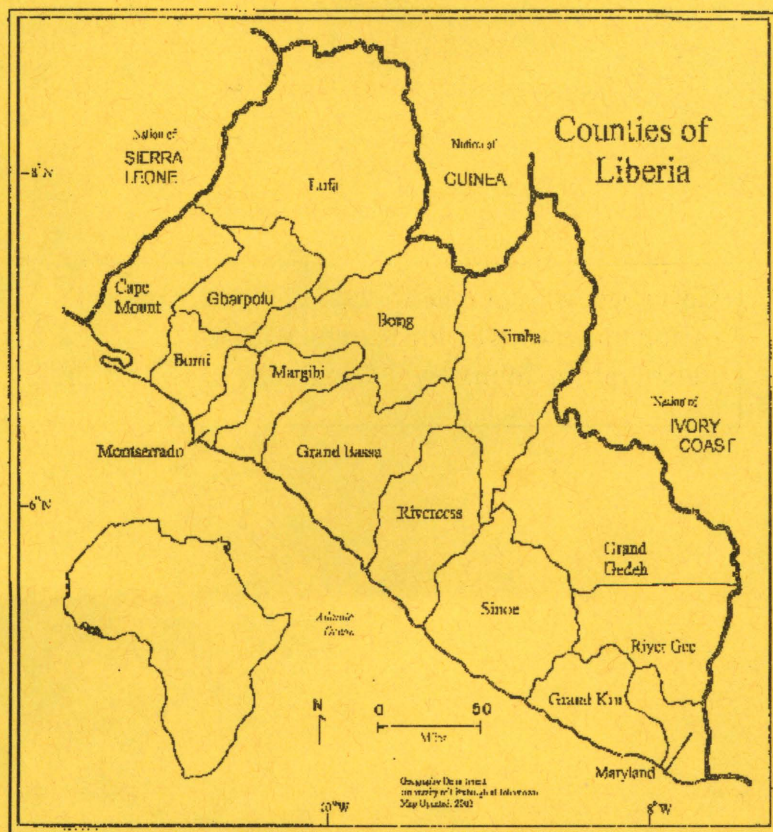


## LIBERIAN STUDIES JOURNAL



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## LIBERIAN STUDIES JOURNAL

## SPECIAL ISSUE ON "NATIONAL INTEGRATION, ELECTIONS AND DEVELOPMENT"

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## LIBERIAN STUDIES JOURNAL

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# **Introduction: Mapping the National Integration, Electoral and Development Landscape in Liberia**

**George Klay Kieh, Jr.**

## **INTRODUCTION**

The trilogy of national integration, elections and development is indispensable to state stability for several interlocking reasons. A key one is that national integration provides the medium, especially in multi-ethnic, multi-racial and multi-religious societies, through which divergent sections of the citizenry of a state can become stakeholders. Specifically, this requires various ancillaries. One is the designing of national symbols that promote national unity by reflecting the totality of the cultural and historical experiences of all of the stakeholders.

Another is the centrality of democratic elections. This is critical for two major reasons. A key one is that democratic elections serve as major form of “vertical accountability” (Linberg 2013; Relly 2012). Using the “ballot box,” citizens are able to hold their elected officials at various levels—national, regional or provincial and local—accountable by re-electing those who the electorate determines have performed well. On the other hand, the electorate is also able to punish those elected officials, whose performance they deem unsatisfactory, by not re-electing them. Further, democratic elections serve legitimation function. Democratic elections bestow on elected public officials the privilege to govern. This is important for the maintenance of political stability, because it militate against the “tugs and pulls” and the resulting conflicts over political power.

Further, socio-economic development is essential to the advancement of the material well-being of the citizens of a state. This includes the important issues of poverty and wealth, land



ownership, education, food security, and the physical infrastructure. Based on the repository of evidence, several states have imploded into conflicts, including civil wars, because of socio-economic crises (Balentine and Nitzschke 2005; Kieh 2008).

Against this background, the purpose of this article is twofold. First, the article will map out the travails of national integration, elections, economic development, food security, land ownership, education, and the physical infrastructure in Liberia. Second, the article will summarize the that articles that constitute this volume.

## **MAPPING NATIONAL INTEGRATION, ELECTIONS AND DEVELOPMENT IN LIBERIA**

### **National Integration**

National integration has been an elusive quest, since the founding of the Liberian state in 1847 (Kieh 2008; Sawyer 1992). At the core of the problem is the vision that was deposited in the emergent Liberian state. As Makua (2001:203 & 220) argues, “The state itself is a neutral passive instrumentality—a receptacle or an empty vessel.... The dominant class or political interest that captures the state makes it the public expression of their particular ... vision.” The vision of the African repatriates from the United States, who founded the Liberian state, was to establish a social formation for the members of their cultural stock and descendants. In this vein, the national symbols—anthem, flag, seal, and motto—were designed to reflect only their (the African repatriates from the United States) cultural and historical experiences. Hence, the majority, the members of the various African ethnic groups that occupied the Grain Coast, the forerunner to Liberia, and the Congos, those who were liberated from captivity en route to slavery, were excluded. For example, the “Declaration of Independence,” the framing national document, only recognized the repatriated Africans from the United States as citizens of the new country: “We the citizens of Liberia were originally inhabitants of the United States of Ameri-

ca”(Declaration of Independence of Liberia, 1847). Similarly, the motto reads: “The Love of Liberty Brought Us Here.” Building on the national symbols, the 1847 Constitution was also non-inclusive. For example, it accorded citizenship only to the repatriated Africans and their descendants (Constitution of Liberia, 1847). It took a century before the members of the African ethnic groups were granted full citizenship.

Significantly, the exclusion of the cultural and historical experiences of the various African ethnic groups from the designing of Liberia’s national symbols, as well as the constitution, exacerbated the antagonistic relations that already existed between the two poles. The genesis of the adversarial relations can be traced to the return of the repatriated Africans, and the subsequent hostile relationships they and the American Colonization Society (ACS) developed with the various African ethnic groups that were already occupying the Grain Coast (which the repatriated Africans named Liberia) (Beyan 1991; Dunn and Tarr 1988; Kieh 2008, 2012; Sawyer 1992). For example, the repatriated Africans, backed by American military might, fought several wars with various African ethnic groups over several issues, including land (Beyan 1991; Dunn and Tarr 1988; Kieh, 2008, 2012; Levitt 2005).

Having conquered the polities of the various African ethnic groups, especially those that were located in the hinterland, by 1904 the Liberian state was able to consolidate its power over the country. One of the resultant effects was the designing and promulgation of the “Barclay Plan.” The centerpiece of the plan was the subordination of the remnants of the political authority of the polities of the various African ethnic groups to the emergent centralized Liberian state, and its government (Kieh 2008; Sawyer, 1992).

Notwithstanding, the “Barclay Plan” did not address the enduring challenges of national integration, including the political and economic marginalization of the members of the various African ethnic groups. Faced with this foundational lacuna, and its

implications for national stability, the Tubman(1944-1971) and the Tolbert(1971-1980) regimes undertook various changes that were ostensibly intended to promote national integration. In the case of the Tubman regime, it implemented two major policy and organizational measures. One was the enunciation of the “National Unification and Integration Policy” in 1954. The policy was intended to be the vision for addressing the country’s vexatious problems of exclusion and marginalization. The other was the establishment of four new counties—Bong, Grand Gedeh, Lofa and Nimba. These new administrative units, which were created from the existing Central, Eastern and Western Provinces, were established so that the various African ethnic groups in these areas—Bong(mainly the Kpelle ethnic group), Grand Gedeh(mainly the Krahn ethnic group), Lofa(mainly the Belle, Gbandi, Lorma and Kissi ethnic groups), and Nmmba(mainly the Gio and Mano ethnic groups)—could have representational parity with the other ethnic groups and cultural stocks in the country. However, the Tubman regime undermined its own “National Unification and Integration Policy” when it took three divisive policy actions. First, “The Most Venerable Order of the Knighthood of the Pioneers” was established as the country’s highest award. However, the award only recognized the contributions of the repatriated Africans from the United States’ stock to Liberia, thereby neglecting the contributions of the other African cultural stocks that comprise the “Liberian mosaic”—the African ethnic groups, the Congos, the Africans, who migrated to Liberia from the Caribbean, and the Africans, who migrated to Liberia from other African countries such as Ghana, Nigeria, Sierra Leone and Togo. Second, January 7 was established as “Pioneers’ Day,” a national holiday, to honor the forefathers and foremothers of the repatriated Africans from the United States stock. Third, December 1 was established as “Matilda Newport’s Day,” a national holiday, to honor the so-called gallantry of Matilda Newport, a member of the repatriated Africans from the United States cultural stock, in defeating the military forces of some of the African ethnic groups during a

battle.

In the case of the Tolbert regime, it undertook organizational changes in the House of Representatives and the ruling True Whig Party, as well as appointed a national commission to study changing the country's national symbols. In the case of the House of Representatives, the positions of First and Second Deputy Speakers were created, with the former allotted to the "old counties" and the latter to the "new counties"(a major bastion of the various African ethnic groups." Similarly, the positions of First National Vice Chairman and Second National Vice Chairman were created in the ruling True Whig Party, with the "new counties" getting the First National Vice Chairmanship, and the "old counties" the Second National Vice Chairmanship. Clearly, these two organizational changes helped institutionalized the subordinate positions of the African ethnic groups that occupied the so-called "new counties." In addition, the Tolbert Regime appointed a National Commission on National Unity that was charged with the mandate of studying and proposing changes to the country's national symbols. However, after more than a year, the Commission only recommended two changes: 1)the changing of the motto; and 2)the changing of a line in the national anthem. However, after making the bold proclamation in his State of the Republic Address to the National Legislature in 1974 that the country's national symbols needed to be changed, President Tolbert failed to demonstrate the political will in ensuring even the modest changes in the national symbols that the commission recommended to him.

The April 12, 1980 military coup that brought Master-Sergeant Samuel Kanyon Doe and the People's Redemption Council(PRC) to power was initially greeted with estacy among various sectors of the Liberian society. One of the resulting desires was that the PRC would have led the process of redesigning Liberia's national symbols and awards, and reviewed the menu of national holidays, as integral parts of societal transformation. However, as the performances of the PRC, and subsequently the Doe "milivilian



regime”(Kesselly 1985) showed, the coup was not a revolution, but rather the replacement of one faction of the local ruling class with another(the Doe-led one). However, the PRC eliminated “Matilda Newport’s Day” as a national holiday, and sort of suspended the “Most Venerable Order of Knighthood of the Pioneer” as the highest national honor. Overall, despite the horrendous performances of the PRC and the Doe “milivilian regime”(Kesselly 1985), some of the ethnic gladiators argued that the ascendancy of the PRC and Doe to political power represented the emergence of the African ethnic groups as the dominant forces in Liberian society. Even if this claim was true, it is divisive and counter-productive to national integration. Instead of focusing on the establishment of the hegemony of one or more ethno-communal stocks, the emphasis should instead be on building an inclusive society based on mutual tolerance, mutual respect, peaceful co-existence, equity and fairness in which all Liberians, irrespective of their backgrounds, are judged on the basis of what Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. called the “contents of their character”(King 1963).

Importantly, the discussion about national integration was revived in 2003, after the end of the country’s second civil war. The emergent hope was that national integration would be an integral dimension of post-conflict peacebuilding. In this vein, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Liberia recommended, among other things, the redesigning of the country’s national symbols as a major step in the quest to promote national integration(Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Liberia 2009). About three years later, the Sirleaf regime appointed a National Symbols Review Team. However, the Sirleaf regime failed to demonstrate the requisite political will that was imperative for the success of the process.

## **Elections**

Liberia has had its share of contentious and fraudulent presidential elections, including post-election violence. First, the 1923 presidential election between the incumbent President Charles D.

B. King, the Standard Bearer of the ruling True Whig Party, and Thomas J.R. Faulkner, the candidate of the opposition People's Party, was contentious because the results were quite fraudulent. There were 6,000 eligible voters for the election (Buell 1965:714). But, the elections commission announced that the incumbent President Charles D.B. King, the candidate of the ruling True Whig Party (TWP), won 45,000 votes (Buell 1965:715). The results sparked protest from the opposition party. However, no investigations were held. Hence, the results remained, and President King was inaugurated as the President of Liberia for a second term of office.

Similarly, the results of the 1927 presidential election were even more fraudulent: the number of eligible voters was 15,000 (Brown 1941:62). However, the elections commission awarded the incumbent President Charles D. B. King, the Standard Bearer of the ruling True Whig Party (TWP), 243,000 votes, and the main opposition presidential candidate Thomas J.R. Faulkner, the Flag Bearer of the People's Party, 9,000 votes (Brown 1941:62). In fact, the Guinness Book of World Records characterized the results of the elections as the most fraudulent ever in the world (The Guinness Book of World Record 1982). The opposition candidate Faulkner protested the results of the election, but to no avail. Thus, President King was inaugurated for a third term of office.

Third, the electoral process for the 1951 presidential election was marked by contention from the beginning of the process. The initial "storm" was in June 1950, when the Tubman regime orchestrated the denial of registration to the opposition United People's Party (UPP) led by Didwhe Twe. This was followed by opposition leader's Twe's arrest on the charge of sedition, and his subsequent imprisonment (Wreh 1976). However, Twe was released to seek medical treatment in the United States. But, upon his return to Liberia, Twe was again arrested and charged with sedition for criticizing the Tubman regime while in the United States. After his release from prison, Twe joined the opposition Reformation Party,

and later became its standard bearer in the 1951 election. However, fearing that it could lose the election, the Tubman regime banned Twe from participating in the election(Kieh 2008; Wreh 1976). In addition, fearing for his life, opposition leader Twe fled to neighboring Sierra Leone(Wreh 1976). In his subsequent diatribe against opposition leader Twe, President Tubman accused him of committing the crime of treason(Wreh 1976). Similarly, the National Legislature acting at President Tubman's behest banned the opposition Reformation Party. Thus, having muzzled the opposition, President Tubman was "elected" unopposed.

Treading on the same path, the prelude to the 1955 presidential election witnessed the Tubman regime mobilizing the full battery of the state's repressive arsenal, for the purpose of suppressing political opposition. In this vein, the initial step was the contriving of a so-called "assassination plot" against President Tubman(Wreh 1976). The fake plot was used as the veneer by the Tubman regime to arrest and humiliate some of the country's prominent political figures, who were perceived as opponents of the Tubman regime(Wreh 1976). In addition, David Coleman, the national chair of one of the major opposition political parties, was murdered by the Tubman regime(Wreh 1976). Having cowed the opposition into submission, President Tubman allowed for token "competitors," former President Edwin J. Barclay, the candidate of the Independent True Whig Party, and William O. Davies-Bright, an independent candidate, to participate in the election(Kieh 2008; Wreh 1976). To add the proverbial "salt to injury," the results were manipulated by the elections commission to legitimize a fraudulent electoral process: the incumbent President Tubman was awarded 244, 873 votes, to 1,182 votes for former President Barclay, and 16 votes to Independent Candidate Davies-Bright(African Elections Database 2018).

Even with the establishment of a de facto one-party state under the aegis of the ruling True Whig Party, after the 1955 crackdown on the opposition, the Tubman regime continued to ensure that

## INTRODUCTION: MAPPING THE NATIONAL 9

the elections commission conducted fraudulent elections. In this vein, during the 1959 presidential election, the incumbent President Tubman ensured that the elections commission placed “Independent Candidate” William O. Davies-Bright on the ballot as his(Tubman’s opponent). As has been argued, this token opposition was designed to perform a legitimization function for the Tubman regime: the Tubman regime wanted to give the international community the impression that the presidential contest was “competitive.” Interestingly, the elections commission awarded President Tubman 530,566 votes, to 55 for “Independent Candidate” Bright(Kieh 2008; Wreh 1976).

To make matters worse, during the 1975 presidential election in which the incumbent President William R. Tolbert, Jr. was the only candidate, the elections commission awarded him 700,000 votes(Kieh 1988). However, the number of eligible voters was 200,000. This meant that the elections commission inflated the number of eligible voters by over 200%. Clearly, the fraud was designed to convey the impression to both the domestic and global publics that President Tolbert had the support of every registered Liberian voter.

During the first presidential election held during the post-April 12, 1980 coup era, the electoral process was manipulated by the incumbent Doe regime from the onset. First, acting under Doe’s instructions(since Doe was desirous of becoming the country’s president), the elections commission established stringent financial requirements for the registration of political parties(Kieh 2008). The purpose was to ensure that opposition political parties were not established, so as to give “CIC” Doe a clear pathway to the presidency. However, after several opposition parties—Liberian Action Party(LAP), Liberian People’s Party(LPP), Liberian Unification Party(LUP), Unity Party(UP) and United People’s Party(UPP)—were able to meet the financial requirements, Doe and his National Democratic Party(NDPL), which was registered at “the speed of light,” moved to their next option in the pantheon



of fraudulent means: LPP and UPP, the emergent political vehicles of the Movement for Justice in Africa(MOJA), and the Progressive Alliance of Liberia(PAL) respectively(the country's two most popular national social movements in the 1970s), were prohibited by the Doe regime from participating in the 1985 presidential election(Kieh 2008). The reason was that the Doe regime was quite concerned that LPP and UPP, the two most popular political parties, would derail his presidential ambition(Kieh 2008). Hence, the candidates in the 1985 presidential election were Jackson Doe(LAP), Samuel Doe(NDPL), Edward Kesselly(UP), and Gabriel Kpolleh(LUP). After the votes were counted by the elections commission, by all independent accounts, Jackson Doe of LAP won the election(Kieh 2008; Seyon 1988). However, in contravention of the Constitution of Liberia and the electoral laws, the elections commission appointed a "special counting committee," comprising of "CIC" Doe's supporters to recount the votes(Kieh 2008; Seyon 1988). Thereafter, based on the "special counting committee's" report, the elections commission announced that "CIC" Doe "won" the election with 50.9% of the votes(Seyon 1988). The opposition protested the results, but the elections commission refused to investigate the claims of fraud, including the burning of ballots cast in favor of Jackson Doe of LAP(Kieh 2008). Thus, Samuel K. Doe was inaugurated as the first president of the country's "Second Republic."

After a comparatively less contentious first round of the 2005 presidential election in which George Weah, the candidate of the Congress for Democratic Change(CDC), won the plurality of the votes with 28.3%(National Elections Commission of Liberia 2005), the announcement of the results of the run-off election was greeted with protest, including violence, by partisans and supporters of the CDC(Harris 2006). The CDC's contention was that the results of the election did not reflect the will of the Liberian voters, because based on their records(CDC), Weah won the second round election. The CDC filed a complaint with the National Elections Commission(NEC). But, NEC rejected the complaint claiming that

by all accounts, including those of the various international observers, the results were accurate. Dissatisfied with NEC's ruling, the CDC continued its public demonstrations. However, the CDC protest and the resulting political stalemate were resolved through the intervention of President Olusugen Obasanjo of Nigeria. Thus, President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf was inaugurated as the President of Liberia.

Again, during the 2011 presidential election, the CDC claimed that it won the first round of the vote(Akam and Schmall 2011). However, according to NEC, the incumbent President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf won the first round with 43.9 % of the votes, to 32.7 % for Winston Tubman, the candidate of the CDC(National Elections Commission of Liberia 2011a). Since none of the candidates won the legally required majority of the votes(51%), President Sirleaf and Counselor Tubman, the two top vote getters, were scheduled to compete in the run-off election. However, CDC filed a protest with NEC accusing the electoral management body of rigging the results of the first round in favor of the incumbent President Sirleaf(Akam and Schmall 2011; Toweh and Valdmanis 2011). Subsequently, NEC ruled that the results reflected the will of the Liberian electorate as confirmed by various international observers. Displeased with NEC's ruling, the CDC organized public protest that turned violent(Akam and Schmall 2011; Toweh and Valdmanis 2011). Thereafter, the CDC boycotted the run-off election(Toweh and Valdmanis 2011). Hence, even though CDC Flag Bearer Tubman's name was on the ballot for the second round, he, however, did not campaign since his party boycotted the election. Against this background, President Sirleaf was declared the winner of the election with 91.8% of the votes(National Elections Commission of Liberia 2011b). However, a political stalemate ensued, as CDC refused to accept the outcome of the election. Later, the political stalemate was resolved through a two-part negotiation between President Sirleaf and Counselor Tubman, and President Sirleaf and George Weah. Thereafter, President Sirleaf was inaugurated for her second term of office.

Six years thereafter, the 2017 presidential election was also contentious: after the announcement of the results of the first round in which Senator George Weah, the candidate of the CDC won the plurality of the votes with 38.4 %, to 28.8 % for the incumbent Vice President Joseph Boakai, the Standard Bearer of the UP, who placed second(National Elections Commission of Liberia 2017a). After the announcement of the results, the Liberty Party(LP), whose presidential candidate was third with 9.6% of the votes(National Elections Commission of Liberia 2017a; Reuters 2017), filed a complaint with NEC alleging the commission of various fraudulent acts by the electoral management board in favor of Senator Weah, the CDC's presidential candidate(Reuters 2017). Subsequently, UP joined LP as the co-complainant. However, in its ruling, NEC claimed that the two political parties' complaint about electoral fraud had no merit. In addition, NEC asserted that all of the international observers concluded that the first round of the election was free and fair. Dissatisfied with NEC's ruling, both LP and UP filed a complaint with the Supreme Court of Liberia(Toweh 2017). Upon receipt of the two political parties' complaints, the Supreme Court of Liberia issued an injunction against the holding of the run-off presidential election on November 8, 2017, until the country's highest court had adjudicated the case(Toweh 2017). After weeks of suspense and anxiety, the Supreme Court of Liberia ruled that the fraud alleged by LP and UP did not rise to the level that would warrant the nullification of the results of the first round of the presidential election(United Nations Mission in Liberia 2017). Thus, the country's highest court ordered NEC to conduct the run-off election. In turn, the second round took place on December 24, 2017, and CDC's Weah won with 57.1% of the votes, to 42.9% for UP's Boakai(National Elections Commission of Liberia 2017b). Thus, in January 2018, George Weah was inaugurated as the President of Liberia.

## **Socio-economic Development**

### *The economy*

Like any country, the thrust of Liberia's economic development is reflected in human development or human material well-being. This is because aggregate economic indicators such as Gross Domestic Product(GDP), Gross National Product(GNP), and economic growth rates do not reveal the state of the material well-being of the citizens of any country. In terms of the distribution of wealth, historically, the ruling class has always cornered a disproportionate share. For example, from the 1950s to the 1970s, about 4% of the country's population controlled about 60% of the national wealth(Movement for Justice in Africa 1980). Similarly, in the 1980s, about 6% of the national population owned and controlled about 70% of the national wealth(Kieh 2008). Although, no data are available for the Taylor and Sirleaf eras, the wealth gap between the ruling and subaltern classes has not been narrowed(Liberia Data Project 2018).

