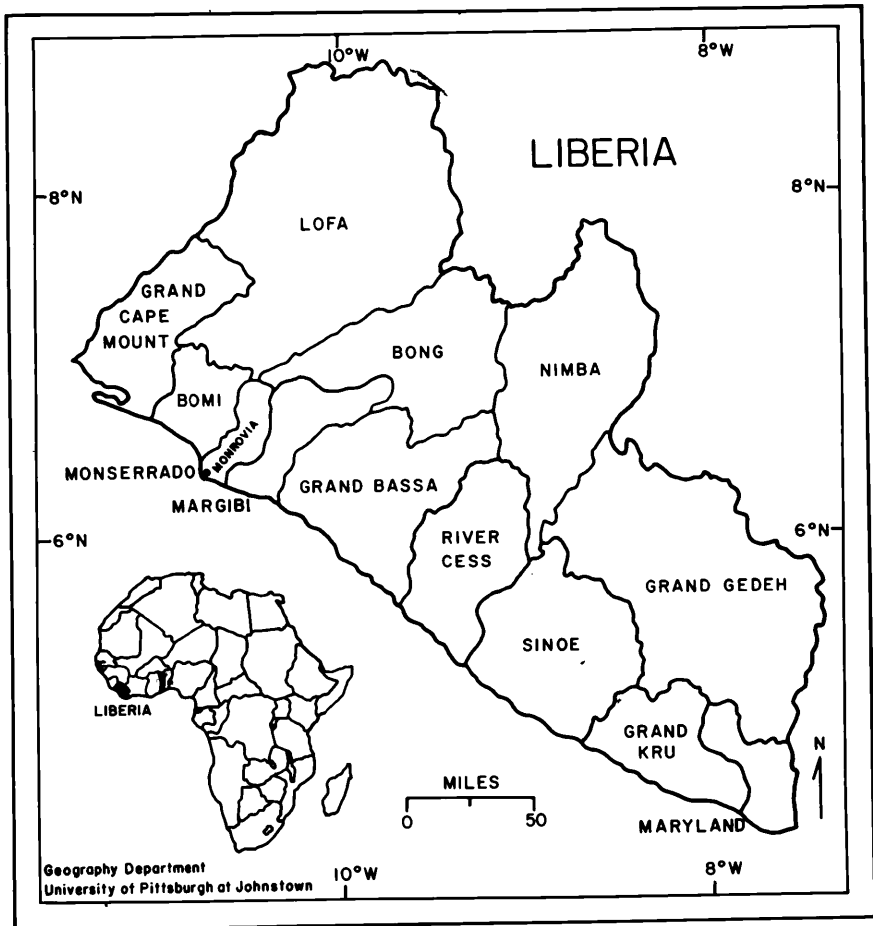


# LIBERIAN STUDIES JOURNAL

**Including a cumulative index of Volume I (1968-69) to Volume XXI (1996). Prepared by Arnold Odio.**



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# LIBERIAN STUDIES JOURNAL

## Editorial Policy

The *Liberian Studies Journal* is dedicated to the publication of original research on social, political, economic, scientific, and other issues about Liberia or with implications for Liberia. Opinions of contributors to the *Journal* do not necessarily reflect the policy of the organizations they represent or the Liberian Studies Association, publishers of the *Journal*.

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Manuscripts submitted for publication should not exceed 25 typewritten, double-spaced pages, with margins of one-and-a-half inches. The page limit includes graphs, references, tables and appendices. Authors may, in addition to their manuscripts, submit a computer disk of their work preferably in WordPerfect 6.1 for Windows. Notes and references should be placed at the end of the text with headings, e.g., Notes; References. Notes, if any, should precede the references. The *Journal* is published in June and December. Deadline for the first issue is February, and for the second, August.

Manuscripts should include a title page that provides the title of the text, author's name, address, phone number, and affiliation. All works will be reviewed by anonymous referees.

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## From the Editor

We are looking forward to seeing you at the 30th Annual Liberian Studies Association Conference scheduled for March 26-28, 1998, at The Westin Atlanta Airport Hotel. **Ciyata Coleman** of **Morris Brown College** in Atlanta, and her conference committee will serve as host.

Just in case you have been on Mars, elections were held in Liberia on July 19, 1997. See page 308 of this issue for an unofficial listing of those elected and appointed to key positions in government.

The editors and Editorial Advisory Board hope that the elections in Liberia, and the seating of a new civilian government will open up opportunities for scholars to travel to Liberia and do more research. We hope, also, that scholars in Liberia will have an opportunity to do independent and collaborative research with their colleagues outside Liberia.

This issue leads with **William Ponder's** "The Micro-Economic Challenges of Adopting a Realistic Exchange Rate Regime for Liberia." The article addresses some very important monetary and fiscal policy issues that policy makers in Liberia might want to consider. Next is **Ali Mazrui's** "Liberia and Ethiopia as Pan-African Symbols: Rise, Decline and Change." Professor **Mazrui** submitted this piece for the Special Sesquicentennial Issue of the *LSJ*, but we could not carry it then because of deadline pressures. We are pleased to carry it in this issue. The debate and discussion about the Liberian Civil War is kept alive by three articles in this issue: **Yekutieli Gershoni's** "Military and Diplomatic Strategies of the Liberian Civil War," covers the period 1990-1996. **Emma Lucas'** "Sexual Abuses as Wartime Crimes Against Women and Children: The Case of Liberia," provides a reality check for those who think that wars leave only physical scars and adult male casualties. **Doris Railey** takes a look at how the Liberian Civil War has affected some Liberians in the Diaspora in her article, "Some Impacts of the Liberian Civil War: A Pilot Study of Thirty Immigrant Liberian Families in the United States."

Our Book Review section kicks off with **Victoria Tolbert's** book, *Lifted Up: The Victoria Tolbert Story*, by **Julius Amin**. As we went to press, **Mrs. Tolbert**, Liberia's First Lady (July 1971- April 12, 1980), died in Minnesota. Our condolences to the **Tolbert** family. We thank **Diana**

**Brown** for her thought-provoking review of **Tibbie Kposowa's** *Silence That is Not Golden*. **Boikai Twe** rounds up our book reviews in this issue with a review of **David Lancy's** *Playing on the Mother-Ground: Cultural Routines for Children Development*. Our thanks go to **Augustine Konneh**, our Book Review Editor, for coordinating these reviews, and also for preparing the section of the *Journal* on Recent Publications and Theses.

There are plenty of news and notes in this issue. The minutes of the 29th Annual LSA Meeting held at **Prairie View A&M University**, Prairie View, Texas, appears on pages 293-300. An Obituary for **Clarence Ernest Zamba Liberty**, one of the pioneers of the Liberian Studies Association and the *Liberian Studies Journal*, appears on pages 301-305. Our condolences to his family.

In our Document section, we carry President **Charles Taylor's** "Address to the Fifty-Second Session of the United Nations General Assembly," as delivered on Thursday, October 2, 1997, by H.E. **Monie R. Captan**, Foreign Minister of the Republic of Liberia.

I like to call your attention to a **position vacancy** announcement for Editor of the *Liberian Studies Journal* which appears on pages 306-307. Yes, I am giving it up! It is hard to believe that it has been three years already. I am not going to use this column to say my farewell yet, because I still have one more issue to do, Volume XXIII:1 (June 1998). What this means is that whosoever takes over as editor in March in Atlanta, will have a whole nine months, till December 1998, to come up with her first issue--political correctness intended. I am hoping that several persons will express interest. Trust me, it is a good job to have, just ask **Elwood Dunn**, **Edward Biggane**, **Jo Sullivan**, and **Svend Holsoe**. Please send your letters of intention to **Dianne Oyler**, the Secretary-Treasurer.

The Liberian Studies Association will like to extend our special gratitude to the Division of Social Science at **Minot State University**, Minot, North Dakota, for housing the secretariat of the association.

See you in Atlanta!

**The Editor**

## **The Micro-Economic Challenges of Adopting a Realistic Exchange Rate Regime for Liberia**

**William F. Ponder, Jr.**

### **Executive Summary**

Liberia's currency crisis which essentially began in 1980, coincided with a turbulent political turning point in the country's history. Since then, several economists and monetary policy experts studying the crisis, have been inspired into reviewing the relevant literature that involves the reordering of exchange rate regimes in developing countries.

In 1991, the National Bank of Liberia (NBL), Liberia's central bank, after an approximate year of inactivity due to the widespread civil unrest in Monrovia and its environs, was faced with a profound monetary and banking crisis. With the suspension of technical assistance to Liberia from the International Monetary Fund (IMF), NBL authorities began to seek alternative technical support from other central banks and such institutions as the African Center for Monetary Studies (ACMS) located in Dakar, Senegal. As a direct result of these efforts, two currency study teams comprising economic researchers from the Research Department of the NBL were sent to the central banks of Nigeria, Sierra Leone, Senegal, and The Gambia and to the ACMS. The teams were assigned to critically assess the exchange rate policies and currency systems of the countries visited and devise an urgently needed solution to Liberia's prevailing monetary crisis. From the assessment made of the successes and failures of exchange rate systems in West Africa, the teams were able to identify and recommend some clear-sighted measures for the reordering of Liberia's currency regime. However, the teams' reports stressed that for any meaningful improvements to occur, these changes must coincide with the adoption of a comprehensive economic adjustment program that encompassed all sectors. This meant that

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given Liberia's excruciating civil disruptions, comprehensive and sustained economic policy adjustments would not be feasible until the relevant political and socioeconomic structures were restored. Thus, the measures since implemented have been in the realm of "crisis management" rather than the programming of long-term economic recovery.

As a member of one of the study-teams, this author benefited from a wide range of insightful discussions at the highest levels of monetary policy-making within the West African subregion, and was inspired into regarding the policies which have sustained the concept of the "dollar myth" in Liberia. Proponents of the "dollar myth" concept view the use of the US dollar currency as a panacea to Liberia's monetary and trade problems.

This article draws on my professional and personal involvement with this very fundamental economic policy question. It is enriched by the experiences this researcher has had in discussing, listening to

**Proponents of the "dollar myth" concept view the use of the US dollar currency as a panacea to Liberia's monetary and trade problems. This article draws on my professional and personal involvement with this very fundamental economic policy question.**

and reading from the opinions of several other professionals. Although influenced by my experience with the study, this author has deliberately avoided the use of the findings that were derived from it. Also, as it is possible that this researcher may share similar opinions with other economists on this subject, the specifics of the analyses and recommendations expressed are mine and do not necessarily reflect the views of the National Bank of Liberia or the authors quoted.

The topic, "Macro-Economic Challenges to Adopting a Realistic

Exchange Rate Regime for Liberia,” represents one of the far-reaching sets of adjustment measures that will form an essential part of reviving the Liberian economy in the aftermath of a devastating civil war. It highlights the case for and against fixed and flexible exchange rates within a context that is applicable to Liberia’s currency arrangement. A brief overview of the experiences of sub-Saharan Africa with major exchange rate regimes is given in order to establish the uniqueness of the Liberian experience. It also introduces the reader to the global framework of policy directions that will inevitably impact Liberia’s future policy recourse. The country’s turbulent political and economic environment since 1979 is assessed on the basis of its negative impact on the maintenance of the fixed parity between the Liberian and US dollar. Specific aspects of monetary and fiscal policies are addressed in order to establish the appropriateness or inappropriateness of interventions or nonintervention on exchange rates. In concluding, the article critically reviews the advantages and disadvantages of maintaining the existing exchange rate structure and provides some options that will be available to policy makers in adopting a more realistic exchange rate regime for Liberia.

### **The Global Framework of Policy Directions**

#### **Sub-Saharan Africa: Liberia-- A Special Case**

According to economic theory, an exchange rate is the price that a buyer pays in domestic currency to acquire a unit of foreign currency. Like any other price, changes in exchange rates reflect changes in the demand and supply of currencies on the international markets. Exchange rates may be flexible-- that is, they are allowed to fluctuate freely in response to the forces of supply and demand or can be kept fixed through official intervention of the central bank.

Liberia, since 1943, has declared the US dollar as its legal tender. The official declaration followed special lending arrangements between the Liberian government and the Firestone Rubber Plantation Company of the

United States. Initially, it was arranged that US bank notes would circulate alongside Liberian small change coins and be exchanged at equal parity. This policy move to create a US dollar-linked economy in Liberia was correspondingly connected to two significant events:

**The position taken by Liberia (to adopt the US dollar as its currency) was unique to post-independent Africa, as most other countries, upon gaining independence, adopted their own national currencies.**

First, in Liberia, it coincided with the liberal trade and investment posture of the (William V.S.) Tubman administration. Second, it closely preceded the 1944 Bretton Woods Agreement that named the US dollar currency as the major medium of exchange in international trade and investment. Thus, the US dollar became a replacement to the position once held by the gold standard (Franz, pp. 6). Under the dollar standard, the United States agreed to make the US dollar "as good as gold," redeemable on demand by any central bank and generally accepted in all international transactions (Galbraith, pp. 255-260). Considering the events at the time, Liberia's use of the US dollar as its legal tender was considered a logical recourse.

However, the position taken by Liberia was unique to post-independent Africa, as most other countries, upon gaining independence, adopted their own national currencies. For most of these states, monetary independence appeared as a natural consequence of political and socioeconomic sovereignty. Stanley Fischer, a notable economist, providing economic rationale to support the argument favoring a national currency writes that a government without its own national currency loses seigniorage (Fischer, 1982, pp. 300-301). Seigniorage is defined as the net revenue from issuing money.



Notably, between 1960 and the late 1970s, it was common to find independent sub-Saharan African states with fixed exchange rate regimes operated by pegging the national currency to a major convertible currency. Later, due to the adverse effects from external shocks and fluctuations in the values of the world's major currencies, the share of sub-Saharan African states that opted to peg their national currencies to a trade-weighted basket of currencies rose sharply-- from 13 percent in 1976 to 23 percent by the close of 1989. Alternatively, a few number of sub-Saharan African states have chosen to peg their national currencies to the Special Drawing Rights (SDRs) issued by the International Monetary Fund ( A World Bank Policy Research Report, *Adjustment in Africa*, 1994, pp. 51-53).

The predominant period of fixed exchange rates prior to the early 1980s was accompanied by strong commodity prices and rising per capita incomes for many sub-Saharan African states. Moreover, in reply to the need to service the demand for Eurodollar financing, large flows of commercial lending were transferred to the continent. However, by 1980, the fluctuation in the prices of primary exports and a worldwide recession that was partly brought about by the oil crises of the mid-1970s led to marked deterioration in the terms of trade of many sub-Saharan African states. With national currencies that were essentially pegged to the world's major convertible currencies, most of these governments resorted to overvalued exchange rates that later led to serious balance of payment distortions (Ibid., 23-25).

By the mid-1980s, several sub-Saharan African states undergoing the International Monetary Fund and World Bank's conditionalities for adjustment-based lending, adopted flexible exchange rate regimes as part of measures to liberalize their economies, tackle balance of payment difficulties, and establish more competitive markets. However, the decreasing demand for primary exports, worsening external debt burdens, drought and famine crises, and political instability, have posed major problems in mitigating the effects of persistent depreciations. As a consequence, several African

countries have periodically swayed between fixed and flexible exchange rates and have tended to adjust monetary and fiscal policies accordingly. In the most recent past, managed float or crawling peg exchange rate systems have been adopted to create buffers against exogenous factors caused by sporadic currency movements and to serve as instruments for reallocating scarce foreign exchange to productive sectors (*Ibid.*, pp. 55).

Sub-Saharan African countries that have adopted independently floating exchange systems had previously implemented a broad spectrum of arrangements. Most had previously maintained arrangements involving a fixed or managed exchange rate for some transactions, combined with a legalized, freely floating exchange rate market for other transactions. Specifically, the currencies of Ghana and Guinea had been pegged to the US dollar prior to introducing a floating arrangement. Similarly, The Gambia changed from an exchange rate that was fixed against the (British) pound sterling. Prior to floating, Sierra Leone, Zaire and Zambia had fixed their exchange rates in terms of currency baskets (with Sierra Leone and Zaire pegged to the SDR for some time). Nigeria and Uganda graduated from an exchange system of managed flexibility vis-a-vis the US dollar that had involved small but frequent rate changes. The general principle in almost every case had been to maintain multiple exchange rates for a short time as a transitional-adjustment device before establishing either a two-tier or a unified independently floating exchange system (Quirk, Peter J. et al, pp. 3).

A World Bank comparative study of sub-Saharan African countries that are instituting flexible exchange rate regimes reflect steady improvements in macroeconomic performance. The GDP per capita growth of these countries climbed from -1.5 percent a year for the period 1981 through 1986 to 0.9 percent a year for the period 1987 through 1991. Conversely, the macroeconomic performance of countries with fixed exchange rate regimes deteriorated significantly in the second half of the 1980s. In those countries with fixed exchange rates, the median real GDP per capita growth fell on average by 1.7 percent a year for the period 1987

through 1991. Meanwhile, the median real depreciation for the periods 1981 through 1986 and 1987 through 1991 in the flexible exchange rate economies was 50 percent, compared with an 8 percent real appreciation in those economies with fixed exchange rates (A World Bank Policy Research Report, *Adjustment in Africa*, 1994, pp. 144).

Through a policy that essentially promoted the “dollar myth” concept, Liberia, subsequent to 1982, managed to elude the exchange rate crises that have absorbed other sub-Saharan African states since independence. However, with the monetary distortions that permeated the 1980s, worsened by nearly two decades of political instability and economic mismanagement, the country’s economy has performed no better than most other sub-Saharan African countries that adopted their own national currencies. Therefore, it seems only appropriate that measures to correct Liberia’s monetary distortions utilize the lessons learned from the global framework with which other sub-Saharan African states have operated over the years. By so doing, the country would be in a better position to avoid the mistakes of its predecessors in managing home-grown exchange rate regimes.

### **Liberia’s Use of the US Dollar as its Legal Tender**

#### **Impact on External Trade and Payment Conditions**

Liberia was no exception when it came to facing the negative effects from external shocks that characterized the period from 1960 through the 1970s. However, the country did manage to mask the severity of these external shocks through its use of the US dollar as legal tender and the increasing demand for its primary exports. Endowed with an abundant supply of natural resources, the country became Africa’s largest producer of iron ore as well as the site of the world’s largest single rubber plantation. Its 635 million tons of iron ore deposits were the world’s richest. The name Liberia, which was once synonymous with rubber, experienced a rapid growth in iron ore production, and by 1966, exports of iron ore for the first

time exceeded that of rubber. Other primary exports have included diamond, gold, cocoa, timber and coffee, which comprised on average, 30 percent of total exports. The country's trade data showed long periods of consistent trade surpluses, with exceptions occurring between 1961 and 1963 when heavy investments in the iron ore market led to extraordinary imports of capital equipment, and again in 1977 when the economy was negatively impacted by the world's recession and the slump in market demand for its primary exports (Ministry of Planning & Economic Affairs, *Economic Survey*, Foreign Trade, 1978).

Liberia's use of the US dollar as its legal tender provided some specific benefits to the country's external trade and payment conditions. It assured the domestic economy of a local parlance that was fully convertible. As a consequence, exchange and payment constraints were largely minimized. Once regular flows of US banknotes did not experience administrative disruptions, the domestic economy was assured of stable exchange and pricing conditions. Moreover, the US dollar served as the major catalyst for attracting foreign investors to Liberia by providing them with easy access to repatriate as well as reinvest their earnings. The economy, on the other hand, flourished without much restriction on capital movements. A similar policy stance characterized the traded goods sector where restrictions on imports were virtually nonexistent. The port of Monrovia, West Africa's first "Freeport," and the country itself, having the world's largest fleet of registered ships under its maritime jurisdiction, created an enabling economic infrastructure for foreign investment. Investors of foreign private capital were thus assured of minimal transaction or translation risks. As a consequence, the value of total exports recorded positive growth rates of 5.5 and 32.6 percent between 1965 and 1974 (See Appendix).

In spite of these positive outcomes, the riveting effects from the two oil shocks of the mid-1970s and the subsequent worldwide recession placed strains on Liberia's export earning capacity. In 1977, the country witnessed

a drop in the price and production of iron ore (its major export) and a stagnant production performance of rubber (its second major export).

Concomitantly, the trade balance showed a marked decline of -16.1 percent (Appendix) and the current account deficit deteriorated sharply from US\$42.8 million in 1977 to US\$129.0 million at

**...it seems only appropriate that measures to correct Liberia's monetary distortions utilize the lessons learned from the global framework with which other sub-Saharan African states have operated over the years.**

the close of 1978 (*National Bank of Liberia Annual Report*, 1978).

Theoretically, the strong US dollar currency made Liberia's imports cheaper and exports more expensive on the international trade market. However, this economic concept was compromised by the fact that virtually all iron ore and rubber production were directly exported to the very manufacturing companies that owned and operated the mines and plantations in Liberia (Franz, pp. 18).

### **Impact On Monetary Policy**

Prior to the Legislative Act that authorized the establishment of the National Bank of Liberia in 1974, the country had no indigenous monetary system. Benefiting from a close and traditional bond with the US government and investors, former governments of Liberia saw the use of the US dollar as a further manifestation of this historic friendship between the two nations. Liberia had no central bank, and as such, Citibank, alias the Bank of Monrovia, acted as a "bank of issue" and custodian of public funds.

The establishment of the National Bank of Liberia was the first major

attempt to nationalize the roles of monetary policy. With the exception of serving as an “issuing bank,” the National Bank of Liberia was structured to accommodate other monetary policy responsibilities. These responsibilities included that of lender

**(Prior to 1974), Liberia had no central bank. Citibank, alias the Bank of Monrovia, acted as a “bank of issue” and custodian of public funds.**

of last resort (banker’s bank); banker, fiscal agent, and financial advisor to government; initiator of selective open market operations; administrator of the clearing house; and regulator of credit and interest rate policies. However, the responsibility of “issuing currency” was left exogenously determined as the Liberian government opted to officially maintain the US dollar as its legal tender. As a consequence, the role of the National Bank of Liberia in regulating and influencing the volume of currency and hence the level of money supply was largely constrained. Given this paradox, Liberia differed from many other African states, as its monetary authorities were restricted from influencing exchange rates in ways that appropriately reallocate resources and promote growth in the export-oriented sector.

With a predominately foreign-owned commercial banking sector, monetary policy measures adopted to meet specific macro-economic objectives were often eluded by the ready-access to credit, overdraft, and transfer facilities provided by overseas parent companies and affiliated foreign banks. This situation created a structural limitation on the National Bank of Liberia’s function as a lender of last resort. Thus, the willingness of these foreign-owned commercial banks to provide the economy with US dollar liquidity depended on the expectation of a consistent national policy that fostered an export-led growth of primary products (Franz, pp. 18).

Liberia's monetary sector, in contrast with its traditional sector, contributes on average, about 85 percent toward national output. This sector is relatively small, conveniently regulated by government, and largely supported by external capital flows. The

traditional sector, on the other hand, with its heavy reliance on subsistent agriculture, sustains about 90 percent of the Liberian population but contributes on

**Despite the structural limitation of Liberia's monetary system, the use of the US dollar has provided some specific benefits to a stable money supply and pricing condition.**

average, a mere 15 percent toward GDP (Tarr, 1993). Besides, it is characterized by small-scale peddler activities producing socially acceptable goods and services largely through an informal system. However, these informal business activities have had a minor impact on the velocity of US dollar circulation since trade and credit opportunities are largely unavailable and considerably underutilized by the participants in this sector.

Despite the structural limitation of Liberia's monetary system, the use of the US dollar has provided some specific benefits to a stable money supply and pricing condition. First, it ensured that the Liberian economy could benefit from full currency convertibility. Second, it served as a restraint on the National Bank of Liberia from instituting direct measures of expansionary monetary policy. Justifiably, many of the country's current economic difficulties are the direct result of the irrepressible pace of deficit financing that characterized the period succeeding the introduction of the Liberian five-dollar coin in 1982 (Konneh, 1993). Third, by being administratively removed from managing exchange rate variations, Liberia's monetary authorities prior to 1982 were allowed the convenience of focusing their attention on managing other relevant aspects of the country's economy.

### **Impact On Fiscal Policy**

With the strength and stability of the US dollar, Liberia's fiscal authorities between the 1950s and 1970s, found it relatively easy to manage the difficulty of exchange rate conversions when making time-series interpretation and analysis of items in the GDP. Also, the economy could readily elude inflationary tendencies brought about by rising import costs since the US dollar, being a fully convertible currency, was in high demand by Liberia's industrialized trading partners. Trade revenues, on the other hand, were relatively stable as they did not experience as much erosion from sporadic currency depreciations that are brought about by external shocks.

However, due to structural weaknesses and inappropriate budgetary practices, the revenues allocated to the money economy often fell short of accommodating the larger developmental requirements of the total economy. As a consequence, the positive performances of GDP between 0.4 and 13.8 percent for periods 1964 and 1979 suggest very little to its actual impact on poverty reduction. (International Financial Statistics, IMF Statistics Dept., *Liberia 1964-1989*). This argument probably supports the claims made by skeptics that the Liberian government's "Open Door Policy," while yielding high levels of economic growth, failed to positively impact the social development of the Liberian majority. Besides, the high growth propensity of Liberia's GDP and its favorable terms of trade position during this period, reflected the nature and extent to which the economy itself was immiserized. One of the caveats of being immiserized reflects a rapidly growing small, open economy that exists under free trade, when in fact, there should be in place some additional tariff protection. In the long-run and under protracted distortions, such a small, open economy will become misaligned, as was the case with Liberia (Bhagwati & Srivasan, pp. 253-255).



A critical review of the causes of Liberia's fiscal distress can be traced back to the period between 1977 and 1979, when massive public sector outlays were employed to finance the Organization of African Unity-related projects. Besides, the rapid growth in the number of public sector enterprises from eight in the 1960s, to

**Between 1983 and 1989, Liberia's external debt had increased sharply from US\$1.129 billion to US\$ 1.725 billion.**

35 in the 1970s, and to 45 by the 1980s, exerted further strain on public sector resources. This general occurrence is observed by Haggard in his thesis "Inflation and Stability" when he states that public sector enterprises played a key role in contributing to the fiscal deficits and external borrowing in a number of developing countries over the period between the 1970s and 1980s (Haggard, 1991). It may also be recalled that during this same period, a slump in the iron ore market led to the subsequent closure of two major iron ore mining companies and the loss of nearly 30 percent of revenues from that industry. With staggering prices in the rubber, cocoa, and coffee markets as well as the challenges in the wake of emerging external debt repayment obligations, the adherence to sound fiscal management was already being tested.

The size and composition of Liberia's external debt have steadily expanded over the years. At the end of 1975, the outstanding debt was US\$162 million, equivalent to about 27 percent of GDP. External borrowings through the mid-1970s had been generally conservative and consisted mainly of loans on concessional terms-- at low interest rates and for extended periods-- from donor countries and multilateral agencies. At the end of 1980, the external debt had risen to US\$596.4 million, a sum equal to 65 percent of GDP (*Liberia: A Country Study*, "External Debt," pp. 149). However, the country's creditworthiness was never a major

international concern until the mid-1980s. First, it was generated by the shift to higher premium commercial credit occurring between 1977 and 1979, and then, made seriously problematic with the significant expansion of bilateral and multilateral assistance occurring after 1982. Between 1983 and 1989, Liberia's external debt had increased sharply from US\$1.129 billion to US\$1.725 billion (IMF Statistics, 1996). The 1989 external debt figure comprised of US\$834 million in multilateral credits, US\$541 million in bilateral credits, US\$305 million in commercial bank credits, and US\$45 million in suppliers credits. Liberia's 1989 accumulated debt service arrears amounted to US\$864 million (Konneh, 1993). The heightened fiscal deficit and near depletion of external reserves, coupled with the general lack of political will that characterized the 1980s, made it difficult to service the country's outstanding debt arrears. In 1986, Liberia's relationship with the IMF became strained when the country was declared ineligible to use Fund resources. Its outstanding arrears due the IMF was declared at US\$489 million in 1992 (*Liberia: A Country Study*, "External Debt," pp. 150). With the accumulation of interest arrears on this amount, the IMF may, as of 1997, lay claim to a whopping US\$600 million from the country (Ogunleye, pp. 636).

The actual negative impact of Liberia's fiscal expanses, however, was not to be experienced until after the 1980 coup. In a deteriorating state of political affairs, the new government acting on revolutionary premises, exhibited a mistaken sense of economic policy direction. First, the rise in Liberia's debt stocks had coincided with a high incidence of fiscal expansion primarily on projects that were unsustainable. Second, the size of the public sector was markedly increased without much foresight to budgetary consequences. Specifically, the financial requirements for rice imports in particular and funds to cover the large wage increases given to the military and civil servants aggravated the misuse of available domestic credit (*Liberia: A Country Study*, "External Debt," 1984, pp. 149).

With the government lacking the will to curb extrabudgetary

expenditures and the National Bank of Liberia lacking in policy maneuverability to remedy fiscal imbalances, the economy took a major downturn. The growing fiscal expenditures accompanied by the sluggish performance in revenues gave rise to unsustainable massive budget deficits. By mid-1981, the government found itself virtually incapable of meeting its recurrent fiscal budget, an increasing trend of capital flight emerged and businessmen began the increased hoarding of the US dollar.

### **Political Transition and its Impact on the Stability of the US Dollar in Liberia**

A major factor which made it possible to maintain the US dollar in circulation in Liberia during the 1950s through the 1970s was the country's enabling political climate. At least until 1979, Liberia had managed to maintain an acceptable level of political tranquillity that was essential to foreign investment interests. With European and other industrialized nations undergoing reconstruction following two devastating world wars, the country's early status of "political independence" coupled with its favorable trade and investment environment, provided an excellent backdrop for increased trade and massive flows of foreign private capital. Specifically, during the Cold War, Liberia's "special relationship" with the United States fostered through the historic ties between the two nations, made it an important bastion of US foreign policy and economic interests in Africa. Thus, the country remained "politically civil" and continued on an economic course that essentially benefited investors of foreign capital. As Franz, in not so many words states, the US dollar served as a kind of guarantor of Liberia's sound foreign investment climate and was seen by some as an important outpost of US economic and foreign policy interests ( pp. 19).

Conversely, however, the complexion of stability that characterized Liberia's political environment was unsustainable. As the world came to witness, the April 12, 1980, military coup, ended 133 years of civilian rule and later saw the erosion of confidence in the management of the country's

economy. Several foreign investors, already confronted with declining market demand for exports, began to reduce their exposures, thus culminating in large private capital outflows. As a result, the balance of payments recorded a net increase in private capital outflows from US\$26.9 million in 1979 to US\$46.3 million by the close of 1980. Between 1983 and 1985, direct investment in the economy declined from US\$46.6 million

**The April 12, 1980 military coup ended 133 years of civilian rule and later saw the erosion of confidence in the management of the country's economy.**

to US\$17.9 million. Moreover, the accelerating trend of private capital outflows led to a liquidity crisis within the local economy. As expected, most of the advantages attributed to the use of the US dollar in Liberia were undermined by the disruption of the "automatic" stabilizing mechanism that had characterized the pre-1982 years. The National Bank of Liberia found itself administratively incapable of making any direct intervention to rectify the monetary crisis (Konneh, 1993). Besides, by being inept in managing a changing sociopolitical dispensation and the external shocks that precipitated capital flight, the government made several policy errors of judgment during the early 1980s.

