 men.⁹⁸ By 2011, \$24.49 billion had been spent rebuilding the country's armed forces.⁹⁹

Zalmay Khalilzad in Afghanistan and Paul Bremer in Iraq become key transitional figures. When faced with rising instability and violence and a more complex and difficult post-invasion situation than expected, Khalilzad and Bremer were given unconstrained executive power and vast resources to rescue the mission and avoid a strategic defeat for the United States in its global war against terrorism. The minimalist American commitment to postwar stabilisation in both countries was dropped at the moment of their appointment. In its place both Khalilzad and Bremer adopted a Liberal Peacebuilding approach given ideational coherence by the four major categories of neoliberalism, the individual, the free-market, the role of the state as guarantor of the rule of law, and the imposition of a democratic system. It was these units of analysis that then shaped American attempts to reconstitute government capacity, stabilise both countries, and allow the US to extricate themselves from these costly adventures.

The results of Liberal Peacebuilding in Afghanistan and Iraq

In both Afghanistan and Iraq, post-intervention attempts at reforming state-society relations and rebuilding sustainable state infrastructure have made little progress. The civilian institutions of both states are largely absent from the vast majority of the population's everyday lives. Economic policies have certainly resulted in the influence of international markets being felt in both countries but they have not guaranteed the exercise of individual liberty let alone empowered an indigenous bourgeoisie. Foreign direct investment has concentrated on what could be termed the 'rentier' sectors of the economy, minerals and mining in Afghanistan, oil in Iraq. This has if anything, increased corruption and the state's detachment from

⁹⁵ See Eric Schmitt, 'US plans Iraqi force for civil defence', *International Herald Tribune* (21 July 2003).

⁹⁶ See Special Inspector General for Iraq Reconstruction, *Hard Lessons*, p. 133.

⁹⁷ See Sabrina Tavernise and John F. Burns, 'As Iraqi Army trains, word in the field is it may take years', *The New York Times* (13 June 2005), available at: {<http://www.nytimes.com/2005/06/13/international/middleeast/13training.html?pagewanted=all>}.

⁹⁸ Thomas E. Ricks, *The Gamble. General Petraeus and the Untold Story of the American Surge in Iraq, 2006–2008* (London: Penguin Books, 2009), p. 199.

⁹⁹ Anthony Cordesman, *Iraqi Force Development: A Progress Report Working Draft*, Center for Strategic and International Studies (23 August 2007), available at: {http://csis.org/files/media/csis/pubs/070823_iraqi_force_development.pdf}, p. 8; Special Inspector General for Iraq Reconstruction, *Quarterly Report and Semiannual Report to the United States Congress* (30 July 2011), available at: {<http://www.sigir.mil/files/quarterlyreports/>}, p. 70.

society. The electoral systems set up after regime change have been largely circumvented by the ruling elites in both Kabul and Baghdad. As a result, electoral participation has dropped and alienation from the state and its governing elite increased. The one area where the interventions have met with some success is in the growth of the state's armed forces, where large armies and police forces anchor the state's continued ability to rule into its despotic power.

Afghanistan today, 12 years after regime change, remains a rentier state where 97 per cent of its gross domestic product comes from international donor-related activity.¹⁰⁰ Corruption affects every aspect of the state's interaction with Afghan society. In a survey carried out in 2010, Integrity Watch Afghanistan found the everyday bribery of government officials had doubled since 2007, with ordinary Afghans having to pay an average of \$156 in bribes each year to access government services.¹⁰¹ The US government reported in September 2010, that 80.6 per cent of Afghans polled believed corruption affected their daily life. In 2012, Transparency International ranked Afghanistan the third most corrupt country in its Corruption's Perception Index.¹⁰²

The US prioritised the development of electricity production as a key driver of economic development, spending £1.7 billion on the sector. However, by 2013, only 28 per cent of Afghan households were connected to the national grid and 73 per cent of all electricity was imported from neighbouring countries. In addition, although \$1.5 billion had been spent on rebuilding road infrastructure, the special inspector general for Afghanistan Reconstruction estimates that 'Afghanistan's road infrastructure is deteriorating, mainly because of the poor quality of initial construction, poor maintenance, and overloading'.¹⁰³

The electoral system pushed forward by Khalilzad as a key part of 'Accelerating Success' has been undermined by widespread and systematic voter fraud. Afghanistan's Independent Electoral Commission rejected 1.3 million of 5.6 million ballots cast in the 2010 parliamentary elections, then disqualified 21 of 249 successful candidates.¹⁰⁴ The electoral turnout itself suggests that after numerous cases of electoral fraud, democracy is no longer delivering legitimacy nor constraining Afghanistan's ruling elite. With no reliable voter registration tally, the total size of the electorate is hard to gauge, with estimates ranging from 10.5 to 12.5 million. 7.4 million votes were cast in the 2004 presidential elections compared with 4.8 million in 2009.¹⁰⁵ These figures reveal a population disillusioned with its government. Given the widespread corruption amongst the country's political elite and their continuing inability to deliver government services, this is hardly surprising.