In terms of income, the distribution has, and remains skewed in favor of the ruling class. For example in the 1960s, about 4% of the population cornered about 75.4% of the national income(National Planning Office of Liberia 1969). However, by the 1970s, the ruling class's portion of the national wealth experienced an infinitesimal decline of less than 1%, down to 75%(Ministry of Planning and Economic Affairs of Liberia 1980). However, no data are available for the Taylor era(1997-2003). As for the Sirleaf regime, the income gap between the compradors and the subalterns was glaringly reflected in the gross inequities in the salaries of public officials and civil servants. For example, the average civil servant was paid a little over \$100.00 per month(Ministry of Finance and Development Planning 2017), while an average legislator was given a base salary of \$15,000.00 per month(Ministry of Finance and Development Planning 2017).

As for unemployment, by the end of the decade of the 1960s, about 28% of the eligible workforce in Liberia was unemployed(National Planning Office of Liberia 1970). This was troubling against the backdrop of the booming economy fueled by the

influx of foreign investors in response to the Tubman regime's "open door policy"(Kieh 2008, 2012; van der Kraaij 1983). In other words, the resulting high economic growth rates from the economic boom did not translate into the improvement of the material conditions of the subalterns. This led Clower et al(1966:v ) to refer to this era as "growth without development." Unfortunately, the succeeding regimes did not formulate and implement the requisite pro-people development policies that would have, among others, generated employment. For example, by the end of the 1970s, the unemployment rate burgeoned to about 44%(Ministry of Planning and Economic Affairs, Liberia 1980). Similarly, during the Doe regime, in 1987, unemployment stood at about 43%(Ministry of Planning and Economic Affairs, Liberia 1988). The trend continued during the Taylor and Sirleaf regimes: at the end of the Taylor regime in 2003, the rate of unemployment stood at a staggering 85%(United Nations Development Program 2006). In the same vein, in early 2018, when President Sirleaf left office, the unemployment rate was estimated at an alarming 95%(Liberia Data Project 2018).

Significantly, the confluence of inequities in wealth and income, and high rate of unemployment contributed to mass abject poverty. For example, in 1997, about 55% of the Liberian population lived on less than US \$1 a day(IRIN 2007:3). About ten years later, the rate of poverty rose to about 64%(Government of Liberia 2008:2). Further, in spite of the massive flow of development assistance during the Sirleaf regime, by early 2018, about 83% of the population lived on less than US \$1 per day(World Food Program 2018:1).

### ***Education***

Historically, the Liberian educational system has been plagued by several major challenges. A major one is the under enrollment of school eligible children. For example, in 2017, about 73% of school eligible children were not enrolled in school(World Food

Program 2018:1). This was in spite of the established government policy on compulsory education. However, the compulsory education policy was characteristically symbolic, because the various regimes that have ruled Liberia have failed to address the critical issues such as adequate number of schools, adequate and appropriate seating, adequate instructional materials, adequate logistics, qualified personnel, and adequate funding that would ensure the meaningful implementation of compulsory education.

In terms of the number of schools, there were more eligible school age children than schools to accommodate them(Kieh 2008). This means that even if all of the school eligible children in the country wanted to enroll in school, there was the woeful lack of capacity to accommodate them. Another major problem is that most of the existing schools, especially in the rural areas, do not have adequate seating for the students(Liberia Data Project 2018). In fact, some of the students sit on blocks(Liberia Data Project 2018). Similarly, there is the pervasive and enduring problem of inadequate instructional materials such as textbooks. In addition, there is the inadequacy of logistics(in some cases the lack of) such as electricity and running water. To make matters worse, there is the paucity of trained school administrators, staff and faculty. In the case of the faculty, there is the pervasive practice of teachers with limited or no training in various disciplines and subject areas teaching students(Liberia Data Project 2018). Further, the lack of adequate funding is the overarching problem, because it adversely affects the entirety of the educational process—from the provision of instructional materials to logistics.

### ***Land reform***

The land issue has been a vexatious and enduring challenge since the repatriated Africans from the United States arrived on the Grain Coast(now Liberia), beginning in the 1820s. One of the major emergent conflicts between the repatriated Africans from the United States and the various African ethnic groups revolved

around land ownership(Beyan 1991; Dunn and Tarr 1988; Kieh 2008, 2012; Sawyer 1992). At the core of the land conflicts was the fraudulent means that were used by the American Colonization Society(ACS) and the repatriated Africans from the United States to acquire land. For example, the ACS used the threat of force to acquire land from King Peter(Movement for Justice in Africa 1980). In addition, other fraudulent acts of land acquisition contributed to various wars between the ACS and the repatriated Africans, on the one hand, and various African ethnic groups, on the other(Kieh 2008; Levitt 2005).

When Liberia gained independence in 1847, the appropriate modalities were not developed and implemented to deal with the various dimensions of the land problem. For example, the issue of dual land tenure systems—customary and statutory—remained intact(Kieh 2016). In addition, the customary variant, which is based on the communal ownership of land, is subordinated to the statutory one, which is anchored on the private ownership of land. The Liberian state's failure to reconcile these two divergent land tenure systems has led to the operation of two parallel models, and the resulting confusion.

Another major problem is the skewed ownership of land: few families owned vast swaths of land, while many Liberians are dispossessed(Kieh 2016). One of the major contributing factors to this phenomenon is that some government officials used the agencies of their respective offices to engage in land grabbing, especially in the hinterland. In other words, these government officials took mainly vast areas of communal lands in violation of the ethos of collective ownership(Kieh 2016).

Also, the Liberian state has leased vast expanse of land to various multinational corporations ostensibly for the establishment of various business ventures spanning from the agricultural to the mining section. For example, in 1926, the Liberian Government leased a million acres of land to the Firestone Plantations Compa-

ny(initially an American-based multinational corporation) for 99 years. In 2004, the lease was extended by 59 years(beginning in 2026)(Kieh 2016). Importantly, hundreds of farmers were forced off their land, and vast acreage of communal lands were taken by the Liberian Government, as the kernels of the land leasing package that was awarded to Firestone(Kieh 2016). In addition, the dispossessed peasants were transformed by the Liberian Government into a army of cheap labor for Firestone(Kieh 2016). Further, during the first term of the Sirleaf regime(2006-2012), the Liberian Government mortgaged the country's land—about a third—to various multinational corporations(Center for International Conflict Resolution 2012:5-6; Kieh 2016:15; Siakor and Knight 2012:1). For example, Sime Darby, a Malaysian-based agro-multinational corporation was given a lease for 220,000 acres of land for 63 years, in the palm oil section of the agricultural sector(Ford 2012:1). Similarly, Goldern Vloreum, an American and Indonesia owned multinational corporation was given a lease for 865,000 acres for 65 years, to invest in the production of palm oil(Ford 2012:1). In order to grant these super-lucrative deals to these foreign-owned businesses, the Sirleaf regime seized vast amounts of land from local farmers in Grand Cape Mount and Sinoe Counties(Center for International Conflict Resolution 2012:5-6; Kieh 2016).

Further, there is the annoying problem of fraudulent land sale. One major form is that individuals sell land that they do not own, by, among other things, preparing fake documents, including deeds. Another is the double selling of land: a private owner of a parcel of land would sell it to two buyers. This has been a major source of land conflicts in the country.

### ***Food security***

Liberia has all of the major ingredients—vast amounts of arable land on which virtually any food can grow, and an abundance of annual rainfall and sunshine—to become self-sufficient in food



production. During the Tolbert regime, laudable strides were made toward the achievement of self-sufficiency in food production. For example, various county-based agricultural projects—the Bong County Agricultural Development Project, and the Nimba County Agricultural Development Project— were established, for the purpose of promoting agricultural productivity and the resultant production of food.

However, during the Doe military(1980-1986) and “civilian” regimes(1986-1990), there was deviation from the path of self-sufficiency in food production. This was because Doe and the other new members of the local wing of the Liberian ruling class developed metropolitan consumption habits that required the reliance on foreign imports of rice and other food products. Similarly, the Taylor and Sirleaf regimes paid lip service to food production, as the country became increasingly dependent upon the importation of food, especially, rice, the country’s staple food.

Significantly, the failure by various regimes to formulate and implement policies that would ensure self-sufficiency in food production increasing led to food insecurity and its associated problems. For example, in 2016, Liberia was classified as moderate chronic food insecure with about 32% of the population classified as moderate or severe chronic food insecure(United States Agency for International Development 2017:3). One of the resulting adverse effects was chronic mass malnutrition. For example, by 2018, about 32% of the Liberian population suffered from chronic malnutrition, among the highest in the world(Action Against Hunger 2018:1).

Further, the problem of food insecurity in Liberia has several major micro-dimensions. One is the problem of food availability. Due to Liberia’s dependence on external sources for the supply of food, especially rice, the staple, the country is vulnerable to externally-driven and determined “supply and demand.” Another challenge is the access to food. That is, even when the food

is available, it is quite difficult for large numbers of Liberians to access it. Several factors account for this, including the very poor and deplorable road network that militates against the transporting of food stuffs to various domestic markets. Further, there is the problem of affordability. With the overwhelming majority of Liberians experiencing mass abject poverty, people cannot afford to buy food, even it is available.

### *The environment*

Liberia has two major genres of environmental challenges: multinational corporations-induced, and human activities-induced(individuals)(Kieh 2012). In the case of the former, the problem commenced in 1926 with the Firestone Plantations Company concession(Kieh 2012). Subsequently, under the “Open Door Policy,” which was launched in the mid-1940s, the floodgate was opened for the influx of multinational corporations into the Liberian economy(Kieh 2012; van der Kraaij 1983). For example, the Firestone Plantations Company has, and continues to contribute to air and water pollution. For almost a century, Firestone has polluted the air through its latex processing activities, and the Farmington River in Mount Gibi County by disposing of the refuse(Kieh 2012). Similarly, the Liberian Swedish American Mineral Company(LAMCO) polluted the air through its iron ore processing activities, and the water by dumping the ore waste in the St. John’s River in Grand Bassa County, for almost two decades(Kieh 2012). In addition, various logging companies, including the Oriental Timber Corporation, have contributed to deforestation in the country’s major forest regions(Kieh 2012). Two major factors contributed to the granting of carte blanche freedom to the multinational corporations to engaged in environmental degradation. A key one was that by design the concession agreements for these multinational corporations had no provisions for environmental protection(Eye on the Environment 2006; Kieh 2012). Another is the penchant of Liberian state managers for the receipt of bribes prevented the enforcement of the country’s minimal environmental rules(Kieh 2012).

At the human-induced level, individuals have, and continue to engage in various activities that have deleterious effects on the environment. One major type of activity is the pollution of various streams, lakes, rivers, and the Atlantic Ocean by using these bodies of water as lavatory facilities(Eye on the Environment 2006; Kieh 2012). For example, West Point, the largest urban slum with about 75,000 residents, which is located on less than one square mile in the capital city region, lacks appropriate lavatory facilities both in the various homes and public ones(Kieh 2012). Thus, the residents use the Atlantic Ocean as their main lavatory facility(Eye in the Environment 2006; Kieh 2012).

Collectively and cumulatively, environmental degradation has led to various major problems. A key one is landslides. Various communities around the country, including the mining regions, have experienced the phenomenon(Eye on the Environment 2006; Kieh 2012).

### ***The physical infrastructure***

One of the major manifestations of the socio-economic crises of underdevelopment in Liberia is lodged in the inadequate and poor state of the country's physical infrastructure, including the roads. As Country Reports(2018:1) ominously warned, "Road travel in Liberia can be hazardous. Potholes and poor road surfaces are common, making safe driving extremely challenging." In the rural areas, for example, the roads, if they exist, are in even more deplorable conditions compared to the urban areas (Johnson 2016).

The horrendous conditions of the country's roads have several major adverse consequences. One is that it takes a long time to travel from one part of the country to another, especially during the rainy seasons. For example, it takes "up to three weeks to travel between towns"(Global Infrastructure 2018:1). Another lacuna is that farmers find it very difficult to transport their products to the

market. And this has ramifications for the availability of food and the resulting food security. Further, auto accidents are quite prevalent with the resultant injuries and deaths.

### THE ORGANIZATION OF THE VOLUME

The volume consist of nine(9) articles. In the introductory article, George Klay Kieh, Jr. begins by interrogating the nexus between the trilogy of national integration, democratic elections, and socio-economic development, and political stability in a state. He begins by deciphering the nature and dynamics of national integration, democratic elections and socio-economic development in Liberia, and then linked these to political stability. Essentially, he concludes that the trilogy has had profound ramifications for political stability in Liberia, including a military coup and two civil wars(1989-1997, and 1999-2003).

George Klay Kieh, Jr. then examines Liberia's national symbols—emblem, flag, motto, national anthem, and national honors.—to determine whether they promote national integration or not. He concludes that the national anthem is the most unifying national symbol. This means that the others represent the cultural and historical experiences of only the repatriated Africans from the United States stock, while failing to integrate the experiences of the other threads of the Liberian “mosaic”—the African ethnic groups, which were the first to migrate to the Grain Coast(now Liberia), the Congos, who were liberated at sea en route to slavery, the Africans, who migrated from other African states, including Ghana, Nigeria, Sierra Leone, and Togo, and the Africans, who migrated from the Caribbean, including Barbados. Against this background, he calls for a rethinking of the country's national symbols for the purpose of making them more representative of the experiences of all of the country's cultural streams.

Augustine Konneh probes the electoral dispute mechanism, using the 2017 presidential election as a case study. He notes that

after the first round of the presidential contest, the Liberty Party(LP) and the Unity Party(UP) filed a joint complaint with the National Elections Commission(NEC) alleging various acts of electoral fraud by the Congress for Democratic Change(CDC). After investigating the complaint, NEC argued that it found no evidence of electoral fraud. Hence, according to Konneh, the two parties filed a case with the Supreme Court of Liberia. Konneh observes that after initially issuing an injunction against the holding of the run-off election, the Supreme Court then subsequently ruled that while fraudulent acts were committed during the first round, yet, the fraud did not rise to the level of annulling the election. Konneh concludes that both NEC and the Supreme Court of Liberia ignored the body of evidence, and thus made erroneous decisions.

Teaway Collins and Onyumbé E, Ben Lukongo interrogate the impact of Liberia's two civil wars on the country's economic development. Specifically, using an econometric model as the methodological compass, they examine the effects of the two civil wars on the standard of living, among others. Their central conclusion is that the two civil wars adversely affected the standard of living.

Emmanuel Oritsejafor examines the major causes of food insecurity in Liberia, and proffers some solutions. In the case of the former, he identifies the major causes as economic inequality, the Ebola Virus Disease, which ravaged the country in 2014, and the use of inappropriate farming methods. In the case of economic inequality, Oritsejafor asserts that the disparities in wealth and income determine food access and affordability. As solutions, Oritsejafor suggests that Liberia should adapt the traditional food management regime with its focus on agricultural diversification, prudent use of the environment, the effective use of land and water, and ensures sustainability, and the establishment of socio-economic safety nets such as nutritional programs.

Morris Koffa probes the important issue of the balance between the environment and the economy in Liberia, and suggests ways to

improve and sustain the equilibrium. Koffa argues that the environmental and economic balance is mediated by several major factors, including the non-prudent use of the country's vast natural resources, the lack of the enforcement of environmental rules, the failure of government officials to give the required attention to the health hazards of environmental degradation and the resulting impact on human resources, and the lack of a sustainability ethos. As solutions, Koffa suggests that the balance can be maintained through the judicious use of the country's natural resources, the enforcement of environmental laws, and according the required attention to the hazardous health effects of environmental degradation, and resulting impact on economic production.

Rodolfo et al examine the nature and the dynamics of the development of a new curriculum for the College of Agriculture and Sustainable Development(CASD) at Cuttington University in Bong County, Liberia through a partnership among Rutgers(New Jersey, USA), North Carolina State(North Carolina, USA) and Cuttington Universities. Specifically, they discussed the various phases of the curriculum development process, and the resulting curricula for the various departments in CASD. In addition, they asserted that the major strengths of the curriculum development process were the availability of funds provided through a grant from the United States Agency for International Development(USAID), increased student enrollment, the opportunities for students to specialize in three major areas of agriculture and sustainable development—Plant and Soil Sciences, Animal Sciences, and Natural Resources Management—increased employment prospects for the graduates of CASD, and the interdisciplinarity of the curriculum. On the other hand, according to the authors, the major weakness of the curriculum is the ubiquity of social development topics.

Fidel C.T. Budy examines the extent to which the impact of external actors such as civil society organizations, media groups, and political and legal actors, especially from the “Global North,” on the debate on land grabbing and land rights in Liberia was neo-co-

lonial. Based on the results of a field study, Budy drew two major conclusions. One was that external actors framed the contours and the poles in the debate. Another was that the proposed Land Rights Act was heavily influenced by external actors.

Samukai Konneh, Kieyee Bordolo and Augustus Moore interrogate the major causes of highway failures in Liberia, and suggest ways for addressing these problems. In the case of the former, the major causes are constant inadequate design and construction problems, poor supervision, the lack of a maintenance culture, the lack of drainage on the highways, and the wear and tear from the ongoing flow of traffic. In terms of solutions, they suggest the imperative of adequate and appropriate road design, adequate soil testing prior to the construction of roads, the use of quality and appropriate road construction materials, the construction of highway facilities such as drainage and shoulders, and the establishment of a road maintenance culture.

## CONCLUSION

The article has attempted to frame the important issues of national integration, democratic elections and socio-economic development. In the case of national integration, it is imperative that national symbols, for example, reflect the collective experiences of racial, communal and ethnic stocks that constitute the society. As for democratic elections, the totality of the electoral processes, including the voters' registry, the access to voting, and ensuring that the results reflect the will of the electorate, is indispensable to the quality of the outcome, especially its legitimacy. In terms of socio-economic development, the article probed issues of economic inequalities in Liberia, the travails of food insecurity, the vexatious issue of environmental degradation, the importance of appropriately designing curricula, the challenges of land rights and related issues, and the tragedy of the country's road system.

Finally, these frontier issues are indispensable to the establishment of a democratic and prosperous Liberia. In other words,

the ways in which these frontier issues are addressed are pivotal to political stability. In essence, national integration, democratic elections and socio-economic developed are inextricably linked to political stability.

### NOTES

The members of the various African ethnic groups were initially granted partial citizenship in 1907. But, this was a calculated political action on the part of the Liberian Government, which was fearful of the members of the African ethnic groups collaborating with the British and French imperialists, who were waging campaigns of territorial encroachment against the Liberian state.

After running in the 2005 Liberian presidential election as the flag bearer of the Congress for Democratic Change(CDC), Weah, having lost the party's primary election, served as Winston Tubman, the CDC's Standard Bearer's, running mate(vice presidential candidate).

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## **Rethinking Liberia's National Symbols**

**George Klay Kieh, Jr.**

### **INTRODUCTION**

The design of national symbols—emblem, flag, motto, national anthem, national honors, among others—is one of the most fundamental and important tasks that is performed during the state formation process. Every newly independent state develops a panoply of national symbols. As Cerulo(1993:243) aptly observes, “Equally important are a nation’s symbols, rituals and traditions. These elements constitute a national identity, the image of the nation projected by national leaders both in their constituents and the world at large.” Importantly, in multi-ethnic and multi-racial societies in which groups have divergent cultural and historical experiences, care must be taken to design national symbols that reflect the commonalities of the various groups’ experiences. This is critical to the development and promotion of nationalism, national integration and national cohesion.

In the case of Liberia, the vision of the founders of the Liberian state was to create a social formation based on the exclusion of the members of the various African ethnic groups such as the Golas, as well as the Congos(those who were recaptured en route to slavery), who were already occupying the “Green Coast,” when the freed African slaves, who were repatriated from the United States, arrived in the early 1820s. In this vein, the emergent national symbols were deliberately designed to embody and reflect only the historical and cultural experiences of the freed African slaves. This led to polarization between the repatriated Africans and their descendants, on the one hand, and the members of the various African ethnic groups that were already occupying the

area and their descendants, on the other. The major resultant effect was the development of feelings of exclusion, marginalization and alienation on the part of the members of the various African ethnic groups. At the vortex was the mindset that the Liberian state was the exclusive preserve of the repatriated Africans from the United States and their descendants. The emergent division between two of the major currents of the Liberian cultural mosaic found expression, for example, in a popular saying among the members of the various indigenous African groups, “Leave those people thing”(Liberia Data Project, 2018).

Against this background, the central argument of this article is that Liberia’s national symbols—emblem, motto, flag, national anthem, and national awards— are exclusionary and divisive. This is because they privilege the cultural and historical experiences of the repatriated Africans over those of the various African ethnic groups and the other African cultural currents—the Congos, African immigrants from the Caribbean, and African immigrants from other African states. Hence, these national symbols have, and continue to be anathema to national integration and socio-political cohesion. Therefore, as a *sine qua non* for promoting national integration, inclusion and cohesion, these national symbols need to be redesigned to reflect the commonalities of the cultural and historical experiences of the five major African cultural streams that constitute the Liberian state—the African ethnic groups that were the first to migrate to the “Grain Coast”(now Liberia), the Congos, the repatriated Africans from the United States, the Africans who immigrated from the Caribbean, and the Africans, who immigrated from other African states such as Sierra Leone, Nigeria, Ghana and Togo.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **The Literature**

Kolst(2006) posits that a country’s national symbols are critical

to the twin processes of nation-building and nation-maintenance. Importantly, these twin processes can culminate in either the construction of a unified nation or a divided one, thereby creating fissures that corrode nation-maintenance over time. In terms of the promotion of national unity, Kolst argues that national symbols must be inclusive. However, on the other hand, Kolst(2006:680) notes that “symbols that are rooted in a cultural past will more often than not be more divisive than unifying since different ethnic and political groups often hark back to different pasts.”

DeZoila et al(2014) argue that a country’s national symbols can either develop a sense of pride or feelings of oppression. Importantly, these two major outcomes are determined by the symbols-making process, especially the historical significance of the symbols. In the case of the promotion of a sense of pride, inclusive national symbols “serve as ways for members of a society to both communicate heritage and socially connect with other members of a group—past and present”(DeZoila et al 2014:1).

Using samples from eleven countries, Becker et al(2017) interrogate the emotional attachment people have to their national flags. The results indicated that the historical development of states are pivotal to shaping the emotional attachment citizens have toward a national symbol like the national flag. In other words, the inclusivity or exclusivity of the national symbols based on historical experiences are major determinants of citizens’ emotional attachment to national flags.

Similarly, Butz(2009) asserts that national symbols have social and psychological effects on the citizens of countries. One of the major effects is that citizens tend to identify with their nations. Another is that national symbols promote national unity. In addition, national symbols help to shape and mediate inter-group relations within a state.

In the same vein, Elgenius(2006) conducted case studies of



Britain, France, Norway and Germany to examine the roles of national symbols in the construction of nations and identities. There were several major findings. One, like Kolst(2006), and DeZoila et al(2014), was that national symbols serve two major functions: integrative and divisive—What Elgenius(2006:2) refers to as “secular religion.” Another is that national symbols raise and shape collective consciousness of “who we are” and “where we are from”(Elgenius 2006:2). The other is that national symbols are dynamic. That is, as integral parts of the nation-building symbols are shaped by a continuum of rediscovery and reinvention.