## **The Changing Role of the National Bank of Liberia**

### **Introduction of the Liberian Dollar**

The National Bank of Liberia, facing its first serious monetary policy challenge ever, sought the advice of international financial institutions, and by 1982, introduced a Liberian five-dollar coin. As the Liberian coin was nonconvertible, it was officially pegged to the US dollar at a parity of one-to-one. However, the government's justification for introducing the

Liberian five-dollar coin was somehow misguided. It was initially intended as a temporary measure to provide the government with a buffer against high levels of deficit financing. Unfortunately, the introduction of the Liberian five-dollar coin began a long line of interventions imposed by the government on the National Bank of Liberia to finance its accelerating deficits. In order to lessen the resulting inflationary pressures on the economy, the bank initiated a savings bond scheme. However, the scheme failed, as the government lacked the political will and fiscal discipline necessary to generate the required revenues to redeem the bonds. This situation weakened the already dwindling confidence in the management and stability of the local economy. Additional seignioraging of the Liberian dollar aggravated pessimistic speculations and led to further hoarding of the US dollar. Moreover, the increasing flight of US dollars exerted a downward pressure on credit creation and private investment, and led to a progressive incidence of extrabudgetary financing by the public sector. The theoretical basis interpreting what occurred in the Liberian monetary system is explained by Gresham's Law (named for the economist, Thomas Gresham). It states that,

if there is no contractual or other restriction to a specific currency for a debt expressed in monetary units, and the debtor thus repays his obligation in currencies or coins of different values, he will then, when following his most immediate interests, attempt to pay in the currency having the least value. Thus, the more valuable money will be pushed out of domestic circulation and will be hoarded (Volker, pp. 27).

In the simplest of interpretations, we say that bad money drives out good money.

With the introduction of the Liberian five-dollar coin, a new dimension to monetary policy and the role played by the National Bank of Liberia developed. Whereas, officially, Liberia still employed the US dollar as its national currency, the bank now had some powers to infuse liquidity into the monetary system through the purchase and issuance of the Liberian

five dollar. Thus, when the government failed to curb its accelerating fiscal deficits, the National Bank of Liberia was repeatedly called upon to provide inflationary financing of these deficits. The overall money supply grew through the additional issuance of the Liberian five dollar. As a consequence, a systematic misalignment in the official exchange rate occurred, causing exchange rate-induced inflationary pressures on the economy.

### **Limitation of Credit and Interest Rate Policies**

The determination of interest rates prior to the introduction of the Liberian dollar was essentially inspired by the policies of the Federal Reserve Bank of the United States. Hence, besides being regulated by government, the country's interest rate and credit policies were influenced by major factors that were considered external to its monetary environment. As a result, private borrowers have been known to be insensitive to the official variation of interest rates by the National Bank of Liberia. This particularity has rendered Liberia's credit policies largely ineffectual in influencing the level of domestic investment or as an indirect monetary policy option against inflation (Konneh, 1993).

The introduction of the Liberian dollar in 1982 and its accompanying financial sector crisis, coincided with major constraints on the availability of commercial credit to the private sector. Moreover, in attempting to meet the excessive demand from government for deficit financing, special credit arrangements were administered involving the Liberian government, the National Bank of Liberia and a select number of commercial banks. These arrangements, referred to as Memoranda of Understanding (MOU), further worsened the dimensions of Liberia's credit policies. By crowding out the private sector, an artificial credit crunch was created in the allocation of loanable funds for domestic investment. Moreover, this distortion rendered other monetary policy measures, such as adjustments made to the reserve requirement ratio, a dismal failure in regulating credit and commercial bank reserves. At the start of the financial sector crisis, commercial banks grew

increasingly constrained in mobilizing financial resources for capital accumulation. Later, through the increased infusion of the Liberian five dollar, the banking system in the short-term was provided with “superficial liquidity” that was essentially tied to the exposures of financing the government’s accelerating deficits. Thus, a vicious cycle of fiscal mismanagement inhibited the banking system from effectively carrying out its role as the primary provider of private credit for capital expansion and economic growth.

### **Limitation of the 25 Percent Export Proceeds Surrender Scheme**

By the mid-1980s, the Liberian economy came to face an increasing foreign exchange crisis. Whereas it had undergone major shocks from capital flight and the slump in export demand, there were still minimum exchange restrictions and profit sharing borne by exporters. Thus, it was not surprising when the Liberian government, through an Act of Legislature, adopted “Certain Economic Policies for the Recovery of the Nation’s Economy.” The Act, in highlighting the 25 Percent Export Proceeds Surrender Scheme, required that all exporters surrender with the National Bank of Liberia 25 percent of their export proceeds in the currency of purchase in exchange for the Liberian dollar currency.

Foreign exchange payments made under the scheme were allocated to finance the importation of essential commodities, meet the government’s letter of credit commitments, pay against airline companies hard currency backlogs, pay foreign missions, as well as pay the bills incurred by individuals undergoing medical attention abroad (Patray, pp. 9)

In 1986, the National Bank of Liberia, acting in accordance with the Act, established a foreign exchange department with responsibilities to carry out the currency swap. However, its implementation brought about much controversy. Official reports suggested that several concessions were opposed to the Act, as they believed that it contravened the concession agreements they had with the Liberian government. Specifically, some

logging and timber companies complained that the Act failed to take into account their previously entered export-secured financing arrangements made with overseas bankers. Besides, there were numerous requests for exemption from such exporters as gold and diamond dealers who insisted that they needed the full portion of export proceeds in order to maintain their required trade and margin levels.

In a 1986-1987 review of the 25 Percent Export Proceeds Surrender Scheme, Mr. Nathaniel R. Patray III, the Senior Executive Officer for Research and Policy at the National Bank of Liberia, noted that

the scheme's poor performance was attributed to three major factors: (1) several exporters understate the value and quantity of their exports, (2) the granting of exemptions to such exporters as gold and diamond dealers who were allowed to surrender only 15 percent as well as to other exporters who were permitted to use the 25-percent portion of their export proceeds to finance imports, and (3) the lack of coordination among the various authorities which limited the bank's ability to impose penalties as prescribed by law (Patray, pp. 10).

A paramount concern of the 25 Percent Export Proceed Surrender Scheme is the flagrant understatement of the value and quantity of Liberia's exports. This occurs through the systematic misinvoicing of trade data, a practice which presents an additional source of capital flight. Trade misinvoicing distorts the claims made of private capital outflows and renders ineffectual the detecting and reporting of Liberia's residents actual accumulating claims on foreigners, and vice versa. An overlook of this malpractice could gravely undermine future attempts to expand and strengthen the export proceeds surrender requirement. Besides, misinvoicing of trade data makes it erroneous to capture capital flight estimates based entirely on the country's balance of payments figures.



### **The Emerging Disparity between the US and Liberian Dollar**

By mid-1983, an exchange rate disparity had evolved in Liberia, trading at \$1.50 Liberian dollar per US dollar. As Liberia had no previous experience with managing exchange rate variations, the depreciation of the Liberian dollar provided a new challenge to the country's monetary authorities. Not surprisingly, the government pronounced it unlawful to trade at an exchange rate other than the official one-to-one parity. This intervention to a fixed parity between the Liberian and US dollars introduced the country's first major experience with a parallel market. By 1985, when the country returned to civilian rule, a growing number of parallel market traders were trading at price premiums of between 100 and 150 percent or at exchange rates of \$2.00 and \$2.50 Liberian dollars per US dollar. Parallel market trading gradually became widespread and the exchange rate depreciated further to \$2.50 and \$3.00 (Liberian dollars) per US dollar. There were few attempts to impose surveillance on illicit trading since the government exhibited a general negligence in maintaining the official parity.

In 1989, the National Bank of Liberia, in an effort to reduce excess liquidity and curb the inconvenience faced by the public in carrying the weighty Liberian five-dollar coins, replaced them with the J.J. Roberts Liberian five-dollar banknote. The exchange rate between the US dollar and the newly introduced Liberian dollar banknote was maintained at the official one-to-one parity. Moreover, exchange rate adjustments to the parallel market were minimal as the price premium maintained its levels of 150 and 200 percent above the official parity.

The eruption of the civil crisis in December 1989 exacerbated the instability in Liberia's exchange rate system. The country's socioeconomic infrastructures were grossly devastated and almost all legitimate foreign trade and investment came to a halt. With the cessation of exportable production, a significant portion of the required foreign currency necessary to meet the demand for imports was not being supplied. This supply-gap for

foreign currency exerted an added pressure on the exchange rate stability between the US and Liberian dollars. The resulting shocks to the parallel market were immediately felt by the sharp depreciation of the Liberian five-dollar banknote. At the start of the civil crisis, the exchange rate floated between \$15.00 and \$30.00 Liberian dollars per US dollar, but within two years had further depreciated to rates between \$25.00 and \$50.00 (Liberian dollars) per US dollar.

By 1992, the country had been militarily divided between warring rebel factions (in the rural areas), and a six-member-country West African peace keeping force

(ECOMOG), in Monrovia. The newly installed interim government in Monrovia found itself grappling with the counterfeiting of the Liberian dollar, the alleged depredation of some agencies and a lack

**By mid-1983, an exchange rate disparity had evolved in Liberia, trading at \$1.50 (Liberian dollar) per U.S. dollar. . . . (By 1991 this disparity) had depreciated to rates between \$25.00 and \$50.00 (Liberian dollar) per US dollar.**

of confidence that led to the continuing closure of several commercial banks. In an attempt to curb counterfeiting, rejuvenate the money economy and reduce inflationary pressures, the National Bank of Liberia withdrew the J.J. Roberts Liberian dollar banknote introduced in 1989 and replaced it with the Liberty Liberian dollar banknote, a revision that effectively refaced the Liberian currency. However, the interim government, not having access to areas under the control of rebel factions, lacked the administrative mandate required to implement the currency change in those areas. This peculiarity resulted in the existence of two forms of the Liberian five dollar in circulation within the local economy. However, the introduction of the Liberty Liberian five-dollar note did provide short-term relief from

counterfeiting and assisted in returning some level of confidence to the banking system. As a consequence, the Liberty Liberian five dollar appreciated to \$20.00 Liberian dollars per US dollar before stabilizing at \$35.00 a few months later.

### **Post-War Economic Implications of the US-Liberian Dollar Disparity**

Since the outbreak of the civil war, the National Bank of Liberia has adopted a noninterventionist posture toward the parallel market. At least from the onset, it was the view of monetary authorities that to intervene in the parallel market by imposing a parity could lead to an underground currency exchange market so potent that it would make unbearable the inflationary pressures that would result. Thus, the bank, as noted earlier, has tried to allow market forces to freely and openly determine the true value of the Liberian dollar based on the daily supply and demand differentials for US dollars. However, in October 1995, the government, acting unilaterally, did try to revalue the Liberian dollar at an exchange rate of \$25.00 Liberian dollars per US dollar. Most bankers criticized the government's action, saying that the economy did not have adequate foreign currency to support such a revalued exchange rate. The government's intervention drove traders to "shield" the market-determined exchange rate of \$45.00 Liberian dollars per US dollar.

In spite of these realistic adjustments taking place in the parallel market, the one-to-one parity between the US and Liberian dollars is still maintained under selective government transactions, and officially, the US dollar still represents the national currency of Liberia. This article so far has examined the distortionary effects that such a *de facto* currency system poses to the country's monetary and fiscal policies. From current indications, the maintenance of the one-to-one parity between the US and Liberian dollars has become, at best, unrealistic and impracticable. It has increased the level of foreign exchange exposure that is borne by investors

of foreign capital as well as served to undermine exportable production. The proforma cost of imports are in most cases misleading and distorted. Pricing signals, on the other hand, do not reflect market determinants and transaction and translation risks abound. The exchange rate system is also hampered by the malpractice of granting discretionary foreign exchange purchase at the official one-to-one parity to certain well-connected functionaries who, in most cases, are not involved in external trade and services. This arrangement has fueled the recycling of foreign exchange between the official and parallel markets. With the undermining of the exchange system, a certain small percentage of the Liberian population is made into perpetual "gainers," and the remaining much larger percentage into perpetual "losers." As a consequence, this practice is known to send wrong signals to the parallel market-- distorting the automatic stabilizing mechanism that should signal buyers and sellers into adjusting their transactions until the market is cleared and prices are stabilized.

The depreciation of the Liberian dollar has reduced purchasing powers. Moreover, since producers of nontraded goods are known to emulate the pricing policies of those in the traded goods market, an unabated appreciable rise in the general level of prices has occurred causing drastic declines in the living standard of the average Liberian citizen.

### **Adopting a Realistic Exchange Rate Regime for Liberia**

#### **Analysis, Recommendations, and Conclusion**

Instituting a monetary system in Liberia that is reminiscent of the pre-1982 era will require making certain rational assumptions that are not determinable at this stage. With the country facing severe balance-of-payment difficulties reflected in sizable external payment arrears, and in the context of initiatives toward restoring overall macroeconomic stability, exchange rate policy adjustment should evolve as a focal point. This section gives a review of the critical thinking that surrounds this subject and provides the basis for the recommendations which follows.

One can fully appreciate the benefits to Liberia of employing the convertible currency of a friendly industrialized trading partner-- its potential strengthening of the balance-of-payments as well as its facilitating trade, travel, and investment. However, a national currency, with its own conversion capabilities that are compatible with the extenuating economic environment, should be available in adequate and usable amounts to accommodate aggregate demand within the domestic economy. Thus, it is relevant that a national currency operates within a framework that allows it to be internally traded against the currencies of other countries. As traditionally practiced, the issuing of a national currency is driven by the policy concern to create "value" for the exchange of goods and services within an economy and between it and the rest of the world. Incidentally, even the renown American economist, Milton Friedman, contributed to the discussion during the preparatory stages of the establishment of the National Bank of Liberia by publishing an article in the *Liberian Economic and Management Review* in which he emphatically advocates the Liberian currency model (Franz, pp. 18).

Justifiably, from the 1950s through the 1970s, it could be argued that the US dollar provided Liberia with a stable "monetary sector." However, this was less true of the "traditional sector." While the lack of discretionary power to issue money placed restraints on the government's capacity to finance extrabudgetary expenditures, it often fell short of supplying the necessary capital requirements for advancing the concept of "full employment" in the "traditional sector." Hence, primary access to capital formation was limited to Monrovia and a few industrial enclaves.

In recent years, Liberia's export to the US has experienced considerable declines. For instance, it plummeted from a value of US\$123.5 million in 1981 to a mere US\$83.4 million by the close of 1982, reflecting a 48.08 percent drop (*National Bank of Liberia Annual Report*, 1982, Foreign Trade). The biggest question is, can Liberia, in its current disruptive political and socioeconomic condition, position itself as it did

during the Cold War-- to provide the environment for an export-led, US dollar-linked economy serving as the major guarantor of US private investment?

Moreover, considering the widespread donor fatigue of the industrialized nations and creditor institutions toward the advancement of

**Regrettably, (Liberia) failed to developmentally capitalize on the opportunity it has had to employ the US dollar as its legal tender.**

aid moneys to developing countries, attracting any meaningful level of foreign investment will depend on the donors' perception of Liberia's tainted governance-image, its insurmountable debt overhang, its shambled infrastructures and its narrowing economic base.

The next question is, can Liberia, evolving from the regional efforts exerted by the member-states of ECOWAS to end a protracted civil crisis, politically afford to continue a policy of "dollar-illusion" which is seen both in terms of the "comparative advantage" concept and the spirit of "regional cooperation" as counterproductive to the fostering of trade between it and other member-states? If factored against total productive output, the US dollar as legal tender in Liberia's balance-of-payment terms, may well be considered overvalued. Such important issues point to the hard facts that the socioeconomic and political environment both globally and domestically do not seem to reflect a direction for the continued external support of a US dollar-linked economy in Liberia. Also, contrary to what some others have written, the country lacks the relevant endowment which in a post-Cold War era would make it of crucial economic interest to US private investors in the 21st century. Regrettably, the country failed to developmentally capitalize on the opportunity it has had to employ the US dollar as its legal tender.

It appears that without appropriate and sustained policy responses,

Liberia could face the risk of repeating the trends of the early 1980s when capital flight and policy inadequacies led to the near-collapse of the country's money economy. Already

confronted with severe external imbalances that are reflected in the sizable total debt arrears approximating

**...Liberia needs to adopt an official national currency within a framework and timetable that will allow for the strengthening of its convertibility.**

US\$2.9 billion, the country's foreign reserves will inevitably become overwhelmingly exposed to the financing of its external liabilities. Besides, with the insurmountable task of reconstruction and social rehabilitation that will be required in the aftermath of the civil crisis, the Liberian economy would have a formidable challenge to appropriately and prudently reallocate its foreign reserves.

A major structural limitation to the use of the US dollar as Liberia's legal tender has been its compromise of the role of the National Bank of Liberia as a central bank and "issuer of currency." The bank cannot be thought of as a full-fledged central bank until this fundamental role is assigned to it. Under Liberia's present monetary system, the structural limitation of the bank's responsibility to the economy is disguised by the use of the convertible US dollar currency. This situation has broadly served to promote foreign trade at the expense of fostering a domestic policy of monetary stability. As a result, any arbitrary externalized distortion to the exchange system will reflect, as it did between 1980 and 1982, the volatility and structural weaknesses that are so pervasive when an economy is subject to threats against its economic sovereignty.

Having raised the above points, this researcher believes that an acceptable level of monetary and exchange rate stability can be achieved if

the National Bank of Liberia is administratively restructured in a way that provides it with greater autonomy over the management of exchange and pricing conditions in Liberia. Such a proposition is supported by James S. Butty when he writes, "it is conceivable that the value of a national currency will remain stable if the responsibility of the National Bank of Liberia and the government are strictly separated," (Butty, pp. 40). In order to ensure that this occurs within a freely competitive exchange and pricing system that accommodate the developmental requirements of both the monetary and traditional sectors, Liberia needs to adopt an official national currency within a framework and timetable that will allow for the strengthening of its convertibility.

This researcher therefore recommends two major approaches to rationalize the current exchange rate regime of Liberia:

- reconcile the existence of the two forms of the Liberian dollar currently in circulation within the country;
- and make a public policy decision supported by appropriate legislation as to whether Liberia should maintain the US dollar as its legal tender or adopt its own national currency under an appropriate and realistic exchange rate regime.

Reconciling the two forms of the Liberian dollar in circulation may be more practicable than many have envisaged. Both currencies (the erstwhile J.J. Roberts and the Liberty Liberian dollar banknotes), could be recalled and replaced (at variable discounts), with a single unified national currency. However, when assigning variable discounts, care should be taken in striking a clear divergence between geopolitical sentiments and the intended economic objective. As was apparent, the two Liberian-dollar currencies were seen by the public as "economic weapons" reflecting the conflicts between the Monrovia interim government and the so-called rebel administration in Gbarnga. Therefore, the J.J. Robert banknotes, the first of the two currencies issued, is expected to receive wider discounts in the swap



process. The primary objectives of reconciling the J.J. Roberts and Liberty Liberian dollar banknotes are to rationalize money supply levels, to stabilize domestic pricing conditions and to lay the foundations for a comprehensive reordering of monetary policy.

Coinciding with measures to reconcile the present duality of the Liberian-dollar system, monetary authorities should adopt a realistic exchange rate regime that is for the most part driven by market determinants. In this regard, it is proposed that the present currency arrangement be nullified and replaced with a managed, float exchange rate regime that will be administered within a two-tier market system: First, a composite structure comprising an interbank market, on the one hand, and a National Bank of Liberia-administered auction arrangement, on the other. And second, a freely floating secondary exchange rate market to accommodate the open buying and selling of international currencies. The objective of a managed float exchange rate system is to provide intervention power to monetary authorities and/or commercial banks in achieving balance-of-payment equilibrium and market-clearing price levels.

By establishing an interbank market, commercial banks and, in some cases, authorized foreign exchange dealers, will be the major participants. The exchange rate will be determined in negotiations between the commercial banks and their customers and between banks. It would be allowed to vary on a daily, if not hourly basis. However, to ensure that the system operates free of intervening disruptions, maximum and minimum stock limits would be imposed on commercial bank holdings of foreign exchange. Such regulation guards against dealers who, in attempting to corner the market, may use inside information to speculate on their foreign exchange operations. It also protects commercial banks against imprudently large foreign exchange risk. The size of the stock limits would be determined initially by referencing the previous trends in commercial banks' working balances, and then, adjusted based on the general experience of the market. Commercial banks will then be allowed to accept bids from clients,

investors, foreign exchange dealers, and, under certain restrictions, public sector enterprises (Quirk, J. Peter et al, 1987).

If the responsibility of conducting the 25 percent export proceeds surrender scheme is shifted from the National Bank of Liberia to commercial banks, a second type of regulation on the interbank market will occur. This regulation involves administering an upper flow limit on the volume of foreign exchange surrendered to each commercial bank so as to also prevent any bank from cornering the market in a flow sense. Such a regulation becomes necessary since a sizable portion of Liberia's foreign exchange receipts is accrued to a few major transactors who, without regulation, could direct all of their foreign exchange earnings to a single exchange dealer. However, if bound by both the stock and flow limits, a commercial bank will either have to buy or sell from other banks or, if the other banks were also at their limits, transact with independent exchange dealers, (Quirk, Peter J. et al, 1987). To guard against undue interference in the implementation of these regulations, representatives of banks could constitute an Interbank Market and Exchange Committee responsible for meeting regularly to evaluate market trends and institute the stock and flow limit adjustments accordingly.

The other major feature of the interbank market involves the convening of weekly price-fixing sessions. At these rate-fixing sessions, commercial banks will trade-in foreign exchange, and an exchange rate will be derived taking into account the results of the previous price-fixing session and the subsequent transactions between banks and their customers during the week. The exchange rate would be set at a level that allows the largest volume of purchase orders to be transacted. At these fixing sessions, commercial banks would be allowed to trade long and short positions based on their specific requirements. The fixing session is an important means of providing monetary authorities with a view into the operation of the interbank system, and thus prevents abuses. Additionally, the National Bank of Liberia could require that exchange rates, determined in all interbank

transactions, be widely and openly published so that the possibility of collusive practices of commercial banks is reduced (Quirk, Peter J. et al, 1987).

It is particularly important to note that in the initial stages of going managed float, legislative and administrative measures will need to be adopted to strengthen Liberia's export proceeds surrender scheme. In this regard, a major decision is whether or not to increase the required percentage of export proceeds surrendered above the current 25- and 15-percent levels. Justifiably, a growing number of sub-Saharan African states (i.e., Ghana, Sierra Leone, Nigeria, Uganda and The Gambia) have adopted 100 percent foreign exchange surrender requirements as part of their interbank market arrangements. The decision whether to keep the export proceed surrender scheme under the supervision of the National Bank of Liberia or place it solely in the hands of commercial banks, would determine the structure of the interbank market. The major policy advantage to keeping the scheme with the National Bank of Liberia is that it guarantees the provisioning of scarce foreign exchange to meet certain macroeconomic objectives that otherwise may not be achieved if placed entirely under the supervision of commercial banks. An alternative, however, is to allow the responsibility to be shared-- with the National Bank of Liberia administering the receipts from iron ore and rubber, and the remaining receipts from the other export sectors being administered by commercial banks. By this arrangement, the interbank market will be positioned to assist the Liberian economy to shift from a disproportionate reliance on iron ore and rubber receipts toward expanding exportable production in such sectors as manufacturing and agro-processing.

Based on budgetary allotments, a certain portion of the iron ore and rubber receipts surrendered to the National Bank of Liberia could be employed to correct macroeconomic distortions brought over from the civil crisis and years of fiscal imbalances. Whereas, the remaining receipts from iron ore and rubber exports could be auctioned to a select number of

importers of essential commodities supplying the health, education, and social rehabilitation sectors. However, these importers would be required to surrender to the National Bank of Liberia the equivalent of 100 percent in the national currency of the foreign exchange they intend to purchase before being allowed to submit bids. Essentially, all transactions of the National Bank of Liberia-auction arrangement would, by law, employ the interbank market exchange rate.

The freely floating secondary exchange market will comprise a network of autonomous, licensed foreign exchange dealers. They would have the option of purchasing a bulk of their currency holdings from the interbank market or buy and sell on demand within their own market. The daily opening and closing exchange rates would be set by this market based on: 1) the size of exchanges in the interbank market accommodating the volume of trade and services in the money economy; and 2) the demand and supply differentials for international currencies within the general economy. The freely floating secondary exchange market will, in effect, be a "retailers' market" for the buying and selling of currencies until perhaps in the future when it is unified with the interbank and National Bank of Liberia-auction arrangements. If efficiently deregulated and backed by appropriate legislation, the freely floating secondary exchange market will obliterate the likelihood that a parallel market could arise.

A "one-size-fits-all" approach to currency flotation may not necessarily be a wise policy direction for every developing country all of the time. Therefore, in the preliminary stages embarked upon to strengthen the convertibility of the national currency, the National Bank of Liberia may need to augment the 25 percent export proceed surrender requirement in order to pool foreign currencies against possible unforeseen exchange rate dispersions. However, when the interbank and independently-floating secondary exchange markets are fully operational and their internalized rate adjustment mechanisms functional, the National Bank of Liberia should gradually begin to relax its involvement in the operations of most privately-

generated foreign exchange allocation.

There is a body of economic literature which supports the popular argument favoring a certain level of central bank intervention in order to control trends of disruptive exchange rate volatility. For instance, the IMF Principle for the Guidance of Members-States Exchange Rate Policies, makes for such an allowance when it states that,

a member should intervene in the exchange rate market if necessary to counter disorderly conditions which may be characterized *inter alia* by disruptive short-term movements in the exchange value of its currency (IMF, 1989, pp. 11).

Although the reverse seems to be more apparent, central bank intervention is known to increase exchange rate volatility particularly in developing countries. If the intervention is unannounced, which unfortunately in most cases it is, it may lead to further private sector uncertainties. Also, a sporadic and extensive central bank intervention in exchange rates may lead to further speculation of the likelihood of future interventions or changes in central bank policies. Without market information concerning the motivation for such interventions and of how extensive they would be, currency exchange dealers could be left with making wrongful inferences which could lead to even wider exchange rate disruptions, (Bonser-Neal, pp. 51) Therefore, it is recommended for Liberia that a necessary central bank intervention should be implemented only after the market is appropriately informed of the reason for the intervention and to its magnitude. Moreover, if the trends are widely publicized on a regular basis, interventions may be infrequently necessary or when and if they do occur, would be hardly disruptive as the market would be adequately informed. Whatever the case, the National Bank of Liberia should not be "politically driven," as in the past, into the retailing and arbitrary buying and selling of the US dollar currency. The bank's currency swap and accompanying auction arrangements should constitute its major role in facilitating the primary social sectors known to have lesser access to foreign currency

financing.

The National Bank of Liberia, under a newly acquired full-fledged central banking status, would be structured to broaden its traditional responsibility of regulating money

supply and domestic pricing conditions by employing the tools of monetary policy more effectively. During distortions in market stabilization, the bank could employ open market operations as well as make adjustments to the reserve requirement ratio and interest rates accordingly. For example, if the National Bank of Liberia found it imperative to intervene to reduce the value of the Liberian currency against the US dollar, the bank would buy US dollar-denominated assets with the Liberian currency. This policy move would lead to an increase in Liberian currency reserves and thus increase the level of money supply. However, under the bank's newly acquired status, it could neutralize the effects of the intervention on bank reserves by selling an equal amount of government securities. The neutralization effect would leave bank reserves and money supply levels unchanged and thus avoid the likelihood of speculations in the exchange market due to adjustments in monetary aggregates.

**Whatever the case, the National Bank of Liberia should not be "politically driven," as in the past, into the retailing and arbitrary buying and selling of the US dollar currency.**

In concluding, the centerpiece of exchange rate policy reforms in Liberia should encompass expenditure- and production-switching policies to improve the economy's capacity to generate foreign exchange and stabilize pricing conditions of tradables relative to nontradables. These policies may include, among other things, the design and implementation of appropriate trade tax reforms alongside the granting of economic incentives in favor of locally manufactured exports. Specifically, such economic

incentives as credit-subsidies could best apply to locally produced goods and services that provide the most efficient alternatives for import substitution. The attempt would be to strengthen the export environment for locally manufactured products which, under a managed-float exchange rate regime, could benefit from a devaluation of the national currency. Such a stabilization program may require adopting a trade policy that would temporarily employ efficiently-administered protectionist measures with an understanding that the pursuits of trade liberalization will occur sequentially. Contrarily, it would be necessary to ensure that the administrative cost of implementing trade protectionism does not exceed the gains from an outright free trade policy (Krugman, pp. 69-87). Moreover, to ensure the impact of a "trade surplus" from protectionism is sustainable in the balance-of-payment accounts, there must occur considerable improvements in the rates of domestic savings and investment. While such policies may appear to be inward-looking, Liberia should continue to harness a visibly friendly environment that is profitable for foreign private investment, particularly one that is manufacture and technology oriented.

When considering a number of vibrantly performing economies of South East Asia that a few decades ago were considered "hapless," they have succeeded in quickly turning their economies around by taking bold economic measures in favor of private investment. A similar performance by Liberia will require a government that is target-driven toward reducing unnecessary public spending while extending transitory investment incentives to the private sector. By placing a moratorium on fiscal deficits to a level that diminishes the "leakages" on income generation and resource allocation, a shift of allocable resources for private sector development would gradually take center-stage. Correspondingly, instituting appropriate demand management policies to encourage private savings would provide the required "new investment capital" for sustaining growth. In the final analysis, Liberia would be poised to implement a financial and trade sector reform program that is liberal enough to expand and diversify the role of private enterprise, while at the same time, regulated enough to protect the

domestic economy from external shocks and disorderly economic conditions.

### Endnote

For the purpose of complementarity, the paper uses the phrases “dollar-myth” and “dollar-illusion” interchangeably. When applied as a concept, the phrase (dollar-myth) is used. When applied as a policy, the phrase becomes (dollar-illusion).