¹⁰⁰ Martine van Bijlert, 'What the US Senate's report on Afghanistan does and doesn't say', *Afghanistan Analysts Network* (13 June, 2011), available at: {<http://aan-afghanistan.com/index.asp?id=1788>}.

¹⁰¹ Aunohita Mojumdar, 'Afghan citizens paid \$1bn in bribes for public services last year, study finds', *The Guardian* (8 July 2010), available at: {<http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2010/jul/08/afghanistan-bribes-corruption-taliban>}.

¹⁰² See Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction, *Quarterly Report to the United States Congress* (January 2013), pp. 116 and 152, available at: {<http://www.sigar.mil/pdf/quarterlyreports/2013-01-30qr.pdf>}.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*, p. 144; Julian Gorger, 'Afghanistan faces \$4bn defence funding shortfall', *The Guardian* (1 December 2011), available at: {<http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2011/dec/01/afghanistan-faces-defence-funding-shortfall?INTCMP=SRCH>}.

¹⁰⁴ Associated Press, 'Quarter of Afghan election ballots thrown out for fraud', *The Guardian* (20 October 2010), available at: {<http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2010/oct/20/afghanistan-election-fraud>}.

¹⁰⁵ Martine Van Bijlert, 'Afghanistan's elections: let's talk turnout', *Foreign Policy* (20 September 2010), available at: {http://afpak.foreignpolicy.com/posts/2010/09/20/afghanistans_elections_lets_talk_turnout}.

Finally, the intervention has gained some success in rebuilding the coercive capacity of the state, with the combined wings of the Afghan armed forces currently employing 331,597. However, the size and cost of its indigenous armed forces has further heightened Afghanistan's dependence on external funders, the post-2014 cost of its armed forces is estimated to be \$8 billion.¹⁰⁶

In Iraq, beyond regime change itself and the turnover in the governing elite, the sustainable results of Liberal Peacebuilding are hard to detect. Iraq's government institutions remain weak, especially in service delivery. In 2011, the United Nations estimated that only 26 per cent of the population was covered by the public sewerage network. This leaves 83 per cent of the country's waste water untreated. Overall, UN figures suggest 7.6 million people or 25 per cent of the population lack access to safe drinking water.¹⁰⁷ The Coalition Provisional Authority made the reconstruction of electricity delivery a key priority after the invasion, earmarking \$5.7 billion.¹⁰⁸ By the time the CPA had closed, it had only increased output by 200 megawatts from the pre-war production levels.¹⁰⁹ The Iraqi government had by April 2012, raised output to 7,918 megawatts. The Ministry of Electricity estimates that it is meeting 60 per cent of demand. However, nationwide surveys carried out by the Iraqi Knowledge Network in 2011, found that the average household received just 7.6 hours of electricity from the national grid each day and 79 per cent of those surveyed rated electricity delivery as bad or very bad.¹¹⁰

Economically, Iraq remains a rentier economy with 90 per cent of government expenditure derived from oil exports. Statistics suggest that since 2005, the number of people employed by the state has actually risen from 1.2 million to 2.3 million. In 2006, the statistics agency of the Iraqi Ministry of Planning estimated that the state employed 31 per cent of Iraq's labour force and estimated this would rise to 35 per cent by 2008. This would put state employment just five per cent lower than the CIA's estimates for 2003.¹¹¹

In both 2010 and 2011, Transparency International's Corruption's Perception Index placed Iraq at 175th out of 182 countries.¹¹² The World Bank came up with comparable figures in its Worldwide Governance Indicators. It rated countries out of 100 on the basis of the rigour of their anti-corruption institutions. Iraq scored 5 points.¹¹³

As with Afghanistan, the one area where the United States appears to have left a lasting legacy is in its attempts at reconstructing Iraq's armed forces. Iraq has 940,000 people currently working for the security forces. The fact that these forces

¹⁰⁶ See Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction, *Quarterly Report* (January 2013).