Allowode et al(2018) argue that national symbols like flag and national anthem serve to convey positive image of a society. In the case of Nigeria, the focus of their study, Allowode et al observe that national symbols have been used to convey an image of the country as “hardworking, credible and truthful”(Allowode 2018:100). In addition, the country’s national symbols depict it as a pluralistic society with diverse ethnic and religious groups peacefully co-existing.

Borman(2006) interrogates the views of the members of the various racial groups in South Africa about the country’s post-apartheid national symbols. According to the results, Blacks “identified the strongest with the new national symbols, while non-Blacks—especially Afrikaans-speaking Whites—rated them as less important”(Borman 2006:383). In essence, the cultural and historical experiences of the country’s various racial groups shaped their views of the national symbols. For example, Blacks are in the majority, and thus they played a leading role in designing the country’s post-apartheid national symbols.

Cerulo(1993) probes the factors that account for the variations in the designs of the national symbols of the states that constitute the international system. The overarching finding is that a state’s status in the world system shaped the design of its national symbols—a nexus she refers to as the “syntactic structure”(Cerulo

1993:243). In this vein, she notes that the core states like the United States have simple designs for their national symbols.

### **Matters Arising**

What are the major issues raised in the literature? How can this study be situated within the crucible of the scholarly literature reviewed? In terms of the major issues raised in the literature that was reviewed, there are two overarching ones. A key one is that the design of national symbols is shaped by the cultural and historical experiences of a state's citizens. In the cases of some states, the design of the national symbols are reflective of the composite of the cultural and historical experiences of all of the ethnic, national, racial, and religious groups that constitute the body politic. On the other hand, in other states, the design of the national symbols tend to reflect the cultural and historical experiences of a dominant group or groups. The other central issue is that there is a duality to national symbols: They can either serve as vectors of national integration, or the axes of division in a state. Importantly, this outcome is contingent upon how inclusive or exclusive the designs of national symbols are.

Drawing from the overarching issues raised in the literature reviewed, this study will be shaped by two major pivots. One is that the national symbols of Liberia do not reflect the composite of the cultural and historical experiences of the country's five major African cultural streams. Instead, they only reflect the cultural and historical experiences of the repatriated Africans from the United States. Hence, these national symbols are exclusionary and divisive. Thus, applying Elgenius' (2006) formulation that national symbols are shaped by a continuum of rediscovery and reinvention, Liberia's national symbols need to be redesigned, so that they can reflect the composite of the cultural and historical experiences of the five major streams in the African mosaic that constitute the state.

## THE MAKING OF LIBERIA'S NATIONAL SYMBOLS

The designing of Liberia's national symbols was shaped by the founding vision, and the resulting state construct. By and large, national symbols are reflections of the desired trajectories for the twin processes of nation-building and state-building. To borrow Mutua's(2001:203 and 220) apt analogy of "the state as an empty vessel," the founders of the Liberian state deposited a vision into the "empty vessel." And this vision is embodied in the design of the country's national symbols.

In this vein, the emblem or national seal or coat of arms and the motto were designed as integral parts of the state formation convention in 1847. During the convention, the representatives of the repatriated Africans from the United States stock or cultural stream designed the seal, and formulated the motto that were consistent with the vision for nation-building and state-building.

The flag was designed by a committee of seven women: Susannah Lewis(Chair), Matilda Newport, Rachel Johnson, Mary Hunter, J.B. Russwurm, Colinette Teage and Sara Draper. Importantly, all of the members of the flag-making committee were born in the United States, and members of the repatriated African from the United States stock(Nyanseor 2015:1). The flag was adopted on April 27, 1847, but was unveiled on August 24, 1847.

In the case of the national anthem, it was composed by Daniel B. Warner, who served as the third President of Liberia. In addition, the music for the national anthem was provided by Cleveland Olmsted Lucas, an African American pianist, who was in Liberia from 1861-1864(Massah 2016:1). Hence, the national anthem may have become official in the early 1860s.

As for the national awards, they were designed at various times. The first one to be designed was the Humane Order of African Redemption, which was established in 1897. The Order of the Star of

Africa was established in 1920. The Grand Order of the Most Venerable Order of the Knighthood of the Pioneers of the Republic of Liberia or the Most Venerable Order of the Pioneers, for short, was established on January 7, 1955.

## **LIBERIA'S NATIONAL SYMBOLS**

### **The Emblem**

The emblem or seal or coat of arms contains several items. One is a sailing ship, which depicts the travel of the repatriated Africans from the United States to the Grain Coast(now Liberia), beginning in the early 1920s. The other is a palm tree that reflects the centrality of agriculture to the envisioned economy of the society that the repatriated Africans envisaged. The plow and spade reflect the repatriated Africans' commitment to the dignity of labor. Another is the dove with a "somewhat open scroll in its claws"(van der Kraaij 1983:10). Further, there is the rising sun, which heralds the birth of the new Liberian state.

Undoubtedly, the emblem, like the rest of the country's national symbols, is the reflection of only the cultural and historical experiences, as well as the vision for nation-building and state-building of the repatriated Africans from the United States. In other words, the emblem is representative of only one of the African cultural streams that constitutes the Liberian mosaic. Significantly, this is at the vortex of the Liberian identity crisis, because the emblem is the overarching national symbol that encapsulates the identity of a country.

### **The Motto**

The national motto is "The Love of Liberty Brought Us Here." The motto was a derivative of the Declaration of Independence, which was issued on July 26, 1847. The Declaration of Independence provided a summation of the cultural and historical expe-

periences of the repatriated Africans from the United States, and the rationale for establishing an independent and sovereign state. According to the Declaration,

We the people of the Republic of Liberia were originally the inhabitants of the United States of North America. In some parts of that country, we were debarred by law from all the rights and privileges of men---in other parts, public sentiment, more powerful than law, frowned us down(Declaration of Independence of Liberia, 1847:1; Wilson 1969:57)

Again, the motto reflects the historical and cultural experiences of the repatriated Africans from the United States, which were shaped by slavery in the United States, and its attendant vagaries of exclusion, discrimination and marginalization, among others, and the desire to find a land where repatriated Africans could enjoy political and other freedoms. But, the exclusionary nature of the motto reflects a major paradox: While the repatriated Africans from the United States desired freedom on the one hand, they did not believe that the members of the various African ethnic groups, and the Congos, who they met occupying the “Green Coast,” should also enjoy similar freedoms. This paradox was framed by what Brown(1941:10) refers to as a “slave psychology—“the tendency of the oppressed to internalize, copy and seek to replicate the nefarious practices of the oppressors.

### **The Flag**

The flag has several major features. The eleven stripes constitute a major element. The stripes represent the eleven(11) signatories to the Declaration of Independence. The colors—red, white and blue---represent various ideals. In the case of the red, it stands for the courage of the members of the repatriated Africans from the United States stock for braving the Atlantic Ocean and other travel-related challenges en route to the Grain Coast(now Liberia). The white signifies the moral excellence of the repatriated Africans.

The blue square, interestingly, represents the African Continent. This is because the repatriated Africans had Tarzan-like stereotypical images about Africa as a region inhabited by “barbarians and savages, who needed to be civilized and Christianized”(Cassell, 1970; Kieh, 2008). The single star represents Africa’s first independent republic.

Like the other symbols, the flag does not represent the shared historical and cultural experiences of all of Liberia’s African stocks. Instead, it embodies and reflects the vision of the repatriated Africans from the United States. For example the eleven stripes represent the signatories of the Declaration of Independence. All of these signatories hailed from only the repatriated Africans from the United States stock. Thus, characteristically, the other African cultural streams, including the various African ethnic groups, were excluded. In addition, the design of the flag is essentially a replica of the American one. This underscored two major tendencies of the repatriated Africans from the United States. A key one was to use their historical and cultural experiences as the singular framers of the country’s flag. The other was the demonstrated penchant to copy from the United States, the country where they were in bondage.

### **The National Anthem**

The national anthem has two major parts: aspirational and patriotic. In the case of the former, it speaks of Liberia in glowing democratic terms. For example, Liberia is referred to as “this land of liberty”(National Anthem of Liberia 1847). The latter rallies Liberians to unify and serve their country. The following parts vividly capture the sense of unity and patriotism: “In union strong, success is sure, we cannot fail...With hearts and hands, our country’s cause defending. We meet the foe with valor unpretending”(National Anthem of Liberia 1847).

Inadvertently, the national anthem, is the most inclusive of all

of Liberia's national symbols. However, there is a line that only reflects the historical and cultural experience of the repatriated Africans from the United States: "...of a race benighted." This reflects the state of exclusion, marginalization and ignorance to which the repatriated Africans were consigned during the heyday of slavery in the United States.

## **The National Honors**

### ***The "Humane Order of African Redemption"***

The "Humane Order of African Redemption" is the Liberia's oldest national award. It was established in 1897. The award's purpose is "[To glorify God] in the civilization of African Tribes within and in the neighborhood of Liberia"(Roberts 1972:235). The award is given for "valor or extraordinary service on behalf of humanity or in the interest of African redemption"(Roberts 1972:235).

The award has three major flaws. One is that it is divisive. This is because the award constructs the "us" versus "them" binary: the repatriated Africans from the United States against the other four African cultural streams—the African ethnic groups that were already occupying the Grain Coast(now Liberia), the Congos or the recaptives, the African immigrants from the Caribbean, and the African immigrants from other African states.

Another is that the purpose of the award exudes hubris. That is because the award places the repatriated Africans on both the civilizational and religious pedestal, one the one hand, and on the other, explicitly suggests that the members of the African ethnic groups are both "uncivilized"(whatever that means), and ungodly. On the contrary, there is a repository of evidence that shows that the various African ethnic groups had thriving civilizations, prior to the arrival of the repatriated Africans from the United States(Bowen-Jones1997; Burrowes 2016; Dunn and Tarr 1988;

Kieh 2008; Sawyer 1992).

The other major flaw is that the discriminatory governance architecture that the repatriated Africans from the United States developed to anchor the emergent Liberian state were not reflective of God's nature and character. Hence, the paradox is how could the repatriated Africans from the United States teach the African ethnic groups in Liberia and in the neighborhood about God, when the former practiced exclusion, discrimination, marginalization and exploitation?

***“The Order of the Star of Africa”***

“The Order of the Star of Africa” was created in 1920, during the regime of President Charles D. B. King. The award is intended to honor both Liberians and foreign nationals who make “distinguished contributions to Liberia or Africa in public service, literature, arts or sciences”(Roberts 1972:235).

By its nature and purpose, this award is the most inclusive of the three major national honors. This is because it does not privilege any of Liberia's African cultural streams as “superior” and the others “inferior,” as is implicit in the other two national awards. In addition, the award has a pan-Africanist thrust that is rooted in honoring service to the African Continent.

***“The Grand Order of the Most Venerable Order of the Knighthood the Pioneers of the Republic of Liberia”***

“The Grand Order of the Most Venerable Order of the Knighthood of the Pioneers of the Republic of Liberia” or the “Most Venerable Order of the Pioneers” is the country's highest award. It was established on January 7, 1955, during the Tubman administration. Eventually, January 7 became a national holiday day known as “Pioneers’ Day. The major purpose of the award is “...[to] commemorate the meaning of the Sainted Pioneer Fathers and Mothers,



keep the flame of their memory burning bright; inspire, by continuing references to their great deeds, in the hearts of all living Liberians...”(Roberts 1972:236). In terms of the qualifications for the award, it is “awarded to Liberians or foreign nationals for outstanding and distinguished service in international affairs, government, religion, art, science or commerce, also for singular acts of philanthropy, and deeds of heroism and valor”(Brown 2012:1). In addition, the award has various grades: Grand Cordon, Knight Commander, Commander, Officer, and Knight(Brown 2012).

The award has several major shortcomings. A major one is that the award’s historical premise is fatally flawed and inaccurate. The fact of the matter is that the repatriated Africans from the United States were not “pioneers.” This is because “pioneers” suggest that the Grain Coast(Liberia) was uninhabited, when the repatriated Africans from the United States initially arrived in the area, beginning in the early 1820s. To the contrary, various African ethnic groups that had migrated from other parts of the African Continent were already inhabiting the area(Burrowes 2016; Dunn and Tarr 1988; Sawyer 1992). Another flaw is that the award’s purpose is a blatant expression that the Liberian State was constructed on the foundation of the exclusion and marginalization of the African ethnic groups, who were already occupying the “Green Coast,” prior to the arrival of the repatriated Africans from the United States, as well as the other African cultural streams. Similarly, the award’s purpose only commemorates the memory and deeds of the repatriated Africans from the United States. How about the memory and deeds of the other African cultural streams? Another major flaw is that the award called into serious question the sincerity of President Tubman’s, who spearheaded the establishment of the honor, National Unification and Integration Policy. The policy, which was launched in 1954, is supposedly intended to promote national integration and unity. President Tubman provided the rationale for launching the policy thus:

For more than 80 years since the Founding Fathers settled here, we have tried to destroy each other by internal wars.

Both sides have failed. Destroy all the ideologies that tend to divide us. Americo-Liberianism must be forgotten, and all of us must register a new era of justice, equality, fair dealing and equal opportunities for every one from every part of the country, regardless of tribe, section, element, creed or economic status (Lowenkopf 1976:55).

But, how can national integration and unification be promoted when one African cultural stream's cultural and historical experiences are privileged, celebrated and honored, while neglecting those of the other historical streams?

## **THE EFFORTS TO REDESIGN LIBERIA'S NATIONAL SYMBOLS**

### **Background**

As has been discussed, it is not "rocket science" to determine that Liberia's national symbols, especially the emblem, motto, flag, the national anthem (in a limited way), and two of the three national honors—The Most Venerable Order of the Pioneers and the Humane Order of African Redemption, need to be redesigned. This is because they are exclusionary and divisive. In this section of the article, the focus will be on four major efforts that have been made to redesign Liberia's national symbols.

### **The Deshield Commission**

The Deshield Commission on National Unity had its genesis in President William R. Tolbert, Jr.'s 1974 Annual Message to the National Legislature of Liberia. In his address, President Tolbert categorically stated, "The present symbols no longer approximately reflect our national aspirations and concept" (New York Times 1974:1). Subsequently, the National Legislature of Liberia passed an Act on July 22, 1974, authorizing the President of Liberia to establish a Commission with the mandate to "review the national

symbols and constitution; and to recommend to the President the necessary changes that were required”(National Legislature of Liberia 1974:1). Subsequently, President Tolbert issued a proclamation in which he mandated the Commission to review the country’s national symbols and constitution “with a view of stamping out every idea that may suggest class distinction, separateness or sectionalism among the people of Liberia”(Tolbert 1974:1)

Organizationally, the Commission comprised 51 members with McKinley A. Deshield, Sr., as the Chair. The other 50 members of the Commission were drawn from the country’s 9 counties and 6 territories: Each county had 5 representatives, and each territory 1 representative. The membership of the Commission was disproportionately drawn from the pro-status quo wing of the Liberian ruling class. They included, for example, Chairman Deshield, who was the incumbent General Secretary of the ruling True Whig Party, Harrison Grisby, Senator from Sinoe County, and Charles D. Sherman, Senator from Grand Cape Mount County. Significantly, these individuals, among other members of the Commission, were not interested in changing the country’s national symbols. And this orientation was vividly reflected in Chairman Deshield’s nation-wide broadcast officially launching the work of the Commission: He stated, *inter alia*, “To give consideration to possible, I repeat changes, the Commission does not conceive neither interpret the President’s mandate as an authorization or directive to necessarily change”(Nyanseor 2014:2).

Importantly, on January 24, 1978, the Commission submitted its recommendations to President Tolbert as follow:

1. The flag should not be changed.
2. In the National Anthem, the word “Benighted to be replaced with undaunted”(Nyanseor 2014:2).
3. The National Motto should be changed to “Love, Liberty, Justice, Equality”(Nyanseor 2014:2).

In terms of an assessment of the Commission's recommendations, some of them were quite useful in helping to address the exclusion and divisiveness embodied the country's national symbol. For example, the Commission was on point to recommend that the change in the National Anthem, and the change of the National Motto. In the case of the former, the recommended change addressed the only major element of division and separateness. Similarly, the Commission's recommendation to change the National Motto was also well on point. On the other hand, the Commission's decision not to recommend changes in the National Flag was ill-advised. This is because this symbol, which the National Symbols Review Project(2014:5) aptly refers to as the "country's calling card," is not reflective of the totality of the historical and cultural experiences of the country's various African cultural streams that anchor the mosaic.

Unfortunately, even the modest recommendations by the Commission never got implemented by the Tolbert regime. This was because President Tolbert lacked the political will, against the backdrop of the dominant position of the pro-status quo wing of the Liberian ruling class. Even though the members of the pro-status quo wing, who served on the Commission were willing to make modest recommendations for changes in the country's national symbol, the majority of the members of this section of the ruling class, who did not serve on the Commission, were not willing to even allow these minimum changes to take effect(Liberia Data Project 2018). This is because this wing of the local ruling class was fearful that making changes in the country's national symbols would have set a bad precedent by opening the proverbial "flood-gate" for clamor for more changes, including structural ones, such as county's authoritarian governance and peripheral capitalist economic system(Liberia Data Project 2018). Thus, characteristically, President Tolbert capitulated to the position of this tier of the local ruling class.

### **The Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Liberia (TRC-Liberia)**

The Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) or the Accra Peace Accord, which ended the second Liberia civil war in 2003, and subsequently ushered in the country's second peacebuilding project, called for the establishment of a truth and reconciliation commission, as the fulcrum of the transitional justice process (Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Liberia 2009). Subsequently, on May 12, 2005, the Liberian National Transitional Legislative Assembly passed the enabling legislation that created the TRC, and included the delineation of the details of its mandate (Truth and Reconciliation of Liberia 2009).

The TRC examined, among others, the major contributing factors to Liberia's civil wars. For the first civil war (1989-1997), the TRC concluded that the country's national symbols are expressions of political, social and economic exclusion of the majority Liberian society (Truth and Reconciliation Commission, Liberia 2009; van der Kraaij 2015). In addition, and more broadly, the TRC observed that "Liberia's complex history created a state of contestation, which remains today a major source of conflict and disunity (Truth and Reconciliation Commission 2009). However, like the rest of the TRC's findings, the poignant observation about the divisiveness of the national symbols was never taken seriously by the Sirleaf regime.

### **The Vision 2030 National Project**

The "Vision 2030 National Project" was ostensibly designed to formulate new futures for Liberia in several major spheres, including economic development, and the promotion of national unity. Spearheaded by the Governance Commission of Liberia, consultations were held with Liberians throughout the country, as well as in some of the diaspora communities, including the United States. One of the major topics of discussion revolved around the coun-

try's national symbols.

At the conclusion of the consultations on the country's national symbols, two major agreements emerged among the participants. One was the imperative of making the country's national symbols representative of all Liberians. The other was the need for "change of one sort or the other in all of the symbols of the state, moving them toward reflecting Liberian traditional culture"(Governance Commission of Liberia 2012). Against this background, it was recommended that the National Emblem or Seal be replaced, and the National Motto changed to "The Love of Liberty Unites Us"(Governance Commission of Liberia 2012). However, characteristically, these two insightful recommendations were never implemented by the Sirleaf regime.

### **The National Symbols Review Project**

The National Symbols Review Project was established by President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf in 2012. The Project was propelled by two major interrelated developments. First, as the National Independence Day Orator in 2012, Dr. Elwood Dunn, a public servant and an academic, reignited the call for changing and redesigning Liberia's National Symbols(Dunn 2012). His rationale was that the country's national symbols were not reflective of the totality of the experiences of what he termed Liberia's "three major heritages—African, Western and Islamic"(Dunn 2012: ). The second and more dramatic development was Dr. Dunn's refusal to accept the conferral on him of Liberia's highest award "The Most Venerable Order of the Knighthood of the Pioneers of Liberia." In justifying his action, Dr. Dunn asserted, "I told the government that I have been writing and making speeches against our national decorations and symbols on the basis that they do not reflect our oneness as Liberians"(Daily Observer 2012:1).

Stunned by Dr. Dunn's principled position of refusing to accept Liberia's highest award, President Sirleaf then asked him to lead a

National Symbols Review Project. Specifically, the Project's mandate was "To conduct a comprehensive examination of [Liberia's] national symbols to determine the extent to which they represent the cultural breadth and historical depth of the national experience"(National Symbols Review Project 2014:2). Structurally, the National Symbols Review Project had two major entities: the Advisory Board, with a membership of 20 members, was appointed by President Sirleaf. Based on the distribution, one member was appointed from each of the country's 15 counties, and one each from the Federation of Liberian Youth (FLY), the Liberian National Student Union (LINSU), the European Federation of Liberian Associations, the Union of Liberian Associations in the Americas, and the United Liberian Association of Ghana (National Symbols Review Project 2014). The membership included Bishop John Innis of the United Methodist Church of Liberia, Ambassador Wesley Johnson, the former Vice Chair of the Liberian National Transitional Government (2003-2005), and the former Liberian Ambassador to the United Kingdom, and long-time public servant and academic Dr. Joseph Guannu (National Symbols Review Project 2014). The other major entity was the Project Implementation Team, which was headed by Dr. Elwood Dunn.

The Project commenced its work in late 2013. One of the major organizing events was the holding of the "National Symposium on Reviewing Liberia's National Symbols to Renew National Identity." In the Keynote Address, Justice Gladys K. Johnson, a former Probate Court Judge, a former Associate Justice of the Supreme Court of Liberia, and then Chair of the Independent National Commission on Human Rights, asserted:

The history of our country began with contradictions of purpose, direction, aims, and objectives, and identity, and has continued in that vein for the past 167 years, including the decade that followed the coup d'état of 1980 and the recent 14 years of anarchy that nearly ended our existence as a sovereign state. It is therefore a welcome decision to have these inconsis-

tendencies or contradictions removed through this transformational process(Nyanseor 2014:3).

However, the outbreak of the Ebola epidemic in 2014 adversely affected the work of the Project. But, interestingly, after the Ebola epidemic ended, the Sirleaf regime's interest in the Project began to wane(Liberia Data Project, 2018). One possible explanation was that President Sirleaf caved into the desire of those who are hell bent on keeping the country's exclusionary and divisive national symbols intact.

## **TOWARD RETHINKING LIBERIA'S NATIONAL SYMBOLS**

### **Background**

Clearly the repository of evidence shows that Liberia's national symbols do not reflect the shared cultural and historical experiences of all of the five major cultural streams and their attendant groups that constitute the Liberian state. Hence, the national symbols are antithetical to the building of a patriotic state based on a shared identity. This is because Liberians cannot be expected to deposit their loyalty and fidelity in national symbols that are outright exclusionary, divisive, and diametrically opposed to the framing canons of inclusion, integration, unification, and patriotism. The National Symbols Review Project(2014:1) provides an excellent summation of the country's enduring crisis of identity: "Liberia is facing a crisis of identity. We seem ready to admit that we are a dichotomous nation of descendants of black settlers and indigenous people...Knowledge of our history and founding ideals remain areas of immense contestations."