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**Appendix**

**Liberia - Financial Aggregates: Trade, Production, Debt & Monetary Statistics**

(In Millions of Dollars)

Year	Exports	Imports	Trade Balance	GDP	External Debt	Money Supply	Ext Debt/ GDP	Ext Debt/ Export
	(A)	(B)	(A) - (B) = (C)	(D)	(E)	(F)	(E)/(D)=(G)	(E)/(A)=(H)
1989	460.1	n. a.	n. a.	1182.8	1725.0	302.1	146%	375%
1988	396.3	272.3	124.0	1174.4	1704.8	256.5	145%	430%
1987	382.2	307.6	74.6	1120.0	1436.3	233.5	128%	376%
1986	408.3	259.0	149.3	1051.2	1242.7	202.1	118%	304%
1985	435.6	284.4	151.2	1069.2	1076.0	170.7	101%	247%
1984	452.1	363.2	88.9	1058.0	1005.6	144.4	95%	222%
1983	427.6	411.5	16.1	1128.9	902.5	142.1	80%	211%
1982	477.4	428.3	49.1	1119.5	813.4	126.7	73%	170%
1981	529.1	441.4	87.7	1022.3	685.4	100.9	67%	130%
1980	600.4	534.6	65.8	916.6	596.4	114.5	65%	99%
1979	536.6	506.6	30.0	880.5	443.2	154.7	50%	83%
1978	504.0	480.8	23.2	773.7	292.1	150.9	38%	58%
1977	447.4	463.5	-16.1	706.2	208.7	122.3	30%	47%
1976	459.9	399.2	60.7	631.7	178.6	108.9	28%	39%
1975	393.8	331.2	62.6	609.6	162.0	73.9	27%	41%
1974	400.3	288.4	111.9	507.2	159.1	75.0	31%	40%
1973	324.0	193.4	130.6	414.6	159.4	n.a.	38%	49%
1972	244.4	178.7	65.7	405.9	162.3	n.a.	40%	66%
1971	222.1	157.4	64.7	372.5	162.0	n.a.	43%	73%
1970	213.1	149.7	63.4	351.6	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
1969	195.9	114.6	81.3	338.7	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
1968	169.0	108.4	60.6	323.2	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
1967	158.8	125.1	33.7	308.3	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
1966	150.5	113.6	36.9	291.1	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
1965	135.4	104.6	30.8	247.2	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.

Sources: World Debt Tables and the International Financial Statistics

## Liberia and Ethiopia as Pan-African Symbols: Rise, Decline and Change

Ali A. Mazrui

**Editor's note:** Professor Mazrui submitted this piece for our special Sesquicentennial issue, Volume XXII:1 (1997), but unfortunately we got the copy after we went to press. We are pleased to publish it here.

Two nations have bled a lot in recent times, and are now grappling with problems of reconciliation. Which two nations? One is ancient, one is new; one is sacred, one is secular; one is eastern, one is western. Let us look more closely.

For about a century during Africa's darkest colonial years (from about 1860 to 1960), two countries were increasingly regarded by Africans as beacons of Pan-African light. Those two countries were Ethiopia and Liberia. Ethiopia was ancient and almost Biblical, with a monarchy which traced its origins to King Solomon and the Queen of Sheba. Liberia in 1860 was still a dream in the making rather than a fully-established reality-- but it was on its way toward becoming a symbol of liberated Blackhood.

Ethiopia had the mystique of age; Liberia had a romance of youth. In time, the two of them became the only two countries in Africa which were not colonized by Europeans. This success in escaping direct European colonization greatly enhanced the status and symbolism of the two countries as Pan-African icons.

Because both countries stimulated the Pan-African imagination, there is a danger of over-stressing the similarities between them as exceptions to the colonial experience-- and under stressing the **differences** between them in their impact upon Global Africa. We define "Global Africa" quite simply

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as Africa and its interrelationship with its worldwide Diaspora. The politically conscious citizens of Global Africa interpreted the symbolism of Ethiopia and Liberia differently.

There is first the fact that Liberia was perceived as a primarily **secular** symbol; some even viewed Liberia as a symbol of black modernity. Ethiopia, on the other hand, had both secular and religious symbolism. Some Pan-Africanists were fascinated by the mystique of the Queen of Sheba who was, according to tradition, the mother of Menelik I and therefore the eternal Queen-Mother of the Royal House of Ethiopia, going back three thousand years.

Also fascinating was the related tradition that the original grandfather of the Royal House of Ethiopia was none other than King Solomon of the Jews, who mated with Sheba to produce Menelik I.

In the Caribbean parts of Global Africa, the Ethiopian Emperor himself became the focus of religious reverence and worship. The Rastafari movement in Jamaica was particularly resilient as such a religio-cultural Ethiopic movement.

What Liberia did share with Ethiopia in the religious domain was a self-conception as a major outpost of Christian civilization. While Christianity in Ethiopia went back to the fourth century of the Christian era, Christianity in much of Liberia arrived with the Black settlers from the United States. Nevertheless, the elites in both Liberia and Ethiopia saw themselves as the vanguard of Christianization and as carriers of civilization.

Another religious aspect which Ethiopia shared with Liberia was the political marginalization of Muslims in their respective societies. In the case of Ethiopia, Muslims were nearly half the population. In the case of Liberia, the religious balance in the population was, ironically, more difficult to pin down. But the political marginalization of Islam was common to both

countries.

A third shared religious aspect between Liberia and Ethiopia was the s o c i a l stigmatization of African traditional religion. The Christian political establishment in both countries regarded traditional belief systems as mere superstitions and fetish aberrations. The elites of both societies regarded followers of traditional religion as "primitive."

**The return or repatriation of African Americans to Liberia was a kind of "Black Zionism." ... Black Zionism triumphed long before Jewish Zionism did.**

The fourth religious aspect shared by Ethiopia and Liberia was not really symmetrical. It concerned the **Israel metaphor** (or **Israelism**). Liberia from 1860 to 1960 did not have much of a Jewish presence in its midst, but the concept of a Black return to Africa did echo the concept of a Jewish return to Israel. The return or repatriation of African Americans to Liberia was a kind of "Black Zionism." The Israeli metaphor was acted out long before modern Israel was created. Black Zionism triumphed long before Jewish Zionism did.

Ethiopia, on the other hand, had actual Jews in its own indigenous population--the so-called Falasha or Ethiopian Jews. The Falasha regarded themselves as "the Lost Tribe of Israel." In the years 1860 to 1960, they were a special kind of Black Jewish Diaspora.

African Americans in the United States were part of the Black Diaspora. Those who migrated to Liberia became de-Diasporized. The Falasha Jews were a Black Jewish Diaspora lodged in Africa. When in the

1970s they were “repatriated” to Israel in Operation Moses, the Falasha became de-Diasporized as **Jews**, but Diasporized as **Blacks**.

Paradoxically, in Ethiopia it was not just the Falasha who had established their links with Jewish history. It was also the Royal Imperial House which lasted until the Ethiopian Revolution of 1974 which overthrew Emperor Haile Selassie. The Royal Line was based on the legend of the Solomonic legacy.

Ethiopian Christianity was also substantially Judaic, encompassing some of the dietary rules of Judaism, including the ban on pork. Ethiopian Christianity also included the imperative of circumcision.

If Ethiopia's extra-African Links were with the Middle East, Liberia's extra African Links were especially with the United States. The ruling elite consisted mainly of Americo-Liberians. The capital city (Monrovia) was named after President James Monroe of the United States, who was president during the years 1817 to 1825. The system of government was partly modeled after the U.S. Constitution (with selective franchise). The currency became the dollar. And even such details as the uniforms of the police and the shape and color of the mail boxes in Liberia were an extension of the American experience.

Ethiopia for a long time looked eastward to the Middle East and Asia; Liberia looked westward to the United States and the Caribbean.

When the recent revolutions came in the two countries, the changes seemed to be in two stages. In 1974, the revolution which overthrew Haile Selassie in Ethiopia seemed to be moving away from indigenous values and toward a kind of Marxism-Leninism. In 1980, the revolution which overthrew President William Richard Tolbert in Liberia seemed to be moving toward indigenous control-- as Master Sergeant Samuel Doe emerged from the ranks of indigenous Liberians to assume power. Ethiopia

seemed to be stepping back from the indigenous; Liberia seemed to be stepping forward toward the indigenous.

**The new political settlement which is emerging in (Liberia) in the 1990s is the second phase of the Liberian revolution....**

But both revolutions were destined to have a second phase, preceded by major social convulsions. After multiple civil conflicts in the late 1970s and 1980s, Ethiopia emerged in the 1990s with a new regime and a new Constitution devolving power to ethno-cultural units. The defeat of the military Marxist regime of Mengistu Haile Mariam inaugurated the search for re-indigenization in Ethiopia in the 1990s.

**... Whereas the first phase attempted an indigenization of personnel but not of values, this second phase could constitute the more genuine indigenization of Liberia in the direction of reconciliation and shared moral values.**

Sergeant Doe's regime in Liberia destabilized the country and led

to a costly civil war. The new political settlement which is emerging in the 1990s is the second phase of the Liberian revolution. Whereas the first phase attempted an indigenization of personnel but not of values, this second phase could constitute the more genuine indigenization of Liberia in the direction of reconciliation and shared moral values.

Liberia did not experience the martyrdom of a major foreign invasion and occupation of the kind experienced by Ethiopia after the Mussolini



aggression of 1935. Ethiopia's resistance to the Italian invasion gave additional symbolic power to Ethiopia as an inspiration to Pan-Africanists. Kwame Nkrumah of Ghana regarded the event as one of the major formative influences in his growth as a Pan-Africanist.

Moreover, Ethiopia later became the headquarters of the Organization of African Unity, the most important continent-wide organization which Africans have ever created.

On the other hand, Liberia, even in its darkest hour, did become a reason for West Africans to get together to try and implement a security system in the subregion. Although the record of ECOMOG in Liberia is very mixed, the venture itself constituted a pioneering effort in collective security by West African states, the beginnings of a *Pax Africana*. Even in its darkest hour Liberia forced Africans to seek collective solutions to Pan-African security problems.

We define *Pax Africana* as a system of peacemaking, peace enforcement and collective security for Africa and by Africans themselves. For more than thirty years I have been discussing the need for Pax Africana--beginning with my very first book *Towards a Pax Africana: A study of Ideology and Ambition* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1967).

We had to wait until the tragedy of Liberia before a beginning was made-- with all the blemishes and flaws of a pioneering effort. ECOMOG's flawed effort was followed by the 1997 Blue Hougwe (Blue Eagle) initiative of eight countries of Southern Africa, training a thousand soldiers as the nucleus of an African Crisis Response Initiative (ACRI).

Then came the Sierra Leonean crisis following the military coup in Freetown in May 1997. Nigeria volunteered on behalf of ECOMOG to attempt to restore the democratically elected government in Sierra Leone by military force if need be. At its summit meeting in June 1997, the

Organization of African Unity unanimously backed the effort to restore the ousted government in Sierra Leone, even if force had to be used.

In short, the dream of a system of *Pax Africana* is beginning to take shape in reality. Africans are beginning to accept the responsibility of being each other's keepers. The cradle of a sustained Pan-African regional security system was in fact Liberia, for better or for worse.

The Pan-African significance of Liberia and Ethiopia continues. The nature of that significance is changing with the times. But we are still faced with a remarkable configuration of dualities-- an eastern country (Ethiopia) and a western country (Liberia); an ancient monarchy and a new republic; a sacred empire and a secular state; a Pan-African symbol of unity and Pan-African symbol of freedom; a Black State with Black Jews and a Black Israel of returning African Americans; mother of the Organization of African Unity and cradle of *Pax Africana*.

The tale of these two nations continues to unfold as the Pan-African struggle enters a new phase.

## **Military and Diplomatic Strategies in the Liberian Civil War**

**Yekutieli Gershoni**

The Liberian civil war started by Charles Taylor's National Patriotic Front Of Liberia (NPFL) on 24 December 1989 to topple the tyrannical regime of President Samuel Kanyon Doe, has become one of the most complicated, embroiled, and protracted conflicts that West Africa has known in the post-colonial era. The fire that Taylor ignited was fanned by the West African countries who intervened in the illusion that they could put it out and, then, by the armed groups that they fostered in the expectation that these groups could help them along. As the parties multiplied and each tried to resolve the conflict in a manner most favorable to itself, peace became ever more difficult to attain. In the course of the conflict, both military and diplomatic strategies were employed, sometimes singly and sometimes in combination. This article describes the movement from one strategy to another and tries to analyze how and why these strategies were employed and with what results.

It begins, though, with a brief look at the initial players in the conflict.

### **Charles Taylor: Wily and Astute**

Charles Taylor's rebellion seemed at first to be another vain attempt in a chain of half a dozen similar efforts to overthrow the corrupt and oppressive government of Samuel Doe. Taylor was unpopular and some experts predicted that his rebellion would fail. A former political appointee, Director General of the General Services Agency, in Doe's government, Taylor was known as an embezzler who had broken out of a US jail. He hardly seemed the redeemer who would free Liberians from the yoke of Samuel Doe. One newspaper editor remarked, "If Charles Taylor made it to

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Monrovia, the people would have lynched him.”<sup>1</sup> Nevertheless, Taylor and the NPFL succeeded where others had failed. Within seven months, Taylor’s forces controlled 95 percent of the country and were approaching the capital, Monrovia.

Taylor’s success was based on his correct reading of the political map in Liberia and of the international constellation. The support for Doe’s regime came from two privileged ethnic groups, the Mandingo and the Krahn. The executive mansion and the capital were heavily guarded by loyal, elite Krahn troops. Taylor

**Taylor realized that for a rebellion to succeed, it would have to be launched from an outlying region where the central government’s forces were weak. His choice was the remote Nimba County, the homeland of the disaffected Gio and Mano ethnic groups.**

realized that for a rebellion to succeed, it would have to be launched from an outlying region where the central government’s forces were weak. His choice was the remote Nimba County, the homeland of the disaffected Gio and Mano ethnic groups. Since 1985, these groups had been targeted by Doe’s government in retaliation for supporting a failed coup on November 12, 1985, led by Doe’s former commanding general, Thomas Quiwonkpa, a son of Nimba County. With the help of these groups, Taylor overcame the dispersed government forces in Nimba County. This victory drew more recruits to his side, and yet more enlisted after the government retaliated with a scorched earth policy Taylor’s rebels won victory after victory.<sup>2</sup>

On the international scene, Taylor was aware that the United States, which had once seen an asset in Samuel Doe, was no longer interested in him in the post-cold-war era and would not come to his aid in case of a

coup.<sup>3</sup> At the same time, he knew that he himself could not look for support to the crumbling Soviet bloc and thus he would have to seek a local sponsor to help him to the executive mansion. He chose Libya which had already shown readiness to intervene in the domestic affairs of other African states such as Chad, Sudan, Somalia, Niger and Mali. Libya and her protege, Burkina Faso, helped the NPFL with diplomatic and military support throughout the civil war.

Thus, on 4 August 1990, when the NPFL was ready to strike the *coup de grace* on Doe's last stronghold, the capital Monrovia, Taylor declared himself Commander-in-Chief and President of the Republic of Liberia.<sup>4</sup>

### **The Liberian Civil War: A Regional Affair**

Taylor's victory, if that is what it can be called, was brief. On 24 August 1990 a West African intervention force (ECOMOG) landed in the Freeport at Monrovia and kept the port from falling into Taylor's hands. The architects of the intervention were the heads of West African states who regarded the installation of a government by the Libyan-backed Taylor a danger to the stability of their own regimes. The NPFL, under Taylor's leadership, did not confine its ambitions to Liberia. The rebel force saw itself as an *avant garde* that would help free other West African countries from oppressed regimes. From his headquarters in Gbarnga, Charles Taylor publicly declared that the NPFL was committed to support coups to topple the regimes in Ghana and Nigeria.<sup>5</sup> Dissidents from other countries in the region, such as the Sierra Leonean rebel Corporal Foday Sabanoh Sankoh and the Gambia's rebel leader Kukoi Samba Sanyang and their followers, had been trained in NPFL camps.<sup>6</sup>

Liberia's neighbors, mainly Nigeria, Ghana, The Gambia and Guinea, felt threatened by Charles Taylor's declaration and by his affiliations with dissident groups. The involvement of Libya and Burkina Faso exacerbated

their concern, since these four West African countries had already experienced Libyan interference in their internal affairs.<sup>7</sup>

Nigeria, who led the group of concerned countries, decided to employ the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) as a legitimate framework for intervening in the Liberian civil war. Together with Ghana, Sierra Leone, Guinea, The Gambia, Togo and Mali, Nigeria organized the ECOWAS mediation committee, headed by ECOWAS' executive secretary, Abbas Bundu from Sierra Leone.<sup>8</sup> By its terms of reference, the mediation committee was to mediate between the belligerent parties in order to effect a cease

**The establishment of ECOMOG and the publication of the 7 August peace plan were clearly directed against the Libyan-backed NPFL. By that action, the ECOWAS mediation committee departed from its defined function as a mediating body**

fire in Liberia. Immediately after it was established in June 1990, the committee invited representatives of the NPFL and of Doe's government to participate in peace talks hosted by itself and the Liberian Inter Faith Mediation Committee (IFMC) made up of the Liberian Council of Churches (LCC) and the National Muslim Council of Liberia (NMCL). The meeting took place in Freetown, Sierra Leone, from 11 to 16 June 1990.<sup>9</sup> The Freetown meeting ended in failure. The NPFL, which was on the verge of defeating President Samuel Doe's crumbling army, rejected the mediation initiative. In response, the mediation committee created the ECOWAS monitoring Group (ECOMOG), consisting of troops from Nigeria, Ghana, Sierra Leone, Guinea and The Gambia, "for the purpose of keeping the peace, restoring law and order and ensuring the cease fire is respected." Along with establishing ECOMOG, the mediation committee published a

comprehensive peace plan for Liberia on 7 August 1990. The plan called for an interim government that excluded any leader of the fighting sections and which, with the active help of ECOWAS, would prepare the ground for new, free and independent democratic elections in Liberia.<sup>10</sup>

The establishment of ECOMOG and the publication of the 7 August peace plan were clearly directed against the Libyan-backed NPFL. By that action, the ECOWAS mediation committee departed from its defined function as a mediating body. The ECOWAS mediation committee and its operational arm, ECOMOG, became directly involved as a belligerent party in the Liberian civil war.<sup>12</sup>

Other West African states were quick to voice opposition to the Nigerian-led mediation committee and ECOMOG. The first to protest was Burkina Faso's President Blaise Compaore who, in 1987, overthrew the government of Thomas Sankara with the help of Libyan-trained Liberian dissidents. These dissidents later became the nucleus of the NPFL.<sup>12</sup> Compaore telexed an angry letter to the ECOWAS chairman, President of The Gambia Sir Dawda Jawara, challenging ECOWAS' right to send an intervention force to Liberia. The Burkinabe Minister for External Affairs, Prosper Vokouma, publicly announced that his country did not recognize Liberia's interim government.<sup>13</sup> Cote d'Ivoire was also opposed to ECOMOG and the proposed interim government. Then-President Felix Houphouet-Boigny regarded Samuel Doe as a usurper, a "bandit" and "criminal." Doe had executed Boigny's son-in-law A.B. Tolbert, who was also the son of the former Liberian president, William Tolbert, also killed by Doe and his cohorts in the Liberian military coup on April 12, 1980. Moreover, Abidjan traditionally challenged the Nigerian claim to leadership of West Africa.<sup>14</sup> Boigny not only refused to have Cote d'Ivoire join the ECOWAS mediation committee, but also organized the ECOWAS members who opposed the Nigerian initiative and put pressure on Francophone members of the ECOWAS mediation committee to resign. As a result, Togo, which had earlier pledged to participate in ECOMOG, decided on 23

August 1990 to “refrain from intervening” in Liberia until all rival factions agreed to the mediatory mission. Cote d’Ivoire did not limit itself to diplomacy. According to various reports, it allowed Charles Taylor’s forces to obtain reinforcements and military supplies from Burkina Faso via its territory. The division within ECOWAS would enfeeble ECOMOG and enable Taylor to thwart all of its peacekeeping efforts.<sup>15</sup>

### **External Force and Internal Military Strategy**

The establishment of the ECOMOG-backed interim government in Monrovia inaugurated a new political and military reality. The NPFL, which effectively controlled more than 95 percent of the country and, until then, had been the main military power lost its superiority. It now faced another major military group, ECOMOG, and, in addition, two minor fighting forces which had declared their support for the interim government and ECOMOG: the Independent National Patriotic Front of Liberia (INPFL), headed by Prince Yormie Johnson who had split from the NPFL; and the Armed Forces of Liberia (AFL), the remnants of Samuel Doe’s army that were reorganized by General Hezekiah Bowen after Doe’s murder on 9 September 1990.

In this new situation, Taylor had to decide whether to recognize the interim government and accept the 7 August peace plan or to pit his force against ECOMOG in an effort to oust them. The support he received from some of the ECOWAS member inclined him to the latter. He adopted an internal military strategy. On 14 September 1990, his NPFL fighters pounded the ECOMOG headquarters in the port of Monrovia, killing five, injuring many other, and damaging a Ghanaian navy vessel.<sup>16</sup>

But the attack did not achieve its goal. Instead of withdrawing ECOMOG, Nigeria and her allies reinforced its contingents and counterattacked. Aided by the INPFL and AFL, ECOMOG drove the NPFL out of the suburbs of Monrovia, and the Liberian interim government headed by Amos Sawyer established itself in the city.<sup>17</sup> Nonetheless, the upshot was



a stalemate. While ECOMOG was able to repel the attack on Monrovia, it was not able to oust the NPFL from its positions in other parts of Liberia. In effect, Taylor was much in the same position he had been in prior to his assault on Monrovia and no more inclined than then to accept the ECOMOG-backed interim government.

### **Diplomatic Strategies: From External to Internal**

Instead, Taylor aptly switched strategies. He replaced his abortive internal military strategy with a diplomatic strategy. He accepted the invitation to peace talks proposed by the ECOWAS mediation committee, on condition that they be held in a country that had not sent troops to ECOMOG. It was agreed that the peace talks be held in Bamako, the capital of Mali, on 28 November 1990, under the auspices of ECOWAS.<sup>12</sup> This was the stage for Taylor's external diplomatic strategy.

Taylor's plan was to present himself at Bamako not as the head of a rebel force but as a legitimate, political leader. To prepare for the conference, on 10

October 1990 he held elections in the territories under his control, which he referred to as "Greater Liberia," and on 15 October formed a government. Although his "Greater Liberia" was not

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recognized by any foreign country, he set up the trappings of an elected government of a sovereign state: a capital in Gbarnga, ministries, currency and a state bank. He hoped that presenting himself as the head of an "elected" government would give him a claim over Amos Sawyer, who was

not elected by the Liberian people and whose appointment to office had been made outside Liberia, in Banjul, The Gambia. Once in Bamako, Taylor ignored the "illegitimate" leader Sawyer, and would negotiate only with the two military leaders, Prince Johnson of the INPFL and Hezekiah Bowen of the AFL, to create the impression that the talks were between a legitimate representative of the Liberian people and two warlords.<sup>19</sup>

No one was taken in by these ploys, however, and the two days of meetings in Bamako did not bring Taylor the recognition he sought as head of state of Liberia. The only agreements reached in Bamako were a cease-fire based on the original 7 August peace package offered by the ECOWAS Mediation Committee and a promise to meet again.<sup>20</sup>

This failure did not close the door on the external diplomatic strategy. A new conference was scheduled to be held in Lome, Togo, on 12 February 1991. To prepare for

**The only agreements reached in Bamako were a ceasefire based on the original 7 August peace package . . . and a promise to meet again.**

that conference, Taylor forged an alliance with his erstwhile enemy, Prince Johnson of the INPFL. This alliance was made possible by a split in the rival camp which left Prince Johnson isolated. On 30 November 1990, fighting broke out between Prince Johnson's INPFL warriors and the remnants of Samuel Doe's army led by Gen. Hezekiah Bowen, putting an end to the cooperation between these two factions.<sup>21</sup> Then ECOMOG provoked the ire of the INPFL leader when ECOMOG commander General Dogon Yaro ordered his troops to disarm the INPFL in an effort to stop the skirmishes. With Prince Johnson left out in the cold, Taylor proceeded to woo him over to his own side, and sent representatives to Monrovia to talk with him. The talks bore fruit. On 18 January 1991, the two leaders decided to form a

united front against the interim government, ECOMOG, and the remnants of Doe's forces. Prince Johnson made a public announcement declaring the interim government invalid and criticizing the ECOMOG commander for his attempt to disarm the NPFL. The NPFL and INPFL decided to form a common front. *The New York Times* reported that Taylor himself arrived in the capital and met there with Prince Johnson on 18 January 1991 to strengthen their new political alignment.<sup>22</sup>

With their new alliance, Taylor expected Prince Johnson to support his bid for leadership. Prince Johnson was willing to cooperate only up to a certain point. In Lome, he joined Taylor in refusing to recognize Amos Sawyer, but at the conference table publicly rejected Taylor's demand to replace Sawyer. The only agreement the participants reached was a resolution to disarm all the warring factions, which was not backed up by any supervisory mechanism.<sup>23</sup>

**. . . With the secret agreement in his pocket, Taylor felt ready to participate in the 15 March All-Liberia Conference in Monrovia. . . .**

Taylor did not lose heart. Despite his failure at the Lome conference, he still believed he would be able to attain his aim through diplomatic means. At the end of the conference, he declared that he still expected to head the interim government and then to run for president.<sup>24</sup> But the focus of the strategy shifted: from the external diplomatic strategy adopted at Bamako and Lome to an internal diplomatic strategy which would be adopted at the next conference, the All-Liberia Conference scheduled to take place in Monrovia on 15 March 1991.

The new strategy rested on a secret deal with some of Prince Johnson's aides. At the beginning of March, NPFL representatives Tom

Woweyi, J. Laveli Supuwood and Dr. Toga McIntosh Gayawea met secretly with two of Prince Johnson's aides, Dr. Peter Naigow and Dr. Alfred Kula, and the five decided that in the upcoming Monrovia conference, the NPFL and INPFL delegates would propose a secret ballot and join forces to elect Taylor as head of the interim government. In return, Naigow and Kula were promised the vice-presidency.<sup>25</sup> With the secret agreement in his pocket, Taylor felt ready to participate in the 15 March All-Liberia Conference in Monrovia.

However, details of the agreement leaked out and Prince Johnson quashed it. Thwarted, Taylor had nothing to seek in the upcoming All-Liberia Conference. He refused to attend and somewhat later he ordered his delegation to withdraw.<sup>26</sup> Even when the other delegates to the conference accepted the NPFL's original demand to appoint him as one of the three co-presidents of the interim government, Taylor refused. Taylor's boycott led the All-Liberia Conference to decide on 19 April to reelect Amos Sawyer as interim president and to create two vice-presidencies: one for the INPFL, which was filled, and the other, for the NPFL, which remained vacant.<sup>27</sup>

Neither the external nor the internal diplomatic approaches brought an end to the Liberian civil war. Taylor's refusal to negotiate with Amos Sawyer in Bamako and his elevation of the INPFL to status of equal partners in the talks not only weakened the interim government, as he had intended, but resulted in the warlords receiving recognition. The status he helped them attain gave them the power to reject any peace plan not in their own interests. Prince Johnson was thus able to thwart Taylor's plans to become head of state, first in the meeting of West African nations in Bamako and then in the All-Liberia Conference in Monrovia.

### From External Warfare to External Diplomacy

Taylor abandoned the political process that seemed to be leading him nowhere and once again took up the military option. Only, instead of employing an internal military strategy to attack ECOMOG forces in Monrovia, a tactic that had failed when he tried it in September of 1990 he now adopted an external military strategy.

#### External Military Strategy: The Attack on Sierra Leone

Taylor decided to hit ECOMOG indirectly, via Guinea and Sierra Leone, which had units in the peace keeping force. He probably had two aims in mind: First, by compelling these countries to defend their own territories, he probably hoped to make them remove their forces from ECOMOG. Second, by showing all the participants in the Liberian conflict that the NPFL had the power to destabilize the neighboring countries, he probably hoped to make them accept him as the head of state of Liberia.

**Ghana had gone so far as to insist that ECOMOG refrain from belligerent activities, and, to the chagrin of Nigeria, withdrew an entire battallion.**

In the second half of April 1991, Taylor thus ordered units of dissidents, former rebels, and opponents of the Sierra Leonean and Guinean regimes under his command to cross the Liberian border into Sierra Leone and Guinea. The attack on Sierra Leone was successful. Units under the command of Corporal Foday Sankoh, which became known as the Revolutionary United Front (RUF) took over several towns and villages in the mining area in the southern part of the country.<sup>28</sup> Taylor publicly denied any connection with the RUF; however, the warriors captured by the Sierra Leonean army disclosed that Taylor had sent them to attack Sierra Leone as

a way of destroying ECOMOG.<sup>29</sup>

In deploying the better part of his forces in the offensive into Sierra Leone and along the Guinean border, Taylor took a calculated risk of being attacked by his Liberian rivals. He knew, however, that neither the INPFL, the AFL nor the interim government had enough military power to do him much harm. He also knew that ECOMOG, which was the only really substantial military force other than his own, was paralyzed by internal rivalry among the five countries that formed it. Ghana had gone so far as to insist that ECOMOG refrain from belligerent activities, and, to the chagrin of Nigeria, withdrew an entire battalion.<sup>30</sup>

Taylor's external military strategy did not result in the dissolution of ECOMOG, but it did give him advantages in the diplomatic sphere by undermining Nigeria's dominance of ECOWAS. His incursion into Sierra Leone forced Nigeria to over extend her resources. Nigerian troops were deployed both to replace the Ghanaian battalion that was withdrawn from ECOMOG and to join the Guinean troops who were supporting the Sierra Leonean army's campaign against the RUF.<sup>31</sup> In addition, Nigeria also had to send military advisors to The Gambia, where soldiers returning from ECOMOG service in Liberia threatened the stability of the government with a violent demonstration in the capital, Banjul on 14 June 1991.<sup>32</sup> The diffusion of its forces made Nigeria more open to compromise with Taylor.

### **External Diplomatic Strategy: The Yamoussoukro Agreements**

In fact, Taylor's external military strategy led directly to the adaptation of an external diplomatic strategy. To try to extricate herself from the morass caused by Taylor's offensive into Sierra Leone, Nigeria coaxed Taylor back to the negotiating table by offering conditions that were too good to refuse. At an Organization of African Unity (OAU) summit that was being held in Abuja, the Nigerian capital, in July 1991, Nigeria proposed replacing the old ECOWAS mediation committee with a new ECOWAS coordinating committee, consisting of Guinea Bissau, Senegal, Togo, The

Gambia, and Cote d'Ivoire as the chair.<sup>33</sup> With the exception of The Gambia, all these countries were either neutral (Guinea-Bissau, Senegal) or favorable (Togo, Cote d'Ivoire) to Taylor. Moreover, Cote d'Ivoire's chairmanship of the new body assured Taylor of strong support from the top.