¹⁰⁷ See Special Inspector General for Iraq Reconstruction, *Quarterly Report* (30 January 2011), p. 98; (30 April), p. 119; and (30 January 2012), p. 76.

¹⁰⁸ Ali A. Allawi, *The Occupation of Iraq. Winning the War, Losing the Peace* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007), pp. 257–8.

¹⁰⁹ Special Inspector General for Iraq Reconstruction, *Hard Lessons*, p. 152.

¹¹⁰ Iraq Knowledge Network, 'essential services fact sheet' (December 2011), available at: {<http://www.iauiraq.org/documents/1583/ServicesFactsheet-English.pdf>}.

¹¹¹ Campbell Robertson, 'Iraq private sector falters; rolls of Government soar', *New York Times* (10 August, 2008), available at: {http://www.nytimes.com/2008/08/11/world/middleeast/11baghdad.html?_r=1&hp}.

¹¹² See Transparency International, *Corruption Perceptions Index 2011*, available at: {<http://cpi.transparency.org/cpi2011/results/>}.

¹¹³ Special Inspector General for Iraq Reconstruction, *Quarterly Report and Semiannual Report to the United States Congress* (30 January 2012), p. 9, available at: {http://www.sigir.mil/files/quarterlyreports/January2012/Report_-_January_2012.pdf}.

are primarily designed to impose order on Iraq's own population, not protect the country from external aggression, is shown in the discrepancy in size between the Ministry of Interior and the Ministry of Defence, the former is twice the size of the latter.¹¹⁴ The remilitarisation of Iraqi society since 2003 can be seen in the total number of people employed by the security forces, who now equal 8 per cent of country's entire work force or 12 per cent of the adult male population.¹¹⁵

Conclusion: The future of the Liberal Peacebuilding and intervention

In February 2007, the specialist nationbuilding team at RAND, who had individually worked on a number of international interventions since 1989, published their definitive work, *The Beginner's Guide to Nation-Building*.¹¹⁶ Given the ambiguous results delivered through exogenous attempts at recreating indigenous state institutions in the aftermath of the Cold War, you would expect a book underpinned by caution even modesty. Far from it. *The Beginner's Guide* reproduced the central pillars of Liberal Peacebuilding, claiming to tell its readers how to deliver order, the rule of law, governance, and democratisation, with greater coherence and efficiency. It also argued that there was a direct, and apparently uncomplicated, relationship between the level of resources invested in nationbuilding and the successes that could be achieved.¹¹⁷ The authors of this 'how to manual' were so confident of the universal applicability of their quasi-scientific method that page 45 contained an equation that calculated the numbers of soldiers and police needed per head of population to deliver stability.¹¹⁸ As Tony Smith has correctly argued, the book contained

no analysis of what an earlier generation would have been quite correct to look for: a local middle class, local experience with limited government; local sentiments of national unity and tolerance for social diversity; local democratic leaders.

It replaced a 'deep knowledge of specific countries and regions in favour of gross comparative generalisations'.¹¹⁹

What is true in an extreme form for RAND is also true for Liberal Peacebuilding more generally. A universal template for correct and sustainable state-society relations is applied to the targets of intervention, irrespective of the historical, political, and economic specificities of each individual case. The units of analysis that give both neoliberalism as an ideology and Liberal Peacebuilding as an ideological practice their coherence are themselves believed to be universal in their applicability. For neoliberalism, individual rationality is universal, pre-existing the state and any society

¹¹⁴ The Ministry of Defence employs a total of 271,400 personnel, spread between the Iraqi army (193,421), the air force (5,053), and subsidiary organisations. The Ministry of Interior employs 531,000. The Iraqi police has 302,000 on its payroll, the Facilities Protection Service, 95,000, Border Enforcement 60,000, Iraqi Federal Police 44,000, and Oil Police 30,000. Special Inspector General for Iraq Reconstruction, *Quarterly Report*, p. 75.

¹¹⁵ Anthony H. Cordesman with Adam Mausner and Lena Derby, *Iraq and the United States Creating a Strategic Partnership* (Washington: Centre for Strategic and International Studies, June, 2010), p. 312.

¹¹⁶ James Dobbins, Seth G. Jones, Keith Carne, and Beth Cole DeGrasse, *The Beginner's Guide to Nation-Building* (Santa Monica: RAND Corporation, 2007).

¹¹⁷ Dana H. Allin and Erik Jones, *Weary Policeman: American Power in an Age of Austerity* (Abingdon: Routledge for International Institute for Strategic Studies, 2012), pp. 76–7.