Therefore, the national symbols of Liberia need to be rethought and redesigned so that they can embody, reflect and represent the collective and shared cultural and historical experiences of all Liberians. In this vein, this section of the article will suggest ways



in which Liberia's national symbols can be rethought. In turn, this will contribute to the process of redesigning these national symbols.

### **The Emblem**

The spade and the palm tree on the emblem or seal could be retained in a new design. This is because these elements are common to the cultural experiences of Liberia's constituent African cultural streams. For example, the spade, which represents the dignity of labor, is a common feature of the African work ethos. Similarly, the palm tree is a plant that is common to all of the country's major African cultural streams. Particularly, the palm tree's representation of agriculture resonates in all of the country's major African cultural streams as well. This is because historically agriculture has always been a central feature of the economies of African societies. Further, the dove with the opened scroll in its claws could be maintained in a new design as well. This is because the message of peace, which the dove represents, is common to the country's major African cultural streams.

On the other hand, the ship and the ocean need to be eliminated. This is because these elements are particularistic to the cultural and historical experiences of the repatriated Africans from the United States. However, if these two elements are considered for the new design of the country's emblem, they could be given new meanings that reflect the totality of the cultural-historical experiences of all of the country's cultural streams.

### **The Motto**

Clearly, as has been discussed, the motto, "The Love of Liberty Brought Us Here," is the most divisive of all of the country's national symbols. Therefore, it should be totally changed. Two major suggestions were made by the Deshield Commission and the "Vision 2030 Project." Either one of the proposed new mottos

would be acceptable. This is because both suggestions embody the totality of the cultural-historical experiences of all of the country's African cultural streams.

### **The Flag**

The flag needs to be rethought and redesigned based on weaving together the threads that link the various African cultural streams that constitute the Liberian mosaic. However, the country's current flag does not meet the aforementioned requirement. Specifically, for example, the eleven stripes represent only the men from the repatriated Africans from the United States cultural stream, who signed the Declaration of Independence. The process that led to the epochal act in the state formation phase was not inclusive.

The other lacuna is that the flag's design is a replica of the United States' one. Thus, the current Liberian flag lacks originality. Alternatively, as has been discussed, there is the need to completely redesign the flag, against the backdrop of the framing contours that have been articulated. In other words, the flag should have what the National Symbols Review Project of Liberia(2014:5) calls "cultural breadth and historical depth." That is, the flag should embody the cultural and historical experiences of all of the country's major African streams. In addition, given the richness of these African cultural tapestries, the redesigned flag must be original.

### **The National Anthem**

The wordings of the National Anthem needs to be thoroughly reviewed and scrutinized. The overarching purpose should be the elimination of words that are non-inclusive and divisive. In this vein, the line "of a race benighted" would be an excellent candidate for review and elimination. In fact, the Deshield Commission recommended the elimination of this stanza and its replacement. Hence, one approach could be the implementation of the Commission's recommendation.

### **The National Awards**

“The Most Venerable Order of the Pioneers,” the country’s highest award, should be completely scrapped for two major reasons. A key one is that the award constructs a divisive and exclusionary binary: The so-called “pioneers,” and their descendants, on the one hand, and the so-called “non-pioneers,” and their descendants, on the other. In addition, the award’s name and purpose fail to reflect the Liberian mosaic, and its constituent African cultural streams.

Similarly, the “Humane Order of African Redemption” should be completely scrapped for two major reasons. One is that the award reflects the repatriated Africans from the United States’ Tarzan-like image of Liberia and the rest of Africa as a land of “barbarians and savages”(Cassell 1970; Kieh, 2008). As has been discussed, such a stereotypical view was anchored on hubris and exclusion. The other flaw was that the repatriated Africans from the United States, who were hitherto slaves, arrogated unto themselves the “noble task” of a “mission civilisatrice” Importantly, the foundation of this task was both ahistorical and false. This is because all of the African ethnic groups that the repatriated Africans from the United States met on the Grain Coast(Liberia) already had thriving civilizations replete with cultural, economic, political and social systems(Dunn and Tarr 1988; Kieh 2008; Sawyer 1992). As Bowen-Jones(1997:9) correctly observes, “Before the arrival of the [repatriated Africans from the United States], however, the political evolution of local African populations of the rainforest, the Kwa, Melle and Mande had achieved various levels of political systems...The Kwas...were known to have established democratic decentralized political systems from the village to the clans.”

The Order of the Star of Africa should be retained as one of the country’s national awards. The reason is that the award’s purpose captures the essence of Liberia as an African mosaic, weaving to-

gether the various constituent threads. However, the criteria for the award should be expanded to include contributions to all spheres of life in Liberia and Africa. In other words, the rethought award should be given to any one---Liberian, or other---who makes outstanding contributions to Liberia and/or Africa in the areas of the arts, business, commerce, culture, economics, education, engineering, the environment, health care, medicine, the natural sciences, public service, and social work. The award should have various grades reflecting the level of the honor.

In addition, a new award should be established as the country's highest award. The name of the award should reflect inclusivity and diversity. That is, it must embody the common aspirations of all of the country's major African cultural streams. Its purpose should be to honor exceptional service rendered to Liberia in various areas, including the arts, business, commerce, culture, economics, education, engineering, the environment, health care, medicine, the natural sciences, public service, and social work. The eligibility of the award should be limited to heads of state, heads of government, and individuals—Liberians and non-Liberians—who make exceptional contributions to the advancement of the Liberian state. The award should have various grades reflecting the level of the honor.

## CONCLUSION

The overarching conclusion of this article is that the current national symbols of Liberia, by and large, do not reflect the totality of the cultural and historical experiences of the constituent African cultural streams that comprise the Liberian state. Hence, these national symbols need to be rethought, and redesigned. The National Symbols Review Project(2014:3) provides a poignant summation of the centrality for Liberia having inclusive national symbols:

National symbols are indispensable to fostering national integration and unification. This is because a nation's symbols

play a subtle but important function in the formation and expression of national identity. National symbols are deeply rooted in a national narrative. As a result, symbols communicate a twofold message that has both an internal and external component...For these reasons, it is important for national symbols to reflect the cultural breadth and historical depth of the national experience.

Finally, the rethinking and redesigning of Liberia's national symbols could have the following impact on building an inclusive and patriotic state. One is the fostering of the bonds of inclusion. Another is the promotion of national unity. Further, an enabling environment would be created in which Liberians can deposit their loyalty, commitment and fidelity in national symbols that represent all of them, irrespective of their ethno-communal and other backgrounds.

### NOTES

Prior to his retirement in 2012, Dr. Elwood Dunn had a distinguished career as a public servant and academic. In the case of the former, he served as Assistant Minister of Foreign Affairs for American Affairs, Director of the Foreign Service Institute, Deputy Minister of State for Presidential Affairs for Cabinet Affairs, and Minister of State for President Affairs in the Tolbert administration in Liberia. In the academic arena, he taught Political Science at the University of the South in Sewanee, Tennessee, for more than 30 years, including serving as the Alfred Walter Negley Professor of Politics. Currently, he is the Alfred Walter Negley Professor of Politics Emeritus at the University of the South, Tennessee.

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# **The National Elections Commission, the Supreme Court and Dispute Resolution in the 2017 Liberian Presidential Election**

**Augustine Konneh**

## **INTRODUCTION**

General election was held in Liberia on October 10, 2017, to elect the President and the Members of the House of Representatives. In the first round of the presidential election, no candidate won a majority of the votes (the threshold of 51%). This was not surprising, since 20 candidates contested. Therefore, pursuant to the Electoral Code, the top two vote getters, Senator George Weah, the flag bearer of the main opposition party the Congress for Democratic Change (CDC), and the incumbent Vice President Joseph Boakai of the ruling Unity Party (UP), were the contenders in the second round. The run-off presidential election was originally scheduled to be held on November 17, 2017 (National Elections Commission of Liberia 2017a).

However, the run-off election was postponed, because the Liberty Party (LP), which placed third in the first round of the presidential election, challenged the results, first with the National Elections Commission (NEC), and subsequently with the Supreme Court of Liberia. Later, the Unity Party (UP), which came in second in the first round of the presidential election, joined LP in challenging the results of the election. Specifically, the two political parties alleged that the first round of the presidential election was marked by gross irregularities and fraud.

Against this backdrop, the purpose of this article is twofold. First, it will examine the way NEC and the Supreme Court of Liberia addressed the grievances of the two political parties—LP and UP. Second, the study will probe the ramifications of NEC's

and the Supreme Court of Liberia's actions for the outcome of the 2017 presidential election. In other words, how did NEC's and the Supreme Court of Liberia's decisions in the electoral dispute for the first round impact the results of the second round of the presidential election?

## LITERATURE REVIEW

The performance of electoral bodies or institutions mandated to administer elections is an important factor in determining the outcomes of elections, especially whether they would be free and fair. The establishment and roles of these electoral management institutions are usually stipulated in the constitutions or electoral laws of various countries. There is a growing body of scholarly literature on election management bodies, including their roles in electoral disputes. In the review of the literature, the focus will be on some of the studies that have been conducted on elections commissions on the African Continent. The reason is that the experiences of elections commission in Africa, with few exceptions, are similar to those of the Liberian elections management body.

Jinadu(1997) examines two major sets of issues: the historical roots of elections commissions in Africa, and the factors that impact electoral administration. In the case of the former, He argued that electoral administration was designed and bequeathed to the various African states by the European colonial powers at independence. However, these electoral administration institutions were intended to foster the conduct of fraudulent elections. As Jinadu(2010:2) argues,

[The electoral machinery that was bequeathed to the newly independent African states was] rudimentary and ad hoc, based on a narrow and restrictive franchise in most cases, and designed and contrived generally and in most cases to ensure succession favorable to the colonial regimes, although this objective was not always achieved.

During the post-independence era, electoral administration on the African Continent has been shaped by two major sets of factors: the broader crisis of socio-economic development and its impact on the funding of elections commissions, and elections management issues. In terms of the elections management issues, they include the compilation of the voters' rolls that are accurate, the issue of access to polling stations, and the elections commissions' ability to strictly implement the electoral regulations.

Similarly, Conteh (2010) posits that the role of the national elections commission of any African country is critical to the success of the process of upholding peace and democracy. However, he lamented that because of the lack of funding, many of the NEC's have to depend on the government for carrying out their electoral functions. As a result of this, they are not independent in making the right kind of electoral decision that will give credibility to the institution.

Makara (1992) argues that election commissions are not independent because of the involvement of the president and the legislature in the vetting process of the commissioners. The President appoints and the legislature confirms. Usually, the legislature does not reject presidential nominations of the elections commissioners. In effect, he argues, the independence of election commissions is usually compromised, due to the high likelihood of the electoral management bodies serving the political interests of the incumbent president, who appointed them to office. He cited the 2007 controversial Kenyan presidential election as an example of how electoral management bodies can be compromised, and the will of the electorate ignored by loyalty to the incumbent president.

Obi (2007) suggests that because of their dependency, election commissions in many African countries are subject to bias; and therefore cannot be neutral in many of the elections held. Because of this dependency syndrome, these electoral bodies lack integrity.

Abuya(2010) probes the tension between the efforts to make elections commission independent in various African countries, and the political realities of elections management on the continent. For example, he observes that the elections commissions are enshrined in the constitutions of various African countries as independent bodies. In order to establish their independence, for example, elections commissioners are given five years tenure, in some cases. However, using the 2007 Kenyan and 2008 Zimbabwean Presidential elections as case studies, he argues that the elections commissions in the two countries failed to demonstrated their independence, as evidenced by the fraudulent results. The fraudulence of these two presidential elections was so profound that its gained “widespread outcry both domestically and globally”(Abuya 2010:126).

## **THE ELECTION DISPUTE RESOLUTION MECHANISM**

### **The Institutions**

Both the Constitution of Liberia and the New Elections Law of 2014 designate the National Elections Commission of Liberia, and the Supreme Court of Liberia as the two institutions with the responsibility for adjudicating electoral grievances and disputes. In the case of the National Elections Commission(NEC), under Chapter X, Article 89 of the Constitution of Liberia, it is an autonomous public commission(Constitution of Liberia 1986). The reason is to give NEC the required independence that is required for it to perform, among others, its elections dispute resolution function impartially, efficiently and effectively. In the case of the New Elections Law, it operationalizes NEC’s elections dispute resolution functions and authority(New Elections Law of Liberia 2014).

In the case of the Supreme Court of Liberia, it is the highest court in the country, including on electoral matters(Constitution of Liberia 1986). In the case of electoral disputes, the Supreme Court of Liberia has original jurisdiction, and serves as the court of last

resort as well (Constitution of Liberia 1986). That is, all electoral disputes that have been heard by NEC, are appealed to the Supreme Court of Liberia, as the court of the first instance (New Elections Law of Liberia 2014). Simultaneously, as the court of last resort, the decisions of the Supreme Court of Liberia in the exercise of its original jurisdiction over electoral disputes are final (Constitution of Liberia 1986; New Elections Law of Liberia 2014).

### **The Rules and Processes**

The rules and processes that constitute the electoral dispute resolution mechanism are enshrined in Article 83, Section C of the Constitution of Liberia and Chapter 5 of the New Elections Law of Liberia (New Elections Law of Liberia 2014). In the case of the Constitution of Liberia, it provides the framework for the electoral dispute mechanism as follow:

1. The Declaration of the Results: The National Elections Commission (NEC) has 15 days to declare the results of elections, including presidential ones.
2. The Filing of Election Grievances: An aggrieved party or parties have 7 days within which to file an election grievance with NEC
3. The Timetable for Investigation by NEC: NEC has 30 days to hear, and decide an election complaint.
4. Appeal to the Supreme Court of Liberia: If an aggrieved party files a petition with the Supreme Court of Liberia, after exhausting NEC's remedies, the electoral management body has 7 days within which to submit all of the records related to the case to the country's highest court.
5. The Timeline for the Adjudication By the Supreme Court of Liberia: The Supreme Court of Liberia has 7 days within which to hear the case and render a decision.

6. The Holding of New Election: If the Supreme Court rules in favor of the plaintiff(s), then NEC has 60 days within which to organize and hold new election.

As a supplement, Chapter 5 of the New Elections Law lays out the sequential processes that underpin the electoral dispute resolution mechanism as follow:

1. The Complainant: “An electoral complaint can be filed by a voter, candidate or a registered political party with the [National Elections] Commission alleging that an offence against the Constitution or the Elections Law or a violation of a regulation issue by the Commission”(New Elections Law of Liberia 2014:8).

2. The Statute of Limitation: A complainant, who alleges an elections violation, has a maximum of seven days within which to file a complaint.

3. The Hearing Entities: Depending on the nature and place of the alleged elections violation, the complainant can file the grievance with either the presiding officer of the polling station, where the alleged violation occurred, or to the Office of the County Elections Magistrate, where the alleged violation took place, or with the national headquarters of the National Elections Commission(NEC), located in Monrovia, the capital city.

4. Hearing and Determination: NEC has 30 days within which to hear an election complaint, and to make a decision.

5. Decisions: NEC make render one of two major decisions: a)rule in favor of the complainant or complainants, or reject the complaint and subsequently dismiss the grievance.

6. Appeal to the Supreme Court of Liberia: After a complaint has exhausted all of the remedies within NEC for resolving the elections grievance or dispute, an appeal can be made to the Supreme

Court of Liberia to hear the case. The ruling of the Supreme Court is final.

## **THE FIRST ROUND OF THE 2017 PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION**

As has been discussed, in the October 10, 2017 Presidential election, there were 20 candidates that contested for the position. Some of the most notable candidates were the incumbent Vice President Joseph Boakai of the ruling Unity Party, Senator George Weah of the main opposition political party, the Congress for Democratic Change, Counselor Charles Brumskine of the Liberty Party(LP), and Mr. Alexander Cummings, a former executive of the Coco Cola Corporation, who was the standard Bearer of the Alternative National Congress, a break-away faction from the CDC. The total number of voters in the first round was 1,641,922, representing a turnout of 75.2% of the registered voters(National Elections Commission of Liberia 2017b).

However, none of the candidates won a majority of the votes(a minimum of 51%). Hence, under the country's "two rounds electoral system," a run-off election was scheduled between the two top vote-getters: Senator George Weah of the CDC, who won the plurality of the votes with 38.4%, and Vice President Joseph Boakai of UP, who came in second with 28.8% of the votes(National Elections Commission of Liberia 2017c). Under the electoral rules, NEC scheduled the run-off election to be held on November 7, 2017.

## **THE OPERATION OF THE ELECTION DISPUTE RESOLUTION MECHANISM**

### **The Filing of Elections Grievances By the Liberty Party(LP) and the Unity Party(UP)**

#### ***Background***



Disenchanted Presidential Candidates Charles W. Brumskine of the Liberty Party (LP) and the incumbent Vice President Joseph N. Bokai of the Unity Party (UP) filed complaint with NEC. The complaint alleged that the October 10, 2017 first round of the presidential election was marred by gross irregularities and fraud (The Democrat 2017: 1). Further, the complainants argued that the alleged electoral fraud and irregularities had adverse impact on the outcome of the first round, including the two parties' chances of winning. Hence, the complainants enjoined the electoral management body to redress their grievances.

LP's and UP's complaints to NEC can be summarized as follow: 1) the late opening of polling stations; 2) the change of some polling stations without providing due notice; 3) the omission of names of some voters from the voters' registry (VR); and 4). NEC's failure to use worksheets. In addition, the complainants provided ten specific instances of alleged fraud and ten instances of irregularities that they claimed marred the elections. Therefore, the complainants argued that the nullification of the results of the first round of the presidential race, and the holding of a new first round were the best redresses of their grievances. In this section, each of the major grievances will be examined.

### ***Late Opening of Polls***

The complainants contended that the NEC failed to adhere to the legal requirement that all polling stations be opened at 8 a.m. For example, several polling stations were opened as late as 3 p.m. on election day, almost seven hours after the legally mandated opening time. This action, according to the complainants disadvantaged several voters. For example, some voters, especially the elderly, the disabled, and infirmed, after having stood in line for hours, were effectively deprived of their constitutional right to vote. This was because they were constrained to leave the polling places, believing not only that such polling places would not be opened, or that the locations of the polling places had been

changed, as was done in other cases. In addition, such action by the NEC may have created or could have created health problems for these voters.

In addition, LP and UP insisted that the late opening of some polls, without ensuring they remained opened for at least 10 hours, as required by law, with sufficient lighting and adequate security, deprived voters who were registered at such polling places of equal protection under the law. Further, in addition to depriving the affected voters of their constitutional right to vote, NEC's action exposed these polling places to the danger of vote fixing.

#### Change of Polling Stations

Another complaint filed by the two political parties was that the locations of some polling stations were abruptly changed by NEC. Thus, the complainants argued that NEC's action was a violation of Articles 77(b) and 80(c) of the Constitution of Liberia, Section 4.2(1) of the enabling New Elections Law, and Article 4.3 of the enabling Regulation on Polling and Counting, which provides that a location of a polling place may be changed by the NEC, if it determines that same is necessary; but the NEC is required to notify the voters and post signs showing the new location, at least a week before polling, emergency excepted.

Also, the complainants averred that on the day of the election, with no emergency, voters discovered that some polling places were not at the locations that had been previously published by the NEC. So, the affected voters were unable to cast their votes. This action by NEC thus deprived these voters of their constitutional right to vote.

#### ***Omission of Names from the Voters' Registry (VR)***

LP and UP noted that the NEC was both constitutionally and statutorily obliged to maintain an accurate Voters' Registration List, at each polling place, of those registered at such voter reg-

istration center. This was mandatory under the law, in order to expedite the voting process, ensuring that votes counted from every polling place are votes of only legitimate voters, and that the results thereof reflected the aspirations of only those who were registered, and who voted at these polling places.

The complainants noted as well that NEC failed to follow due process in making sure that the final registrants' roll was up to date and accurate. However, many voters went to the polling stations at which they were registered, but only to be told that they were not eligible to vote because their names were not on the final registrant roll. This action, due to NEC's failure, deprived the affected voters of their constitutional right to vote.

### ***NEC's Failure to Use Worksheets***

LP and UP complained that NEC's presiding officer's worksheets were not used by the election management body at the various polling places. The complainants contended that, among other things, the presiding officer's worksheets would have indicated the starting and ending serial numbers of the ballots used at a polling place. This would have made it difficult for ballots in the ballot boxes to be replaced, while in transit from the polling places to the elections magistrates. Also, the presiding officer's worksheets would have been signed by the various party agents, who were serving as poll watchers. Therefore, in the absence of the record of the serial numbers of the ballots used, there is no way of knowing whether the ballots in the ballot boxes were those that were either cast at a polling place, assigned and delivered to the polling places, or ballots that were surreptitiously stuffed in the ballot boxes after polling had closed.

Similarly, the complainants also provided specific instances of alleged fraud that they claimed discredited the election. The allegations of fraud included: the breaking of sealed ballot boxes, the manipulation of the votes, the arrest of persons with pre-marked

ballots in their possession, some of which had already been deposited in the ballot boxes, and some of NEC's presiding officers carrying ballot boxes on bikes.

In addition to the grievances filed by the complainants to NEC, the UP submitted a Bill of Information to the electoral management body to make available certain documents before the hearing. Specifically, UP requested for the addendum list from the first round, among others. However, NEC refused to make these documents available. Instead, NEC continued to ask UP to go for the hearing.

### **NEC's Response to the Elections Grievances Filed By the Two Political Parties**

NEC's response to the two political parties' complaints was an outright rejection. NEC ruled that voting irregularities did not alter the outcome of the first round of the presidential election. In fact, NEC claimed that international observers said that voting was largely free and fair. NEC responded to the political parties complaints with an underlying bias. For example, even before NEC's ruling, the election management body's Chairman Counselor Korkoya prematurely dismissed the case as having no merit, during a radio interview. At the broader level, NEC's behavior and attitude toward the grievances of the two political parties showed that it was not neutral in the presidential election, as required by the Constitution of Liberia, the New Elections Law of Liberia, and other electoral regulations. This was because President Ellen Johnson had instructed NEC to fix the election for CDC Standard Bearer George Weah, who she was supporting (Confidential Information 2017). In fact, President Sirleaf met with NEC officials, including the commissioners and elections magistrates, to inform them of her support for Weah (Toweh 2017). Hence, NEC developed a pro-Weah bias that made it impossible for the election management body to fairly assess the various elements of LP's and UP's grievances.

Importantly, NEC's failure to fairly investigate the two political parties' complaints made the runoff election symbolic. This was because since the critical issues that were raised by the two political parties, including the voters' registry and the lack of an accountability system for recording the serial numbers of the ballots used were never addressed by NEC, they spilled over into the second round. To make matters worse, since the NEC commissioners were beholden to President Sirleaf, because she appointed them, it was therefore a foregone conclusion that Weah, President Sirleaf's choice, would have won the runoff election.