Taylor's expectations of the external diplomatic strategy here came very close to being fulfilled. Cote d'Ivoire abandoned the parity established at the previous peace meeting, where all the Liberian factions, namely the NPFL, INPFL, AFL, and the interim government, were equal partners, and, in effect, recognized Taylor as the single rebel leader equal in stature to Sawyer. President Houphouet Boigny, who headed the committee, invited Taylor and Sawyer to three consecutive meetings in Yamoussoukro, in June, July and September 1991.

Relying on the strong support of Cote d'Ivoire, Taylor was ready, this time around, to talk with Sawyer and accepted the invitation. Progress was made. It was agreed that elections be held under international supervision within six months. A five-member electoral commission was established, with two representatives of the Liberian interim government, two of the NPFL and the fifth nominated by those four. Sawyer, who depended on ECOMOG for support, agreed to have ECOMOG enlarged with troops from additional African nations, and Taylor agreed to disarm his troops, along with those of the other factions, and to encamp them at designated sites under international supervision.<sup>34</sup>

Although the three Yamoussoukro agreements did not recognize Taylor as the leader of Liberia, they did give him many advantages that might serve his purpose in the future. NPFL rule over the territories under its control was recognized. ECOMOG, which was made up of units from five nations which Taylor accused of being hostile to the NPFL, was enlarged to include Senegal, Uganda, and Tanzania, to which he did not object. And NPFL participation in the electoral commission would give it a

say in determining who would be the next ruler of the country.<sup>35</sup> The exchange of this external political strategy for the previous external military strategy seemed to promise positive results for the NPFL.

### **Failure of the External Strategies**

For all its promise, though, the external diplomatic strategy in which Taylor engaged with Nigeria and Cote d'Ivoire did not bear fruit. The road to political accord that the Cote d'Ivoire and Yamoussoukro agreements had paved was blocked by Guinea

**Nigeria coaxed Taylor back to the negotiating table by offering conditions that were too good to refuse.**

and Sierra Leone. Directly involved in the war with the NPFL, these two countries balked at the compromises. They objected to Nigeria stepping down from the ECOWAS mediation committee and refused to accept Cote d'Ivoire's leadership. They were furious at being left out of the negotiations and, in particular, rejected the Yamoussoukro acknowledgement of Charles Taylor's authority. Sierra Leone's foreign minister, Abdul Karim Koroma, asserted that the Yamoussoukro accords, in which his country was not included, had done little to stop the spread of the Liberian conflict into Sierra Leone.<sup>36</sup>

President Joseph Momoh of Sierra Leone and General Lansana Conte of Guinea would not permit a resolution of the civil war in Liberia as long as the war in Sierra Leone and the NPFL threat along the Guinea border continued unabated. The two heads of state imitated the NPFL tactic of employing opposition groups to fight the enemy and made use of Liberians opposed to Charles Taylor to attack NPFL positions. In early October 1991, about 350 Liberian dissidents, backed by the Sierra Leonean army, crossed the border near the Mano River bridge from Sierra Leone into



Cape Mount County and attacked NPFL positions. The attack was carried out by the United Liberation Movement for Democracy in Liberia (ULIMO).<sup>37</sup>

ULIMO was an amalgam of two separate movements which had been established by late President Doe's loyalists. One group was the Movement for the Redemption of Liberian Muslims (MRM), consisting of members of the largely Muslim Mandingo ethnic group under the leadership of Alhaji G.V. Kromah, Doe's former Information Minister. Kromah took refuge in Conakry, where the Guinean government gave him assistance in training his followers. The other was the Liberian United Democratic Front (LUDF), consisting of members of the Krahn ethnic group under the leadership of General Arma Youlu and centered in Freetown. Since April of 1991, these organizations had fought, respectively, alongside the Guinean and Sierra Leonean Armies in their campaigns against Taylor's forces. When the military tide in the Sierra Leonean hinterland shifted in favor of the NPFL and RUF, Momoh and Conte encouraged Kromah and Youlu to combine their organizations to form ULIMO and engineered the attack.<sup>38</sup>

The ULIMO attack spoiled Taylor's diplomatic victory and brought about an ironic reversal of roles. Six months earlier, Momoh had accused Taylor of supporting the Sierra Leonean rebels and Taylor had denied the connection. Now, Taylor accused Momoh of supporting ULIMO and providing it with military equipment, while Momoh, describing the attack as "an internal Liberian problem," denied his connection with the violence.<sup>39</sup> Judging from ULIMO's own statements, however, there is little doubt that Guinea and Sierra Leone were involved in ULIMO operations. Shortly after the military action, a ULIMO spokesman in Freetown bitterly described the Yamoussoukro accords as biased and "prejudicial" and charged that Cote d'Ivoire favored the NPFL and demanded its replacement as head of the ECOWAS coordinating committee by a neutral country.<sup>40</sup> In response to the offensive instigated by Sierra Leone and Guinea, Houphouet-Boigny sent a delegation to Freetown to broker an agreement between these countries and

Taylor.<sup>41</sup>

In exchange, Sierra Leonean President Momoh demanded the immediate withdrawal of NPFL forces from Sierra Leone, the creation of an ECOMOG supervised buffer zone along the border, and the prompt implementation of the provision in the previous Yamoussoukro agreements to disarm and encamp NPFL forces.<sup>42</sup> Under pressure from

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Houphouet-Boigny, Taylor accepted these conditions, though they were less favorable than those he had obtained in the previous Yamoussoukro agreements. The conditions were incorporated into a new accord called Yamoussoukro IV, which Taylor and Sawyer signed on 31 October 1991.<sup>43</sup>

But Yamoussoukro IV did bring Taylor the respite he was apparently seeking at this point. Sierra Leone and Guinea distrusted Taylor's promise and figured that they could disperse the NPFL forces by pressing on with the ULIMO offensive. They continued to support ULIMO-- which was not a signatory to any of the Yamoussoukro agreements--- in its pledge to fight on until the NPFL rebels were disarmed and all mercenaries serving in the NPFL were sent back to their countries of origin.<sup>44</sup> Between November 1991 and the beginning of 1992, ULIMO gained control of three counties previously held by the NPFL. Sierra Leone and Guinea, though parties to Yamoussoukro IV, made no attempt to restrain ULIMO. On the contrary, they were probably behind ECOMOG's readiness to supply ULIMO with weapons and ammunition for its military campaign against the NPFL.<sup>45</sup>

### **Back to Internal Military Strategy**

For the first time in the civil war he started, Taylor found himself in a tight corner with very little room for maneuver. His external diplomatic strategy had collapsed and his forces were under continual attack by ULIMO. Choosing not to invest his resources in fighting ULIMO, in a war that might bring him additional territory but not the undisputed leadership of Liberia, he set his sights on Monrovia in a new internal military strategy.

#### **Operation Octopus**

Remembering the failure of his September 1990 internal military strategy, Taylor carefully worked out a new war plan to capture Monrovia--Operation Octopus. To prepare his internal military operation, he shored up his arsenal. In the second half of August 1993, the NPFL received from Libya and Burkina Faso large quantities of heavy weapons (tanks, armored cars, antiaircraft missiles and heavy artillery) and a large consignment of small arms and ammunition via Buchanan Port and Roberts International Airport.<sup>46</sup> Taylor's next step was to once again approach his old enemy, Prince Johnson. This time, his purpose was to strike a deal that would permit NPFL forces to access the capital through Prince Johnson's lines in Caldwell, a northwest suburb of Monrovia. This move, Taylor believed, would enable the NPFL to storm ECOMOG troops in Monrovia's port and other ECOMOG strongholds. His expectations were reinforced by his conviction that ECOMOG had been weakened by the 30 April 1992 coup in Sierra Leone, in which President Momoh was unseated by a group of junior army officers headed by Captain Valentine Strasser.<sup>47</sup>

The NPFL launched "Operation Octopus" on 20 October 1992, shelling ECOMOG headquarters and other strategic points and storming ECOMOG positions in Monrovia.<sup>48</sup> But the military offensive ended in failure. Prince Johnson's troops did not allow NPFL fighters to pass through Caldwell, and ECOMOG repulsed the NPFL offensive.<sup>49</sup> In January 1993,

employing heavy artillery and aircraft, ECOMOG began an all-out offensive on NPFL positions from Monrovia up to the port of Buchanan. The offensive ended in April with ECOMOG occupying Roberts International Airport and the two other main seaports, Greenville and Buchanan.

### **Mosaic of Armed Factions**

The military defeat only complicated further an already complicated situation. Once again, neither ECOMOG nor the NPFL was defeated and neither was able to achieve a decisive military victory. The

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fill. The first was ULIMO. Initially, no more than a small armed band that Guinea and Sierra Leone used to fend off Taylor, ULIMO gradually became an independent military force with its own territories and government. The military failure of Operation Octopus further encouraged ULIMO units to attack NPFL positions.

ULIMO's success was emulated by other military factions. The Krahn from Grand Gedeh County in southeast Liberia, impressed by their kin in ULIMO, exploited the NPFL's loss of vigor to form their own armed group, the Liberia Peace Council (LPC). And just as ULIMO was supported by ECOMOG, the LPC found a sponsor in Bowen's AFL, which supplied it with arms and ammunition.<sup>51</sup> Using those supplies and encouraged by the failure of the NPFL military offensive, in April 1994 the LPC launched an offensive from Sinoe and Grand Gedeh counties aimed at NPFL headquarters in Gbarnga. The LPC offensive served as an example for another group, the Nimba Defense Force (NDF) which readied its 2,000 warriors stationed along the Guinean-Liberian border to attack the NPFL.<sup>52</sup>

The success of the LPC offensive in turn encouraged the Krahn in ULIMO to challenge the organization's Mandingo Muslim leadership and create their own independent Krahn organization. With the support of the new Khran faction, ULIMO's General Roosevelt Johnson rebelled against Alhaji Kromah. ULIMO split into two opposing factions, a small group, ULIMO-J, named for Roosevelt Johnson, and a larger, more powerful group, ULIMO-K, named for Alhaji Kromah.<sup>53</sup> Then, much as had happened in NPFL territory, ULIMO's split encouraged new warlords. In Lofa, one of the three counties under ULIMO-K control, an armed group identified as the Lofa Defense Force (LDF) arose with the declared aim of opposing Muslim domination. The NPFL was quick to support this group so as to further undermine ULIMO-K. Alhaji Kromah, the head of ULIMO-K's Muslim section, responded by supporting a dissident group in the NPFL, the Bong (County) Defense Front (BDF), which turned its arms against Taylor.<sup>54</sup>

The process continued through much of 1994 and 1995. New armed groups sprung up to challenge the authority of old ones and factions continued to divide and multiply. With no turning point in the military situation, the various factions were able to amass, military power, obtain economic independence in the territories they occupied, and, later, to demand political recognition as partners in deciding the future of Liberia.

### **Diplomacy Revisited**

The mid-1993 military standoff and the proliferation of armed factions left the main parties in the dispute exhausted. Taylor was forced to realize that his military strategies had brought him to a dead end. The Nigerian-led ECOMOG was debilitated by the withdrawal of the Senegalese, Ugandan, and Tanzanian units and by a chronic shortage of money, arms and equipment resulting from the decline in monetary contributions from international organizations and the ECOWAS member states. In addition,

Sierra Leone and Guinea were too embroiled in their own troubles to continue to support any fighting. Both were endangered by the ongoing civil war in Sierra Leone that Taylor's incursion had sparked. Sierra Leone had undergone a military coup. All this led the major belligerents to once again try a political solution to the crisis.

### **The Cotonou Peace Accord**

Again, ECOWAS took the initiative, this time under the leadership of Nigeria and Ghana. The ECOWAS coordinating committee, which had mediated the four Yamoussoukro Agreements, effectively ceased to function with the collapse of those agreements and the death of its motivating force, Houphouet-Boigny, in 1993. Most of the committee members despaired of resolving the crisis in Liberia and lost interest, leaving Ghana and, more particularly, Nigeria, the major forces in ECOMOG, to carry on by themselves.

Backed by the UN, the US, and the Organization of African Unity (OAU), Ghana and Nigeria, in the name of ECOWAS, chose Geneva, outside of Africa and identified with neutrality, as the venue for new peace negotiations. The invitations that were sent to the participants reflected the new military and political realities in Liberia. In addition to representatives of the interim government and the NPFL, ULIMO-K was asked to send its representative to Geneva. Away from the battlefield, on 16 July 1993, the three parties agreed to a cease-fire and to continue the talks in Africa.<sup>55</sup>

The talks resumed on 25 July in Cotonou, Benin, under the auspices of the ECOWAS chair, Benin President Nicephore Soglo. There, interim government head Amos Sawyer, NPFL second-in-command Enoch Dogolea, ULIMO-K head Alhaji Kromah, and AFL head Hezekiah Bowen signed the Cotonou Peace Accord. The accord undertook to continue the cease-fire, disarm all factions and to establish transitional institutions with a timetable for free and democratic elections. ECOMOG would be extended by the addition of army units from other African states and under the

supervision of the United Nations Observer Mission in Liberia (UNOMIL). ECOMOG would be responsible for the cease-fire and the disarmament process.

The Cotonou Peace Accord raised hopes that the long civil war in Liberia would finally give way to political stability. The assumption was that since fighting had so clearly failed, the contending parties had no choice but to make this agreement work. In the words of Soglo: "This time we should not waste time on the path to peace because time is not money but rather blood, suffering and the hope of an entire youth. Today you must leave Cotonou for good with an established government."<sup>57</sup> The parties appeared to heed Soglo's words. They agreed to establish the Liberian National Transitional Government (LNTG) consisting of representatives of the two main armed factions, NPFL and ULIMO-K, as well as civilians nominated by the outgoing government of Amos Sawyer.<sup>53</sup>

The Cotonou Accord gave Taylor less than the All-Liberia Conference, where he turned down the offer to become a member in a collective vice-presidency. But he accepted the Accord as the best deal he could strike under the circumstances. In

**When finally, on 7 March 1994, the LNTG was sworn in to replace the interim government, the ceremony was delayed for five hours on account of quarrels over the nominees. The quarreling continued after the swearing in, totally paralyzing the LNTG.**

fact, the Accord brought some benefits. Namely, it turned his main adversary, the Nigerian-dominated ECOMOG, into a multi-African force and placed it under the international supervision of UNOMIL.

On the other hand, the NPFL had not attained a dominant role in the

LNTG, in which representatives of the various factions were on more or less equal footing. Thus, though Taylor accepted the agreement, it was in his advantage to undermine the LNTG and have it replaced with a governing body in which he would have more control. Already in Cotonou, the NPFL delegation had insisted on a consensus for any governmental decision -- an arrangement designed to hinder the LNTG's operations. His designs were furthered by the quarreling of the various factions. Back in Monrovia, without the international umbrella, his own representatives joined in the fray with representatives of Amos Sawyer and Alhaji Kromah over the allocation of portfolios, and the parties never settled on who would get the ministries of defense, foreign affairs, justice and finance. When finally, on 7 March 1994, the LNTG was sworn in to replace the interim government, the ceremony was delayed for five hours on account of quarrels over the nominees. The quarreling continued after the swearing in, totally paralyzing the LNTG.<sup>59</sup>

The weakness of the LNTG diminished the hopes that the Cotonou Peace Accord might work. These hopes finally went up in thin air. The cease-fire that had been agreed on at Cotonou could not be implemented because of the proliferation of warring factions in the hinterland. Moreover, not all the parties that signed the agreement actually wanted the cease-fire, so they supported those warring factions that were not bound by it. The LPC, the LDF, and the BDF continued to attack one another and other factions as well. Their war efforts were supported at least in part by signatories of the Accord. The AFL encouraged the LPC to continue the war against the NPFL. The Krahn-dominated ULIMO-J and LPC were probably supplied in their ongoing fight against Taylor's NPFL by the Nigerian units in ECOMOG.<sup>60</sup>

Torn by conflicting interests and unable to implement the Cotonou Accord, the LNTG virtually fell apart toward the end of 1994.<sup>61</sup> The newly appointed President Kpomakpor left for medical treatment in the United States, his two vice presidents, Mohamed Sheriff and Isaac Musa dropped



out, and another cabinet member, Dexter Tahyor, was considering dropping out. Only Phillips Banks who became vice president when Musa and Sheriff left, remained.<sup>62</sup> Formally, the LTNG continued to operate, but, in fact it was no more than a shell of a governing body. Its president described the LNTG as “a mess” and ordinary citizens referred to it as “a farce, a very expensive joke.”<sup>63</sup>

The disintegration of the LNTG marked the collapse of the Geneva and Cotonou agreements and shattered all hopes of ending the civil war and starting normal life in Liberia. But, though Taylor could not have been sorry, this time, in contrast to the past when diplomatic endeavors had fallen apart, he did not resort to military means. Instead, much as he had planned, he took advantage of the LNTG's disintegration to obtain a more favorable political settlement.

### **The Akosombo and Accra Agreements**

Having given up hope of gaining control by warfare, Taylor waited for a new diplomatic initiative. The initiative was again provided by Ghana and Nigeria. On 7 September 1994, the new ECOWAS chairman, Ghanaian president Jerry Rawlings, invited Taylor, Bowen, and Kromah, but no civilian leaders, to a meeting in Akosombo, Ghana.<sup>64</sup> There, Rawlings suggested that the crumbling LNTG be replaced by a joint presidency of the warlords. His exclusion of civilian leaders, who had taken part in all the previous agreements, suggested that Rawlings probably wanted to reproduce in Liberia the “strongman” scenario that had worked successfully in his own country, where he, a military man, had himself led a coup in December 1981 that toppled the elected civilian government of Hilla Limann. For a decade, Rawlings ruled Ghana with an iron hand, suppressing opposition, imprisoning and executing critics of his regime, and imposing top-down structural and economic reforms. The end result was economic and political stability. In November 1992, he held presidential elections, followed by the election of the parliament of the Fourth Republic. Rawlings was elected president, thus becoming “the first leader of an African coup regime to win

a competitive, multiparty election."<sup>65</sup>

Taylor would have preferred not to share his power, but Rawlings' proposal gave him, for the first time, public recognition as a head of state, from whence he could climb to become **the** head of state. Thus, along with Bowen and Kromah, he accepted Rawlings' proposal. On 12 September, the three agreed on a cease-fire and to prepare for general elections to be held on 10 October 1995.<sup>66</sup> But, the attempt to exclude civilians and the other warlords from participating in the decision-making process ended in failure. Various non-governmental organizations in Liberia opposed the plan. The small armed factions, including ULIMO-J, LPC, LDF and others, intensified their attacks on the NPFL and ULIMO-K so as to undermine the agreement. Furthermore, a new and dangerous situation developed in the hinterland. Warlords lost control of their troops: bands of young recruits, some of them teen-age boys, chose **t h e i r        o w n** commanders and offered their services to the highest bidders. The cease-fire agreed to at Akosombo was never implemented, and preparation for free and democratic elections were never made.<sup>67</sup>

**Neither Rawlings' threat to cease his efforts nor the United States' warning that the Accra Agreement was "the last chance" for Liberia brought the factions to resolve their differences.**

Taylor had to decide whether or not to abandon his political strategy for a renewed military one. With his military failures well in mind, he decided to continue on the diplomatic course-- in less than good faith. He gave his support to a new Rawlings plan which would, this time, include civilians and the other warlords, confident that a government thus composed would not last. On 21 December 1994, he, Bowen and Kromah met in Accra with other warlords and representatives of civilian political parties. Under the auspices

of ECOWAS, the UN and the US, the participants yet again agreed to cease all violent actions in Liberia and to establish a new five-member Transitional Ruling Council (TRC) that would lead Liberia to free and democratic elections in November 1995. The five seats in the TRC were allocated in proportion to each faction's power. The NPFL, ULIMO-K, and the civilian Liberia National Conference (LNC) were each allotted one seat. The AFL and a coalition of smaller militias was allotted the fourth seat, and the chair was given to Chief Tamba Taylor, a traditional chief in his 90s. On 8 January 1995, the heads of the various factions arrived in Accra to nominate their representatives to the ruling council to be installed in Monrovia on the 11th of the month.<sup>68</sup>

The Accra Agreement was less favorable to Taylor than the Akosombo one, but he did not have to worry. As he predicted, it soon unraveled. In fact, the TRC never even met, foiled, as the Cotonou Peace Accord had been, by the endless fighting among the armed factions in the hinterland and by rivalries within and among the various parties that were to constitute it. ULIMO-K, torn by internal rivalry, did not appoint a nominee. A fierce quarrel broke out between the heads of the smaller militias. For instance, the two Krahn-dominated factions, ULIMO-J headed by Roosevelt Johnson and the LPC headed by George Boley, quarreled over who would hold the one seat on the council allocated to their coalition. Neither Rawlings' threat to cease his efforts nor the United States' warning that the Accra agreement was "the last chance" for Liberia brought the factions to resolve their differences.<sup>69</sup>

### **Pyrrhic Victory: Arms and Diplomacy**

The collapse of the TRC and the Accra Agreement would finally bring Taylor within reach of his goal. Despite Rawlings' threat to abandon his peace efforts, neither Ghana nor Nigeria could afford to leave the Liberian imbroglio. Pulling out would have left a vacuum for Libya to fill and potentially would have destabilized all of West Africa. They thus had no

choice but to propose a new diplomatic initiative to bring the warring parties back to the negotiating table. For the better part of 1995, Nigeria and Ghana, with the support of the UN, the US, and the OAU, tried to put the pieces together. They used their influence over the West African states that supported the NPFL to get them to stop providing it with arms, and they put heavy pressure on the various warlords to negotiate.

Taylor was quick to exploit the situation. Knowing that no political agreement could be reached without him, he turned down Rawlings' invitation to a new conference, to be held in Abuja in July 1995, which all the other parties in the dispute accepted. Instead, he insisted on a personal, one-to-one meeting with the conference host, the Nigerian head of state Sani Abacha, to discuss solutions to the problem. Such a meeting would give Taylor the public recognition he sought as the number one warlord and the only person who had the power to end Liberia's civil war. Taylor's ploy was successful. In June 1995, Taylor was received by the Nigerian head of state. At the end of the meeting, Taylor announced that he would participate in the conference at Abuja to be held in August 1995.<sup>70</sup>

With his newly acquired status and prestige, Taylor was in a better position than ever before to influence the negotiations. He concocted a deal with two other warlords, Alhaji Kromah and George Boley, to set up a ruling body modeled after Akosombo, which Taylor saw as a stepping stone to the sole leadership that he knew he could not obtain in the negotiations at that point. To camouflage their military rule, the three warlords formed a six-member Interim Council of State, referred to as the collective presidency, in which they included three civilians, who, for all practical purposes, would have no power. The head of the collective presidency, Wilton Sankawulo, a civilian academic of no known political ambition, was virtually picked out of a hat."<sup>71</sup>

The Abuja agreement was signed on 19 August 1995. Much like the previous agreements, it called for a complete ceasefire, the demilitarization of the armed factions by ECOMOG under the supervision of

UNOMIL, and preparations for free democratic elections to be held in August 1996. Along with Kromah and Boley, Taylor became a vice-chairman of the collective presidency and appointed his men to the key ministerial posts of foreign affairs, justice and internal affairs (the interior). The other two warlords also put their men in key posts. Roosevelt Johnson of ULIMO-J and the smaller military factions, although not included in the collective presidency, were allocated junior portfolios and administrative positions.<sup>72</sup>

On 1 September 1995, the collective presidency took up office in the executive mansion in Monrovia. This represented a major advance for Taylor. It gave him, for the first time since the beginning of the civil war, the entrance he wanted into Monrovia, but had not been able to attain militarily.

Although formally Taylor was only one of three vice chairmen, he conducted himself as though he was the head of state. He had police cars with wailing sirens clear the road ahead of his car on his way to the Executive Mansion. There, he deliberately made people wait in the sweltering heat while he sat upstairs in his airconditioned office, only to prove that it was he who ran the show. He visited Cote d'Ivoire in an official capacity and, on his return, threw a large ball in Monrovia Centennial Pavilion, where he was hailed as the leader of Liberia.<sup>73</sup>

More significantly, Taylor set out to clear the hurdles that stood between him and the sole leadership of Liberia. He deliberately proceeded to undermine the Abuja agreement. His first step was to form an alliance with his former enemy, Alhaji Kromah, based on their mutual hatred of the Krahn. Together they isolated the two Krahn warlords, George Boley and Roosevelt Johnson. In December 1995, NPFL and ULIMO units attacked the Krahn-dominated LPC positions in the hinterland, ignoring the agreed upon cease-fire. With his power base in the hinterland badly damaged, Boley abandoned his position in the collective presidency and left Liberia.

**(Taylor) . . . was a nimble, flexible, sharp and ever pragmatic manipulator, unburdened by ideology and other inhibitions in his quest for power.**

Taylor's second step was to infiltrate NPFL units into Monrovia, ignoring the disarmament clause in the agreement. As an excuse, he argued that the disarmament should be undertaken by the Liberians themselves and not by ECOMOG. ULIMO-K followed suit. Once the two armies were entrenched in Monrovia, Taylor had Kromah issue an order, in March 1996, in the name of the collective presidency to remove Roosevelt Johnson from his post as minister of rural development, and arrested for murder.<sup>75</sup> When Johnson's forces violently resisted the police attempt to arrest him on 6 April, NPFL and ULIMO units took over strategic points all over Monrovia and launched an offensive against the ULIMO-J forces which had taken refuge in the Barclay Training Center. On 3 May, Roosevelt Johnson fled the country.<sup>76</sup>

ECOMOG was unable to stem the violence. It was powerless to stop

Taylor's and Kromah's attack on ULIMO-J in the capital, because their forces, enforcing an order of the collective presidency, were acting entirely within the law. ECOMOG was also not able to stop the havoc that the assault had sparked in Monrovia, as NPFL and ULIMO-K forces joined fighters from the other military factions that had infiltrated the city in a rampage of indiscriminate looting, terror and murder, which left the capital in shambles.

It is unlikely that Taylor had foreseen the full extent of the violence that was unleashed. Nonetheless, it did not prevent him from pushing forward with his drive for sole leadership. Taylor turned the devastated capital into the center of his diplomatic activity. For the first time since the start of the conflict (with the exception of the 1991 All-Liberia Conference), Monrovia, rather than some foreign capital, was the seat of the diplomatic efforts in the region. The shift of venue was not only geographical; it was also a substantive reflection of Taylor's new power. With Kromah on his side, Taylor was able to dictate the time and place of any new negotiations. He turned down Rawlings' invitation to participate in a new round of peace talks scheduled for 7 and 8 May, 1996, in Accra, and insisted, instead, that he would hold a national conference in Monrovia in which all segments of Liberian society would participate to seek a mandate to hold elections.<sup>77</sup> Somewhat later, flexing his muscles, Taylor refused to meet the U.S. Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs, George Moose, who had been sent to mediate in the new crisis.<sup>78</sup>

He was also able to dictate the terms of the new settlement. On 17 May, NPFL radio announced that in accord with a proposal by the West African foreign ministers who had gathered in Accra on 7 May, NPFL and ULIMO-J forces would vacate the strategic points they had taken over in Monrovia and hand them over to ECOMOG. But, what it did not announce was more important: that Taylor refused to withdraw his forces from the rest of Monrovia and rejected the ministers' demand that he reinstate Roosevelt Johnson and George Boley.<sup>79</sup> More significantly, the announcement was

made in the name of the collective presidency-- over which Taylor now had almost sole control.

## Summary

In the six years of civil war, four broad strategies were employed to resolve the conflict, sometimes separately, sometimes in combination, and some of them more than once. These were (in random order) an internal military strategy, external military strategy, internal diplomatic strategy, and external diplomatic strategy. The movement from one strategy to another is summarized in Table I

To a large extent, though not entirely, it was Taylor who determined what those strategies were. At each stage in the crisis, he showed considerable ability to size up the situation and to exploit the opportunities it offered. He was a nimble, flexible, sharp and ever pragmatic manipulator, unburdened by ideology and other inhibitions in his quest for power.

He knew how to discern and use to his own ends the division in ECOWAS between Nigeria and its allies on the one hand, and Cote d'Ivoire and its allies on the other. He knew how to play the various Liberian factions off against one another. He knew how to learn from his mistakes, and to abandon the military strategy when it became clear that it would not get him the leadership of the country. When he substituted the diplomatic strategy, he did so with the clear understanding that neither Nigeria nor Ghana could leave a vacuum in Liberia, and exploited their plight to sabotage successive agreements to which he signed his name and to draw out ever more congenial terms for himself. He was able to inveigle himself into Monrovia without firing a shot, and then to combine diplomacy and arms to drive out two major competitors, knowing that ECOMOG was by then too weak and inept to do anything to stop him. Judging from Taylor's record, one can predict that he will not be satisfied with these achievements. His alliance



**Table I**

<b>Date</b>	<b>Place</b>	<b>Strategy</b>	<b>Initiator</b>	<b>Cause</b>	<b>Motive</b>
9/90	Monrovia	int/mil	NPFL	Ecomog Landing	to occupy capitol
11/90	Bamako	ext/dip	Ecowas	failure of military strategy	to attain diplomatic agreement
2/91	Lome	ext/dip	Ecowas/NPFL	failure at Bamako	to attain diplomatic agreement
3-4/91	Monrovia	int/dip	Ecowas/NPFL	failure of Lome talks	to set up new internal govt.
4/91	Sierra Leone	ext/mil	NPFL	failure of diplomacy	dissolution of ECOMOG
6,7,9/91	Yamoussoukro	ext/dip	Ecowas CoCom	invasion into Sierra Leone	to end civil wars
10/91	Liberia	ext/mil	S.L & Guinea	unwanted success of Taylor	to undermine NPFL diplomatic achievements.
10/91	Yamoussoukro	ext/dip	Ecowas CoCom	NPFL military defeat	to prevent collapse of previous Yamoussoukro agreements
10/92	Monrovia	int/mil	NPFL	failure of diplomacy	to oust ECOMOG.
1/93	Liberia	int/mil	ECOMOG	NPFL attack	to repel NPFL.
7/93	Geneva-Cotonou	ext/dip	ECOWAS	military standstill	to effect a peace agreement to establish a new government.
9,12/94	Akosombo-Accra	ext/dip	Ghana/Nigeria	collapse of internal govt.	to establish a new internal government.
8/95	Abuja	ext/dip	Ghana/Nigeria	disfunction of internal govt.	to effect a comprehensive peace agreement and establish a new internal government.
4/96	Monrovia	int/mil	NPFL/ULIMO-K	presence of armed factions	to oust ULIMO-J
5/96	Monrovia	int/dip	NPFL	Ghanian diplomatic initiative	to emphasize Taylor's independence.

with the ULIMO-K leaders cannot last long. At the first opportunity, he will find a way of driving Kromah out of the collective presidency. Yet, even if he becomes the sole ruler of Liberia, his victory may well be a Pyrrhic one. Taylor pursued his personal ambition without any consideration for the enormous toll his actions took on his country and countrymen. Liberia is a collapsed state. Its economic infrastructure, administrative machinery, and judicial system, have all been decimated. The April events in Monrovia have pushed the total loss of lives since 1990 to almost 200,000. Half of Liberia's population is displaced. The fighting in the capital has brought anarchy and destruction into the heart of the country. Foreign diplomats, foreign aid workers, UN observer missions, and the Lebanese, Syrians and Indians who formed a huge chunk of Liberia's business class have all fled. Taylor might become a ruler without a country.