¹¹⁸ Dobbins, Jones, Carne and Cole DeGrasse, *The Beginner's Guide to Nation-Building*, p. 45.

¹¹⁹ Smith, *A Pact with the Devil*.

an individual may find themselves within. The market thus becomes a naturally occurring mechanism through which individuals come together to maximise their utility.¹²⁰ The state, recognised within both neoliberalism and Liberal Peacebuilding during the 1980s and 1990s, to be a necessary evil, will be recreated with limits imposed through the construction of democratic institutions. This would be welcomed by those individuals who have been liberated from rogue or failing states and beyond that the constraints of specific cultures and outmoded traditions. What this sunny and universal optimism failed to recognise is the revolutionary transformation Liberal Peacebuilding sought to unleash, albeit largely unwittingly, on a number of the societies it targeted.

Creating a strong centralised state in Afghanistan with coherent institutions that delivered order and services from Kabul to the rest of the country would have been a truly revolutionary act. When arguing for and seeking to implement 'Accelerating Success', Zalmay Khalilzad must have had some understanding that in trying to achieve such a goal, the US and NATO would have been flying in the face of the Afghan state's historic relationship with its own society.¹²¹ His confidence that this could be done must have been anchored not in a rational estimation of the capacity of the US government to transform Afghanistan, but his faith in the universal applicability of the units of analysis derived from within neoliberalism. These identified both the problems to be solved in Afghanistan and the ways to solve them. In a comparable manner, Paul Bremer set about applying a universal neoliberal template to the reform of the Iraqi state. This universal template likewise ignored Iraq's contemporary history. The institutions of the Iraqi state were subjected to 13 years of the most draconian sanctions ever imposed in international history. They were specifically designed to bring the state to the verge of collapse. This, in conjunction with three wars in twenty years, meant the state that Bremer targeted for reform was too weak to survive his neoliberal policy prescriptions and collapsed. In both Afghanistan and Iraq, the application of Liberal Peacebuilding led the United States into a prolonged commitment to stabilising the country through rebuilding state capacity. As has been detailed above, although this commitment was extremely costly and time consuming, it has delivered meagre results. The American led exogenous interventions appear to have been able to recreate the coercive institutions of the state with more success than its civil institutions or its ability to deliver services. It has established a new ruling elite in both Kabul and Baghdad heavily dependent upon coercion in order to survive.

Beyond the hubristic and mechanistic optimism of RAND's nationbuilding team, the failures of Liberal Peacebuilding in Afghanistan, Iraq and beyond have clearly placed constraints on the United States and international community's willingness to deploy military intervention with the aim of transforming state-society relations. When faced with a popular uprising and state repression in Libya in 2011, the Obama Administration was happy to 'lead from behind', using airpower, special forces, and the empowerment of numerous Libyan militias to deliver a regime

¹²⁰ Williams, *The World Bank and Social Transformation*, p. 20.

¹²¹ Thomas Barfield and Neamatollah Nojumi, 'Bringing More Effective Governance to Afghanistan: 10 Pathways to Stability', *Middle East Policy*, XVII:4 (Winter 2010), pp. 40–52.

change. This approach allowed Washington to minimise its responsibility for reconstituting the state after Gaddafi's removal.¹²² When faced with even greater state repression and civil war in Syria, the US has once again worked very hard to limit its formal involvement and hence responsibility for stabilising any post-Assad Syria. Beyond the newly found timidity of the United States however lies a series of unanswered analytical and philosophical questions about Liberal Peacebuilding itself. The transformative ambitions of liberal interventionism across the 1990s, whether pursued multilaterally by the United Nations or unilaterally by the US, UK, and NATO, have been matched by the paucity of outcome. Regime change has proved easier to achieve than the sustainable transformation of state-society relations. Against this background, the universal applicability of the units of analysis placed at the centre of Liberal Peacebuilding must now be subject to extended intellectual scrutiny.

¹²² See Ryan Lizza, 'The Consequentialist: How the Arab Spring remade Obama's foreign policy', *The New Yorker* (2 May 2011), available at: {http://www.newyorker.com/reporting/2011/05/02/110502fa_fact_lizza?printable=true#ixzz1KWzFQym6}; and Thom Shanker and Eric Schmitt, 'Seeing Limits to "New" Kind of War in Libya', *New York Times* (21 October 2011), available at: {<http://www.nytimes.com/2011/10/22/world/africa/nato-war-in-libya-shows-united-states-was-vital-to-toppling-qaddafi.html>}.