### **The Decision of the Supreme Court of Liberia on the Electoral Grievances**

Dissatisfied with NEC's decision, the Liberty Party(LP) filed a case with the Supreme Court of Liberia, the final arbiter on electoral matters(Constitution of Liberia 1986). Subsequently, the Unity Party(UP) joined the LP as the co-complainant. Upon receipt of the complaint, the Supreme Court of Liberia issued an injunction against the holding of the presidential run-off election, which was scheduled to be held on November 7, 2020(Toweh 2017). In issuing the injunction, "Supreme Court Chief Justice Francis Korkpor said that the National Elections Commission(NEC) was prohibited from conducting the run-off election until the complaint filed by the petitioners [was] investigated"(AFP 2017).

After weeks of suspense, including speculations about the prospects of holding the presidential run-off election and the ramifications for stability, the Supreme Court of Liberia issued its ruling about LP's and UP's complaint. In announcing the country's highest court's decision(based on a 4-1 majority decision), Associate Justice Phillip Z. Banks stated the following:

1.The alleged voting violations in the first round did not amount to fraud or necessitate an election re-run(GARDAWorld 2017:1). In other words, the complainant's case was without merit.

2. The National Elections Commission(NEC) was hereby ordered to conduct the run-off presidential election(GARDAWorld 2017).

### **THE RAMIFICATIONS FOR THE SECOND ROUND OF THE PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION**

The decisions of NEC and the Supreme Court of Liberia about the election complaints filed to the two institutions by LP and UP had two major sets of ramifications for the run-off presidential election, which was held on December 26, 2017. First, the critical issues that constituted the bedrocks of the two political parties' complaints, including the inaccuracy of the voters' registry, NEC's failure to publish the registry prior to the holding of the second round of the presidential election, the practice of NEC's failure to keep records of the serial numbers of the ballots used, and the discrepancies between the results from various polling stations as recorded on the worksheets, and the results announced my NEC were never addressed. Thus, these vexing issues were simply transferred from the first to the second round of the presidential election.

The other major ramification was that the failure of the Supreme Court of Liberia to hold NEC accountable for the various fraudulent acts and irregularities that were committed during the first round of the presidential election emboldened the election management body to continue its behavior. In other words, having been vindicated by the Supreme Court of Liberia, NEC knew that it had a blank check to continue to perpetrate fraudulent acts, as well as irregularities without the fear of being held accountable. As has been discussed, this was against the backdrop of NEC performing its role as the handmaid of President Sirleaf in making the CDC Flag Bearer George Weah, the next President of Liberia.

Toward this end, several major fraudulent acts were committed by NEC during the run-off presidential election. A key one was that since NEC failed to update and publish the voters' registry as is required by law, there were ghost names on the log, and some voters

even voted two or more times for Weah(Confidential Report 2017). Another major issue was that NEC's failure to establish a system of accountability for recording the serial numbers of ballots used led to the stuffing of ballot boxes with extra ballots on behalf of Weah(Confidential Report 2017). In addition, there were discrepancies between the vote tallies that were recorded on the presiding officers at various polling stations' worksheets, and the results announced by NEC's elections central command(Confidential Report 2017). Ultimately, Senator Weah of CDC won the run-off election with 61.5% of the votes to Vice President Boakai of UP 38.5%(National Elections Commission 2017d)

### **SUGGESTIONS FOR REFORMING THE ELECTORAL DISPUTE RESOLUTION MECHANISM**

Clearly, the electoral dispute resolution mechanism needs serious reforms, as part of the broader process for rethinking electoral institutions, rules and processes. Addressing these issues is a major condition for the completion of the process of democratic transition in Liberia. A major area is the appointment of the chair and commissioners of NEC. Currently, these officials of the elections management body are appointed solely by the President of Liberia(Constitution of Liberia 1986). Hence, these elections officials are beholden to the President of Liberia, because it determines their job security. In other words, the President of Liberia can removed either the chair or a commissioner at will, the issue of tenure notwithstanding. A suggestion for addressing this issue is for the development of an appointment formula: the President of Liberia appoints three commissioners, and political parties collectively choose the other three commissioners. The six commissioners would then in turn choose the chair of the commission, who will become the seventh commissioner. These steps would help to ensure the independence and impartiality of NEC.

Second, as part of the broader electoral structural reforms, a special court on elections needs to be established as the arbiter

of all electoral grievances at the national and local levels. This court will replace NEC and the Supreme Court of Liberia as the sole institution for managing the electoral dispute mechanism. In other words, NEC and the Supreme Court of Liberia should not be involved in investigating and adjudicating elections complaints. The elimination of NEC's role as both a "player and a participant" would help ensure that the elections management body is held accountable for the way it conducts elections. For example, lessons could be drawn from the experiences of the Electoral Tribunal of Nigeria, which is the arbiter of all elections matters in the country.

Third, the voters' roll must be compiled by using the citizen identification card. This will help ensure that interested parties do not duplicate the voter ID. In addition, the voters' roll must also be progressive: once a citizen attains the age of 18, he or she must be automatically included on the voters' registry. In addition, no voter residing in one electoral constituency should be allowed to register to vote at another constituency. This will help address the problem of voters' trucking during elections periods. The trucking of voters falsifies statistics about the actual number of voters, who are resident in the various electoral constituencies.

Fourth, on the issue of excess ballots, NEC should be prohibited from printing excess ballot papers. Instead, NEC must print exactly the number of ballots as per the number of registered voters. There is no valid reason why it must be allowed to print excess ballot papers that usually lead ballot stuffing and other voting irregularities.

Fifth, steps should be taken to help ensure that the vote tallies that are recorded and certified by the presiding officer and the representatives of the political parties and independent candidates at each polling station match the results that are announced by NEC's central elections center. This will help minimize electoral complaints, and the resulting needless conflicts. A major way would be the establishment of the votes auditing system that will seek



to match the results that are recorded at each polling station in the country with the results that are reported to NEC's central elections center.

Sixth, under the reformed electoral dispute resolution mechanism serious attention must be given to the importance of compliance with the various timelines. For example, if a timeline is established for a particular action to be taken as part of the adjudicatory process, then such a deadline must be strictly adhered to. This, too, will help to minimize needless conflicts.

## CONCLUSION

The path to democratic transition and democratic consolidation and the resulting stability in Liberia rest in large measures on the freeness and fairness of elections at various levels. This means, among other things, that the elections management body must be perceived by the citizens, political parties, independent candidates and civil society as independent, neutral and impartial. This will require, for example, the designing of a formula for appointing the commissioners of NEC. As has been discussed in this article, the centerpiece of such a formula must be the elimination of exclusive presidential control over the appointment of the elections commissioners.

The other major issue is that reforming the electoral dispute resolution mechanism, as has been discussed, will contribute to the building of confidence in the electoral process, including the legitimacy of the outcomes of elections. By establishing an impartial electoral tribunal with authority over all electoral matters, citizens, political parties and independent candidates can have the confidence that their elections grievances or complaints will receive fair hearings. Even if the electoral tribunal rules against a complainant, the latter will take solace in the fact that a fair hearing was held.

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## **Econometric Analysis of Civil War and Economic Development of Liberia**

**Teaway Zehyoue Collins and Onyumbé E Ben Lukongo**

### **Introduction**

At its inception, Falkner (1910) and Dalton (1965) argue that the goal of the Liberian authorities was to retain political control among the families of settler descends (thus the Americo-Liberians) and to share any material benefits from economic growth among its own members to the exclusion of the indigenous ethnic or tribal groups (i.e. native Liberians). This contributed to the April 12, 1980 military coup, and the emergence on the political scene of Liberia's first indigenous (or native) President Samuel K. Doe. However, the Doe regimes (1980-1986 and 1986-1990) did not perform better than the Tolbert administration that it overthrew. Thus, the poor performance of the Doe regimes provided the tipping point for the first Liberian civil war that erupted in 1989, as the result of armed incursion by the Charles Taylor-led National Patriotic Front of Liberia (NPFL) (Gershoni 1997). The war wrecked havoc. For example, thousands of Liberians became internally displaced, as well as refugees in various African countries. In addition, the war killed approximately 200,000 people. However, barely two years after the first civil war ended with the election of Charles Taylor, the leader of the main rebel group, the second civil war broke out. The war was triggered by an insurgency by the Liberians United for Reconstruction and Democracy (LURD). In addition, by March 2003, the Movement for Democracy in Liberia (MODEL), another rebel group, joined the war. Consequently, thousands of people were internally displaced, scores of others were forced to flee the country, and hundreds died.

War related studies suggest that most of the damage inflicted on Liberia, during the two civil wars, may have been mostly deliberate. It seems that various combatant groups swept back and forth across the country between December 24, 1989 and July 2003, and destroyed schools, health centers, and administrative buildings. According to these authors, others raped women and killed innocent Liberian citizens, often including unarmed women and children. Some of the rebels recruited children as soldiers, cooks, and sex slaves (Lukongo & Rezek 2016).

Against this background, this study examines the impact of the civil wars on the economic development of Liberia. The main research question is how did the civil wars impact the economic development of Liberia? The study is organized around five sections. Section 1 introduces the study while Section 2 presents the theoretical frameworks along with related empirical studies. Section 3 outlines the interrupted time-series research design, the statistical tests employed here, and the empirical strategy selected for the study. Section 4 discusses the main results and Section 5 presents the conclusions and discussions. The period under investigation includes the pre-civil war from 1960 to 1988, the civil wartime from 1989 to 2003, and post-civil war from 2004 to 2017.

## **Literature Review**

This section provides an overview of civil war theories, the political and economic development theories and theories related to corruption based on the research question and the research design. To limit the scope, this set of theories builds the theoretical framework, which then guides the research enterprise and provides ground for the interpretation of the results and discussions of findings. The study acknowledges other theories

and rival assumptions found in the existing literature, but does not mentioned here. The selected themes enhance the understanding of the problematic of this study. Students and scholars of economic development are acquainted with the writings or works of a sample of scholars carefully selected to serve the purpose of this study. A sample of this scholarship is presented in what follows. The achievements and failures of political development or economic development in Liberia, the uncertainties and challenges it still faces and will continue to face. All of these issues find some explanations from the theoretical frameworks, as well as the experiences of other countries presented here.

Research indicates that at the onset of the independence in the continent, many African leaders embraced the modernization theory and build their hopes and aspirations around what happened in terms of political development and economic development in Western societies (the United Kingdom, France, United States of America) and Asia (China), to name a few. It is obvious that donors of all stripes foster the modernization theory as a means of economic development in transition or modernizing countries. It is important to note that history, actors both domestic and international, and the global political landscape matter when analyzing this case of Liberia. The country started off with ethnic division.

This review is grounded within the theoretical lens of political development, political decay and economic development. Despite the varied histories of Western societies and Asian ones, there is some convergence from these experiments on the role played by the state, as the overarching institution, the law, democratic accountability, specific sets of circumstances and political and social actors. The price of political and economic developments come with high premium of revolutionary violence. But these success stories were able to shape their courses toward political and economic development. To illustrate, Moore (1966:426-427) notes that the road to western democracy

has been punctuated by revolutionary violence, as evidenced by the cases of the English Civil War, the French Revolution, and the American Civil War. These wars paved the way to the advancement of democracy. Seen from this angle, it is our understanding that countries aspiring for political or economic development should not follow this path for obvious reasons. However, these considerations enlighten our discussions and gives a clear assessment of times and circumstances that are country-specific and time-sensitive in the quest for economic or political development. The lessons learned helped other countries to model and evaluate their political development.

In discussing "Political Order in Changing Societies" Huntington (1968:2-6) distinctly elaborates on the political gap, which is the noticeable difference in degree of government, laments shortage of political community and effective, authoritative, and legitimate governments, and warns that "... economic development and political development are two independent goals and progress toward one has no necessary connection with progress toward the other." He also raises our awareness regarding the misguided prescriptions from modernization theory, which favors the elusive quest for economic development as a precondition for political development. Pointing to the right direction, the root cause of political decay or instability, according to Huntington (1968:4) is the discrepancy between the rapid social change and the involvement of new groups into politics, as well as the slow development of political institutions. As related to corruption in modernizing societies, including Liberia, Huntington (1968:66-67) stresses that,

The opportunities for the accumulation of wealth through private activity are limited by traditional norms, the monopoly of economic roles by ethnic minorities, or the domination of the economy by

foreign companies and investors. In such a society, politics becomes the road to wealth, and those enterprising ambitions and talents which cannot find what they want in business may yet do so in politics...Corruption, like, violence, results when the absence of mobility opportunities outside politics, combined with weak and inflexible political institutions, channels energies into politically deviant behavior...In a such system corruption tends to accentuate already existing inequalities. Those who gain access to the most political power also have the more frequent opportunities to gain access to the most wealth.

Following Huntington's footsteps, in his book titled "Political Order and Political Decay: From the Industrial Revolution to the Globalization of Democracy," Fukuyama (2014:25) rekindles this discussion by highlighting three enabling features: a competent state, strong rule of law, and democratic accountability that pave the way for political development. Fukuyama brings to light challenges faced by developing countries using the metaphor of "Getting to Denmark." According to Fukuyama (2014:25), the ideal country—Denmark is "prosperous, democratic, secure, well governed, and experiences low levels of corruption." This implies that on this quest, the best effort is to understand better: (1) how did Denmark get where it is today, (2) what does it do to maintain a harmonious balance among the state, law, and democratic accounting; and (3) how does it generate, distribute and maintain its wealth? In fact, Liberians and Liberianist scholars have the specific task to respond to these questions and decide which route will be comparable to Denmark *à la* Fukuyama.

A word of caution comes from Di Palma (1990:4) on "To Craft Democracies: An Essay on Democratic Transitions." He stresses that democratic transitions viewed from recent



developments show signs of impatience and violence. He advises that crisis using the etymological definition from Greeks, that is, sorting out, choosing, deciding” should be an impetus leading to the mountain of hopes that Liberians shall leverage. Seen from the bright side, it is reasonable to contemplate the issue of culture and its relation to political and economic development. Values shall propel and justify political institutions, which will be anchored on imbedded flexibility of adaptation to changing circumstances during the potential phase of political decay. If any, for some reasons, has to occur, it will be a wake-up call for democratic accountability.

Historical records indicate that civil war short-circuits political as well as economic development in all aspects. Very conclusively, a recent study conducted by Lukongo and Rezek (2016) suggests unequivocally that civil war, as a matter of fact, very often disrupts an entire agricultural system in a country; and these impacts may extend very deeply into neighboring nations as spillover effects in the form of residual violence and refugee migration. It should be noted that civil wars have destructive effects such as deaths, diseases, hardship, trauma, displacement (Arquilla, 2009; Collier & Hoeffler, 2004; Goldsmith, 1987; Murshed, 2002). The consequences of war can linger on for years after armed combat has ceased (Mason 2009:63).

## **Methodology**

### ***Research Design***

In this section, we present the rationale for and the efficacy of the interrupted time-series design. The effect of war on economic development indicators can be measured and tested using a time-series design proposed here following the standard practice in the applied literature. The design is called interrupted time-series because the timeline of Liberia has been interrupted by

war events. Civil war is believed to be a disruptor of the economic development indicators in three distinct periods, that is, before (1960-1988), during (1989-2003), and after civil war (2004-2017). Beyond our good intentions, the time division is constrained by the availability of the data maintained by the Word Bank Group. This research design allows us to ask question—how war has affected the economic development indicators in Liberia? The data gathered for this study possess the structure of a time series. To illustrate, the year is the reference point of data production and collection for this study. Several scholars have employed this design because it is conducive to evaluating the proposition that civil war has had an impact on the economic development of Liberia.

### *Data Collection, Sources and Variable Construction*

The main sources of the data are the databases maintained by the World Bank Group called the World Development Indicators, the Peace Research Institute Oslo, Norway, the popular press such the British Broadcasting Company, and governmental agencies such the U.S. Central Intelligence Agency. The second dataset came from the Peace Research Institute Oslo (PRIO), Norway, using the threshold number of battle related deaths of at least 1,000. The history of political development and decay of Liberia was utilized to create a binary variable, which portrays the civil war period running from 1989 to 2003. In the same fashion, a multinomial variable was constructed to capture three phases of the political development and decay of Liberia. This variable takes on a value of one during the pre-civil wartime from 1960 to 1988, a value of two during the civil war from 1989 to 2003, and a value of three during the post-war, that is, from 2004 to 2017.

The timeline and war events underwent a cross examination. As for this study, thirteen measures of economic development were extracted from the World Development Indicators, including the total population, the real gross domestic

product per capita (GDP measured in constant US dollars), the foreign direct investment expressed as a percent of GDP, the official development assistance expressed as a percent of GDP, the infant mortality rate reported per 1,000 live births, the total unemployment represented as a percent of the total labor force, the trade flows expressed as a percent of GDP, the imports of goods and services as reported as a percent of GDP, the exports of goods and services rendered as a percent of GDP, the military expenditure noted as a percent of GDP, the livestock production index, the food production index, and the crop production index. The summary statistics and different means comparison tests are reported in Table 1, using these three periods to investigate differences in the averages of the economic development indicators.

### ***Methods***

At this stage of the descriptive analysis, Figures 1-6 provide a graphical depiction or in other words, the exploratory statistical analysis. The  $y$ -axis shows one of the economic development indicators and the  $x$ -axis displays years from 1960 to 2017. A special attention is paid to the significant turning points of economic development indicators and its relationship with political events.

The analysis of variance (ANOVA) was performed to test the difference in averages of 13 economic development indicators organized in pre-, during, and post-war periods. Let consider 58 years, which were disrupted by political development or decay. In order to successful compare these three periods, the sample is divided into three groups. Let also assume  $y_{ij}$  represents any of the thirteen economic development indicators. Following Milliken and Johnson (2009, p.2), the means model was carefully selected to represent the data structure as shown in equation (1). The means model is written as:

$$y_{ij} = \mu_i + \varepsilon_{ij} \quad i = 1, 2, 3 \text{ and } j = 1 \dots 58 \quad \varepsilon_{ij} \sim i.i.d. N(0, \sigma^2) \quad (1)$$

where  $\mu_i$  represents the average of any economic development indicator,  $i$  stands for the three periods,  $j$  represents years under analysis, and  $\varepsilon_{ij}$  is the standard error term.

Relating to the model above, the null hypothesis is that there is no difference among the averages of economic development indicators estimates in three periods described above. Notice that the subscripts of 1-3 reflect the division of the timeline. The null hypothesis is specified as,  $H_0: \mu_1 = \mu_2 = \mu_3$  versus the alternative hypothesis,  $H_a: \text{not } H_0$ . An appropriate F-statistic is employed in the empirical studies to test the null hypothesis using the full model and the restricted model. It is written as assuming the null hypothesis holds true:

$$F_c = \frac{SS_{H_0} / df_{H_0}}{ESS_F / df_F} \quad (2)$$

where  $SS_{H_0}$  represents the sum squares resulting from the difference between the restricted and the full models,  $df_{H_0}$  is its corresponding degrees of freedom;  $ESS_F$  is the error sum squares of the full model and its related degrees of freedom are represented by  $df_F$ . The decision rule for rejecting the null hypothesis is that the p-value associated with the  $F$ -statistic shown above shall be less than the conventional levels of significance of 0.01 (for very strong evidence against the null hypothesis), 0.05 (for strong evidence against the null hypothesis), and 0.10 (for weak evidence against the null hypothesis).

Three versions of ANOVA were applied, namely Bonferroni, Scheffe, and Sidak versions. Milliken and Johnson (2009:48-49) provide an excellent summary of these three versions of the analysis of variance. These authors argue that the

Bonferroni's method is not frequently employed but it is suitable for a small number of comparisons like the one for this study. As for the Scheffe's version of ANOVA, these scholars advise that empiricists apply it when employing a large number of planned comparisons. They also acknowledge that the Sidak's version of the ANOVA provides a modification of the Bonferroni method by using a different percentage point for each of the comparisons in order to calculate a  $t$ -statistic for each of the comparisons. The consistency in reporting results from different versions of the ANOVA adds credibility to our findings. It is important to know globally the difference, but still there is a lack of specifics in differences between two periods. Tukey-Kramer method is favored in the accomplishing this task.

This study employs Tukey-Kramer method because it yields all pairwise comparisons without repetition not available in the standard ANOVA procedure. For this reason, the Tukey's multiple comparison test, which called Tukey's honestly significant difference test or Tukey's HSD is popular in applied studies. Milliken and Johnson (2009:50) present the difference between averages (means) without repetition; that is,  $\mu_i - \mu_{i'}$ . This approach is appropriate for this because the 14 economic indicators are compared in this sequence: war versus pre-war, post-war versus pre-war, and post-war versus war as documented in Table 2. In order to reject the null hypothesis, these authors suggest to employ the following:

$$| \hat{\mu}_i - \hat{\mu}_{i'} | > q_{\alpha, t, v} \sqrt{\frac{\sigma^2}{2} \left[ \frac{1}{n_i} + \frac{1}{n_{i'}} \right]} \quad (3)$$

where the first part of equation (3) represents the difference in averages of the pre-war and war and the second part of the equation is employed to obtain the  $t$ -statistic. The latter is evaluated using the conventional levels of significance. Furthermore,  $v$  is the degrees of freedom for the estimation of the variance (sigma squared),  $\alpha$  is the level of significance, and  $t$  is

the  $t$  method employed to calculate the  $t$ -statistic. It is important to note that  $n_i$  and  $n_j$  represent the sample size of pre-war and war, respectively.

Consistent with the main research design, which is the interrupted time-series design, this study leverages the time-series econometrics capabilities to model the relationship between war and the selected economic development indicators. Recall that this study aims to investigate the impact of civil war on the economic development of Liberia is below:

$$Y_t = \beta_0 + \beta_1 \text{war}_t + Z_t' \Theta + \mu_t \quad (4)$$

where  $Y_t$  represents an economic development indicator such as GDP per capita, foreign direct investment, to name a few.  $\text{War}_t$  is a binary variable and takes on a value of one during the wartime, which is, from 1989 to 2003, and elsewhere zero.  $Z_t$  is a matrix of covariates, which may potentially affect for instance GDP per capita. A severe warning comes from seasoned applied econometricians such as Angrist and Pischke(2009:64), who caution empiricists about bad controls as follow:

*We've make the point that control for covariates can increase the likelihood that regression estimates have a causal interpretation. But more control is not always better. Some variables are bad controls and should not be included in a regression model...Bad controls are variables that are themselves outcome variables in the notional experiment. That is, bad controls might just as well be dependent variables too.*

Bad controls have the tendency to undermine the relationship between the response variable and the explanatory variable(s). Several attempts have been made in this study to

test whether or not adding a control would alter the relationship between war and real GDP per capita. The results reinforce the notion of parsimony (a simple model) adopted for this study. That is, results do not change by that much to warrant the use of controls.