### Notes

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 "Democracy Not Dictatorship," *Africa Research Bulletin* 27,1  
 (15 February 1990): 9557.
- <sup>2</sup>Elizabeth Levy, "Liberia Des larmes, des mots et des armes," *Jeune Afrique*, 1550, 12-18 September 1990, 28.  
*Le Monde*, 2 June 1990, 1  
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- <sup>3</sup>Raymone W. Copson, *Africa's Wars and Prospects for Peace*.  
 (Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe, 1994), 132.
- <sup>4</sup>"NPFL Radio," BBC, 4(B), Africa, 4 August 1990.
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in prison, he was released after serving only two, and, for several years, worked as a photographer in Bo, in south-central Sierra Leone. Then, probably in the mid-1980s, he left the country.

Paul Richards', "Rebellion in Liberia and Sierra Leone: A Crisis of Youth?" in Oliver Furley, ed., *Conflict in Africa* (London: I.B. Tauris, 1995), 140.

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Tijan M. Sallah, "Economics and Politics in The Gambia," *Journal of Modern African Studies* 28, 4 (1990): 632, 634.

<sup>7</sup>For Libya's political ambitions in West Africa, see Emeka Nwokedi, "Sub-Regional Security and Nigerian Foreign Policy," *African Affairs*, 84, 335 (April 1985): 195-209.

<sup>8</sup>"Family Problems," *West Africa* (6-12 August 1990), 2236.

<sup>9</sup>"Liberian government Plans to Hold Peace Talks" BBC 4(B) Africa, 12 June 1990.

<sup>10</sup>"Mediation Committee Meets (Banjul)," *Africa Research Bulletin* 27, 8 (1-31 August 1990): 9801-02.

<sup>11</sup>Saadia Touval and I. William Zartman defines mediation as "a form of third-party intervention in conflict for the purpose of abating or resolving that conflict through negotiation. In common with other forms of peacemaking or conflict resolution, it is an intervention that must be accepted to the adversaries in the conflict, who cooperate diplomatically with the intervenor. Peacemaking differs from certain

other forms of third-party interventions in that it does not involve the use of force and is not intended to help one of the participants win or prevail."

Saadia Touval and I. William Zartman, "Introduction Mediation in Theory," in Saadia Touval and I. William Zartman, eds., *International Mediation in Theory and Practice* (Boulder and London: Westview Press with the Foreign Policy Institute School of Advanced International Studies, Johns Hopkins Univ., 1985), 7.

<sup>12</sup>Paul Richards, "Rebellion in Liberia and Sierra Leone," 138-139.

<sup>13</sup>"Liberia Ecomog Poised," *Africa Confidential* 31, 17 (24 August 1990).

<sup>14</sup>Cote d'Ivoire had a record of challenging Nigerian influence. In 1967, it supported the secession of Biafra from Nigeria. Colonel Chukwuemeka Odumegwu Ojukwu, who led the Biafran rebellion, was offered political asylum in Abidjan after the rebellion collapsed.

Atsutse Kokouri Agbobli, "Liberia Pax Nigeriane" *Jeune Afrique*, 1552 (26 Septembre - 2 Octobre 1990), 29.

<sup>15</sup>"Monrovia Centre Captured," *West Africa* (22-28 October 1990) 2714. "Mediation Committee Meets (Banjul)," *Africa Research Bulletin* 27, 8 (15 September 1990), 9801.

Kenneth B. Noble, "Civil War in Liberia Threatening To Divide West African Neighbors," *New York Times* (29 August 1990) A1.

<sup>16</sup>Peter da Costa, "Life after Doe," *West Africa* (24-30 Sept. 1990), 2510.

<sup>17</sup>"The Fight Goes On," *Africa Research Bulletin* 27, 10 (1-31 Oct. 1990), 9872.

<sup>18</sup>Peter da Costa, "Taylor Under Seige," *West Africa* (15-21 October 1990), 2652.

- <sup>19</sup>"Monrovia Centre Captured," *West Africa*, 22-28 October 1990, 2714.
- <sup>20</sup>Kenneth B. Noble, "Liberian Factions Agree to a Cease Fire," *New York Times*, (29 November 1990), A3.
- <sup>21</sup>"Gradual Return to Normality," *Africa Research Bulletin*, 27, 12 (1-31 December 1990), 9949.
- <sup>22</sup>Kenneth B. Noble, "Rival Liberia Rebels Agree to Cooperate," *New York Times* (20 January 1991), 3.
- <sup>23</sup>"Reconciliation Meeting Declaration," *Africa Research Bulletin* 28, 3 (1-31 March 1991), 10057.
- <sup>24</sup>"Togo Summit," *Africa Research Bulletin* 28, 2 (1-28 Feb. 1991), 10022.
- <sup>25</sup>"Liberia: When Warlords Confer," *Africa Confidential* 32, 9 (3 May 1991), 7.
- <sup>26</sup>*Ibid.*  
"Reconciliation Meeting Declaration," *Africa Research Bulletin* 28, 3 (1-31 March 1991), 10058.
- <sup>27</sup>Kenneth Best, "The Continuing Quagmire," *Africa Report* (July-August 1991), 40.
- <sup>28</sup>"Border Towns Invaded," *Africa Research Bulletin* 28, 4 (1-30 April 1991), 10072.
- <sup>29</sup>Barnadette Cole, "Taylor's Hand," *West Africa* (22-28 April 1991) 591.
- <sup>30</sup>Kenneth Best, "The Continuing Quagmire," *Africa Report* (July-August 1991), 41.

- <sup>31</sup>"Checking the Advance," *West Africa* (27 May - 2 June 1991), 863.
- <sup>32</sup>"Gambia: Heroes No More," *Africa Confidential*, 32, 15 (26 July '91), 7.
- <sup>33</sup>"Ecowas Praised," *West Africa* (29 July-4 August 1991), 1256.
- <sup>34</sup>"Fourteen Summit (Abuja)," *Africa Research Bulletin*, 28, 7 (1-31 July 1991), 10188.  
    "Mini-Summit," *Africa Research Bulletin*, 28, 9 (1-30 September 1991), 10274.  
    "Peace in Sight?" *Africa Research Bulletin*, 28, 9 (1-3- September 1991), 10275.
- <sup>35</sup>"Liberia: Ecowas Stand-off," *Africa Confidential* 32, 15 (26 July 1991).
- <sup>36</sup>Peter da Costa, "The End of the Road?" *West Africa* (23-29 September 1991), 1571.  
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- <sup>37</sup>"Border Fighting," *West Africa* (28 October - 3 November 1991), 1820.
- <sup>38</sup>"Liberia: Wild Cards in the Pack," *Africa Confidential* 32, 23 (22 Nov. 1991), 7.
- <sup>39</sup>"Severe Warning," *Africa Research Bulletin*, 28, 10 (1-31 September 1991), 10295.
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"Meeting Postponed," *West Africa* (7-13 October 1991), 1696.

<sup>42</sup>"Momoh Warns Rebels," *West Africa* (30 September - 6 October 1991), 1656.

<sup>43</sup>Peter da Costa, "Decisive Moves," *West Africa* (11-17 November 1991), 1886.

<sup>44</sup>"New Ulimo Attack," *West Africa* (11-17 November 1991), 1900.

<sup>45</sup>John Momoh, "Renewed Ulimo Offensive," *West Africa* (28 September to 4 October 1992), 1608.

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<sup>46</sup>"Preparing for War?" *West Africa* (14-20 September 1992), 1568.

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<sup>48</sup>"Rebels in Liberia Seize a Factory Near the Capital," *New York Times* (29 October 1992), A5.

<sup>49</sup>"The siege of Monrovia," *West Africa* (23-29 November 1992), 2008  
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"Liberia: Fundamental Targets as March Deadline Nears," *Africa Research Bulletin* 31, 3 (1-31 March 1994), 11352.

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<sup>54</sup>"Fundamental Targets as March Deadline Nears," *Africa Research Bulletin* 31, no 3 (1-31 March 1994): 11351-11352.  
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<sup>55</sup>"After 13 Years of a Vicious War, Liberians Dare to Hope for Peace," *New York Times* (2 August 1993), A2.  
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<sup>56</sup>Arthur B. Dennis, "Concomitant Clause Under the Cotonou Peace Accord: Comments and Clarifications," *Inquirer* (18 Jan. 1994), 6-7.

<sup>57</sup>"Council Chairman Replaced," *Africa Research Bulletin*, 30 11 (1-30



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<sup>58</sup>"Liberia-- Cotonou Peace Agreement," *Africa Research Bulletin*, 30, 7 (1-31 July 1993), 11092.

<sup>59</sup>"Political Wrangling," *Africa Research Bulletin*, 30, 11 (1-30 November 1993), 11239.

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<sup>60</sup>Stephen Ellis, "Liberia 1989-1994," 172-174.

<sup>61</sup>"United Nations Seventh Progress Report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Observer Mission in Liberia," *Liberian Studies Journal*, 20, 1 (1995), 133.

<sup>62</sup>"Liberia: After Akosombo," *Africa Confidential*, 35, 22 (4 November 1994), 4.

<sup>63</sup>Editorial, "What Next?" *New Democrat Weekly* (14-20 July 1994), 5.

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"Reading Signs on the Wall," *Eye* (15 July 1994), 2.

<sup>64</sup>"United Nations Seventh Progress Report of the Secretary General on the United Nations Observer Mission in Liberia," 133.

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Paul Richards, "Rebellion in Liberia and Sierra Leone," 136-137.
- <sup>68</sup>"Liberian Leaders in Ghana to Elect Council," Reuters World Report (hereafter RWR), (8 January 1995) Newsupdate 8, 950109SA, Obi Taiwan (9 January 1995).
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- <sup>70</sup>"Peace Among Warlords," *Economist* (9 September 1995), 53.
- <sup>71</sup>"Keeping What Peace?" *Africa Confidential*, 37 4 (16 Feb. 1996), 2.
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Association Internet List-Serve (hereafter LSA-L).

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Purnell Murdock, Correspondent Report, Abidjan, 2-195390 (6 April 1996), LSA-L.

<sup>75</sup>Monrovia, RWR (16 April 1996), Alpha Koroma, LSA-L

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<sup>76</sup>James Butty, “Fighting Week Two,” *West Africa* (22-28 April 1996), 620.

“Taylor Determined To Regain BTC,” RWR (27 April 1996), Alpha Koroma, LSA-L.

<sup>77</sup>(3 May 1996) Alpha Koroma, LSA-L.

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## **Sexual Abuses As Wartime Crimes Against Women and Children: The Case of Liberia**

**Emma T. Lucas**

Sexual violence and acts of bestiality are routinely directed against women and children during periods of armed conflict. Women and children may be targeted based on their ethnicity, political association, religion or social class. During Liberia's civil war, women and children were subjected to sexual violence at the hands of warring factions. Underlying this behavior by combatants is the view held by administrative, military, and political leaders that sexual violence can further their political goals (Human Rights Watch 1996:1). Rape becomes a weapon to terrorize and degrade not only women, but also their families and community and to send a political message. Mladjenovic (1992:10) identifies forms of wartime rape to include rape as (1) a public event, (2) mass rape, and (3) the killing of the women who have been raped. The wartime mentality of dehumanizing women has been openly expressed by vicious and notorious individuals previously. For example, Mladjenovic (1992: 8) cites Nietzsche and Hitler who declared that man should be trained for war, and women for the recreation of the warrior. In an effort to understand the attitudes of warring factions toward the enemy and the rage to commit sexually violent acts, an examination of the role of ethnic identities during conflicts is necessary.

In the case of Liberia, longstanding tensions account for the rifts between Americo-Liberians and indigenous people. Liebenow (1987: 3-7) notes that the majority of Liberia's population identified 1980 as their first year of independence from the quasi-colonial or caste-like situation they lived in vis-a-vis the Americo-Liberians. This thinking is indicative of the smothering war that had existed for more than 160 years. My intent in this article is to first examine the early ethnic interactions that identified ethnic differences and later intensified ethnic tensions. Secondly, to discuss the linkages between ethnic tensions, soldier mentality, and sexual abuse as a

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wartime weapon against women and children during Liberia's civil war. Lastly, to stress the need for international intervention in the form of greater recognition of human rights abuses and consideration of subsequent legal sanctions against these offenses.

## **Early Ethnic Tensions and the Roots of Continuing Conflicts**

Liberia was originally inhabited by sixteen main ethnic groups who coexisted with relative peace until 1980. Originally, tribalism meant ethnic pride which served as a means for the preservation of cultural heritage. Seldom was it a means of one group oppressing or annihilating another. However, as liberated slaves from the United States arrived at the Grain Coast, they began penetrating the land of the existing groups and soon introduced a new form of government patterned after that of the United States and Christian values. The result was an enforced exclusion of indigenous groups by Americo-Liberians since the former had little structured interaction among themselves, thus fostering a kind of divide and rule evolutionary process. The Grain Coast natives were not permitted to participate in the structure of the imposed social order, thus laying the foundation for divisiveness (*The Liberian Crisis*, 1994:10) and a system of *de facto* apartheid or separateness of the groups. From the outset, the black emigres to Liberia viewed themselves as distinct from the indigenous people and this separateness continued to amplify the disregard of human suffering and life.

Distinctions between the settlers and the natives were identified immediately upon contact. Several examples of this focus on difference can be found in the following correspondences. In a letter from Diana Skipwith James (an emancipated slave) to Sally Cocke (member of her former master's family) from Monrovia, March 6, 1843, the following is found:

...I wrote you a long catalogue about the Natives customs which I am in hopes that you found very amusing. In conversing with one of them I ask him how it was the[y] could not read & write like the white

man (they call us all white man) & had not as much Sence as the white man & he said that it was their own fault; that God give them the Choice either to learn book proper as they says or make Rice & they told god they had rather make rice. I labored with him & told that it was a mistaken Idear altogether. I farther told him that God has bless them with as many Sences as the white man and if they ware only to put them in exercise that he would be the same as the white man [sic] (Wiley 1980:57).

In a letter Peyton Skipwith wrote to his mother Lucy Nicholas Skipwith on June 27, 1846, from Monrovia, his view of personal value is clearly distinct from the indigenous people. He stated "I still feel buoyed up as Master has Promised to send on my Bro. Geo. & his family. I believe he shall have more help in this dark benighted land, to try and civilize the heathens and bring them to know life and life eternal [sic]" (Wiley 1980: 66).

At the time of independence from the American Colonization Society in 1847, indigenous laws and a modern constitution coexisted, thus

**Striking at the enemy meant that women and children were viewed as easy targets if they belonged to the wrong ethnic group.**

amplifying the distinctions between the groups. The Americo-Liberians became the dominant power, maintaining their ruling power, economically, politically, and socially, while denying basic rights and liberties to the indigenous majority. The exercise of *de facto* apartheid led to the absence of a meaningful presence of indigenous individuals in positions of power, and thus proved to be a simmering source of discontent that would continue into the future.

During the Tubman Administration (1944-1971), a unification policy was introduced to integrate the systems of the two groups, but while a consciousness of oneness was created, the Americo-Liberians remained in control. The country's majority population, the natives, were never fully integrated into the body politic. The military coup of 1980 led by Msgt.

Samuel K. Doe was an effort to give voice to those traditional Liberian ethnic groups that had lived under rules of inequality and subjugation for more than 160 years. However, under Doe, a member of the Krahn ethnic group, Americo-Liberian rule was quickly replaced by a Krahn ethnic minority rule (Gershoni 1997).

The separateness found among Liberia's ethnic groups, notes Nzouankeu (1991), leads to the substitution of ethnic interests for national interest, favoritism, patronage, nepotism, the accentuation of social inequality, etc. (pp. 383). Rebellion under Doe created rival ethnic sub-nationalism and ethnic hostilities and violence. Groups in conflict and struggle for power saw each other as mortal enemies to be savagely liquidated. Longstanding ethnic tensions fueled combatants' thinking that identified anyone different as the enemy. Striking at the enemy meant that women and children were viewed as easy targets if they belonged to the wrong ethnic group. Once ethnicity became an identifier during war, sexual violence followed as the consequence of an internalized hatred.

### **Wartime Sexual Abuses in Liberia**

The Liberian civil war delivered mass killings and atrocities along ethnic lines with women and children being subjected to indiscriminate killings and sexual abuses. A November 1992 article in *The Boston Globe* notes the brutal murder of five American nuns who were the victims of renewed fighting in Liberia in territory occupied by Charles Taylor. The article further states that the tragic deaths of these nurses and teachers reflect the larger tragedy of Liberian women and children since the war began in December 1989 (Nowrojee and Swiss 1992: 23). These killings and abuses continued as the civil war lingered. Thousands of women and girls were sexually abused and killed and forced to witness the torture and murder of others. These traumatic incidents leave years of physical and psychological injuries. Far from being rare and unusual, wartime acts of sexual abuse, rape, and murder are common. Many civilians fell victim to

all the warring and ethnic armed factions. According to a report of the U.S. Committee for Refugees (1992), many individuals witnessed physical abuses, rape, wanton killings, mutilations, people being forced to eat their own body parts, the sick and the elderly burned alive in their huts, and unborn fetuses ripped from the wombs of their pregnant mothers. The investigation further documents the fact that the commission of these acts by soldiers was made worse by forcing men, women, and children to watch the execution and torture of their loved ones. Child and adult soldiers alike were the perpetrators of these inhuman acts.

Women and children alike suffered at the hands of soldiers who gave no consideration to the helpless status of women, children, or old people during military confrontations. Soldiers' violent impulses were let loose by ethnic hatred whose roots can be traced to the settlers' arrival. Such impulses exploded into a level of bestiality making incidents of rape against women and girls so numerous and routine. Many of the rape stories reveal the hideousness of the crimes with no consideration given to the age or physical condition of the victims. Human Rights Watch (1994: 18) reports that some of the rape included those against women by friends of their sons. War and propaganda make enemies of neighbors and acquaintances; therefore, when women are raped by men familiar to them, the trauma, betrayal, shame, and impulse to flee are exacerbated (Copelon 1994: 204). Pressure is exerted by the male squadrons, and if a soldier has any doubts because he spent his childhood playing with his sister in the yard, or he felt love for his mother, his colleagues are there to straighten him out (Mladjenovic 1992: 8). This phenomenon has been observed dramatically also in the civil war in Bosnia, leading to ethnic cleansing, genocide, and mass murder.



During the 1980s and early 1990, Doe's Armed Forces of Liberia (AFL) and Charles Taylor's National Patriotic Front of Liberia (NPFL) committed gross abuses that had widespread, devastating effects.

These abuses included

harassment, looting, rape, mutilations, and torture. Six hundred civilians were massacred at the hands of the AFL at St. Peter's Lutheran Church in July 1990. Civilians were subjected to deplorable abuses by NPFL especially during the height of the war in 1990 when many Krahn and Mandingo groups suffered these abuses. During Operation Octopus in 1992, NPFL fighters were responsible for widespread looting and killing including the deaths of the nuns cited earlier. At Camp Carter in 1993, approximately 547 women and children were massacred; some of these victims were beaten and hacked to death, or shot and mutilated. It is also reported that the NPFL was responsible for attacks against the Liberian Peace Council in the southeast (Fleischman 1994: 173-74).

Another armed faction, the Liberian Peace Council (LPC), emerged in 1993 and continued to carry out mass abuses against civilians. Members of this faction were largely Krahn and former AFL soldiers with some having previously fought with the United Liberation Movement for Democracy in Liberia (ULIMO). Fleischman (1994: 175) and Human Rights Watch (1994:5) note that abuses by LPC took the form of looting, arbitrary arrest and detention, torture, rape and extrajudicial executions.

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## **Use of Child Soldiers and Behaviors of Adult Soldiers in War**

Unfortunately, a distressing aspect in the commission of sexual abuses is the active engagement of children as combatants in the civil war. Many children found themselves members of an exploited segment of the population; they could be the victim or the victimizers. Generally, the socialization of male children is generally toward a more aggressive, exploring, and self-fulfilling prophecy (Chasen cited in Boateng 1993). Child soldiers and their proneness to beastly and violent behavior without remorse are similar to the behavior of youth and gang violence in the United States. Fraser (1996) notes that:

Violent behavior has its roots in early childhood and is often the result of an impoverished opportunity structure, inadequate training in critical social and cognitive skills, the perception that there is a social and concrete utility in aggressive behavior and the lack of prosocial activities in the social environment (pp. 349).

With a continuing sense of hopelessness, a lack of significant relationships, a void of positive opportunities, and overwhelming poverty, children became vulnerable victims and victimizers. During armed conflicts, the prowess of children is tested through aggressive actions, and their rank and sense of self-worth rode on their ability to commit atrocities. They would kill, cut off someone's head, rape, maim, and loot without thinking about the impact of these acts on humans (Fleischman 1994; Human Rights Watch 1994: 32; Berkeley 1992). Heightened hatred for the "enemy" coupled with ethnic group loyalty fueled the commission of violent bestial acts. One child soldier about 17 years of age described how he raped women at checkpoints and exhibited no remorse. Children were forced to have sex with women in public to please their commanders and to humiliate the women. (Human Rights Watch 1984: 37)

The Women's Commission for Refugee Women and Children sent a delegation to Cote d'Ivoire and Guinea in 1991 to observe and assess the needs of Liberian women and children. This investigation was followed by a visit to areas outside of Monrovia in 1992. The stories shared by women

about their plight during the civil war were repeats of the ones shared by refugees. In rural areas, as soldiers began violent and abusive acts, villagers fled into the bush. Some escaped. Others were not so lucky. Dr. Swiss, a member of the Commission's team, heard many reports of the horrible sexual abuses of women and of their being forced to witness the rape of others, including children.

Gang rapes were common, and the following story documents these acts:

In one tragic instance in greater Liberia in 1990, an eyewitness said that armed fighters took all but one of 26 school girls from their residential school one night. They were taken to a nearby town that a large group of soldiers were occupying, and returned to their school the next morning. Two staff from the school said that some of the girls were able to tell them that they had been raped that night by the fighters. Another eyewitness on the school campus said that many of the girls were crying when they were brought back and that several indicated they had been raped. (WCRWC 1991: 2)

On May 20, 1990, Doe's AFL soldiers attacked the United Nations compound where many men, women, and children had gathered in hopes of safety. One survivor of this attack stated:

When the soldiers jumped over the fence, they killed three people on the spot. They grabbed people and held them at gunpoint. They raped two women in front of everyone. They beat people who were in the yard. People were trying to run away, shouting, and crying. The soldiers were just shooting (U.S. Committee for Refugees 1992: 6).

Abuse of women included horrendous cases of torture. *Taipei* was a form of torture used repeatedly. Women suffered permanent paralysis and nerve damage because of this physical trauma. In one report, Dr. Swiss was told of a 28-year-old woman who was tied in the *Taipei* position, raped, and beaten for two days in August 1990 at Mount Barclay. Other abusive atrocities took place as well. The following is another story of wartime

abuse:

One woman was jailed by Taylor's soldiers in October 1990 for 65 days in Nimba County. While in jail, her head was shaved and she was repeatedly beaten and tied with a rope. She was kept naked for three days, and a 15-inch stick was thrust in her vagina until she bled. This she endured without medical attention (WCRWC 1991: 12).

On more than one occasion, when a pregnant woman approached a checkpoint, soldiers would argue over the sex of the fetus, and to verify their guess would cut open the woman's stomach and remove the fetus for sex identification (WCRWC 1991: 12). In another report, a 14-year-old girl was captured and sexually abused by a company of soldiers for months before she was able to escape (Nowrojee and Swiss 1992: 23).

Other health concerns surface as a result of vicious sexual attacks. The report, *Our Forgotten Family*, by the Women's Commission for Refugee Women and Children indicates that there has been a dramatic increase in sexually transmitted diseases. In 1990 it was reported that 90% of the gonorrhea cases were resistant to penicillin. Specific

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figures for the HIV infection are not known; however, there is growing health concern for increased exposure to HIV from rape (10-11). Increased incidences of sexually-transmitted disease have implications for family health and social structures. Berry-Fanning (1994: 15) note that soldiers and other fighters are among the principal carriers of AIDS in Africa. This is true of the Rwanda war as well. Rwandan doctors have found that common problems among wartime rape victims who seek medical treatment are

sexually transmitted diseases, including HIV/AIDS. Reconstructive surgery may sometimes be performed for women and girls because of sexual mutilation by attackers (Human Rights Watch 1996:3)

The cultural aspects of rape as a crime must be addressed. Various strict cultural values, traditions, and norms place a high value on female virginity. The act of rape is an act not only against women, but also against the society. Once this virginity is lost, the woman's value diminishes. Consequently, in some cultures, women who have been raped are believed to have dishonored the family and thus are more difficult to marry off (WHO 1992). Researchers (Human Rights Watch 1996; WHO 1992; Swiss and Giller 1993; Heise 1994) note the cultural implications of wartime rape as an assault on the individual, her family, and community. This act is an attempt to dominate, humiliate, and control behavior and is intended to disable an enemy by destroying the bonds of family and society. Swiss and Giller (1993: 612-13) further indicate that this need to destroy is amplified by ethnic tensions and the revengeful attitude of the perpetrator. Thus, expressions of ethnic group tension and hatred, may lead to the rape of the enemy woman and this is often an explicitly ordered and condoned command by those in military control. Rape is a means to a political end. It is part of the destruction of the perpetrator against the enemy or the other ethnic group. According to Human Rights Watch (1996: 2), combatants who rape in war often link their acts of sexual violence to a broader social degradation of the woman and the perceived harm to her community.

### **The Psychology of Soldiers Toward Sexual Abuse**

Sexual aggression is fertile terrain for understanding the motivators behind the commission of acts of sexual violence. According to Macdonald (1987: 15), generally gender is the principal articulator of the social order, and in this world where men wage war, women are viewed as the "protected" or even as the custodians of the social order that men are fighting for. The commission of acts of sexual violence and ethnic cleansing

throughout history casts doubts on this statement. Association with an army suggests that men will subject themselves to rigorous rules and powerful controls of imagery. In this environment of control, men can be made to subdue personal feelings and emotions, and obey commands without hesitation. Heightened violence, asserts Berry-Fanning (1992: 15), is

perpetuated by the military, rebel soldiers, and freelance bandits. It may occur as isolated incidents by individual fighters, as conduct implicitly sanctioned by commanding officers, or as gender-specific political terror explicitly encouraged or ordered as part of a military strategy.

Non-masculinity is associated with ineffectiveness and passivity, and masculinity with power and aggression. The self-declared power of men and the right to rape increases during wartime (Mladjenovic 1992: 10). Soldiers have a need by choice or order to prove their masculinity along the lines of the expected military behavior at that moment. The rape act is embellished by soldiers feeling in their heads, in their guns, and in their sexual organs that all the inventions of civilization encourage them to carry out these outrageous and inhumane acts (Mladjenovic 1992: 8). Macdonald (1987) supports this and further indicates that war rape is another action by which males overcome any

feelings of submission to authority. This thinking pattern is coupled with the pathology of soldiers for the various factions. Many child soldiers were subjected to a cruel initiation rite

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upon joining a faction in which a child is forced to commit some other atrocity to demonstrate that he would be a reliable fighter (Human Rights

Watch 1994: 4). For example, the followers of Charles Taylor were described as “drug-crazed” given to mutilations, and with no discernible ideology (Kaplan 1992: 16). Child soldiers told one child care worker that factions used both alcohol and drugs to control the kids. Children were given a mixture of cane juice (a highly intoxicating local rum) and gunpowder which made them high and was supposed to give them the courage to go and fight at the front (Human Rights Watch 1994: 37, *The Liberian Crisis* 1994:10). Other reports noted the use of marijuana, cocaine, and an amphetamine known as “bubbles,” products that caused levels of intoxication and thus a perceived “braver” feeling among the users, in this case the child soldiers. Child soldiers were often subjected to actions with overtones of proving one’s prowess and bravery.

No matter whether it is war or peace, men know they can rape. Brownmiller (1975) notes rape is a conscious process of intimidation by which all men keep all women in a state of fear. Most often there is no public accountability, check, or sanctions. This fear may be heightened during wartime, especially during a civil war when there are no rules, no structure, no chain of command (Human Rights Watch: 32). There is no public accountability, check, or sanctions. Rape, a weapon of terror and revenge, is not subject to definitions of “just” and “unjust” acts. Sadly, many children who lacked the maturity to make logical and humane decisions regarding their acts were used as combatants by the warring factions. UNICEF (cited in Human Rights Watch, 1994: 2) estimates that as many as 10 percent of 60,000 fighters were children less than 15 years of age. These child soldiers suffered the same cruelties themselves that many of them carried out against others. Child soldiers were killed and wounded and many children themselves killed, maimed, raped and looted (Human Rights Watch 1994: 2). According to Brownmiller (1975: 32),

it has been argued that when killing is viewed as not only permissible but heroic behavior sanctioned by one’s government or cause, the distinction between taking a human life and other forms of impressible violence gets lost, and rape becomes an unfortunate but inevitable by-product of the necessary

game called war.

Sexual assaults relegate children and women to the level of insignificant objects. During war, women's bodies become the battleground (Gillespie 1992: 19). That is, they are unavoidable casualties; they just happen to be in society and, therefore, they become the objects of war acts.

But, rape is committed against a human, a person with natural rights, feelings, and emotions, and, therefore, no excuses regarding the unfortunate presence of women and children in war territory will suffice. Some soldiers must prove their status as war fighters, not only to themselves but also to fellow soldiers and to the sex victim. This wartime mentality gives men a license to rape as does the military association often made with masculinity, depersonalization, and aggression (Brownmiller 1975; Macdonald 1987).

The act and the excuse for rape in war reveals the male psyche in its boldest form, without the veneer of "chivalry" or civilization (Brownmiller 1975: 33). In fact, access to a woman's body is considered an actual reward of war. Speaking of access to another's body as a reward shows further the low status of women in many societies. Ethnicity is a compounding variable, but with this aside, rape is an example of a woman's powerlessness and the low value sometimes given to her in society at large (Morgan 1984: 306).

### **The Oppressive Mentality of Liberians**

One fundamental question continues to surface: What characteristics within the nature of humans move them to the point of human exploitation whether physically, sexually, or mentally? Another stinging question is: Why does a human lose all rational behavior when faced with decisions about the commission of these abuses?

As has been noted, many civilians were subjected to suffering and death at the hands of fellow countrymen. Twe (1994: 44) describes the



impact of the antiself disorder and the social hostilities of ethnic groups in Liberia. He further states that this disorder leads to ethnic wars, family breakups, social exploitations and an affirmation of negative Euro-American stereotypes of the African as “uncivilized,” “tribal” and “heathen.” This aspect of the mentality of civil war combatants should be explored in relation to acts of sexual abuse.

The practice of *de facto* apartheid in Liberia, whether in 1847 or 1980, has the same effect-- one group seeks control over another. Since 1980, violence has been used for purposes of carrying out the acquisition of this control. Violent acts during wars are for purposes of domination, terror, revenge, and destabilization. The goal of wartime rape is domination and dehumanization in addition to attacking the integrity and identity of the woman (Copelon 1995: 202). This is played out through ethnic cleansing when an ethnic combatant tries to destroy the “enemy” ethnic group. Copelon (1995: 208) also notes that war intensifies man’s sense of entitlement, superiority, avidity, and social license to rape. Acts justified by this kind of thinking may very well be viewed as uncivilized, tribal, and heathen behavior. The mounting distinctions among all of Liberia’s ethnic groups undergirded the rage felt by those who believed they had enjoyed none of Liberia’s economic, political, or social, benefits. Thus, wartime rape against Liberian women was seen as a means of terrorizing and dominating the enemy.

### **Human Rights Protection for Women and Children**

Reconciliatory efforts must include consideration of the long-term damages done to women and children in Liberia, community integration, and social justice and order. Sadly, these damages may not be healed sufficiently in the next 20 years.

Presently, recognition of sexual violence as an injustice in internal and international conflicts is finally receiving attention after vocal appeals. However, ethnic conflicts continue to repress hopes for world peace.

The post-Cold War world has witnessed wars in the former Yugoslavia, Somalia, and Rwanda, for example, and has also witnessed the use of rape as a weapon in these conflicts. Women and children must be protected from human rights abuses of any kind. In Liberia, the civil war brought long term damage to women, children, families, community integration, and social justice and order. These damages may not be healed sufficiently in the next 20 years.

**Women and children must be protected from human rights abuses of any kind. In Liberia, the civil war brought long term damage to women, children, families. . . . These damages may not be healed sufficiently in the next 20 years.**

Protective documents such as the Geneva Conventions, the Convention Against Torture, and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights exist, but are not followed (Women's Commission for Refugee Women and Children 1992). In 1990 Liberia signed the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, a declaration that specifically prohibits recruiting children under the age of 15 as combatants (Women's Commission Follow-up Delegation 1992). Liberian women are actively involved in regional and international efforts to bring peace to their country. Mary Brownell of the Liberian Women's Initiative identified the far reaching devastating impact of the civil war on women and children, a population that constitutes 90% of displaced Liberians (Brownell 1996:16). All warring Liberian factions are also bound by Protocol II of the Geneva Convention. Every major human rights document must designate sections to address all abuses of women and children. High hopes are riding on the full

implementation of Liberia's Peace Plan.

Global organizations, including Refugee Women in Development, advocated for the recognition of rape as a form of political

torture. Gender justice must be approached with vigor at the international level. In recent years the UN International War Crimes Tribunal has recognized the urgency to address wartime sexual violence and has investigated and punished perpetrators (*MS*, July/August 1996:42, Human Rights Watch 1996:33).

**Children are our future. . . . The redressing of deep-seated ethnic tension is critical to progressive movements toward future peace.**

Justice Richard Goldstone, prosecutor for the International Criminal Tribunals for the Former Yugoslavia and Rwanda has recognized rape as a form of torture under the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhumane or Degrading Treatment or Punishment. In a written correspondence to Professor Copelon dated September 8, 1995, Justice Goldstone stated:

Sexual assaults committed particularly against women can constitute torture under the statute of the Tribunal, and will prosecute as transgressions of international humanitarian law by my office (Human Rights Watch 1996: 32).

Continued advocacy in this area is needed to assure women of protection from wartime sexual violence that is brutal, demeaning, and psychologically devastating. We have observed much of systematic wartime sexual violence as being shrouded around the singularity of ethnic cleansing and self-righteous but unacceptable excuse for the commission of wartime crimes.

Children are our future. This segment of the population that has been active combatants must receive coaching and counseling in respect for humanity. Among the peace-building institutions recommended by UNIFEM are recommendations for postwar reconstruction, including the reeducation of soldiers and child soldiers to a productive place in society (UNIFEM 1996:27). The redressing of deep-seated ethnic tensions is critical to progressive movements toward future peace. The constant advocacy of healing, peace, and reconciliation are necessary for any effective acceptance of the peace-building process.

To move toward the workable reconstruction of a united Liberian society as a country, leaders must demonstrate to themselves, the people at home in Liberia, and the world at large beyond Liberia, West Africa or even Africa itself, the creation of institutional instruments and capacities to punish and bring to justice perpetrators of the heinous crimes committed during the civil war. That must be part of the road to peace, justice, and unity in the future of Liberia.

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## **Some Impacts of the Liberian Civil War: A Pilot Study of Thirty Liberian Immigrant Families in the United States**

**Doris H. Railey**

### **Introduction**

A conflict, a dispute, an argument, a difference of opinion can all lead to war. Wars are reputed to have been in existence before the advent of civilization. Wars can occur because of unmet desire for more land and/or territory, wealth or power and/or security defenses. According to M. Rajai, there are two major kinds of wars: "just and unjust." He suggests that "just wars" should be supported, and "unjust ones" should be opposed. Under his framework, "just wars" are those that help spur progress, while the "unjust ones" are those that impede progress.

Similarly, in a position statement issued in 1994, The Liberian Women Initiative, an umbrella group consisting of religious and social groups involving women in Liberia, brilliantly described the nature and dynamics of the Liberian Civil war:

We, the women of Liberia, are the mothers of the land. We feel the joys and sorrows of this land in a special way because we are women. Not only do we represent one half of the population, but we also feel a special sense of responsibility for our children, our husbands and our brothers who make up the other half of the population. We take care of the society. We soothe the pains. We are the healers and peacemakers. We call on all women of Liberia at home and abroad and all Liberian women to unite and join our efforts in aiding the peace process in Liberia clear its final hurdle. The struggle for survival as a nation and as a people is presently at a delicate and crucial stage. For the past four years, we have been killed, raped, starved to death, misused and abused. We have witnessed the horror of having our children, our husbands, our fathers and other relatives killed and maimed before our very eyes. We have experienced starvation to the

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point of becoming walking skeletons. We have been stripped of our dignity as human beings! The women have borne all of this victimization with suffering and stoic silence. This silence is not to be construed as weakness or acquiescence.<sup>1</sup>

One of the major consequences of the civil war is the migration of several Liberians to various African and European countries, and the United States. Clearly, the underlying impetus is the search for safety and security.

Against this background, the purpose of the study is to examine some of the impacts of the Liberian Civil War on 30 families that have migrated to the United States from Liberia and to, hopefully, draw some conclusions on how the war affected Liberian families in general who migrated to the United States as a result of the war.

### **Research Design**

#### **Conceptual Issues**

A family is defined as a social (primary) group in which members are related by blood, marriage or adoption. The family is one of the most important social institutions in any society. Members of most societies are initially socialized through their families. Consequently, the family becomes the major agent in the socialization process. For example, cultural values and norms are first learned through the family. Besides providing material comfort, a family gives its members social placement, and regulate sexual activity.

Most industrialized societies subscribe to the nuclear family concept, which is a family that consists of parents and children. However, in most African countries, including Liberia, the concept of extended family is widely used. Under this tapestry, the constellation includes parents, children and other family members.

## Data and Data Collection Method

The data were collected from a survey research conducted among Liberia families, who have migrated to the United States as a consequence of the Liberian civil war. The data were coded from the responses on a questionnaire.

### Sample

The study used a combination of quota and random sampling methods to choose both the sampling areas and the respondents. In the case of the sampling areas, various American cities with large Liberian immigrant populations were selected. Within these areas, 200 respondents, who are heads of families, were randomly selected.

**The purpose of the study is to examine some (political, social and psychological) impacts of the Liberian Civil War on 30 families that have migrated to the United States and to, hopefully, draw some conclusions on how the war affected Liberian families in general who migrated to the U.S. as a result of the war.**

Unfortunately, only 100 respondents returned questionnaires.

Of the questionnaires returned, only 30 were usable. In terms of marital status, 20 are married; one is widowed; three are divorced; and six are single. In terms of gender, there are 16 males and 14 females. As for regions, all of the counties of Liberia were represented, with the exception of Bomi County. Similarly, all of the various major ethnic groups were included, except the Gbandi. In terms of educational levels, 10 respondents have graduate degrees; 15 have baccalaureate degrees; four have high school

diplomas; and one has grade school education. In terms of income, 10 respondents earn between \$5,000-10,000; six between \$11,000-20,000; seven between \$21,000-30,000; three between \$31,000-40,000; and four from \$41,000 upward. As for age, the mean ages for the male and female respondents are 41 and 39 respectively. In terms of religion, 28 respondents are Christians, and two belong to other religious groups.

The low return rate can be attributed to the various concerns that these families have as a result of the civil war: Some of them are fearful of ethnic retribution, while others are concerned about "exposing themselves," because of their immigration status. Consequently, they perceived the research as a possible vehicle for making them vulnerable to either retribution or deportation.

### **Indicators**

Three major indicators-- social, psychological and political-- are used to assess the impact of the war on the Liberian families.

### **Literature Review**

Many studies have been conducted on the impact of civil and interstate wars on families in several nations, but, there are very limited research and information on the impact of civil wars on the families in Africa. Liberia, Africa's the oldest Republic, had not experienced a civil war in modern times until 1989, when Charles Taylor and his National Patriotic Front of Liberia (NPFL) invaded the country. As the result of the war, by November 1990, 1.28 million Liberians were displaced. The estimated number of Liberian refugees in neighboring countries was estimated at 780,000: In Guinea, there were 409,000; in the Ivory Coast, there were 250,000; in Ghana, there were 25,000; and there are others in European countries and in the United States. The death toll is estimated at 200,000 (Various press and human rights reports).

### **The General Literature**

Myers-Walls, Myers-Bowman and Pelo (1993) argue that because so little is known about how parents talk to their children about war and peace, they asked a sample of parents to write their anticipated responses to questioning by their children in the areas of war and peace. The investigation centered around the differences between the description of war and peace; it contrasted the responses of mothers with fathers, daughters with sons, and subgroups within the sample. The result showed numerous contrasts between the war and peace answers, especially when they were written by fathers or delivered to sons. The responses describing war were active and concrete and identified some aspects of how war begins. The responses describing peace were less consistent, with the most common characteristic being the identification of what peace is not. The war answers were more likely than the peace answers to outline what people do, and the peace answers were more likely to outline what people feel.

In her seminal work on Central America, Leslie (1993) asserts that war forces families to move from their areas of residence, often to new cultures. In turn, these families are affected by their new cultural milieu in several ways: First, they face the challenge of getting acclimated to the culture. Second, they have to find employment. Third, they have to meet the social needs of their dependents--education, health, housing, etc.

Hendrix and Anelli (1993) study focused on Vietnam veterans' perceptions of the impact of their wartime experiences on their current family life. The research used veterans' self-reports of combat exposure, the psychological impact of war service, and family satisfaction and functioning. The result indicated direct effects of war service on psychological impact and direct effects of psychological impact on family satisfaction and functioning. No direct effects were found between war service and family satisfaction and functioning.

Laila et al (1993) addressed the impact of war-related stressful life

events on the health of families living through war conditions prevailing in Lebanon for 12 years. The key questions addressed in the study related to the impact of the war situation, shown to generate stress on many domains at once, on the physical, social, and mental well-being of individuals and families. Considering physical health, they found that most individuals, whether mothers, fathers or adolescents, reported high levels of somatization. For mothers and fathers, the study showed a significant relation of war-related events and of reported stress.

Usman (1994) interviewed a 12-year-old child soldier, whose ethnic background is Krahn. The young man said he had enlisted into the military to avenge the death of his family. He indicated that his whole family was killed right in front of him by Charles Taylor's rebels. At the end of the interview, he stated that he had killed approximately 250 rebels. At the time of the interview, he was in Lisbon and on his way to Switzerland, to speak with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugee, about the 650 Liberian child soldiers in Sierra Leone, and 865 in Liberia. Interestingly, he had become a born-again Christian, and promised not to fight again.

Finkel (1992) posits that the many years of fighting have taken a brutal toll on Angola's 10 million people, who have no desire for a war that has claimed about half a million lives, and denied almost seven million access to basic health service and clean water supplies. In

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trying to revamp the family structure, a national Family Tracing Project, has been instituted. The project locates families of some of the estimated 50,000 orphaned and abandoned children in the wake of Angola's devastating 16-year war. There are 28 children's institutions. In a bid to track down families, the coordinated initiative linking government and roughly 10 private voluntary organizations have installed a special tracing team in each of Angola's provinces. It is very important for children to be in a stable family environment.

Jordan et al (1992) interviewed 1,200 male Vietnam veterans and the spouses of co-resident partners of 376 of these veterans. The questionnaire contained questions to determine the presence of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), and items to tap family and marital adjustment, parenting problems, and violence. The spouse or partner interview assessed the S/P's view of these items, as well as their view of their own mental health, drug, and alcohol problems, and behavioral problems of school-age children living at home. Compared with families of male veterans without current PTSD, families of male veterans with current PTSD showed markedly elevated levels of severe and diffuse problems in marital and family adjustment, in parenting skills, and in violent behavior. Walker and Maiden (1987) interviewed and sent out questionnaires about dying to 90 male and female between the ages of two and 18 years and 90 male and female between the ages of 18 and 97. They were interested in understanding how attitudes toward death and dying develop and change across the lifespan. The results of the finding revealed that children's attitudes were influenced by variables such as level of cognitive development, experience with death, socialization, and instruction. Young children reported an imaginative range of views about forms of possible afterlife. Adolescents included recognition of environmental, ecological, and psychological causes of death and were concerned about the effects of personal death on family members and friends. Adolescent views of an afterlife reflected traditional socialization. Attitudes of adults were influenced by variables such as gender differences, environmental factors, generational differences, experience with death,

aging, and interaction effects. Widows and widowers who had developed individual survival skills, psychological coping strategies, and extended social support networks reported less distress than did unprepared subjects following the death of a spouse. While aging or maturation alone appeared to be systematically unrelated to overt death anxiety, adults did seem to maintain an ambiguous attitude regarding death throughout the lifespan.

Laufer and Gallops (1985) examine the impact of military service and exposure to war trauma on marital patterns and problems in a stratified, probability sample of 1,259 nonveterans, era veterans, and Vietnam veterans. Their primary findings were Vietnam veterans were more likely to enter marriage than nonveterans; combat exposure to abusive violence contribute to higher rates of divorce among Vietnam veterans; participation in abusive violence led to lower rates of divorce among Vietnam veterans but higher levels of marital dissatisfaction; and, while men in stable family situations report significantly less psychological and behavioral difficulty than those with a history of divorce or those never married, the effect of combat exposure was not primarily channeled through its contribution to greater marital instability.

Sanua (1983) examined the cultural differences in mourning, wartime bereavement, and psychopathology among United States and Israeli families, 20 American families of soldiers who died in the Vietnam War and 20 Israeli families of soldiers who died in the Yom Kippur War were interviewed. Analysis of the results showed that the effect of the loss of a son or husband was affected by the kind of war in which these countries were involved. In Israel, young and old had to fight and more children tended to become fatherless, adding to the distress of the mothers. As opposed to American families, practically all Israeli families expressed their sorrow quite overtly. In Israel, there was a greater denial of the death through magical acts and thoughts than in the United States.



**The Literature on the Liberian Civil War**

In a study, *West Africa* (1994) reported that about 40,000 to 60,000 children were involved in the Liberian civil war. Citing a study by UNICEF, the magazine estimates that about 6,000 of these fighters, or 10 percent, were children under 15. More child soldiers were forcibly recruited; but there is evidence that a small amount of them joined voluntarily. The latter posit that they joined the various warring factions, in order to avenge the death of parents, other family members, and friends; to protect their families from rival warring factions; and to get food for themselves, and their friends or their families.

The Human Rights Watch (1994) reported that many former child soldiers suffer from symptoms of post traumatic stress disorder such as sleeplessness, nightmares, flashbacks, bed wetting, anxiety and depression.

Malakpa (1994) argues that there is the need for special services in the areas of counseling, and other related areas of special education in postwar Liberia. He maintains that there are at least eleven orphanages and three night shelters for boys. Additionally, he states that there are unaccompanied children both in Liberia, and in Liberian refugee camps. He asserts that these children and many adults will need special help. This is because trauma, the lost of loved ones and everything one owns, witnessing or participating in gruesome activities, etc., do leave scars on the mind, which require long term psychological counseling. He concludes that this is particularly true for young children and adolescents, who fought in the war as "small soldiers." His suggestion is special education and rehabilitation services should be included in post-civil war national plans. In order to do so, he argues, there must be a "political will" which is often neglected.

George-Williams (1994) posits that most able-bodied men were killed by the army, leaving the women as the only bread winners to support the children. Women were forced to watch the murder of others, by the soldiers; and were sometimes told to applaud or laugh; they were threatened

with summary execution, if they did not comply. Those who showed any emotion while they watched the murder of their husbands and children were shot. For example, in many instances, when a pregnant woman approached a check point, the soldiers argued over the sex of the child that she carried. In order to satisfy their curiosity, the woman's stomach was slit and the fetus was removed for sex identification.

In addition, in the midst of crossfire, many market women risked their lives going into the bushes to find food to sell to support their children. Some women in Monrovia and in refugee camps increasingly turned to

**Although prostitution existed in Monrovia before the war, there is now a group of low-income women who have become prostitutes for the first time, in order to provide for their families.**

prostitution, especially the younger women. Although prostitution existed in Monrovia before the war, there is now a group of low-income women who have become prostitutes for the first time, in order to provide for their families. She notes that in order to address the plight of the women, 35 women's groups were organized under the auspices of the National Women's Commission of Liberia (NAWOCOL), whose function is to coordinate the activities of these various groups. NAWOCOL has initiated many programs and projects to meet the needs of women. Because the women were psychologically and physically traumatized, the organization developed a trauma healing program called "My Sister's Place" in collaboration with UNICEF, to assist women and young girls in difficult circumstances as a result of the war.

### **The Liberian Civil War: An Overview**

To understand the crisis in Liberia, we must go back to the origins of the civil war, which in turn are rooted in the origins of the Liberian state. Liberia was founded in 1821 for the repatriation of freed American slaves to Africa. Gaining independence in 1847, Liberia was dominated politically and economically limited to coastal areas amounting to about three percent of the country's territory. Political and economic life of Liberia and everything from citizenship was dominated by settlers until well into the twentieth century. Even under the more open policies of President William V. S. Tubman (1944-1971), the domination of settler Liberians remained largely in place.

The festering resentment thus produced between the coastal elites and the peoples of the hinterland provided the basis for Samuel Doe's seizure of power through a military coup on April 12, 1980. Doe's government gave new voice to indigenous peoples, and his revised constitution (1984) ensured the citizenship and political rights of all Liberians. Doe's regime, however, was also characterized by widespread corruption, economic decline and the failure to return as promised to civilian rule. Playing off one ethnic group against another, and traditional religion against Islam and Christianity, Doe also exacerbated intergroup tensions in Liberia.

The consequence of such policies was the outbreak of civil war in 1989. Rebel leader Charles Taylor, drawing his strength from mostly the Mono and Gio ethnic groups excluded by Doe's regime, successfully undermined the government, setting into motion the chain of events that led to Doe's assassination in 1990. Retribution directed against groups seen as

allied with Doe led to the slaughter of thousands and forced many more into exile, with Mandingo, Vai, and Krahn peoples suffering the brunt of the assault. Taylor proved unable to establish control over all of Liberia; thus, a state of war continued until 1997. The Economic Community of West African States

(ECOWAS) imposed a cessation of hostilities through the Abuja II Peace Accord. Subsequently, presidential and legislative elections were held in July 1997. To the surprise of many, Charles Taylor won the presidential election, and his National Patriotic Party swept the legislative elections.

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### **Some Areas of Impact of the Civil War**

The Liberian Civil War had an impact on the people in several areas: social, economic, political, psychological, etc. In this part of the article, the multidimensional impact of the conflict will be assessed.

#### **Social Impact**

On the issue of children having problems adjusting to school, eight families said yes, 18 no and four did not respond.

On the issue of the state of marriages prior to the civil war, four were fair, five were good and 14 were excellent. After the civil war, five are fair, six are good and nine are excellent. Broken down by gender, prior to the civil war, six females were excellent, three were good, and two were fair.

After the civil, four are excellent, four are good, three are fair. In terms of males, prior to the civil war, eight were excellent, one was good, two were fair. After the civil war, six are excellent, three are good, two are fair.

### **Psychological Impact**

On the issue of whether any one of the families studied lost relatives and friends in the war, all 30 families indicated that they had lost family members and/or friends.

In reference to their health before the war, one family was fair, 13 were good and 16 were excellent. After the war, two are poor, five are fair, 11 are good and 12 are excellent.

On the issue of having war dreams, 18 families answered yes, 10 answered no and two gave no response.

On the question of how the families cope with the impact of the civil war and loss of loved ones, all 30 of the families used talking, traveling, reading and working as mechanism for coping with the civil war or the loss of loved ones.

### **Political Impact**

With reference to whether the civil war is a just war, three (10% of) families responded yes and 27 (90%) said no.

On the question of the families eventually returning to Liberia, 27 (90%) said yes and three (10%) said no.

On the issue of whether the United States provided sufficient support to end the civil war in Liberia, five (17% of ) families are yes and 25 (83%) said no.

On the issue of whether the United States Government was supportive in adjusting their immigration status, 20 (67%) answered yes and 10 (33%) answered no.

On the issue of whether the families had contacted the congresswoman or congressman in their district about the civil war in Liberia, seven (23%) said yes and 23 (77%) said no.

In reference to whether the families had taken part in protest and marches in the United States about the civil war in Liberia, 10 (33%) answered yes and 20 (67%) answered no.

### **Discussion and Conclusion**

This study has examined some social, psychological and political impacts of the Liberian Civil war on 30 Liberian families who have migrated to the United States. The findings indicate linkages between the civil war and behavioral patterns, relationships and attitudes. First, socially, the civil war has affected marital relationships. Psychologically, families are traumatized by the loss of relatives during the war. In terms of health, the war has affected families in several ways. Also, the specter of the war still looms in the minds of families, as evidenced by a significant proportion of them having war dreams. Politically, about 90% of the families surveyed do not consider the civil war to be an effort to remedy societal ills. Interestingly, the majority are discontented about the lack of sufficient support from the United States to find a solution to the war. In terms of political attitudes, the majority of the families still demonstrated the perennial political apathy that has been a major mainstay of the Liberian political culture. For example, 77% of them have made no effort to lobby their congressman or congresswoman on behalf of Liberia. Similarly, 67% of them have not participated in any demonstrations to publicize Liberia's tragedy.

In terms of prescriptions, several major steps need to be taken, in order to address the impact of the civil war. Some families may do fine, being counseled by

**The findings (of this study) indicate linkages between the civil war and behavioral patterns, relationships and attitudes.**

friends, relatives or their religious affiliations. However, others may need

much more. If that happens to be the case, professional help such as psychologists, psychiatrists, and psychotherapists should be recommended. We should look for signs that indicate when our loved one(s) (spouse, parents, friends, children or other family members) need(s) professional help.

On the national level in Liberia, addressing the social, psychological and political needs of the populace should become a part of the national plan. Areas that need consideration are special education, psychological testing, marital counseling, family counseling and programs designed to assist war victims. Also, organizations such as the National Women's Commission of Liberia (NAWOCOL), Liberian Women Initiative, National Adult Education Association of Liberia, Special Emergency Life Food--Liberia, Liberian United to Save Humanity, Christian Health Associations of Liberia, Liberia Justice and Peace Commission, UNESCO, WHO, United Nations, need to provide assistance to victims of the war, in their respective domains of competence.

Finally, this writer recommends that further study be conducted in this area using a larger population. The research findings from this study could be used for policy formulation for post-civil war Liberia.

### Note

<sup>1</sup>The Liberian Women Initiative. *Position Statement on the Liberian Civil War*. Monrovia, Liberia, 1994, 1.

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*Lifted Up: The Victoria Tolbert Story.* Victoria Anna David Tolbert. (Minneapolis, MN : MaCalester Publishing Company, 1996) 187 pages.

*Lifted Up: The Victoria Tolbert Story* is a brief autobiography of Victoria Tolbert, the former First Lady of Liberia. It is a story of courage, fortitude, faith, and a triumph of the human spirit. Significant issues addressed in the book include her childhood, marriage to former President William Tolbert, her role as First Lady, the assassination of her husband, and her faith in God.

Life began for Victoria without her mother, and that contributed to a difficult childhood. "I was motherless . . . Without a mother, childhood was difficult for me," she writes. Yet those hardships strengthened her faith in God, and resolve to be self-dependent. In fact, a recurring theme in the book is Victoria's commitment to her faith, and belief in God. In times of joy and sadness, whether rejoicing over the birth of her child, or lamenting over the vacuum created by the absence of her mother, or sobbing over the brutal assassination of her husband, Victoria always turned to God for guidance. "The writing of this book," writes the author, "is one important way I have chosen to praise and venerate the Lord Jesus Christ, my Savior . . ."

The autobiography offers a glimpse of Victoria's life in the Executive Mansion. She maintained a busy schedule. She participated in State functions, conducted family business in the absence of her very busy husband, involved herself in volunteer organizations such as the Medical Volunteer Service (which she founded), Young Women's Christian Association, the Baptist Women's Missionary Union and the National Annual Calendar Tea Committee. Despite those activities, there was the downside to the glamour that came with life as the First Lady. Often, Victoria was lonely, and gradually became detached from her husband: "During those lonely days and lonesome nights, I grew much closer to the

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Lord. Many nights at the Mansion, I laid prostrate on the floor in prayer and fell asleep . . . ,” the author writes.

Perhaps the most significant parts of this book are chapters seven and eight titled, “Blood and Tears,” and “Imprisoned and Afraid.” Those chapters focus on the

**“During those lonely days and lonesome nights, I grew closer to the Lord. Many nights at the Mansion, I laid prostrate on the floor in prayer and fell asleep...,” the author writes.**

military coup that overthrew and assassinated William Tolbert, and the torture his family endured in the hands of the followers of Samuel Doe, the new Liberian president. Here, the account is succinct, and at times, graphic, but real. Victoria was there and provides an eyewitness account of those awful events. “We spent three days and three nights . . . before we received any food or even a drop of water. During the heat of the day, our mouths were very dry, but at the setting of the sun, we were able to swallow what little spittle we could coax from our glands,” the author laments.

The coup marked the beginning of serious trouble for Liberia. Doe has since suffered the same fate he inflicted on Tolbert, and Liberia, at the time of this writing, is still a nation torn by civil strife.

Victoria’s attempt to present her husband as a president who was fair, Godfearing and honest is probably the most disturbing part of the book. Reading through her story, one would conclude that Tolbert headed a model administration to be copied by other African leaders. But the historical record tells a very different story. Tolbert’s presidency “was marked by despotism, corruption, and an extreme concentration of wealth,” (George Ayittey, *Africa Betrayed*, 197). He robbed from the nation, placed relatives in decision-making positions, and engaged in outright fraudulent ventures.

His economic theory that he labeled “humanistic capitalism,” only justified the continuous pillage of the nation by him and his relatives. “The Tolbert family’s greed,” Sanford Ungar has written, “was a key factor in the downfall of a system that might otherwise have survived another generation,” (Sanford Ungar, *Africa: The People and Politics of an Emerging Continent*, 97-101). In short, Victoria failed woefully to rehabilitate the presidency of William Tolbert.

Despite those weaknesses, Victoria’s book adds a personal account to the understanding of the tragedy that besieged her family and the Liberian nation. Her voice is the one of women in Liberia, perhaps in sub-Saharan Africa. Her story is sad, yet refreshing. At the end of the book the tide begins to turn for her. Few First Ladies in African nations have written books or autobiographies. *Lifted Up* should serve as a model to be emulated by other First Ladies within the continent. Their stories are important and need to be told in their own voices.

Julius A. Amin  
The University of Dayton

**Addendum:** Victoria Anna David Tolbert died in Minnesota on Saturday, November 8, 1997, as we prepared to go to press. We are grateful that she gave us a first-hand account of her take on the April 12, 1980 coup in Liberia before she died. **RIP.**

**Tibbie S. Kposowa, *Silence That is Not Golden*. (Cincinnati, Ohio: Tabay Publications, 1995.) 333 pages.**

Set in an unnamed West African country that closely recalls its author's native Sierra Leone, this novel weaves a modern morality tale around the looming presence of AIDS. The Hon. Misalie Lamboi, ex-soccer hero, with a British university degree and a prominent appointment as the National Minister of Health, is an enthusiastic promoter of tourism and a sponsor of the Golden Complex, a large new tourist hotel under construction. In an opening scene, he and his wife sit in their luxurious living room in the capital city viewing his new TV promotion of this complex, which extolls its attractions for tourists, important among them its location in an "almost AIDS free" country. His wife, Satta, also university educated and now a government accountant, thinks this advertisement misleading and criticizes her husband's official silence on the AIDS epidemic. She then speaks of her eagerness to begin her own family, having delayed childbearing to finish her education. Her husband, meanwhile, fondly remembers his encounters with several girlfriends.

This image of established bourgeois family life collapses suddenly as a routine visit to the doctor reveals that Misalie has contracted the AIDS virus. The book follows his subsequent course of action as he must decide how to handle this new situation in his professional life and in his domestic relations. As he opts for public admission of his own HIV+ condition, he uncovers scandalous falsifications of HIV and AIDS statistics, and through his treatment by others he experiences directly the results of his own official policies of denial and concealment-- gross levels of misinformation and ignorance as to the causes, methods of transmission, and means of prevention of HIV/AIDS. Learning the hard way the high costs of the official policies he has previously promulgated as Minister of Health, he now acts to implement immediate changes in national AIDS policies which favor

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AIDS education and prevention.

But Misalie's new insights in the public sphere of governmental bureaucratic politics are not matched by his activities in the domestic sphere. Toward his wife, family, and his several girlfriends his behavior is far less laudable. As her husband attempts to continue his covert extramarital affairs,

**The social realism and strong moral overtones of this book follow in the tradition of other harsh critiques of social conditions. ... The novel's title refers explicitly to the harmful silence surrounding AIDS.**

ignoring the health dangers to those with whom he is involved, it is his wife Satta who emerges as the dominant moral force of the novel. Herself free of the AIDS virus, it is she who must deal with her husband's now health-threatening liaisons with his girlfriends, one of whom turns out to be both HIV+ and pregnant. She must also confront his own impending illness and death, and the pressing problem of her own childlessness.