Again, the timeline of 1960 and 2017 is based on when the data from the World Bank Group and the World Development Indicators became available. These data are organized in the pre-war years, civil war years, and post-war years. The pre-war period of Liberia is from 1960 to 1988, which included part of the long rule of the late President William V.S. Tubman's administration as well as William R. Tolbert Jr.'s administration, and also Samuel K. Doe's administration. The civil war period of Liberia, which is part of the focus of this study, is from 1989 to 2003. It include such events as (1) the insurgency led by another rebel leader, Charles Taylor, who eventually became an elected President of Liberia; 2) the assassination of then President Doe by the rebel group led by Prince Yormie Johnson; and (3) the emergence of various rebel groups that fought to control various parts of Liberia. The post-war period of Liberia, which is another important part of this study, was between 2003 and 2017. This period included the interim administration of Gyude Bryant, the presidency of Ellen Johnson Sirleaf (2006-2018), and the election of former international soccer star, George Opong Weah, as the President of Liberia.

## **Results**

### ***Background***

This section discusses the findings of the overall research recorded in Tables 1-3. Columns 1-5 of Table 1 present results related to the analysis of variance (ANOVA), which compares the averages of economic development indicators in three periods, that is, pre-war, war, and post-war. Table 2 shows the results from Tukey-Kramer's test, which was designed to probe the difference

in averages of war versus pre-war, post-war versus pre-war, and post-war versus war, respectively. Columns 1-7 of Table 3 present results from the regression analysis of civil war and its relation to selected economic development indicators.

***Exploratory Analysis of Economic Development Indicators in Pre-, During- & Post-War***

As stated earlier, Liberia is analyzed over the course of 58 years. The timeline is divided into three parts: (1) pre-civil war period in Liberia (2) the civil war period in Liberia; and (3) the post-civil war period in Liberia.

Figure 1 illustrates the situation of the real income during the period under investigation. The real income begun at \$1,273.5 in 1960, reaching all time high of \$1,683 in 1972. However, it decreased thereafter to \$1,575 in 1979. There is a noticeable drop of real income between 1979 and the onset of the first Liberian civil war. That period was punctuated by failed military coup in 1985. In the years 1989-1996, known as the first Liberian civil war, the real income plummeted to \$123 in 1996, from \$1575 in 1979. This was a major drop, following the perpetration of violence by the rebel group, National Patriotic Front of Liberia, in early 1990s. The real income dipped to \$123, before it begun an upward trajectory in the mid- 1990s, during the period of relative peace. Later a decline is recorded in the early 2000s, which was fueled by the outbreak of the second Liberian civil war, and the resulting heavy fighting. However, later during the period, small gains in real income had been reclaimed, but still at the lower levels. However, heavy fighting resumed in 2003(Gershoni 1997; Richards 2003). Consequently, real income meandered around \$272 and \$353. The Comprehensive Peace Agreement of the Accra Peace Accord officially ended the war in August 2003.



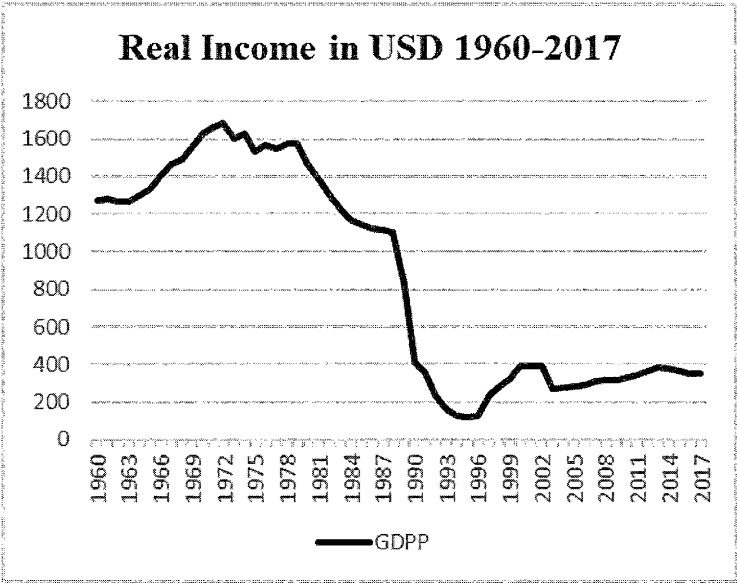


Figure 1: Liberia’s Real Income (real GDP per capita, GDPP) from 1960 to 2017

The analysis of Figure 2 suggests that trade yields more to the Liberian economy, representing about 124.4 percent of the GDP. But, completely stopped two years prior to the onset of the first Liberian civil war in 1989. The best trade performance ever recorded lasted for for three years (2004-2007). But, there was a big plunge from 311.4 percent of GDP in 2007, to 95 percent of GDP in 2010. Thus far, the post-war trade performance is encouraging.

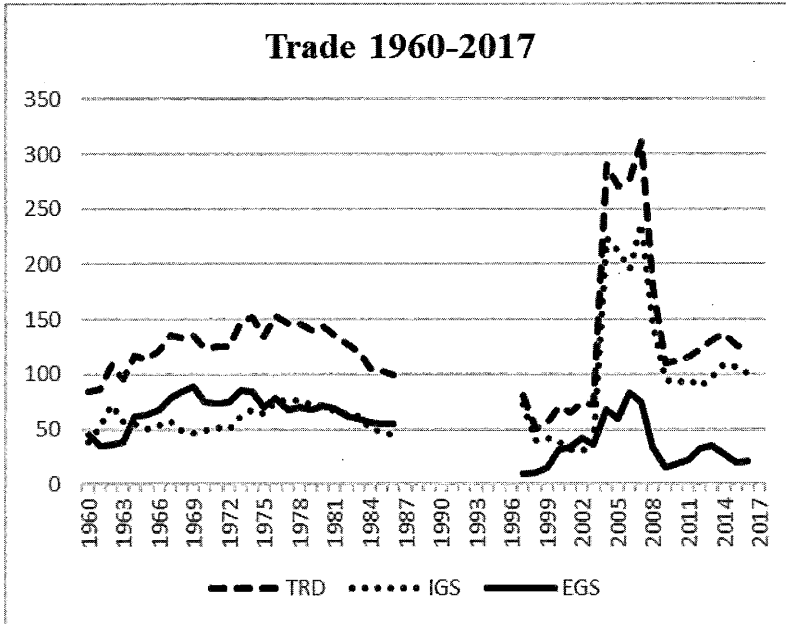


Figure 2: Liberia's Trade as a percent of GDP (TRD), Imports of Goods & Services (IGS), and Exports of Goods & Services (EGS) expressed as percent of GDP from 1960 to 2017.

Major donors, including the United States of America, Sweden, United Kingdom, France, Germany, and the People's Republic of China have provided tremendous amount of aid to Liberia. The assistance received during the post-war period is 6.5 times more compared to the pre-war figures. On the foreign direct investment, Liberia did not attract that much in the pre-war era. It was only 9.95 percent of the GDP. This investment tripled during the wartime and stayed as such in the post-war levels. It is evident that the FDI reached its lowest level -203 percent of GDP in 1998, from its all-time high of 167.33 percent of GDP in 1997. The reason is that political violence and intermittent fighting inside and across the borders fueled insecurity and uncertainty among investors.

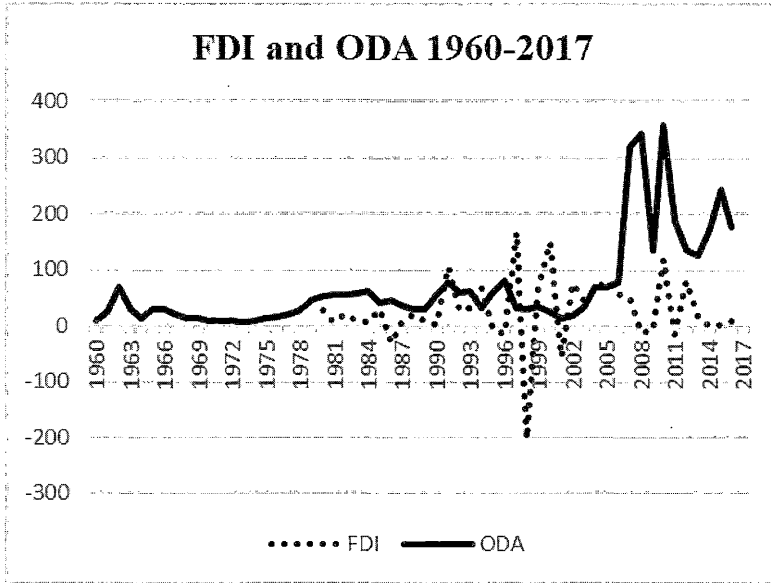


Figure 3: Liberia's Foreign Direct Investment & Official Development Assistance (in percent of GDP).

As for military expenditure, Liberia spent about 1.84 percent of its GDP in pre-wartime and about 0.73 percent in post-war. Data indicate a dramatic leap of military spending to 16.51 percent of GDP, close to 9 times compare to the pre-war figures.

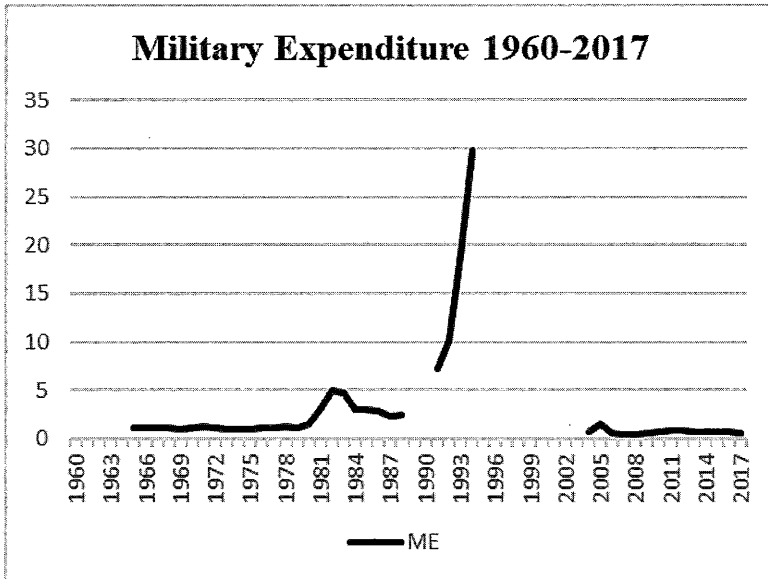


Figure 4: Liberia's Military Expenditures (in percent of GDP) from 1965 to 2017.

The agriculture sector was negatively affected by the two civil wars in Liberia. As shown in Figure 6, the production indexes related to food and crop reveal such decline, which is supported by the evidence reported in Lukongo and Rezek (2016) for the Continent of Africa. However, livestock production index posted upward trend tapping 794.3 percent.

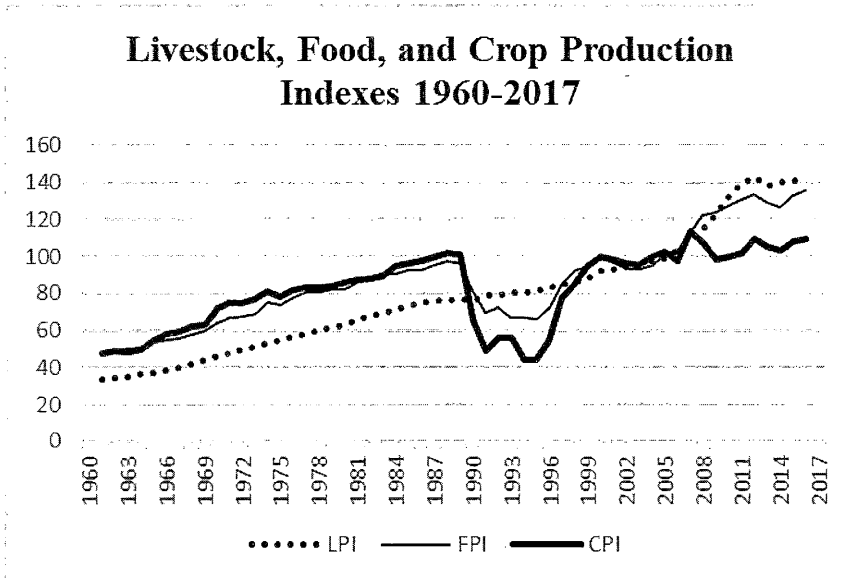


Figure 6: Liberia's Livestock Production Index (LPI), Food Production Index (FPI), & Crop Production Index (CPI).

### *Testing for Difference in Economic Development Indicators Averages using the Analysis of Variance*

The immediate purpose of the analysis in this section is to provide an examination of the impact of the destructive civil war on the economic development of Liberia. Columns 1-4 of Table 1 present the averages of the economic development indicators for the entire period of study, the average of pre-war, war, and post war, respectively. The last column 5 of the same table shows the results related to the analysis of variance for these three periods of Liberia's political development or decay. Our findings indicate a very significant difference in averages of all economic development indicators except the foreign direct investment (FDI) during the period under study. Column 5 of Table shows almost all F-statistics pass the test of significance at the 1 percent level; but,

we fail to find evidence that foreign direct investment was different among these subsequent periods of political decay in Liberia. The reason is that data on FDI become available late in the pre-war era in 1980; that is, 9 years prior to the civil war onset. Notice that foreign direct investment did not increase by that much during (30.76 percent of GDP) and after the civil war (31.37 percent of GDP) as shown in columns 3 and 4 of Table 1 in the row about the middle part of the first upper quarter of the table. It is important to note that the data on unemployment became available from 1992 onwards.

Table 1: Means Comparison Test Using the Analysis of Variance

	All	Mean	Mean	Mean	ANOVA
		Pre-War	Pre-War	Post-War	F-stat
Economic Development Indicators	1960-2017	1960-1988	1989-2003	2004-2017	
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
Total Population	2,400,518	1,635,122	2,417,223	3,965,941	144.08***
GDP per capita (constant 2010 US\$)	860.86	1,401.28	309.24	332.29	332.81***
Foreign direct investment, net outflows (% of GDP)	26.06	9.95	30.76	31.37	0.39
Net ODA received per capita (current US\$)	67.82	28.60	42.14	184.98	44.93***

	All	Mean	Mean	Mean	ANOVA
		Pre-War	Pre-War	Post-War	F-stat
Mortality rate, infant (per 1,000 live births)	146.30	181.10	148.81	71.52	146.16***
Unemployment, total (% of total labor force)	4.54		5.63	3.53	23.69***
Agriculture, forestry, and fishing VA (% of GDP)	45.60	30.39	67.63	49.10	51.40***
Trade (% of GDP)	130.43	124.36	66.84	177.27	14.94***
Imports of goods and services (% of GDP)	78.00	58.62	41.43	137.93	33.81***
Exports of goods and services (% of GDP)	52.43	65.73	25.41	39.35	20.11***
Military expenditure (% of GDP)	2.87	1.84	16.51	0.73	47.53***
Livestock production index (2004-2006=100)	78.65	54.15	84.50	124.70	123.03***

	All	Mean	Mean	Mean	ANOVA
		Pre-War	Pre-War	Post-War	F-stat
Food Production index (2004-2006=100)	86.62	72.52	82.98	121.17	48.99***
Crop production index (2004-2006=100)	82.03	75.72	74.53	104.28	14.90***

***Deconstructing Differences of Economic Development Indicators using Tukey's Test***

The analysis of variance documents the difference in the three political development or decay eras of Liberia without indicating between-era differences. Drawing from the empirical literature, the multiple means comparison test selected for this study—the Tukey-Kramer method— lends such a possibility of comparing between-era averages in orderly manner. Columns 1-3 of Table 2 report findings of difference in average economic development indicators in this sequence, war versus pre-war, post-war versus pre-war, and post-war versus war. Overall, two patterns emerged from the results. That is, gains and losses were recorded in the economic development indicators. On reading figures in columns 1-3 of Table 2, the first figure located in the same row as the economic development indicator is the difference between averages of war vs. pre-war, post-war vs. pre-war, and post-war vs. war, respectively. Underneath is the *t*-statistic presented in square bracket and its corresponding p-value is presented in parentheses. All p-values are evaluated at the conventional level of significance 0.01, 0.05, and 0.10. One rejects the null hypothesis of non-significant difference between averages when the p-value shown in columns 1-3 is less than the above levels of significance.



The strength of evidence weakens with the increasing value of the  $p$ -value.

As for the population, the Tukey test results indicate that Liberia's population increased by 748,101 on average between the pre-war and wartime and by slightly above 1.5 million between 2003 and 2017. The same data show that the total population of Liberia increased by about 2.3 million from the 1960s to 2017. It is our contention that many Liberians fled the country and migrated to other countries. In addition, many also died due to the fighting. This implies that the demographic projections are based on the wrong assumptions. Some researchers are skeptical of the quality of population projections, which fails to include the reality of war ridden countries. There is an urgent need to update the population statistics, which are so far misleading. This conditioned dataset is a good example of a bad control in the regression analysis setting.

The analysis of the real income or gross domestic product per person suggests substantial losses of income in the order of \$1,092 between the pre-war and the wartime, and \$1,069 between the pre-war and the post-war. Data indicate no statistical significant difference in average income (\$23.04  $p$ -value = 0.920) during and after the war as shown in columns 1-3 of Table 2, when reading from the GDP per capita row. Prior to the war, a typical Liberian was 4.53 times better off, compared to a Liberian living in wartime. Likewise, a Liberian during the pre-war era was 4.22 times better off, compared to a Liberian living in the post-war era, with \$332.29.

When analyzing the foreign direct investment, Liberia posts some gains. However, they are not statistically significant at the conventional levels. Some are skeptical and question the validity of foreign investment figures. Beyond the statistical dialog, it transpires from the war discourse and the popular press reporting that during the war years, illegal exploitation of natural resources was common. The recording of transactions is far from imagination

in war ridden settings.

On the other hand, the official development assistance exhibits substantial gains tapping fairly 143 percent of GDP, when compared to the situation during and after civil war. It is also evident that Liberia had more office development assistance in the post-war period. This is because after the war ended, the international community poured money and other resources into this country.

Table 2: Means Comparison Tests following Tukey-Kramer Method

Economic Development Indicators	War vs. Pre-War	Post-War vs. Pre-War	Post-War vs. War
	(1)	(2)	(3)
Total Population	748,100.8	2,330,818	1,546,718
	[5.84]	[16.97]	[9.86]
	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)
GDP per capita (constant 2010 US\$)	-1,092.09	-1,068.99	23.04
	[-21.52]	[-20.59]	(0.000)
	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.920)
Foreign direct investment, net outflows (% of GDP)	20.98	21.43	0.61
	[0.79]	[0.80]	[0.03]
	(0.710)	(0.703)	(0.999)
Net ODA received per capita (current US\$)	13.55	156.39	142.84
	[0.84]	[9.20]	[7.40]

Economic Development Indicators	War vs. Pre-War	Post-War vs. Pre-War	Post-War vs. War
	(0.680)	(0.000)	(0.000)
Mortality rate infant (per 1,000 live births)	-32.30	-109.58	-77.28
	[-5.15]	[-17.09]	[-10.55]
	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)
Unemployment, total (% of total labor force)			-2.10
			[-4.87]
			(0.000)
Agriculture, forestry, and fishing, value added (% of GDP)	37.24	18.71	-18.53
	[10.05]	[4.94]	[-4.40]
	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)
Trade (% of GDP)	-57.51	52.92	110.43
	[-3.08]	[3.56]	[5.35]
	(0.010)	(0.003)	(0.000)
Imports of goods and services (% of GDP)	-17.19	79.30	96.50
	[-1.30]	[7.51]	[6.58]
	(0.405)	(0.000)	(0.000)
Exports of goods and services (% of GDP)	-40.32	-26.38	13.94
	[-5.48]	[-4.50]	[1.71]
	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.212)
Military expenditure (% of GDP)	14.66	-1.11	-15.77
	[9.17]	[-1.11]	[-9.40]
	(0.000)	(0.511)	(0.000)

Economic Development Indicators	War vs. Pre-War	Post-War vs. Pre-War	Post-War vs. War
Livestock production index (2004-2006=100)	30.35	70.54	40.19
	[7.02]	[15.56]	[7.85]
	(0.000)	0.000	(0.000)
Food production index (2004-2006=100)	10.46	48.65	38.19
	[2.22]	[9.84]	[6.84]
	(0.077)	(0.000)	(0.000)
Crop production index (2004-2006=100)	-1.19	28.57	29.75
	[-0.22]	[5.07]	[4.68]
	(0.973)	(0.000)	0.000

### *Empirical Results*

It is important to recall that the main purpose of this study is to empirically examine the impact of civil wars on the economic development of Liberia. Columns 1-7 of Table 3 display the main results. The dependent variable in each model is one of the economic development indicators, while the dependent variable is a war dummy ( $\geq 1,000$  battle related deaths per year).

We find strong evidence that civil war in Liberia is negatively associated with decline in economic development indicators, which is consistent with theoretical predictions. As shown about the middle portion of Table 3, civil war contributed to the reduction of the real income by about \$744 on average per year, as noted in column 1. There is trade loss to Liberia amounting 75 percent of GDP. In the same vein, exports and imports decreased by fairly 32 and 43 percent of GDP, respectively. During civil

war, the official development assistance was reduced by almost 35 percent of GDP. As expected, unemployment rate rose by 2.02 percent as a result of civil war. Column (7) of Table 3 indicates that the military expenditure spiked to 15.07 percent of GDP, the highest ever recorded in the history of Liberia.

In this empirical study, one shall ask the counterfactual outcome in the absence of war. In other words, how do economic development indicators perform in the absence of war, using the regression analysis results? The best place to be is at the first row of Table 3, which reads “constant.” The epistemic duty of the constant or the y-intercept in the regression analysis is to provide the average value of the response variable when letting the independent variable(s) to be zero. For the specific case of this study, we employ a simple model where war dummy variable is the only independent variable, which is set to zero. In the absence of war, the average real income in Liberia should have been slightly above \$ 1,053, during the period under study. Official development assistance and trade were supposed to be almost 77 and 142 percent of GDP, respectively. The unemployment rate should be hovering around 3.53 percent, and the military spending at 1.44 percent of GDP, between 1960 and 2017, in the absence of war. Consistent with the well-received literature, our findings clearly show evidence of substantial losses in wartime (Mason 2009; McGovern 2005).

**Table 3: Relating War to Economic Development Indicators**

	GDPP	ODA	UER	TRADE	Export	Import	Military Exp
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)
constant	1,053.238	76.99	3.53	141.55	51.16	84.40	1.44
	[14.80]	[5.34]	[8.51]	[8.091]	[16.56]	[10.60]	[8.01]
	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)
War	-743.99	-34.86	2.09	-74.71	-31.74	-42.97	15.07
	[-5.32]	[-2.27]	[5.05]	[-16.78]	[-5.31]	[-4.56]	[3.35]

	GDPP	ODA	UER	TRADE	Export	Import	Military Exp
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)
	(0.000)	(0.027)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.002)
R2	0.3355	0.0273	0.4865	0.2326	0.2367	0.1007	0.7000
F-stat	28.88	5.15	25.50	65.38	28.21	20.81	11.20
p-value	(0.000)	(0.027)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.002)
N	58	57	27	47	47	47	27

Note: Reading from the left side of the table, one notes three rows associated with the constant(y-intercept) and war dummy and thereafter, one row is associated with the coefficient of determination (predicting power of the model), the global test of significance of parameters associated variable(s), that is, the F-statistic, its related probability to reject the null hypothesis, and lastly, the number of observations (N). Notice that the estimated coefficients, the t-statistic in square brackets, and the p-value in parentheses are reported in rows 1-3, respectively under columns 1-7.