The social realism and strong moral overtones of this book follow in the tradition of other harsh critiques of social conditions. The Lambois predicament is grist for author Tibbie Kposowa's condemnation of official and domestic policies that maintain silence in the face of the AIDS epidemic (the novel's title refers explicitly to the harmful silence surrounding AIDS). Satta Lamboi embodies what appears to be the author's own moral views on proper domestic comportment in the face of this deadly epidemic: condemnation of extramarital sexual promiscuity and an emphasis on the need to respect the institution of marriage and to reform philandering husbands and promiscuous young single women. Moving between her home in the capital and her large network of kin in her natal village, Satta serves

as the mediator between two moral worlds: that of a morally loose and corrupting westernized urban Africa, portrayed here through the higher echelons of its government bureaucracy, and the transcendent and vital moral values embedded in traditional village practices and knowledge, especially those of the extended family and village leaders from whom Satta seeks advice and help in her distress. Highly educated yet cautiously hopeful about the diviners' predictions for her procreative future, firmly moral in her devotion to her extended family even as she recognizes the value of education and the comforts of her bourgeois world, she bridges these two worlds, and embodies the best of both.

In taking up the social cause of HIV/AIDS in sub-Saharan Africa, the author of this novel has selected an extremely urgent topic. Sub-Saharan Africa has at present an

**Sub-Saharan Africa has at present an estimated 13 million people with HIV, 65% of the total world cases, and an estimated 70% of the world's AIDS cases. And the figures are rising.**

estimated 13 million people with HIV (Human Immunodeficiency Virus), 65% of the total world cases, and an estimated 70% of the world's AIDS cases. And the figures are still rising. (1) Until recently this epidemic has been centered in Central and Southern Africa, and rates of infection have been considerably lower in West Africa. However, these numbers are now increasing, fanned by labor migration, civil war, and social unrest. AIDS is highlighted as a sexually transmitted disease (STD), and is here explicitly associated with promiscuous and illicit sexual practices. Its sufferers are portrayed not as innocent victims of external forces but as transgressors of moral boundaries, sinners who in some sense deserve their punishment, and whose appropriate responses to their sufferings are those of shame and guilt. AIDS is characterized in a manner very parallel to descriptions of syphilis, another STD epidemic, in 19th century Victorian America. Syphilis was also

introduced into bourgeois families by husbands' promiscuous heterosexual activities. Deliberately concealing knowledge of their infectious conditions from their wives, they went on to infect them as well and through fetal contact, their children. Women and children were thus the ultimate risk population associated with this social pattern of syphilis transmission, with results severe enough to greatly exacerbate concerns over the falling birthrate in these dominant sectors. (2) If *Silence That Is Not Golden* stops short of dramatizing this ultimate threat in its West African setting, its implications are clear, and are juxtaposed against the female characters' intense concerns with having children. The novel thus highlights the pattern of AIDS prevalent in sub-Saharan Africa: its heterosexual transmission, and equal rates of incidence and risk among women and men. It presents a striking contrast to fictional dramatizations of AIDS in the U.S., which in parallel fashion emphasize and reflect its contrastive, homosexual locus and greater risk for men.

In the absence of any cure, the modification of sexual behavior has long been viewed as the only way of controlling the spread of AIDS, and this invites its commentators to introduce their own

**(The novel) presents a striking contrast to fictional dramatizations of AIDS in the U.S., which in parallel fashion emphasize and reflect its contrastive, homosexual locus and greater risk for men.**

corrective moralities. Mr. Kposowa is no exception. In matters of sexuality, the novel presents somewhat conventional stereotypes of gender: men tend to be weak and tempted by the flesh; women are either moral protectors of family, and potential victims of AIDS, or they are promiscuous, and as such are the ultimate repositories and carriers of the HIV/AIDS virus. The author's logical resolution of this view of the dangers of AIDS is to advocate the restriction of sexual activity to the institution of marriage, and

the book implicitly does advocate this. Given the presence of polygyny and the acceptance of premarital and extramarital sexual liaisons in many African societies, however, such restrictive sexual morality may by itself be of questionable efficacy as a model for changing behavioral patterns to reduce the risk of AIDS. One of the few success

**The plot of this novel is well developed and engaging, though at times the moral message seems a bit heavy handed and the writing, especially the dialogue, somewhat stilted.**

stories in reducing new cases of HIV/AIDS in Africa comes from Uganda, until recently one of the most AIDS-ridden countries in the world, with rates of infection that soared during the late 1980s. This led to an intensive national level AIDS prevention campaign directed to young people at highest risk, which promoted abstinence, monogamy or condom use, and emphasized the need for fidelity within sexual relationships, rather than within marriage. Young couples deciding to form such relationships were urged to go together for HIV testing, to use condoms, and to promise fidelity for the duration of the relationship. Recent studies indicate a dramatic reduction in rates of infection over the past five years. (3) In his portrayal of the dangers of AIDS, the author has also chosen to emphasize its impact on an urban elite. Locating the bearers of AIDS so centrally within this sector allows for a discussion of AIDS within the corridors of power, and points to the crucial role of the state in providing overall direction for national AIDS policy. Yet it also replicates the greater publicity that has attended cases of AIDS among those in power, in Africa as elsewhere, and neglects the fact that the great majority of AIDS cases in that continent and in the world occur among the poor, rural as well as urban. It seems significant, for example, that in the several scenes in the novel set in Satta's natal rural village, where her husband's AIDS is the catalyst for the topics discussed, there is no mention either of the presence of, or of knowledge



about AIDS.

Tragically, as well, the author's emphasis on the need for state action in instituting AIDS health education and prevention programs rests on an unquestioned assumption of the stability of state power. The recent military coup which has destabilized Sierra Leone, as well as the lingering civil war in neighboring Liberia and widespread instability throughout the continent raise far grimmer spectres for the spread of AIDS and a welter of other epidemics in the absence of any form of state control. AIDS thrives on the conditions that favor multiple casual sexual contacts such as those afforded by wartime conditions: deterritorialized populations and movements of refugees within and across state borders, the presence of foreign soldiers, the frequency of rape. (4) Moreover, levels of poverty, disease, and malnutrition drastically reduce immune system response to HIV and increase the instance and speed of its opportune infections. The rapid spread of HIV/AIDS among the sexually active members of populations carries away those of productive and reproductive capabilities, and intensifies the demographic patterns established by warfare, of remnant populations composed mainly of the very old and the very young.

Mr. Kposowa, who holds several degrees and a long residency in the U.S., is currently working in the field of education. His concern with publicizing the high risk of AIDS in his homeland by putting it at the center of a fictional account is a very important one. The plot of this novel is well developed and engaging, though at times the moral message seems a bit heavy handed and the writing, especially the dialogue, somewhat stilted. But the book foregrounds the urgent issue of AIDS in sub-Saharan Africa, provides a thoughtful critique of current policies and attitudes toward this epidemic, and suggests alternative courses of action. I for one hope that this novelistic portrayal, and others like it, will increase awareness among educated Africans and Africanists about these issues, and lead to greater concern and action in combating the AIDS epidemic.

Diana Brown  
Bard College

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David F. Lancy's book focuses on the processes by which Kpelle children become adults. He says the fieldwork for the book began about 30 years ago when he joined the research team of Michael Cole and John Gay in their study of Kpelle children in the American-style elementary schools around Cuttington College in Bong County, Liberia.

In the first chapter, Lancy sets out his methods and approach as an experimental psychologist who has metamorphosed into an anthropologist.

In the second chapter, he reviews the literature on child development, highlighting the differences between the U. S. "child centered" perspective and the Kpelle "children as economic assets" perspective and Jean Piaget and Lev Vygotsky's child development models.

In chapter 3, he focuses on Kpelle culture as it has been documented by U. S. scholars since the 1950s and introduces the reader to his research site, Gbarngasuakwelle, a Kpelle town of 160 houses, located four miles from the Guinea border.

The next seven chapters focus on Kpelle work; parents, children, and make believe; games and models; dances, songs, stories, proverbs, and the acquisition of values; children's work; apprenticeship and bush school as formal education; and the *kwii* way.

Professor Lancy presents a sophisticated, theoretical perspective and approach which attempts to promote a more "universal understanding" of child development by using his Kpelle study as a counterweight against the bias use of Euro-American norms. The book succeeds in several ways by using photographs, diagrams and tables to illustrate findings and inferences

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about Kpelle cultural routines; it gives an in-depth examination and documentation of children playing on the "Mother-Ground" (play area) in Kpelle culture; and it explores the modern, *kwii*, impact on this agrarian society. The author is very careful in buttressing his own findings with the support from the literature on cross-cultural studies in other parts of Africa and on other continents.

Through photographs, diagrams, and personal accounts, Professor Lancy is able to demonstrate the impact of work (rice farming), games, folklore, adult-children interactions, and formal education on the early development of the Kpelle and other

**Professor Lancy presents a sophisticated theoretical perspective and approach which attempts to promote a more "universal understanding" of child development by using his Kpelle study as a counterweight against the bias use of Euro-American norms.**

agrarian people. The author uses about four chapters to illustrate how Kpelle children use observation and self-directed play on the "Mother-Ground" to develop skills and knowledge in becoming competent Kpelle adults. Additionally, the author explored the introduction of American-style schools, books, games, and technology into Kpelle culture. He characterized this as the "*kwii* way." Most of his findings are supported by the works of other scholars and his work in Papua, New Guinea.

The greatest weakness of this book is its reliance on Euro-American traditions and standards of empirical research. Very little critique was made of Euro-American methodology and the validity of past findings on African societies like the Kpelle. For example, Professor Lancy sees U.S. mainstream culture as "child centered" and sees Kpelle culture and other agrarian societies as cultures where children are viewed primarily as

“economic assets.” My understanding of African psychology suggests just the opposite view. Many African proverbs suggest “without children the world would come to an end.” This seems to reflect a Euro-American bias in the literatures in child psychology, anthropology, and African Studies which tends to project a materialistic epistemology and American values on African cultures. Many critics like Edward W. Blyden, Molefi K. Asante and Harry C. Triandis have pointed out that African Studies, psychology and anthropology as disciplines in Europe and America have been made tools to support the oppression of non-Western cultures and the worship of materialism, modernization, and Western empiricism.

The American ethnocentrism that is widespread in the psychological and anthropological literature has for decades been promoted as scientific and empirical. In Professor Lancy's work, I found little critique or challenge to

**The greatest weakness of this book is its reliance on Euro-American traditions and standards of empirical research. ... This work does not break any new ground of universal understanding or challenge Eurocentric ways of viewing African people.**

the longstanding Euro-American methodologies and findings on Africa and other non-Western societies. This work does not break any new ground of universal understanding or challenge Eurocentric ways of viewing African people. The inner workings of African cultures, symbolism and cosmic knowledge are reduced to materialistic conceptions and statistical indices in this work. The deep structures and spiritual essence of Kpelle culture were discounted and marginalized to promote Euro-American scientific and economic realities.

This book is also largely silent on the transformation of Kpelle society since 1980 with the fall of the First (Liberian) Republic and the

recent disruption of Kpelle society by the Liberian Civil War and the fall of the Second Republic. This shortcoming may be due to the civil conflict ruling out any further study of Gbarngasuakwelle by Professor Lancy. This issue should have been dealt with in discussing the findings because this may have better explained some of the limitations of the study.

What roles have Euro-American missionaries and scholars like Professor Lancy played in preserving Kpelle society and preventing the death and traumatization of Liberian children? How can the documentation of African cultural routines contribute to better African children development? These are questions that I expected to be addressed in this cross-cultural study of human development. Instead the author concludes the book by advocating the use of cheap and reliable contraception as a way of checking population growth in rural Liberia. Is overpopulation in rural Africa really a major development problem or is this only a strategic problem from the perspective of Euro-Americans? This and other already mentioned shortcomings are not only present in this work but most of the cross-cultural studies this reviewer has read on Africa and Asia. African and Asian fertility is viewed as a serious strategic problem for the West. As we approach the 21st century, this reviewer hopes that cross-cultural research teams would be more inclusive of African and Asian social scientists and their views as a counterweight against the Euro-American history of racism and use of science to promote white racial superiority.

In spite of these weaknesses, this book is valuable because it documents the experiences and routines of African children which are rapidly disappearing in societies where children have been forced to become soldiers, political activists and veterans of war before their puberty. Professor Lancy's work will prove valuable to anyone wanting to study Kpelle culture or African child development.

Boikai S. Twe  
Sinclair Community College

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**Liberian Studies Association Business Meeting  
Saturday, April 5, 1997, Prairie View A & M University  
Dr. Walter Wiles, Presiding**

President **Walter Wiles** called the meeting to order. He reminded all of those members present to pay their dues before they can vote. He added that it was extremely important that all try to recruit new members; the well being of the Liberian Studies Association (LSA) depends on bringing in new members, since the numbers have been dwindling for the last couple of years. President **Wiles** suggested that each member of the Association should try to bring in at least one new membership--i.e., either an institutional subscriber or a person. Recruiting efforts could also be concentrated on Liberians, Liberianists and friends of Liberia.

Secretary-Treasurer **Arnold Odio** then read the minutes from the 28th Annual Convention Business Meeting held at Southern University in Baton Rouge, Louisiana, in April 1996. **Alpha Bah** moved that the minutes be accepted. Seconded by **Timothy Rainey**, the minutes were accepted as presented by the Secretary-Treasurer. President **Wiles** then asked for reports from the different committees.

**Book Committee:** **David Hartsfield**, Chairperson, requested that the composition of the committee be revisited, given the inactivity of some members. **Dianne Oyler**, who had successfully sent books to Liberia in a previous year, was asked to join the committee. She accepted.

**Bokai Twe** then reported of efforts by the **All Liberian Conference** to transport educational materials to Liberia. He suggested that LSA could send the many books it had collected throughout the years to Syracuse, New York, to be added to the All Liberian Conference shipment. Dr. **Twe**, however, could not say whether the books could be assigned to a particular institution of higher learning or a specific group in Liberia. He proposed that LSA designate the recipients of the books on each package so that they

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could be allocated upon arrival.

**Charles Wolo** added that in the Southwest area of Texas, friends of Liberia wanted to send educational materials to Liberia free of charge to the country. LSA, he added, could take advantage of such an offer.

The Secretary Treasurer referred to the problem of coordinating the collection of books already stored in different geographical areas, especially those books and journals stored with different members of LSA. **David. Hartsfield** and Dr. **Schmidt** have many books waiting for eventual shipment to Liberia. **Elwood Dunn** requested that the committee try to come up with a solution. He added that Dr. **Schmidt** was now at the University of Nebraska and that she should be contacted by the committee. Dr. **Dunn** also expressed concern about the financing of the transportation of LSA books to Syracuse for shipment to Liberia, since LSA funds are limited. Concerning the question of whom will receive the books and educational materials in Liberia, Dr. **Dunn** proposed Dr. **Melvin Mason** as a possible, responsible recipient, given his association with **Cuttington University College**.

The President of LSA inquired of the shipment date of the All Liberian Conference. Dr. **Twe** reported that perhaps in a couple of months the Syracuse books will be ready for shipping. Dr. **Wiles** added that the LSA Executive Committee should be responsible for identifying financial resources for transporting the books. Counselor **Varney Sherman**, a graduate of Cuttington University College who had worked with Dr. **Mason**, was suggested as another recipient for the books when they arrive in Liberia.

Dr. **Oyler** suggested that the US military (Navy) could be used as a reliable and cheaper means of transporting books to Liberia. She referred to the **Jeremy-Denton Amendment** which makes it possible to send educational materials to other countries via military transport. She indicated that only the "paper work" is the major obstacle for this avenue of transportation. Dr. **Dunn** asked Dr. **Oyler** to provide written information about the procedure to the Book Committee.

**Alpha Bah** suggested a reconstitution of the Book Committee which

would include some of the members present and called for volunteers to work with **David Hartsfield**, Chair of the committee. The President then charged the Book Committee with finding a quick solution.

**Membership Committee:** **Doris Railey**, Chairwoman, was not able to attend the Business Meeting. The President suggested that the committee continues to exist with **Doris Railey** as Chairwoman, the committee's mission being to intensify the membership drive.

**Elwood Dunn** proposed that heads of Liberian organizations be contacted and requested to promote membership in LSA among Liberian academicians.

President **Wiles** referred to **Charles and Dwedor Ford's** earlier inquiry about a data bank of LSA members. **Charles Ford** was commissioned by the president to establish a data bank of LSA members. **Charles Ford** also intends to work on a publication of *Who's Who of Liberians in the Americas*. **Dianne Oyler** added that former members should be contacted and encouraged to renew their membership in LSA. **Augustine Konneh** indicated that more effort should be given to recruiting new members rather than concentrating on individuals who once may have been members, but who in recent years have not wanted to be affiliated with LSA.

**William Allen**, editor of the *Liberian Studies Journal* was asked to begin a membership drive via LSA-L-- the Listserve of the Association-- since many of the people who benefit from the Listserve [LSA-L@uga.cc.uga.edu] are not members of LSA.

The artist **Kijana Wiseman** suggested that former students and staff of the **American Cooperative School** be contacted for membership, especially during their upcoming reunion.

**Financial Report:** Secretary-Treasurer **Arnold Odio** presented the financial report, copies of which were distributed to members present and officers of LSA. Copies are available to members of LSA and can be

solicited from the Secretary Treasurer. Dr. **Odio** reported that in the last couple of years there has been a sharp drop in institutional subscriptions, maybe as a result of tighter library budgets. At present, research institutions are the ones subscribing. Student subscriptions have been very few. Since almost 90% of the budget for publishing the *Liberian Studies Journal* comes from subscriptions, Dr. **Odio** emphasized that it is imperative to have new membership. If the membership does not increase in the coming year, it is possible that the Association may have to cease publishing the *Liberian Studies Journal*.

President **Wiles** was congratulated for a successful 1996 LSA Meeting in Baton Rouge, Louisiana. The Conference was well attended, and it made more money than had previous conferences. However, all of the funds went to finance the conference itself and to cover its expenditures. Expenditures exceeded earnings, and, therefore, the Liberian Studies Association was not able to capitalize on the conference funds. The mailing of *LSJ* is still being done by the **United Methodist Church**, an arrangement made by the late Dr. **Tom Hendrix**. From the floor it was suggested that a "thank-you" note be sent to Mrs. **Ellen Hendrix** for continuing to manage the storage of journals in Bloomington, Illinois.

**Alpha Bah** inquired about requests for back copies of the journals in storage. Dr. **Odio** said that orders will be filled within the next year. Mrs. **Hendrix** has agreed to go into the warehouse and look for the back issues requested. Plans to move the journals to a more accessible location will also be concluded before the 1997 Annual Meeting of the Association. Dr. **Odio** and Dr. **Twe** referred to their plan next summer (1997) to travel to Bloomington in order to move the journals. **Elwood Dunn** mentioned the **Svend Holsoe Collection** at Indiana University, Bloomington, Indiana, as a possible storage location for the LSA journals. **Romeo Phillips** indicated that **Ruth Stone**, the person responsible for the **Holsoe Collection**, may be the appropriate person to approach on the question of storage.

**Report of the Editor of the *Liberian Studies Journal*: William Allen** thanked all those who have contributed to the journal in the last year. He

thanked the editorial staff for their wholehearted support, especially **Similih Cordon**, **Yekutieli Gershoni**, **Bertha Azango** and **Augustine Konneh**. He also asked paper presenters at LSA 1997 to consider publishing their works in the upcoming volumes of the journal.

Dr. **Allen** referred to the change in the cover of *LSJ* XXI:2, which is dedicated to **Edward Wilmot Blyden**. He also thanked **Boikai Twe** for his thought-provoking article on **Blyden**.

The editor extended an invitation to the reading public for comments to the articles in the journal. He emphasized that the editorial staff of the journal welcomes articles from the natural sciences as well as the humanities. The reason that not many articles from these disciplines are published in the *LSJ* is that scholars in those areas are not submitting manuscripts; persons in those areas are encouraged to submit papers. Dr. **Allen** urged members of LSA to encourage their institutions to subscribe to the journal. He also requested that people renew their subscriptions on time.

The editor indicated that the upcoming issue, Volume XXII:1, will be a special issue commemorating the 150th celebration of the founding of Liberia. Specific individuals have been asked to submit articles for this particular issue.

Dr. **Allen** reiterated his desire to serve only one term--three years--as editor. He indicated that at LSA 1998 in Atlanta a new editor should be elected who will take office eight months later. Dr. **Bah** inquired of the reasons for the editor's decision to hand over only after three years. Dr. **Allen** said his initial commitment was to serve for only three years and expressed his intention to pursue other career objectives.

**Yekutieli Gershoni** recommended the Listserve "**H-Africa**" to members and proposed that the *LSJ*'s contents be disseminated through this Listserve also. The Listserve gives the contents of several journals on Africa, and it reaches many scholars studying Africa. Dr. **Allen**, offered to pursue this source through the State University of New York in Binghamton where LSA member **Gordon Thomasson** is a professor.

President **Wiles** thanked Dr. **Allen** for his editorial services and then spoke about **Prairie View A & M University**'s historical relationship with

Liberia, especially to the many cooperative educational and developmental projects between the university and Liberia.

Moving on to other business, the president said that at the last board meeting held in Atlanta on October 26, 1997, it had been suggested that **LSA-2000**, the 32nd Annual Meeting of LSA, be held in Liberia. **Elwood Dunn** added that indeed **LSA-2000** should be held in Liberia, but only if Liberia has a "legitimate and elected government" by then. **Romeo Phillips** suggested that the planning for the proposed **LSA-2000** be conducted with cautious optimism, given the political realities. **Kijani Wiseman** indicated that three years of planning is realistic, given the political uncertainties in Liberia. **Cyril Broderick** suggested that the commitment of LSA to hold **LSA-2000** in Liberia should include the phrase "so long as it is feasible," rather than the one offered earlier. The members accepted the revision to the phrase and agreed to have **LSA-2000** in Liberia, "so long as it is feasible."

President **Wiles** asked for suggestions and then recommended the following persons to compose a planning committee for **LSA-2000**: **Elwood Dunn** [Chairman], **William Allen**, **Gloria Braxton**, **Beverly Bruce**, **Ciyata Coleman**, **Melvin Mason**, **Dianne Oyler**, **Peter Severeid**, **Boikai Twe**, and **Walter Wiles**.

**Ciyata Coleman** informed the Association that the Division of Academic Affairs of **Morris Brown College** had agreed to host the next annual conference, **LSA-1998**.

**Election of Officers:** **Timothy Rainey** was elected to succeed **Doris Railey** as the member-at-large on the **Board of Directors** of LSA.

**Dianne Oyler** was nominated by **Ciyata Coleman** to succeed **Arnold Odio** as Secretary Treasurer of the LSA. **Romeo Phillips** moved that this nomination be unanimous and **Dianne Oyler** was elected unanimously as Secretary Treasurer of LSA.

President **Walter Wiles** thanked **Arnold Odio** for the many years of relentless services to LSA. **Elwood Dunn** suggested that a more appropriate manner of expressing the Association's thanks to **Arnold Odio** be done, and the President agreed that such an expression of thanks be done

at an appropriate time.

**Arnold Odio**, commenting on his tenure of service as Secretary Treasurer, said that he “loved it and hated it.” He loved the people who made up the LSA and the many good works the association has accomplished, but hated crunching the numbers. **Dianne Oyler** added that Arnold’s would be a hard act to follow, but that she would do her best to carry out the tasks and would work hard to make **LSA-2000** in Liberia possible.

**Alpha Bah** nominated **Massala Prince Reffell** as President. Given the tradition of electing the conference chairperson as the next president, chairman **Reffell** was elected unanimously.

**Walter Wiles**, now the outgoing president, turned his gavel over to President **Reffell**, thanked all the members for their support, and promised to continue to help the association carry out its plans.

**New Business:** Newly elected President **Reffell** said he would have preferred being in the background, but given the changes of the times, he promised to work hard to further the goals of the Association.

**George Kieh** spoke of rethinking the structure of LSA. He commented on the need for our professional organization to have a conference committee composed not only of members from the locale where the conference is being hosted, but of other relevant individuals who would review all papers submitted and also the conference’s general theme. Such a committee should be composed of individuals from a variety of disciplines. Dr. **Kieh** also challenged the procedure for electing the president; always, the host of the conference automatically becomes the next president. Dr. **Kieh** offered to prepare a written proposal to be submitted for consideration at the next meeting of LSA in Atlanta.

**William Allen** suggested that if the automatic presidency is indeed constitutional, the members could suspend that part of the constitution if there is a quorum. **Arnold Odio** suggested that, as requested, a conference committee be appointed in collaboration with the hosting institution. Such a committee can be composed of individuals from a variety of disciplines.

Given the tradition of electing as vice president a person from the institution which will host the forthcoming LSA meeting, **Ciyata Coleman** of **Morris Brown College** in Atlanta (LSA-1998) was elected unanimously as vice president of LSA.

**Arnold Odio** referred again to the problem of the accessibility of the *LSJ*, and Secretary-Treasurer **Oyler** promised to inquire of **Minot State University** if storing the journals there is possible. **William Allen** offered Spartanburg, South Carolina, if **Dianne Oyler** could not get storage space in Minot, North Dakota.

Having completed the agenda, President **Reffell** closed the meeting and the members adjourned.

Respectfully Submitted,

Ciyata Dinah Coleman, Vice President  
Arnold Odio, Secretary-Treasurer



**Obituary**  
**Clarence Ernest Zamba Liberty**  
**December 2, 1943-October 22, 1997**

Clarence Ernest Zamba Liberty was a scholar, a serious scholar of the history of the Liberian state. For those who will follow him in articulating the nature of the Liberian state through its many evolutionary phases, he has left a legacy perhaps unparalleled since the independence of Liberia more than one hundred and fifty years ago.

The deceased was born December 2, 1943, to the union of the late Senator Ernest Liberty and Elizabeth Reeves Liberty in Fortsville, Grand Bassa County, Liberia. He was raised in Monrovia and parts of the old Western Province (now Lofa County) where his father was at various times District and Provincial Commissioner. He developed an affinity for that part of the country and he imbibed much of its rich cultural heritage.

His formal education effectively began at the Wilson Afternoon Primary School in Monrovia which he attended between 1952 and 1954, and was continued at the Monrovia Demonstration Elementary School where he completed his elementary education in 1956. His special talents became apparent at this early age as he was drawn to participation in school plays and newspaper editing. Dr. Liberty was a soccer enthusiast.

At a tender age, he was introduced to the Christian faith as he followed his parents, first to the Providence Baptist Church in Monrovia, and then to the First Methodist Church, also in Monrovia. He participated in a variety of religious and youth programs.

In 1957, young Liberty was enrolled at the College of West Africa (CWA), a leading secondary school in Monrovia operated by the Methodist

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Church. CWA would horn his talents, and he would shine in this academically challenging environment and go on to further achievements. While at CWA, the deceased was on the honor roll from the sophomore through his senior year, was a member of CWA's delegation to a model United Nations General Assembly in 1959, represented CWA on a national Radio Quiz Team in 1959, was a junior class president, was a member of CWS's Hi-Y Club and its representative on the national delegation to the World Assembly of the Hi-Y Clubs in Hilversum, The Netherlands, August 1960. He was the president of the CWA Sports Association.

Upon graduation from high school in 1960, the deceased matriculated to Cuttington College and Divinity School in Suakoko, Bong County, Liberia where he remained only between February and July 1961. This was so because he became the proud recipient of a grant from the African Scholarship Program for American Universities (ASPAU). This enabled him to enroll in the fall of 1961 at Ohio Wesleyan University in Delaware, Ohio. Four years later, he was graduated with a B.A. degree in history. The years at Wesleyan were events-packed-- membership on the soccer team, dramas, editing the student literary magazine, *The Owl*, and serving a term as president of the foreign students association.

Another event in 1964 would eclipse all of the forgoing as the deceased was united in holy matrimony December 22 of that year to Doris Moore whom he often told his friends was his high school sweetheart. Four lovely children would issue from this union.

Dr. Liberty was then off to the prestigious Stanford University in 1965 to initiate his graduate education. After years of diligence and hard work, he was awarded the M.A. degree in history in 1966, and the Ph.D. degree in African history in 1977. He wrote a brilliant doctoral dissertation titled, "Growth of the Liberian State: An Analysis of Its Historiography." While at Stanford, he was active in the African Students Association (1965-1968), initiated the first issue of *Journal of New African Literature*, and was

a co-founder in 1968/69 at Stanford of the Liberian Studies Association and its journal, the *Liberian Studies Journal*. The Association and the *Journal*, in continuous operation since then, have become the mainstay of scholarly exchanges and publication on Liberia, Africa's oldest republic.

Upon the completion of the residency requirements for his doctoral degree at Stanford, Dr. Liberty returned home in 1971 and joined the faculty of the University of Liberia as an assistant professor of history. In 1972, he chaired the history subcommittee of the National Sesquicentennial Committee of Liberia. In the same year, he was appointed Dean of Liberia College where he served for two years. As the University reorganized for further development, a process in which the deceased played a prominent role, serving as chair of the Reorganization Committee and the Special Curriculum Committee, Dr. Liberty became Vice President for Academic Affairs (1974-1975), and then Vice President for Administration (the number-two position in the institution) from 1975 through 1981.

He was, at the University, an outstanding scholar and a shrewd and effective administrator. At the helm with University of Liberia President, Dr. Mary Antoinette Brown Sherman, when the University and the nation were struggling with the challenge of change, the deceased was very much a part of those history-making events. He would reflect upon the national scope of those events in two seminal pieces. One published in 1987, and the other completed only a few days before his death.

The years at the University also saw the deceased represent the institution on the board of the United States Cultural and Educational Foundation in Liberia (1973-1975); the Advisory Education Committee of the Mano River Union (1973-1975); the Association of African Universities, Ibadan, Nigeria, 1975; the National Delegation to UNESCO meeting in Lagos, Nigeria, and Paris, France, 1975-1980; and the University of Liberia Special Development Committee, 1974-1977.

In the wake of the April 12, 1980, military coup d'etat that brought down the Tolbert government in Liberia, the deceased found himself in a career shift. He was appointed by the military government as Liberia's Ambassador to the then-Federal Republic of Germany, with concurrent accreditation to the Federal Republic of Austria, the United Nations Industrial Development Board, and the International Atomic Energy Agency, with residence in Bonn, the German capital. Serving from 1981 through 1985, he was, during his tenure, a member of the Group of African Ambassadors in Germany, and in 1984 an Executive Committee member of UNIDO's Industrial Development Board.

Upon termination of service as Liberia's envoy, Dr. Liberty came to the United States with his family, and returned to his alma mater, Stanford University, where he served as visiting professor from 1985-1987. In 1987, he was invited to Marquette University here in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, where he would serve another two years as visiting professor through 1989.