## Conclusion

Most certainly, the overall relevance of the study on the impact of the civil war on the economic development of Liberia between 1989 and 2003 is endless. Our findings are consistent with previously reported losses recorded in wartime. The average Liberian's standard of living has been changed to its lowest levels for the foreseeable future. This study is exploratory by design and acknowledges some limitations due to data availability. The literature suggests some avenues that Liberia may explore in its quest for political and economic development. Among others, Huntington (1968:2) suggests the creation of political community emanating from the middle class and capable government bureaucracy selected on a meritorious basis. This is because the bulk of the economic development efforts are propelled by the state.

In the same vein, Di Palma (1990:15) suggests that countries in democratic transition, including Liberia, leverage success stories and learn from failures as it is a set of already tested and strictly political institutions and practices, rules, and procedures from which a number of otherwise diverse countries we

thus call ‘democratic’ have variously borrowed over time in order to govern themselves.

It is to this specifics, and not to an abstract, that political actors in a transition react today in a variety of ways: by deferring to them; by selecting from them; by improvising, innovating, inventing upon them. It is to this pool, and not to an abstract, that concrete actors may turn at one concrete point for one convenient purpose—in essence, setting up government in diversity as a way of defusing conflict.

Also, the results show abysmally low standard of living for the majority of Liberians in the foreseeable future, if nothing is done to reverse the trend of deprivation. It is our understanding that this study cannot offer what it takes for Liberia to get to the socio-economic development status of Denmark. But rather, the study can only point to the imperative of a harmonious balance among three anchors of political development—a competent state, strong rule of law, and democratic accountability, which promote human development and social mobility. Clearly, more work lies ahead in this quest for political and economic development in Liberia.

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## **Traditional Food Management Regimes: An Alternative Approach for Food Security in Post Conflict Liberia**

**Emmanuel O. Oritsejafor**

### **Introduction**

The World Food Summit in 1996, defined food security as a condition that exists “when all people at all times have access to sufficient, safe, and nutritious food to maintain a healthy and active life” (Tian, Bryksa, and Yada 2016:p.155 ). The problem of food security in developing countries is severe, particularly in Sub Saharan Africa(SSA), where 218 million people are undernourished. SSA accounts for more than 950 million people, which is about 13 percent of the global population. This translates into one quarter of the population. In sub-Saharan Africa (SSA), 30 percent of children under age five are under weight (Wiggins: 2008). Factors that have contributed to this problem include general demographic trends in third world nations that are caused by more mouths to feed, public policies that are not consistent with development realities, and crude farming methods (Oritsejafor 2004).

The number of undernourished people in SSA has increased by 44 million to reach 218 million. Undernourishment has been a long-standing development challenge in SSA despite being reduced from 33 percent in 1990 -1992 to 23 percent in 2014-2016. In 2014-2016 the percentage of undernourishment in SSA remains the highest among developing regions (Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development-Food and Agriculture Organization 2016: 60).

In the case of Liberia, 14 years after the two civil wars, and the development of several agricultural rehabilitation programs such as the Agriculture Production and Productivity Enhancement Project (Ministry of Agriculture, Liberia 2015), the country is ranked as the thirteen lowest country in terms of human development by the United Nations Development Program (UNDP). Sixty percent of Liberians face poverty and forty percent are vulnerable to food insecurity (Fouladbash 2013).

Therefore, an examination of the nature of food insecurity in Liberia will provide an understanding of the breadth and depth of the development challenges that has ensued in Liberia's agricultural sector thus paving the way for alternative policy direction. Hence, the article examines the nature and dynamics of food security in Liberia, and offers some suggestions for addressing the resulting challenges.

## **Theoretical Issues**

### ***Literature Review***

The emerging literature on food security in Liberia has suggested that the phenomenon is a major impediment to attaining sustainable agricultural development. According to Johnson, (2010:49), "Liberia is food insecure... and at least four in every 10 Liberians are unable to access the adequate amount of food to meet their nutritional requirements..." Along these lines, in 2017, an assessment of chronic food insecurity in Liberia facilitated by the United States Agency for International (USAID) shows that 32 percent of Liberia's 4.2 million people were classified as moderate or severe Chronic Food Insecure (CFI) (USAID: 2017). CFI was highest in the South-eastern region, comprising Grand Gedeh, Rivercess, Sinoe, Grand Kru, Maryland, and River Gee Counties, where it ranged between 40 and 45 percent; when compared to other rural areas where it has been 30 to 35 percent (United States

Agency for International Development 2017).

The agriculture sector provides sustenance for 70 percent of Liberia's population that are engaged in the farming of rubber, rice, oil palm, and cocoa. However, low agricultural productivity has contributed to Liberia importing more than 80 percent of its staple food, thus exposing the country to the global market price volatility (Ministry of Agriculture, Liberia 2015: 4, 21). It is projected that Liberia spends about \$20 million on food imports every year, which is about 15 percent of its Gross Domestic Product (GDP), and loses about \$5 million every year to post harvest wastage (Worzie 2016).

The inherent dependency on food imports suggest that Liberia is challenged by food security, which has ushered in the need to address this development balance through an alternative framework. One of such frameworks prescribed by an agricultural based organization for Liberia, Africa Rice, is the use of modern technologies that is not labor intensive (Tamba 2018: 1). Similarly, Lovendall (2007:105) suggested that mechanized farming has its strengths in regard to agricultural development. However, he recognized the cost related weaknesses for rural farmers.

However, Djebou, Price, Kibriya, and Ahn (2017:9) found in their comparative study of agricultural assets and food security of rural households in Ghana, Senegal and Liberia that even when modern technologies are accounted for as inputs, the usage of technologies such as tractors were not statistically significant in the case of Liberia. The study found that 54 percent of households in Ghana were food secured; 37 percent and 12 percent in Senegal and Liberia respectively were food secured. Thus, it was suggested that there was a correlation between income and food security status of households.

There are four dominant orientations often used by development agencies, policy makers, and some social

scientists for addressing food security in Africa: Dualism, Agro-Technological, Socio-Anthropological, and the Development orientation. The theoretical works on economic development by the Keynesian school of thought provide some of the dominant orientations in the effort to explain the problem of economic decline in developing countries. However, this school of thought appears to have had an enormous influence on contemporary neoclassical theoretical models used for explaining agricultural development in developing regions. Examples of such models are the Bohemian notions of static dualism, and the Higginian dynamic dualism.

The first neo-classical orientation, dualism, uses the growth model as the point of departure for its own model of economic development. Hayami and Ruttan(1971) in their essay on agricultural development, define dualism as the attempt to understand the relationship or the lack of a relationship between a lagging traditional sector and a growing modern sector within non-western societies affected by the economic and military institutions of western colonialism.

Within this orientation, dualism can be seen as either static or dynamic, that is, from a sociological and technological perspective. However, static dualism is concerned with the description of the two sectors of the economy, showing the static nature of the traditional sector while concurrently recommending that such sectors are best left alone (Hayami and Ruttan, 1971). Boeke(1953) in his study of Dutch colonialism in Indonesia provides this thesis on dualism: the traditional sector, he claimed, could never be transformed by outside resources and materials. Thus, any attempt to transform this sector would only result in the continuance of its inherent problems. The general outcome of this recommendation by Boeke has further encouraged the emergence of the enclave model of growth within which has emerged the perspective that a high productivity sector producing for export must co-exist with a low productivity sector producing for domestic consumption.

Winger(1976) on the other hand, elaborates on “enclave dualism”. He views dualism on the basis of the technological differences between the modern and the traditional sectors. The modern sector is concentrating on the primary production of commodities in mining and plantation through its importation of technology from outside while the traditional sector is characterized by wide substitution possibilities between capital and labor and the use of labor-intensive production methods.

Lewis(1954) study on developing countries has likewise made an equal contribution to the understanding of the neo-classical orientation of dualism. Lewis’ analysis is mainly concerned with exploring the relationship between the modern and the traditional sectors. His analysis views developing countries as characterized by an unlimited labor supply in the rural sector; but, if this supply is carefully utilized, it can lead to needed economic development in both the traditional and modern sectors. This model has failed to produce the desire results in most developing countries, because policy makers and development agencies have not been able to strengthen the relationship between the traditional and modern sectors of their economies.

The second orientation that has been utilized in explaining the reason for rural agricultural decline in Africa is the agro-technological orientation. This orientation seems to have the greatest impact on the development strategies that are designed to help ameliorate productivity problems in the agricultural sector. The most important model within this orientation is the diffusionist model. This model is premised on the belief that new farming methods that have been discovered in developed nations would inevitably lead to high agricultural productivity when transferred to developing countries (Schultz 1964).

The third neo-classical orientation frequently used in explaining the problem of agricultural productivity in developing economies is the socio-anthropological approach. This approach

is concerned with the question of why traditional farmers in developing economies seem to have a negative perception of programs directed at transforming their development. Thus, proponents of this approach suggest that developing agencies cannot become successful in transforming traditional societies until they consider the values and social orientations of these societies. This is because they are conditioned by long periods of traditionalism. Thus, change in these societies will occur slowly or, in some cases, never occur (Foster 1967).

However, scholars such as Mouzeli and Brett(1990) reject the growth criteria of the neoclassical orientations, where quantitative increases in such indexes as Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and per capita income are yardsticks for measuring development. Instead, they argue that development should be examined through a country's actual economic, political, cultural structure, and their historical development within the context of the world economy. In this regard, Amin(1976) contends that underdeveloped countries have certain characteristics that oblige us not to confuse them with the now advanced countries. These characteristics are as follows:

1. The extreme inequality that is typical of the distribution of productivities in the periphery and in the system of prices transmitted to it from the center,
2. The disarticulation due to the adjustment of the orientation of production in the periphery to the needs of the center, which prevents the transmission of the benefits of economic progress from the poles of development to the economy as a whole, and
3. Economic domination by the center, which is expressed in the forms of international specialization and in the dependence of the structures whereby growth in the periphery is financed.

Clearly, in the case of Liberia, the inability of past and present Liberian Presidents such as Tolbert and Doe to improve agricultural production with the adoption of the World Bank Green Revolution Schemes have reinforced the need to seek an alternative development approach. Instead, Liberia has become dependent on foreign nations for the supply of rice and other national staples (Somah 2005).

### ***Theoretical Framework: Traditional Food Regimes***

In contrast, this study suggests that an indigenous agricultural approach using Traditional Food Regimes is sustainable, because it would abate the dependency on imported food and encourage increase yields through local production. Improving agricultural development of developing economies such as Liberia is imperative because of the importance of this sector for national development. Its impact is even profound when one examines the socio-economic implications of food security before and after the civil wars in Liberia.

Accordingly, Thomasson (1991:1) suggests that post-war Liberia is in a better position to face the challenges of development-agriculture and providing health care with the adoption of Indigenous Knowledge (IK). He further propounded that IK systems can contribute to recovery, maintain and enhance the lives of rural Liberians. For instance, the use of traditional seed and traditional metallurgy can be pivotal in rebuilding the agricultural sector .

In this regard, several other development scholars have examined the utility of Indigenous Knowledge for agricultural development. Gana (2003) focused on the use of natural plant materials as agro-chemicals among small-scale farmers in three villages in Niger State, in Northern Nigeria. The study revealed that these farmers were able to reduce and control the population of cowpea pests in the field, and parasitic nematodes found in the



soil with the use of botanic chemicals as alternatives to the use of toxic-synthetic agro-chemicals.

In another study, Ajibade and Shokemi (2003) found that IK was used effectively by 95 percent of 200 farmers to identify five weather systems, such as rainfall, harmattan, thunderstorm, windstorm, and sunshine. The study suggests that if IK is integrated with a western-based weather forecast system, it could prove to be an essential element of the development process for farm communities in Nigeria .

Similarly, in other developing countries such as Bangladesh, farmers are noted to have used the store of knowledge they have built over time to enhance food production. For example, in the absence of sufficient natural forests in Bangladesh, more than 50 percent of timber, 85 percent of fuel-wood, and 90 percent of bamboo used are derived from trees and shrubs grown by people on their homesteads (Qudus 2000). In this case, IK is integrated with modern technology to address farm forestry challenges that were caused by over-exploitation of homesteads for food crops and medicinal resources.

Finally, the invaluable contributions of Traditional Food Management Regimes suggest that the use of capital-intensive development approach for agriculture is not necessarily an end game for developing communities, such as those in rural Liberia. Instead, alternative approaches such as Traditional Food Management Regimes must be explored because they are germane to the development realities of rural communities.

## **Methodology**

### ***Data***

This study uses primary and secondary data for addressing the critical issues food security in Liberia. The primary data were collected from a interview conducted in Liberia during a field research visit. Although the number of respondents was limited,

however valuable insights were gained.

In terms of secondary data, they were collected from journals, government documents from such agencies as the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), and international organizations such as the Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO), and the World Bank, as well as online databases for agricultural and economic analysis. The use of secondary data is complementary to the Interpretative Phenomenological Approach (IPA) because of the limited time available to conduct an extensive field study. Nonetheless, available secondary data is rich enough to deepen the extent of the research inquiries.

### ***Method***

This study uses an Interpretative Phenomenological Approach (IPA). The IPA is a qualitative approach whereby the researcher plays a dynamic role in the process; while at the same time he/she attempts to gain access into the participants' world (Warden 2006). Therefore, IPA is epistemologically reflexive. That is the process of inquiry is preoccupied with questions such as: how does the research question define and limit what can be found? How does the study design and method analysis effect the data and its analysis? (Pietkiewicz and Smith 2012). The strength of the IPA approach is advanced by the ability to use established philosophical assumptions in driving research inquiries. The first-hand account of the research participants was considered as it is in this study. Thus, an interview was conducted with a farmer in Gbapolur to provide the contextual understanding of how Traditional Food Management Regimes can be used to address food security among rural communities in a cost-effective manner.

Nonetheless, scholars such as Tuffor (2017) have suggested that IPA is descriptive and not quite interpretative. However, the approach attempts to understand the lived experiences of the participants. It also endeavors to capture the participants'

experiences of a phenomenon by integrating the knowledge of the participants. In this case study, we are limited by the numbers of participants because the field study was limited to a day visit to Liberia because of research logistics such as funding.

### **Challenges of Food Security in Liberia**

Agriculture is a major contributor to Liberia's economy and a primary source of livelihood and employment to about 70 percent of the population (Ministry of Agriculture, Liberia 2015). However, about 20 years after the second civil war, Liberia is ranked as one of the lowest countries in terms of human development. For example, 60 percent of Liberians face poverty, and 40 percent are vulnerable to food insecurity (Fouladbash 2013). The country's economy rebounded strongly after the 2008-2009 global economic recession and grew at about 8.1 percent, as a result of foreign direct investment (FDI) inflows and increased production in iron ore (United States Agency for International Development 2018). However, by 2014, Liberia experienced an economic downturn because of several factors that are not limited to mal-administration and other forms of public corruption. For instance, the outbreak of the Ebola Virus Disease (EVD) has been a significant impediment to economic growth as illustrated below in Table 1.

**Table 1: The Economic Impact of Ebola in Liberia, Guinea and Sierra Leone**

Economic Impact of Ebola	Liberia	Sierra Leone	Guinea
Estimated GNP loss by Ebola (mil. USD)	180	920	540

Economic Impact of Ebola	Liberia	Sierra Leone	Guinea
Estimated reduction of GNP growth rate by Ebola (with remaining growth rate for 2015)	3.8% (3%)	6.9% (2%)	4.1% (0.2%)
Reduction of cereal production 2014 in relation to 2013	8% (from 323,00 t)	5-8% (from 2.8 mil t)	3-8.5% (from 3.04mil t)
Need to import additional cereal because of Ebola	65,000 t	55,000 t	44,000t

Economic Impact of Ebola	Liberia	Sierra Leone	Guinea
Additional food insecure people because of Ebola (March 2015)	290,000 (63% increase)	280,000 62% increase)	470,000 (48% increase)
Share of rural food insecure people because of Ebola	76%	76%	90%
National self-sufficiency rate in food	20%	85%	85%
Cereal import requirements 2015	445,000 (24% more)	300,000	440,000
Need for food assistance from outside 2015 (in tonnage of cereals)	90,000	55,000	44,000
Number of documented Ebola cases (April 2015)	10,042	12,201	3,548
Number of Ebola deaths (April 2015)	4,486	3,857	2,346

Source: J. R. Buntze, "Impact of Ebola on Food Security in West Africa," Rural 21- International Journal of for Rural Development, 2015, p.43. Retrieved on March 18, 2018 from [https://info.brot-fuer-die-welt.de/sites/default/files/blog-downloads/rural2015\\_ebola\\_impact.pdf](https://info.brot-fuer-die-welt.de/sites/default/files/blog-downloads/rural2015_ebola_impact.pdf)

Table 1 shows the economic impact of EDV on food security in Liberia, Guinea and Sierra Leone. It is important to note in the case of Liberia that the Gross National Product declined close to 4 percent, and the need to import cereal rose as a result at about 8 percent, because of the decline in the production of the same commodity. Along the same lines, 63 percent of the Liberians became food insecure because of Ebola Virus Disease(EDV), and the share of the rural food insecure people rose to about 76 percent because of EDV.

Thus, food insecurity in Liberia is profound with about every fifth household considered food insecure. The effect is far reaching particularly among rural communities (United States Agency for International Development 2018). To underscore the severity of food insecurity in Liberia, this study will employ the food insecurity description in Table 1 for assessment. Table 2 is employed to classify the extent in which Chronic Food Insecurity (CFI) is prevalent among the various counties in Liberia. This assessment is representative of the national CFI crises, and the concomitant human development challenges that Liberia has continued to confront in the post-war period.

**Table 2. IPC Chronic Food Insecurity Level Descriptions**

Regions	States	Pop	Level 1	%	Level 2	%	Level 3	%	Level 4	%	% L2	% L3
North	Borno	402, 634	121,000	30	141,000	35	101,000	25	40,000	10	70	35
	Yobe	334, 287	100,000	30	117,000	35	100,000	30	17,000	5	70	35
	Nigeria	5,57,820	167,000	30	193,000	35	133,000	25	36,000	10	70	35
North	Borno	101, 560	30,000	30	36,000	35	25,000	25	10,000	10	70	35
Western	Osun	100, 637	40,000	40	30,000	30	25,000	25	5,000	5	60	30
	Grand Cape	153, 423	35,000	25	60,000	45	30,000	25	5,000	5	75	30
South	Grand Barea	267, 638	120,000	45	54,000	20	67,000	25	27,000	10	55	35
Central	Mangabi	233, 448	89,000	35	80,000	35	63,000	25	13,000	5	65	30
	Mamabala	1,180,602	439,000	35	460,000	45	175,000	15	58,000	5	65	20
	Mommodafo		54,000	30	72,000	40	36,000	20	15,000	10	65	30
South	Grand Kofadi	147,914	44,000	30	52,000	35	37,000	25	15,000	10	70	35
Eastern	Bikemata	36, 333	25,000	30	22,000	25	26,000	30	12,000	15	70	45
A	Sarwa	123, 620	49,000	40	19,000	15	37,000	30	19,000	15	70	45
South	Grand Kofa	69,920	21,000	30	21,000	30	13,000	25	10,000	15	70	40
Eastern	Maryland	164, 123	41,000	25	57,000	35	41,000	25	25,000	15	75	40
B	River Giza	60,637	23,000	35	20,000	25	20,000	25	12,000	15	65	40
Grand		4,194,000	1,377,000	34	1,484,000	38	947,000	23	374,000	9	65	32
Total												

Level of Chronic Food Insecurity	Descriptions
Level 1 - No CFI	In a common year, households (HH) are continuously able to access and consume a diet of acceptable quantity and quality for an active and healthy life. HH livelihoods are sustainable and resilient to shocks. HHs are not likely to have stunted children.

Level of Chronic Food Insecurity	Descriptions
Level 2 - Mild CFI	In a common year, HHs are able to access a diet of adequate quantity, but do not always consume a diet of adequate quality. HH livelihoods are borderline sustainable, though resilience to shocks is limited. HHs are not likely to have moderately or severely stunted children.
Level 3 - Moderate CFI	In a common year, HHs have ongoing mild deficits in food quantity and/or seasonal food quantity deficits for 2 to 4 months of the year and consistently do not consume a diet of adequate quality. HH livelihoods are marginally sustainable and resilience to shocks is very limited. HHs are likely to have moderately stunted children.
Level - Severe CFI	In a common year, HHs have seasonal deficits in quantity of food for more than 4 months of the year and consistently do not consume a diet of adequate quality. HH livelihoods are very marginal and are not resilient. HHs are likely to have severely stunted children.

Source: United States Agency for International Development, Assessment of Chronic Food Insecurity in Liberia, (Washington DC: USAID, 2017), p.4.



Table 2. shows that 32 percent of Liberia's population of 4.2 million people were classified as moderate or severe CFI. The estimated CFI prevalence of moderate and severe was profound in South-eastern region consisting of Grand Gedeh, Rivercess, Sinoe, Grand Kru, Maryland and River Gee Counties. The range of moderate to severe CFI was between 40 to 45 percent in the foregoing areas, when compared to a range of 30 to 35 percent in other rural areas. The classification shows that a prevalence of moderate and severe CFI was lowest in greater Monrovia, because urban communities do not face acute seasonal food deficits. While rural communities that face moderate and severe chronic food security experience seasonal food deficits of two to four months per year, urban communities such as Monrovia have food dietary diversity.

The prevalence of CFI in rural communities is attributable to income inequalities in these communities when compared to urban communities such as Monrovia and other parts of Montessarado. This assumption is supported by Djebou, Price, Kibriya, and Ahn (2017) in their comparative analysis of agricultural assets among Ghana, Senegal and Liberia. The authors suggested that "326 households surveyed in each of these counties showed that in Ghana, income distribution was estimated at \$1735 United States Dollars (USD); \$1344 USD for Senegal, and \$926 USD for Liberia..." (Djebou, Price, Kibriya, and Ahn 2017: 7).

### **Toward Addressing Food Insecurity in Liberia: Using Traditional Food Management Regimes**

The utility of the traditional food management regimes for addressing CFI in Liberia was advanced by a Liberianist and indigenous scholar Thomasson (1991), when he suggested that the key to reconstructing post-war Liberia is in rebuilding the country's traditional agricultural sector. He suggested that the problem of CFI is further accentuated by the nature of land tenure

system implemented by the Liberian elite in collaboration with western capitalist interests:

In the 1920s, the United States and Firestone Rubber coerced and enticed the Liberian elite into leasing land for the huge Harbel rubber- plantation proclaimed

as the world’s largest. Before this land was commandeered, the rural sector in Liberia had been self-sufficient in rice production. Later, the ruling elite diverted more and more land to meet personal and international lenders demands for an export economy and cash crop... (Thomasson 1991:.2).