Though the last seven years of his life were punctuated by periods of ill health, he remained active in scholarship and deeply involved with Liberia's agony especially since the initiation of the devastating civil war. The emotional scars in time took their toll. He was able, in the last weeks of his life to complete the sequel of his first reflections on the Liberian crisis. The first article, "Report From Musardu (Letter to an American Friend): Reflections on the Liberian Crisis," was published in the *Liberian Studies Journal* in 1987. He began the piece in his characteristic style:

Sometime in May a friend asked me to describe the political situation presently obtaining in Liberia and what I could offer as a practical solution in the present impasse if somehow the military factor ceased to be paramount. I tossed the idea about and finally decided on the device of an open letter to an American friend as a means of attempting an answer to a quite complex problem. What follows is that construct . . .

The sequel, a 40-page manuscript which he completed virtually hours

before his death and therefore remains unpublished, is titled "Butuo: A Lilliputian Testament to a Struggle-- The NPFL Journal of State Power: How Charles Taylor Upset the Bowl of Rice and Took Home the Whole Hog . . ." Again, employing the device of a letter, he began:

Dear Martin: A decade has elapsed since our last communication. So much water has gone under the bridge that I sometimes wonder if any is left upstream. If you are like a few acquaintances of mine, you probably wish you had never heard about Liberia, more or less spent so much time trying to make it intelligible to your associates and your countrymen. As you already know, two individuals dominated information about Liberia over the past decade: Samuel Kanyon Doe and Charles Dahnkpanah Ghankay Taylor. The first was your potato greens, the second *kay-tay-lay*. This bit of writing is about the second. It is an attempt to bring some balance to the portrait by the media about Liberia since the Civil War erupted. Some will read the account presented here and dismiss it. They should think again. Otherwise they could end up gyrating wildly around like live chickens whose heads had suddenly been excised from their bodies . . ."

Dr. Liberty wrote poetry and scores of other articles, among them "The Decline of the Dey." The latter was presented at a conference on social research in Liberia held at Stanford University in 1969.

Clarence Ernest Zamba Liberty departed this life suddenly on October 22, 1997, at his home in Glendale, Wisconsin, at the age of 54. He is survived by his wife of 33 years, Doris Moore Liberty, four children-- Clarence Ernest Zamba, Jr., Toniah Elizabeth, Bukele Duwlu, and Chidegar Montogar, a number of brothers and sisters, and a host of other relatives, colleagues and friends.

May his soul rest in peace!

**Editor's note** The Board of Directors and members of the Liberian Studies Association, the editor, staff and Editorial Advisory Board of the *Liberian Studies Journal*, extend our deepest condolences to Mrs. Liberty and all members of the Liberty family on the death of our colleague and friend.

## Position Vacancy

The Editorial Advisory Board of the *Liberian Studies Journal* invites qualified applicants to apply for the position of **Editor** of the *Liberian Studies Journal*. The editor serves a three-year term beginning April 1, 1997.

### Qualification:

- Membership in the Liberian Studies Association for at least two years;
- Knowledge of, and an interest in topics on social, political, economic, humanistic, scientific and other issues about Liberia or with implications for Liberia;
- Commitment to publishing a balanced journal which covers all aspects of research about Liberia;
- An on-going interest in issues related to research and scholarship about Liberia;
- Ability to edit the work of others.

### Responsibilities:

- Oversee the editing and production of two issues of the *Liberian Studies Journal* every year;
- Serve as principal staff person on the Editorial Advisory Board;
- Serve as a member of the Board of Directors of the Liberian Studies Association;
- Supervise the work of the Book Review Editor, Associate Editor, and all staff persons, including typesetters, etc., who are associated with the production of the *Journal*;

**Requisites:**

- Affiliation with an institution of higher learning, think tank, or research institute as an academician, administrator, fellow, or in a related capacity;
- Institutional support from place of employment
  - Agreement by the institution to have the *Journal* housed there, which means that the masthead of the *Journal* will clearly state the name of the host department and the name of the institution;
  - Providing clerical support for typesetting the *Journal*;
  - An understanding that the editor will use institutional mailing resources to mail manuscripts to anonymous referees and reviewers;
  - An understanding that the editor's volume of long distance telephone calls may increase because of the need to contact reviewers, referees, and others who are associated with the publication of the *Journal*.
  - Desirable, but not required, is that the institution provides release time for the editor.

**How to Apply:** Interested candidates should send a letter of interest, curriculum vitae, and a one- to two-page Personal Statement by **January 31, 1998**, to: Dr. Dianne Oyler; Secretary-Treasurer, Liberian Studies Association; Division of Social Science; Minot State University, Box 51; Minot, North Dakota 58707.

**A decision will be announced by or at the 30th Annual LSA Conference in Atlanta, March 26-28, 1998.**

**Below is a listing of Who's Who in Liberia based on the last General Election held on July 19, 1997, and recent Cabinet-level and other key appointments in government**

**Members of the House of Senate  
Liberian National Legislature**

**Bomi County:** J. Soko Brown, NPP and Mohammed M. Dukuly, NPP.  
**Bong County:** Francis Y. Garlawolu, NPP and Richard K. Flomo, NPP.  
**Grand Bassa County:** Charles W. Brumskine, NPP (President Pro Tempore) and J. D. Baryogar Junius, UP. **Grand Cape Mount County:** John D. Gray, NPP and (Member To be named), ALCOP. **Grand Gedeh County:** Peter N. Fineboy, NPP and J. Nathaniel Williams, NPP. **Grand Kru County:** Thomas N. Nimely, NPP and Nimene Beatrice Sherman, UP. **Lofa County:** Eddington A. Varmah, NPP and Kekura Bayoh Kpoto, NPP. **Margibi County:** Bedell S. Fahn, NPP and Abraham G. Smith, NPP. **Maryland County:** Willie D. Garland, NPP and James Larmouth Cox, Sr., UP. **Montserrado County:** Grace B. Minor, NPP and Evelyn Diggs Townsend, NPP. **Nimba County:** George G. Koukou, Sr., NPP and Margaret Karmah, NPP. **Rivercess County:** James H. Tukpah, NPP and (Member to be named), ALCOP. **Sinoe County:** Harrison Sleweon, NPP and Myrtle C. Gibson, NPP.

**Members of the House of Representatives  
Liberian National Legislature**

**Bomi County:** Sando Dazoe Johnson, NPP; Sam F. Massally, NPP.  
**Bong County:** Joseph Cornorma, UP; G. Patrick Wesseh Williams, NPP; Francis Kpangba, ALCOP; James Y. Kpanbgai, NPP; M. Flomo Juasemei, NPP; Mertin F. Kerkula, NPP; M. Lawrence Goelon, Sr., NPP.  
**Grand Bassa County:** W. Shadrach Artis, Sr., NPP; Alexander R. Robinson, UP; Wilmot Howard, NPP; M. Nahndi Barsi-Giah, Sr., NPP; John S. Cee, NPP. **Grand Cape Mount County:** Momolu Abel Massaley,



NPP; Bokai R. Sambolla, NPP; James K. Momo, NPP; Mohammed Momolu Kiawu, NPP. **Grand Gedeh County:** John D. Beh, LAP; William S. Karyee, NPP; William Uti Youlo, NPP; A. Saygbegee Davis, NPP; Anthony P. Wuo, Sr., NPP; (Member to be named). **Grand Kru County:** Jonah Wreh, NPP; Nyudueh Morkonmana, NPP. **Lofa County:** Stanley S. Kparkillen, NPP; Francis Garbo, NPP; Philip Saa Tali, NPP; Joseph K. Kabbah, NPP; Willie Z. Varnie, NPP; Etta Boi Tellewoyon, UP; and one member to be named. **Margibi County:** Roland C. Kaine, NPP; John Chowuo, NPP. **Maryland County:** Moses Washington, NPP; Peter Hne, NPP; J. Kla Toomey, NPP. **Montserrado County:** S. Josen Fahn, NPP; Cornelius A. Porte, NPP; Benjamin G. Warner, NPP; Marie E. McIntosh, NPP; S. Kebba Freeman, NPP; Alfred Jaleh Tue, UP; Morris S. Nyei, NPP; Ben Patten, NPP; Cephus K. Dougbe, Jr., NPP and one member to be named. **Nimba County:** Alexander Dousaye, NPP; Zaiyee B. Dehkee, I, UP; Stanley A.A. Yanglay, NPP; Annie Yeanay, NPP; Isaac T. Dahn, Sr., NPP; Ellen King, NPP; Robert B.S. Tingban, NPP; and two additional members to be named. **Rivercess County:** Isaac P. Kollar, NPP; Victor M. Wilson, NPP. **Sinoe County:** B. Darlington Teah, NPP; Paul Nimene, NPP; Christian Chea, NPP; Fred Sargba Gbagbar, UP.

### **Cabinet Ministers and other Presidential Appointments The Executive Branch of the Government of Liberia**

Charles Taylor .....	President
Enoch Dogolea .....	Vice President
Sandra Howard .....	Planning
Jenkins Dunbar .....	Land, Mines & Energy
Brig. Gen. Philip Kamah .....	National Security
Dr. Roland Massaquoi .....	Agriculture
Dr. Bangali Fofana .....	Commerce
Dr. Evelyn White Kandakai .....	Education
Roosevelt Johnson .....	Rural Development
Raleigh Seekie .....	Transport

Peter Chea .....	Defense
Elias Saleeby .....	Finance
Edward Komo Sackor .....	Internal Affairs
Monie R. Captan .....	Foreign Affairs
Peter Bonnah Jallah .....	Justice
Joe Mulbah .....	Information
Maxwell Kaba .....	Post & Telecom.
John T. Richardson .....	Public Works
T. Ernest Eastman .....	Presidential Affairs
Tom Woewiyu .....	Labor
Dr. Dakina .....	Health & Welfare
Charles B. Roberts, Jr. ....	M-D Lib. Telecom. Corp.
Sam Burnett .....	M-D Lib. Electricity Corp.
Benoni Urey .....	Comm., Maritime Affairs
Charles Bright .....	Governor, Nat'l Bank
Charles DeShield .....	Director, Nat'l Police
Prince Myers .....	Immigration & Nat.
Elsie Badio Dossen .....	M-D Nat'l Ports Auth.
Cyril A. Allen .....	Nat'l Investment Comm.
Bob Taylor .....	M-D Forestry Dev. Auth.
James A. A. Pierre, Jr .....	Legal Advisor to the Pres.
Reginald Goodridge .....	Press Secretary to the Pres.
John Bestman .....	Director of the Budget
Gloria Musu Scott .....	Chief Justice

**Editor's Note:** The information above is compiled from press and Internet reports, and not from the official report of the Independent Elections Commission. **ALCOP**--All Liberia Coalition Party; **LAP**-- Liberia Action Party; **NPP**--National Patriotic Party; **UP**-- Unity Party

**Address of His Excellency Charles Dahkpanah Ghankay Taylor  
President of the Republic of Liberia  
To the Fifty-Second Session of the United Nations General Assembly  
Delivered by  
H.E. Monie R. Captan  
Foreign Minister of the Republic of Liberia  
Thursday, October 2, 1997**

Mr. President,  
Mr. Secretary-General,  
Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen

At the outset, I wish to convey to you and this August Assembly, sincere greetings on behalf of the Government and People of Liberia, and in my own name. We are here today, having endured and survived a severe civil crisis of nearly a decade, through the acute consciousness of our subregion, whose empathy with Liberia's plight, created and orchestrated a mechanism to prevent us from self-destruction. And we stand no less indebted to a sea of humanitarian outreach through the International Community, most notably the European Union (EU) and the United States, but absolutely, as a living testimony to God Almighty, whose compassionate will has removed the hand of evil from the activities of our nation. Indeed, Mr. President, we are here because Liberia has stood the test of time and the full assault of hardship. Today, one added voice of a sovereign state of Africa-- and an original Charter member of this Organization-- is being heard through its constituted head of government, which we symbolize, and for which we give all glory to God.

Mr. President

It is my pleasure to congratulate you on your election to the Presidency of

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this 52nd Session of the General Assembly. To this we add our best wishes for your success in meeting the challenges of this awesome assignment. Also, it is befitting that we extend our thanks to your predecessor, His Excellency Razali Ismail, whose tenure was characterized by a resolute commitment to finding solutions to the many issues which impacted the proceedings of the 51st Session.

I wish to also seize this opportunity to commend, on behalf of the Government and people of Liberia, Secretary-General Kofi Annan. Already, he has demonstrated that he understands the problems which afflict Africa, his native continent, and that his leadership is not confined to the accomplishments which he earned as a son of Ghana. Day by day, clear glimpses are being made visible of his ability as an effective spokesman for all mankind. Permit me to also pay special honour to the former Secretary General, Dr. Boutros-Boutros Ghali, whose sense of purpose and invaluable efforts to strengthen the role of the Organization in the pursuit of international peace and security has brought benefits to mankind. We stand convinced that the patience he exercised and the many initiatives and personal commitment he injected to the search for peace and understanding during his tenure deserve appropriate commendation by this Organization.

Mr. President:

The establishment of the United Nations over five decades ago marked the beginning of a new era in international relations. The adoption of its Charter, a document of pride and durability, which Liberia helped to formulate, has instituted a working system of international cooperation. Thus, nations are resolved thereby to eradicate the scourge of war; strengthen peace through justice and international law; respect the equal rights of all nations-- large and small-- promote social progress; and protect human rights throughout the world. We wish to reaffirm our avowed faith in the United Nations, and retain the undiminished hope that this Organization will continue to be a veritable instrument for the good conduct of relations among all nation

states. In so asserting our firm commitment to its ideals, we, therefore, rededicate ourselves to its objectives. Indeed, from nearly every perspective, this Organization continues to cater to the common aspirations of the International Community. Today, with its increased image as a center for harmonization, the vision of its Charter members has expanded across its original spectrum of engagement.

Accordingly, as one of its visionaries, who actively participated in its very creation, despite our recent civil conflict and its heart rending accounts, we felt it propitious that we be personally represented at this 52nd Session, not only to reaffirm our commitment to multilateralism, but also to explore new ways of transforming our hopes for solidarity into concrete actions for peace and development; not only to make a ceremonial representation, but to add frankness to the scope of discussions for the improvement of our Organization.

On July 19, the eve of the Sesquicentennial Anniversary of our independence, the people of Liberia went to the polls and made a forthright decision for a great new beginning for democracy, representative government within a constitutional order, and for peace and prosperity in the forward march towards the 21st century. In that momentous exercise, the Liberian people demonstrated once again, as they had done throughout one hundred fifty years of survival, their resilience and unconquerable will to overcome imponderable odds, to keep alive the flame of national independence in Africa.

Jawaharlal Nehru, India's first Prime Minister, at the birth of his nation, defined independence as the moment "when an age ends, and the soul of the nation, long suppressed, finds utterance." Thus, when the tragic events of our national experience in the recent past are viewed within the context of historical inevitability, we can safely say that the elections of July 19, 1997 have given rise to a newly liberated soul of the Liberian Nation.

It is in this light that we see the landslide victory of July 19, 1997 as the final coming together of all of our people in a national embrace of unity to give vibrancy to the liberated national soul. The vote took place during the week of solemn celebration of 150 years since the founding of the nation. It was a vote rooted in renewed hope which concurs with what one writer refers to as "idealism suffused with a sense of ending." The people voted to end civil war and national turbulence and to begin a new era of peace, stability, democracy, responsible government and prosperity.

We have fully grasped the message of our people's verdict. Upon our Inauguration on August 2, 1997, we set out to form a government of inclusion. We have also embarked on a process of national reconciliation. We have invited all Liberians irrespective of political party affiliation, religious orientation and ethnic origin to come and join hands with us in rebuilding our country. We have assured all that our primary objective is to foster national unity as the best hope for genuine peace and progress in our country.

We have also reaffirmed the 1986 Constitution as the Organic Law of Liberia. That constitution guarantees and protects fundamental rights and freedoms of all alike. We are committed to making that sacred document work. Our Administration shall guarantee and promote the functioning of a credible and independent judiciary. We shall equally protect human rights and freedom of the press. Above all, we shall endeavor to promote intimal stability through a government of inclusion and national unity.

Our experience as a nation convinces us that the right to self-determination is a necessary prerequisite for any people to ensure national development and to play a meaningful role in the community of nations. The right to self-determination is not only limited, in our view, to liberation from external control but also to liberation from internal tyranny. It is being demonstrated time and again that it is unhealthy for external support to be tied to the survival of a particular regime rather than to the growth and development of

the nation. There is no substitute to legitimacy and good governance. Internal liberation awakens a new consciousness about peace, security, stability and conflict resolution within a society. The institutions of the market economy are strengthened and the people develop greater hope for a decent and better standard of living.

In this connection and based on our experience, Liberia shall continue to play the role of promoting regional peace and security, fostering national development through regional and sub-regional integration and promoting democratic values through institution building.

### **International Situation**

We are aware of the significant changes which are taking place, including, the increased tendency towards political pluralism and democratization, the rise in economic growth in a number of countries, the upsurge towards market economies as well as progress towards the liberalization and globalization of the world economy.

Mr. President:

The end of the Cold War has resulted in the relaxation of tension, particularly between world powers, and improved interactions among and between states. My Government must nevertheless register its grave concern that since the advent of the historic Fiftieth Anniversary of this Organization, some regional conflicts which appeared on the verge of resolution have defied settlement. We are deeply disturbed by ongoing conflicts in Africa, the Middle East, Europe and Asia. Historical evidence has shown that conflict resolution, whether in Africa or elsewhere will have negative consequences, not only for the countries directly affected, but also for their neighbors and the regions of which they are a part. Liberians know only too well the consequences of a protracted conflict and therefore urge all parties to the various conflicts to seek a negotiated settlement of their differences.

In recent times, several unfavorable developments have continued to threaten international peace and security. Presently, in the Middle East, the conflict between Israel and the Palestinian Authority percolate with accusations, charges and countercharges despite the signing of the 28th September 1995 Agreement. In spite of the fact that efforts to placate the situation are being undermined, we urge states within the region which are taking concrete steps, as well as the international community, to give more attention to ensuring that the peace process remains on course.

Within our sub-region, while we draw immense satisfaction from the fact that the Liberian crisis has finally ended and its People have achieved durable peace and stability, we lament the reality of a threatened situation which in recent times has developed in neighboring Sierra Leone. Mr. President, this matter truly leaves much to be desired, and we cannot overemphasize the fact that it is in the best interest of Liberia and its neighbors that peace is soon established in Sierra Leone and its people are reconciled.

Liberia, a member of the ECOWAS Committee of Five on Sierra Leone, is committed to a peaceful negotiated settlement of the Sierra Leonean crisis. We are of the firm conviction that it is our responsibility to ensure security and stability within our sub-region.

Notwithstanding the individual and collective efforts of African States at achieving socio-political transformation, acts of destabilization continue to pose a serious threat to these countries. That is why African countries have intensified cooperation at the regional and sub-regional levels to stem this trend. We welcome the growing cooperation between the United Nations and regional organizations in the fulfilment of Chapter Eight of the United Nations Charter and the renewed commitment to conflict resolution through preventive diplomacy, peace keeping and peace-making.

In the economic sphere, recent conscientious efforts have resulted in the



registration of positive signs in the revitalization of the global economy. This progressive trend has been taking place against the backdrop of explosive growth in world trade and private investment flows. In the meantime, developing countries have contributed thus far 70 per cent of the growth in global gross domestic product and half of the growth in world trade. Notwithstanding, the gap between developed and developing countries continues to grow, leaving many countries behind amidst positive economic progress generally occurring in the world. More importantly, official development assistance required to fill the gap in resource depletion has fallen to its lowest point in real terms during the past 23 years thereby forcing many of the world's poorest countries deeply into debt, and making it virtually impossible for them to undertake or sustain economic reforms.

This situation has affected most developing countries, particularly those in Africa which continue to experience the crippling impact of external debt, deteriorating terms of trade, decline in investment and financial flows. While we acknowledge that the development of the African continent is primarily the responsibility of its people, we hope that Africa's development will, of necessity, remain an area of concern to the international community. We commend the Secretary General for his continuing initiatives for the development of Africa. The government of Japan also deserves Africa's appreciation for helping to sensitize the international community to assist African countries overcome the negative trends which are impacting on their economies.

Closely related to the issues of development is that of the environment. Human impact on the environment has increased dramatically with unprecedented effects on mankind. Nevertheless, we remain hopeful that the growing awareness of the degradation of the environment and the need to reverse this trend will remain a priority on the global agenda. In this connection, my Government commends the holding of the recent High Level Meeting convened by the United Nations to review progress on the implementation of decisions reached on Agenda 21 since the 1992 Rio

Conference on Environment and Development.

### **Drug Trafficking and Abuse**

Mr. President

The Government of Liberia is concerned about the alarming incidents of drug trafficking and drug abuse which have already destroyed and continue to ruin countless lives. While this unfortunate development has undermined the integrity of many governments, we commend cooperative efforts between governments that have taken bold action to prevent and eradicate drug trafficking and drug abuse. We welcome the Secretary General's proposal to merge the Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice Programme and the United Nations International Drug Control Programme.

The Liberian Government is prepared to work very closely with the International Community in order to bring success to the international campaign which strives to undermine the production and trafficking of illicit drugs. We are assured in this connection that working in the framework of international cooperation, and given our commitment, we are bound to succeed in our efforts to make our world a safer place for ourselves and our children.

### **United Nations Reform**

Regarding the restructuring of the Security Council, we must recall that with the founding of this Organization, we have committed ourselves and succeeding generations to continuously preserve peace and security in our world. Let us remember that peace will be elusive in the world where social, economic and political rights are flouted. In this connection, and in view of the Security Council's primary role in the maintenance of international peace and security, its reform is of particular urgency. We note the emergence during the 51st Session of the growing consensus to restructure the Council

so as to ensure that it becomes more representative and democratic. This would encourage the advent of a greater balance between the requirements of efficiency and expansion, as well as transparency in its method of work. Moreover, with optimum utilization of the resources of those member-states that can contribute significantly to peace-keeping operations, immense successes will redound to the credit of this Organization.

Due to the far-reaching implications of the Council's decisions and actions for global peace, there have been persistent demands to expand its membership to reflect geographic balance and ensure equitable representation. Besides, of the fifteen members of the Council, five enjoy the veto power. The right of veto, we believe, is against the principle of universality and leaves the fate of our world to be decided by only a few members.

Accordingly, Liberia joins the call for expanded membership of the Council. We also request that, as the region with the single largest number of members, Africa be given two permanent seats on the Security Council. We further call for the elimination of the veto power.

Mr. President:

Liberia believes that no country or institution can prosper if it is resistant to change, the United Nations being no exception. In this connection, we share the Secretary General's decision to institute reforms in the administrative and operational aspects of the Organization. Notwithstanding, we support a reform process that does not diminish the capacity of the United Nations to perform the Charter mandated functions in the area of development, more especially that of meeting the needs of developing countries. We are therefore heartened by the Secretary General's indication that savings accrued from the exercise will be utilized to establish an economic and social development account for the sole purpose of financing development programmes launched by the United Nations. We note that \$200 million will

be saved for development by the year 2002.

### **Sanctions**

The issue of sanctions has occupied much time and energy here over the years and Liberia, like other African nations, and nations around the world, has watched sanctions succeed, and fail, as a means of encouraging change. Sanctions greatest triumph was perhaps in South Africa, where international sanctions isolated the racist apartheid regime and contributed to its eventual downfall.

But unfortunately, as we know, sanctions are not always so successful. Time and again, nations singled out for punitive sanctions have been able to circumvent the edicts of this world body and obtain the goods -- or the weapons-- they seek. Worse, the leaders of these nations, who are the real targets of the political and economic pressure sanctions are meant to deliver, often feel no pain. Sadly, it is the innocent people-- already the victims of these regimes-- who suffer the most. On balance, then, our Government is skeptical about sanctions as a tool for change. Unless universally adopted, strictly enforced, and carefully designed to achieve specific political goals, we believe that sanctions can too easily end up harming those they are designed to help.

### **Human Rights**

The Liberian Civil War, to a great extent, was a protest against the blatant disregard and violation of the rights of Liberians. At the end of seven years of civil war, the need to consolidate peace is of the highest priority to my Government. It is essential to national survival and the sustenance of our newly created democracy, that the post-war reconciliation policy be firmly grounded in developing a culture and tradition consistent with international norms of respect for basic human rights.

In furtherance of this objective, my Government has initiated a process to create by law, a National Commission on Human Rights that will operate independently, and that will investigate, document, and report cases of human rights violation. Additionally, the post of Deputy Minister for Human Rights has been created within the Ministry of Justice, with specific responsibility to ensure the protection of basic human rights.

Since its inauguration on August 2nd, our Government has taken prompt and appropriate steps that will protect the rights of all, whether citizens or aliens residing in the country. As a testimony of this commitment, some immigration officers were dismissed when they were brought down guilty for having brutalized some alleged aliens. Additionally, a private lawyer successfully filed a Writ of Habeas Corpus against the Minister of Justice, the Commissioner of Immigration and Director of Police, for detaining a number of aliens after the required forty-eight hours without a formal charge. The lawyer was awarded the verdict of the case and the aliens released.

Without a doubt, we as a Government are aware of the microscopic manner in which we are being keenly observed, both internally and externally. Accordingly, we do not intend to make pale our promise that matters relating to human rights will be kept clean and our record maintained unadulterated. As a candidate for the Presidency, we made it abundantly clear that when elected, there would be no witch-hunting. On this account, we stand to be challenged.

### **The Republic of China**

We are witnesses to the rapid growth of the global village through advancement in technology, communications and tolerance, which, too, have encouraged world peace and stability. Indeed, when the illustrious architects of this noble Organization conceived the idea, from the Dumbarton Oak Conference to the Yalta Conference-- before drawing up the United

Nations-- the world was not as it is today. From its original membership of 51 nations in 1945, the UN now has an impressive membership of some 185 nations. Out of this number 28 were admitted just since 1990, the latest being Palau, in 1994.

The parallel existence of the People's Republic of China and the Republic of China on both sides of the Taiwan Strait constitutes to my Country, a founding member of this Organization, one of the difficulties and prevailing sense of frustration still persisting on the international political scene even after the Cold War.

It is truly begging the issue to revisit the decision of the General Assembly when, on October 25, 1971, it decided through the votes of its membership, to admit the People's Republic of China as a representative, while ignoring a compromise proposal for the Republic of China to retain a seat in the General Assembly. My country, a life-long supporter for the inclusion of every nation into the United Nations system, feels that this proposal should be revisited with the view of admitting the Republic of China to the General Assembly. Quite clearly, existing global realities make it necessary and prudent for the action of 1971 to be revisited. We believe that the United Nations is the proper instrument to correct many problems of a seemingly intractable nature. We may add that this Organization is the most significant international forum for the resolution of complex crises, and that all nations who desire participation in the UN have that right. Yet in its highest sense, we believe that until reunification is achieved, the parallel participation in the United Nations of the People's Republic of China and the Republic of China would be conducive to regional security and world peace.

### **Liberia's Economy**

Mr. President:

One of the principal challenges facing Liberia at this time is the revitalization

of its economy. The past prosperity of the Liberian economy was built upon the successful development of the country's abundant natural resources and the active participation of the private sector. We also enjoyed the benefits of a lively transit trade with our neighbors. In the years of economic mismanagement and civil strife, the economy collapsed and the livelihood of ordinary people were impaired.

Bringing prosperity back to the country is an enormous challenge. We are determined that the benefits of such prosperity should reach all the people of Liberia, and not merely the privileged few. I am convinced that the private sector has a key role to play. The management of the economy must be transparent and cost-effective; the burden of external debt which we inherited needs to be addressed. A positive relationship with the International Financial Institutions is central to the success of our reconstruction program. We need an early infusion of financial resources on favorable terms to launch the post-war reconstruction programmes.

Private sector operations in rubber, timber and mining will provide jobs and earn foreign exchange for the country. We need to create a favorable climate for new investment. This means, therefore that the fiscal regime must be reformed, simplified and taxes paid to the Government. My Government has already implemented a centralization of all revenue collection under the Ministry of Finance. Our exchange rate and currency practices are being reviewed, in order to guide local and foreign investors about the transaction costs of doing business.

In managing the economy, we must make the best use of scarce resources. There is no place in the new Liberia for ineffective public corporations and a bloated civil service that are a drain on the Budget. Revenue collection is being tightened up. Expenditure strictly controlled and the Budget used as the main vehicle for prudent fiscal management and public accountability. Given our very limited resources, this will mean that many priority projects may have to wait.

Liberia's external debt, inherited from previous governments, to the International Financial Institutions, and other external creditors imposes a huge burden on my Government. We believe that the size of that burden coupled with the cost of rebuilding a shattered society, makes it essential that the international community makes special concessions.

My Government intends to manage public finances according to the high standards expected of any good government. But we cannot consolidate the transition from war to peace, unless immediate funds are available to run the machinery of government and to start-up the reintegration programs designed by donors, in consultation with our Government.

### **Conclusion**

I stand in this Great Hall of Sovereignty, before its honored representatives of independence, representing a nation which, only seventy-five days ago, underwent a free, fair and peaceful election-- perhaps, one of the most transparent elections ever held anywhere in the world. I hail from a national heritage, which more than a century and half ago, was born out of enslavement, servitude and racism; and from thence to freedom and independence; and my proud Patrimony, in its struggle to maintain its sovereignty and independence lost almost half of its territory to external powers. Indeed, I speak of a Land of Liberty that has passed through more than its share of political crucibles.

We have come, not in anger, instead, we have emerged from a stained past of self-infliction perhaps not the tallest rationale for qualification-- but our scars enable us in a rather conscripted way, to speak almost first-handedly on how we have been able to survive and keep our dignity as a sovereign State and People. We ask that you will accord us the requisite attention, while resting with the hope that the experience of conflict resolution in Liberia, the engagement of the United Nations and the International



Community, in collaboration with the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) through its peace-keeping instrument ECOMOG-- which helped restore peace and harmony to Liberia, will enlighten you on future undertakings in the arena of civil conflict.

In all candor, Mr. President, if anything of substance must be said, let us never again allow any form of human anguish to be left in isolation, no matter how meaningless it may appear in the eyes of controlling Powers. Should it not be understood that one human tear is just as painful as another, and that the entire globe is united by the same life-generating substance?

We have come to the United Nations to advocate international cooperation. Let us not close our eyes to the countless failures in the achievement of our common objectives as we enter the 21st century. Let us take note of the dangers and work together so that reason can prevail. The economic problems and social dangers the world face are immense, and we have no right to postpone solutions or open the door to conflict and instability. Strategic confrontation dominated the best minds of this century. Perhaps it is now time to turn our eyes upon ourselves, upon our peoples and our societies, to assess their condition, their moral wants, their crises, and attempt to find solutions.

To conclude, I wish to make an appeal to reach each heart, without distinction as to creed, dogma, political colors or national factions. I should like each of us to look the other in the eye and ask ourselves sincerely and frankly: Is this the world our children deserve? Will we be satisfied when, in the near future, the voice of history and of our blood summons us to judgement? The United Nations system and the entire international community will be judged on the basis of their response to these important questions.

I thank you.

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