To further advance the importance and the continuous relevance of the traditional food management regimes, an interview was facilitated with small holder farmer from Gbarpolu County, Mr. Zuofown Sengbeh, a 69-year-old farmer with three children. Mr. Sengbeh, grows varieties of food crops such as rice, cassava, pineapple, plantain, edoes and pumpkin on an eighteen (18) acre community land. Table 4. provides a description of Traditional Food Management Regimes used by Mr. Sengbeh

**Table 4: Traditional Food Management Regimes: The Case of Liberia**

Practices/Regimes	Major Advantages
Rice Storage: harvested rice is kept in the grilling storage ariste made out of rock and sand. Fire is kept under the ariste to keep rice dry for the next season. Sometimes the dried rice is kept beyond the next season	The storage system provides preservation and sustainability even with limited technologies. Out of 5 tin (10-15 acre) 2 tin is sold in local markets.

Practices/Regimes	Major Advantages
Yam and eddo's storage: cover with leaves and dirt	Protect from pest and bugs
Maize storage and preservation: Maize is hung in the farm hut -burnt with fire to dry for the next farming season	Protect from pest and bugs.

**Source:** Interview with Mr. Zuofown Sengbeh, May 24, 2018, 5:30pm Monrovi, Liberia. Interpreter. Mr. Thomas Tweh.

Mr. Zuofown Sengbeh was asked about the challenges he has encountered as a local famer. He was concerned that farmers are given very little support by the government. He is challenged to engage in mixing farming with other activities to support his children's education. As a result, he is also engaged in hunting and fishing, as revenue-generating activities to help support his family.

### Policy Recommendations

Given the social and economic implications of the current food crisis for rural communities in Liberia, policy makers and development agencies would need to provide safety nets for poor households in developing regions. The ability to address the adverse effects of high food prices, and other social challenges like EDV would require policy options and an assessment of best practices in Sub-Saharan Africa and other developing regions. Thus, the following recommendations are proffered:

1. **Food and Transport Vouchers:** Programs that have used food vouchers have been known to be successful in some developing countries, though there is less experience with transport vouchers. The challenge of distributing near cash instruments, such as vouchers, is that benefits are amenable to diversion when compared to cash transfers. For example, Indonesia has been successful in the implementation of a time-

limited cash transfer program to about one-third of its population in order to absorb the shocks of food and oil prices (World Bank 2008);

2. **School feeding:** School feeding programs are increasingly popular in developing countries, particularly in Sub-Saharan Africa. Countries such as Ghana, Benin, Burundi, Liberia, Lesotho, Sierra Leone, Senegal, Mauritania, and Mozambique have all implemented school feeding programs. However, the benefits of school feeding could be enhanced through increasing funding (World Bank 2008);
3. **Cash Transfer Programs:** Government initiated unconditional cash transfer programs can be employed to assist households that are facing social and economic hardships. For instance, in Ghana care takers of orphans and vulnerable children (OVC) receive cash transfer to register their children and ensure that they are enrolled in school (Daidone, Daris, Handa, & Winter, 2017).
4. **Comprehensive Education:** To alleviate the present social and economic impact of high food prices on poor households, social protection should be implemented to reduce the pressures of children being pulled out of school. For example, in Ghana, primary school enrollments have peaked by 14 percent after user- fees were abolished in 2005 (World Bank 2008).
5. **Nutrition and Health Options:** Eating less and switching from expensive sources of protein such as fish, meat, and eggs to cheaper cereal will invariably have long term health consequences for poor households. Younger children and pregnant women

are more susceptible to weight loss and malnutrition. Therefore, national governments and multilateral institutions must collaboratively intervene to address food and health-care shortages during crisis periods to the poor households (World Bank 2008);

6. **Food Taxes and Subsidies:** Several countries have implemented programs to reduce food taxes and increase subsidies. For example, in North Africa, Egypt has increased the ration of food subsidies and in Latin America, Brazil has increased the benefits of the Bolsa Familia conditional cash transfer (World Bank 2008).
7. **Reintegration and Rehabilitation Programs** must remain a policy option, because of the challenges the Liberian civil wars have continued to pose for displaced rural communities. It is along the foregoing lines that the Food and Agricultural Organization(2015) suggest that 40 percent of post-conflict communities with food insecurity challenges are likely to relapse into conflict within a 10-year span, if re-integration and rehabilitation programs are not implemented (Food and Agricultural Organization 2015: 4).

## Conclusion

Overall, food insecurity has remained one of the most profound development challenges Liberia has continued to confront. The social and economic implications of food security is exacerbated by social crises such as EVD and continued income inequality among rural small holders. Therefore, policy makers and development agencies must continue to provide social and economic safety nets such as nutritional programs, credit facilities, and universal free education for farming communities, in order to

better address the adverse effects of high food insecurity.

This study also suggests that the prevailing view by development agencies that accelerated agricultural development programs are best suited for addressing food insecurity in developing economies such as Liberia has not yielded sustainable results because they are for the most part exogenous to the development realities of indigenous communities. Instead, the study advanced the view that Traditional Food Management Regimes are far more sustainable because they are congruent with the development realities of rural communities.

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## **Environment and Economics: The Case of Liberia**

**Morris Koffa**

### **Introduction**

The environment and economics are two distinct concepts by definition; but they are not mutually exclusive in functionalities as it relates to eco-balancing and economic sustainability; to the biosphere or natural environment in which the human and physical environments exist (Smith 2011). In broad terms, environmental economics examines how economic activities negatively affect the environment, if regulations are not robust. The solution to this problem is that resources should be allocated so that the environment can be improved to enhance the quality of life for future generations (Smith 2011). Economists argue that economics is a market-based phenomenon driven from the standpoint of maximizing profits at all cost. On the other hand, the environmentalists/ethicists argue on the morality, such as good vs evil, as it relates to the environment in the sense of what is morally right or wrong. This is done in the interest of balancing the environment (Pojman and Pojman 2008).

Russell (2001) also argues that the consideration and incorporation of environmental economic in almost every developmental goal is rewarding for the sustainability of the environment from a cost benefit analysis perspective. This means that the necessary and applicable trade-offs should be designed not to over stress the environment to its peril. In brief, Bromley and Paavola (2001) note that economic growth comes with unaccounted environmental costs; and with it, rising risks of catastrophe in which the economy remains unable to internalize real costs to the earth. For example, in the case of climate change or global warming, the argument has always been driven by economic globalization, where those in favor of economic benefits refute the sciences of global warming. However, the environmentalists and ethicists see science

as realistic, because of the glaring impacts on the global environment.

Currently, the number one economic threat to humanity is the inability to value nature. What is being stressed is that as resources are generated from the environment, adequate amount should be apportioned to protect the environment. In the case of Liberia, the efficacy of policies protecting the environment should be given priority to ensure the protection of the environment for sustainable future. The point here is that humankind cannot ruin the human sanctuary (environment) over economic gains.

The central core of environmental and economic balance should be driven by cost-benefit analysis (CBA) – what are the economic benefits and the impact to the environment in the form of social integration and benefits. The human environment is comprised of water, air and land not to exclude its nuances; while the physical environment is made up of infrastructures such as roads, buildings, bridges, technologies which are critical functionaries of the circle of life (Koff, 2018). The environment must be protected against all threats direct and indirect, to include but not limited to human health, jobs creation and economic prosperity (Pojman & Pojman 2008). Economics, according to (Smith 2011), is the social science discipline that is concerned with the problem of administering scarce resources, the means of producing goods and services for human survivability so as to attain the greatest or maximum fulfillment of society's unlimited wants, but never to the severe detriment of the natural environment. The protection of a clean and a healthier environment is germane to productive human resources, which is credited for life's fulfillment—it can be measured in economic prosperity for any community or nation. While environmentalists or other naturalists cannot and should not be absolutely anti-economic growth, because it creates jobs and other social incentives, there should be a balance through relevant and robust public policy initiatives to sustain the environment.

Ensuring such a balance (environment & economic) rests solely at the balwick of political leaders, law makers, policy makers, mainstream economists, industrialists, and entrepreneurs to reducing environmental dejection while creating the needed economic balance (Pojman & Pojman 2008). The case can be made about Liberia's struggling pattern decades has fallen short with this globally acceptable phenomenon. As a result of such lack of balance, communities are suffering and people are dying (AEW 2011). Most of the activities that fuel Liberia's economy, such as agriculture, iron ore mining, other industrial productions and energy consumption create not only environmental problems, but also other stress on the environment which leads to social paralyses and public health concerns. Policy orientation and implementation that are research-driven become increasingly necessary to co-exist with needed economic growth and environmental sustainability practices. The protection of the environment for future generation's ability for equal access to good health, employment and economic development cannot be comprised (Smith 2011).

Contemporary environmental, disaster and emergency management as well as healthcare issues, so often never enjoy the full support as major policy issues. In this article, public health and disaster and emergency management will be considered as subsets of the environment into which economic balance should be incorporated. Environmental and disasterous conditions are two critical elements that are inherently linked to poor health conditions. The purpose of this article is to examine the ways in which the economic and environmental imperatives in Liberia can be balanced. In other words, how can Liberia pursue and achieve economic development, while protecting its environment?

### **The State of Liberia's Environment**

It is well known that the physical environment reflects the total space around us, including living and non-living things, and natural forces (Koffa 2018). The environment provides contexts for interactions among plants, animals, soil, water, air and other

living things. In short, in the biological and ecological context, the environment is often referenced as natural environment. It creates or stifles economic opportunity and enhances or impedes public health. In other words, the environment suggests situations and conditions that respond to certain actions and interactions, sometimes emanating from human beings. It is therefore important to be sensitive to the need for a sound ecological balance, necessary for the co-existence of all elements and creatures in the environment.

It is important to understand that actions which may impact the environment include over exploitation of natural resources. The over exploitation may diminish job prospects for a large segment of the population of a society, if it continues unabated. The loss of job opportunities may cause population shifts, including gravitation to already congested communities, leading to poor sanitary conditions. This is the kind of shifting, and searching for greener pasture that causes additional stress to the environmental holding capacity (EHC). EHC becomes a problem if the environment is getting more than what it can handle. This is why environmental and economic balance is important as it relates to due diligence to the environment.

In the Liberian context, links comprising of ways of using the environment, the quality of economic empowerment, and the quality of healthcare contributed to the country's two civil wars, which led to massive deaths and the enormous destruction of the physical infrastructure. In most countries, there is a commissioned entity that is solely responsible to ensure that the nation's environment is properly managed, and protects people against diseases and other threats. Nations do this by establishing the appropriate laws and regulatory policies. Many Liberian policymakers seem not to have learned from past disastrous environmental problems, especially from the country's two civil wars. For example, untenable exploration of natural resources and economic inequalities abound (United Nations Development Program 2006).

From the inception of the Liberian nation, environmental



protection through sustainable initiatives never claimed the attention of policymakers, let alone corporations, whose actions naturally led to enormous pollution. While these corporations pursue their goal of maximizing profits, successive political administrations acquiesced. There were fewer or no attempts at holding these business institutions accountable. In the end, public health and the related infrastructures were put at risk. These corporations knew what it meant to protect the environment; however, working with policymakers, who demonstrated indifference or insensitivity to environmental issues, nothing significant was done. For example, bodies of water from which residents fetched drinking water, and use for recreation, the air they breathed, and the land/soil from which they grow food crops became adversely impacted. Clearly, these are public health issues. Toxic substances emanating from plant chemicals and gaseous releases from mining industries threaten living organisms, including human beings. Numerous Liberians have lived through these dangerous actions for well over a century. Unfortunately, the bulk of contaminants and pollutants are often left at the peril of the communities long after the corporations leave. These pollutants and contaminants saturate the communities for decades. And they are passed onto multiple generations, thereby undermining strides toward a sustainable future.

Successive administrations of the Liberian government, from the late 1800s to the early 2000s, witnessed the unsalvageable destruction of the nation's environment, characterized by massive pollution of the water, land, and air. The industrial scars are still visible in the nation's environmental circle because of the felt social and economic consequences. Without doubt, most of the environmental problems of Liberia can be traced to the origins of the nation where the settlers and the indigenes were at odds as to how to manage the environment (Somah 1994). Because the indigenes often recongnized not only the enconomic but also the spiritual value of the environment, they always protected it. They often established the appropriate traditional norms in ways that protected

the food, waterways, air and the soil for the health and longevity of the populations. Conversely, given the settlers' capitalistic background, they sought to alter the environment in the name of the development. Considering that, they spared no area, not even those areas that had been protected by indigenous communities.

Once the idea of money was introduced, and over time it became entrenched, numerous indigenes, howbeit grudgingly, succumbed to the will of the settlers and their economic partners. This marked the beginning of vandalism or destruction of environment in Liberia (Somah 1994). Regarding economic partners, reference should be made to the following: the Firestone Tire and Rubber Company, the Liberian Swedish and American Mineral Company (LAMCO), the National Iron Ore Company (NIOC), and the Bong Mining Company (BMC), among others, as the giant companies.

Firestone, which commenced its investment in Liberia in 1926, during the administration of Charles D. B. King, the 16<sup>th</sup> President of Liberia, signed a lease agreement for 99 years, with the terms of leasing one million acres at the price of 6 cents per acre. In that lease, the regard for the environment was nominal. In 1944, during the regime of William Tubman, the 18<sup>th</sup> President of Liberia, the "Open Door Policy" was ushered in. This policy brought in a plethora of investors, like LAMCO, NIOC, BMC, as well as several logging companies, without any strong environmental policy framework (African Environmental Watch 2010). The activities of these corporate partners had severe environmental impact on most communities; but these partners largely went with impunity. Over the years, the residual effects of their actions have become the conduit for more hazards, and vulnerability made manifest the impact of several disasters such as flooding, erosion, and oil spills in the country.

In the late 1980s and early 1990s, a little more serious

attention shifted to the development of policies to regulate the environment. Despite the initial efforts, the system of coordination remained weak. There was much fragmentation of responses. Most of the line ministries and agencies of the Liberian Government did not have the national framework or protocols by which to ensure environmental protection ( African Environmental Watch 2010; Somah 1994). As a result, individuals and communities were often adversely impacted. The associated costs from hospitals or clinics visits are passed onto the national government in most instances, because over 80% of the population is either unemployed nor has health insurance (African Environmental Watch 2011). Such associated astronomical costs spelled potential problems for the government to support social programs, let alone sustain economic development (Coppola 2010; United Nations Development Program 2008). The landfall of a disaster can cause adverse environmental problems; and poor environmental conditions can cause hazardous conditions that can lead to major health crises (United Nations Development Program & Government of Liberia 2006). Because disaster and environmental degradations are inseparable, it is always a good management practice to simultaneously treat them together to achieve the maximum results of less adverse impact (Haddow et al 2008; United Nations Development Program & Government of Liberia 2006 ). Managing one in isolation from the other can be dangerously problematic. When the environment and hazardous conditions are not managed properly, public health and other social services decrease tremendously. Therefore, protecting a community or a nation against the dangers of disaster and poor environmental conditions are very good practices for a sustainable future. Sound and well balanced environmental practices help to prevent or minimize any disaster that are so often catastrophic for people's livelihoods; and bring destruction to the economy and the environment. All of the aforementioned programs can only be effective and sustained, if money or taxes generated from industries and other businesses are fairly distributed to these social programs.

How Liberia handles its environmental problems can be a good indicator as to how vulnerability levels in communities may be reduced. However, in 1999 after over a century, the Government of Liberia under President Charles Taylor, and with the support of the United Nations Development Program(UNDP), established the National Environmental Commission of Liberia (NECOLIB). NECOLIB had the mandate to oversee all environmental activities in the country and serve as the coordinating entity for the environment, coming up with policies and regulations for the environmental activities of the nation (National Transitional Government of Liberia 2005). Prior to the establishment of NECOLIB, environmental management activities in Liberia were fragmented among line ministries and agencies. These governmental ministries and agencies directed environmental activities with no clear coordination. Such fragmentation yielded no effective result for the overall handling of environmental issues in the country.

NECOLIB was envisioned to coordinate all fragmented aspects of the environmental program of the government and also to serve as the focal point for all international environmental treaties. NECOLIB was in essence a good idea (National Transitional Government of Liberia 2005). Additionally, NECOLIB was given the authority to oversee the activities of environmental NGOs, for a better coordination of the efforts to avoid duplication of functions (United Nations Environmental Program 2009). Although NECOLIB was constituted to play a central role on environmental issues in the country, its role was not impactful. The reason is that it was not given adequate economic support to serve communities threatened by a variety of disasters (International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies 2014). Later, however in 2003, NECOLIB became resourceful in helping to create the Environmental Protection Agency of Liberia(EPA-L). EPA-L became somewhat functional in 2006 (African Environmental Watch 2011; Environmental Protection Agency of Liberia 2008).

The two civil wars, which lasted for 14 years, more than any

other event in the country, worsened the environmental conditions in the country. The civil wars created high levels of vulnerabilities for residents and communities. As the wars intensified, an influx of rural inhabitants poured into cities, especially Monrovia, seeking a safe haven from war zones. The influx of rural inhabitants worsened poor zonal and building code regulations, poor housing conditions, garbage collection systems, etc. (Ministry of Health & Social Welfare 2010; United Nations Environmental Program 2009). With the frequency and intensity of annual rainfall in the country, communities have not been prepared to handle the challenges posed by the flood disasters. Therefore, such communities have remained socially and economically disadvantaged (African Environmental Watch 2011). From 2003 to 2005, the National Transitional Government of Liberia (NTGL), which was one of the provisional, postwar administrations, paid little attention to capacity building of the EPA-L. One major reason for such minimal attention was that this provisional administration was created simply to prepare the fragile nation for national elections. Consequently, EPA-L remained virtually dormant throughout the tenure of the interim government (African Environmental Watch 2011; United Nations Development Program 2010; United Nations Environmental Program 2009).

Since Liberia gained her national sovereignty in 1847, the issue of environmental soundness has never been a major factor in the political, economic and social decisions-making processes of the country. Every conceivable environmental law or ordinance has been ignored without exception in the governance and development of Liberia. Foreign and local companies did business at will without Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) or Environmental Risk Analysis (ERA) to forecast the potential impact or risks to the health and safety of the Liberian people. In addition, the conservation of the country's natural resources provided necessary mitigation in protecting human health and preserving as well as sustaining a future for generation to come. Sadly so, the activities of some companies, like Firestone, LAMCO and Bong Mining, just to name

a few, left the nation with vivid memory of environmental scorn and degradation that will hunt generation of Liberians.

By all calculations, 14 years of civil wars exacerbated the ecological imbalance caused by the unchecked business activities of foreign companies, and benign neglect of regulatory compliance by the Liberian Government. The latter part of the 14 years witnessed the mindless environmental pillage and wanton destruction of the country's natural resources (African Environmental Watch 2012). For example, the nation's virgin forests were prematurely depleted for economic benefits to a very few; diamonds and other minerals resources were illegally extracted and proceeds generated were used to fuel internal and regional conflicts without any reciprocity in the form of employment and benefits for local communities, such as schools, roads, clinics, etc. This is considered environmental torture and injustice, to say the least. To add to the dilemma, the destruction of virgin forests left catastrophic chain reactions: deforestation, desertification and erosion, water and air pollution, all of which are major contributors to pollutants in the entire water corridor—streams, creeks, lakes, rivers, and oceans—that is so precious and of essence to the survival of the people and nation.

One of the cardinal factors that propelled the Liberian Peace Conference in Accra, Ghana, in 2003, had much bearing on the environmental degradation associated with the illegal extraction of natural resources. The diversion of proceeds prompted UN sanctions and subsequent indictment of former President Charles Taylor by the international community. Since the restoration of law and order to Liberia, little or no attention has been given to the state of the environment by the Liberia government. The EPA of Liberia, under whose control the state of the nation's environment falls, is unheard of by ordinary Liberia citizens. One would think that with the deteriorating conditions of the environment, the issue would be of paramount importance in the process of rebuilding Liberia.

Are the nation and its leaders reverting to the ugly past of national environmental neglect or business as usual with foreign concessions? The economic gains from the exportation of the logs from the forests and other natural resources (economic gains) supported the war in the Mano River Union (MRU) Basin, at the peril of the environment. This massive onslaught on the environment happened during the leadership of Charles Taylor.

The limited support notwithstanding, EPA-L, which was institutionalized in 2006, has made noticeable strides in the area of Environmental Impact Assessments (EIS). It has ensured an EIS for almost every project. Moreover, EPA-L has embarked upon capacity building by enrolling available candidates into tertiary institutions of learning (African Environmental Watch 2011; Environmental Agency Protection of Liberia 2008).

The area of noticeable challenge for EPA-L is how to successfully regulate the collection of garbage and solid wastes that usually pose health risks to the public (African Environmental Watch 2011). With budgetary constraints and the lack of political will among the legislative, executive, and judicial branches of the Government of Liberia, EPA-L's leadership, past and present, has sought partnerships nationally and internationally in an effort to consolidate help for the internal and external institutional capacity building of the agency. The current waves of garbage in some major cities in Liberia, particularly Monrovia and Paynesville cities, threaten public health. Several efforts were made in spite of all that transpired during those years of environmental carnage to reemphasize the importance of protecting the environment, and a deep sense of economic balance; such help came from many.

Of the many local, national, and international organizations that have formed partnerships to help EPA-L in environmental capacity building and environmental educational awareness, Africa Environmental Watch (AEW), formerly the Liberia Environmental Watch (LEW), has made an important mark. Prior to institutionalizing EPA-L in 2006, AEW began organizing environmental conferences

both in Liberia and the USA. AEW help to build strong partnerships with the United States' Environmental Protection Agency(USEPA), National Council for Science and the Environment (NCSE), Global Environmental Facilities(GEF), United States Agency for International Development(USAID), Conservation International (CI), Environmental Law Institute (ELI), University of the District of Columbia (UDC), Bowie State University (BSU), Alabama State University (ASU), North Carolina State University A&T, etc. (African Environmental Watch 2011; Environmental Protection Agency of Liberia 2008).

### **The Garbage Concerns**

Garbage is a major health threat to Liberian communities, including major cities. However, steps have not been taken to get this age old environmental problem resolved.. Almost every street corner in the capital city region has a pile of trash and abandoned vehicles. Unattended trash poses sanitary hazards to the environment. At the stage of decomposition (chemical reaction), the garbage produces a toxic liquid known as leachate. Leachate is very harmful to underground and surface water. Beside the terrible odor that pollutes the air, the pile of garbage also serves as breeding grounds for mosquitoes. Mosquitoes are hosts to several deadly transmittable diseases to human. The rust from these abandoned scraps of iron or vehicles have high toxicity levels that cause water borne diseases. Even a handshake in Liberia is potentially risky because of the poor sanitary exposure. With of all these evolving environmental nuisances, it has not dawned on ordinary Liberians the severity of the consequences facing the healthy and safety condition. This is largely due to the lack of fundamental understanding of the obvious dangers. Poor sanitary environment, for example, accounts for more deaths than the gun shots fatalities.

Assistance has been given to Liberia from various international entities. For example, through the leadership of the African Environmental Watch(AEW), an assessment team



comprised of technical experts from the University of the District of Columbia(UDC) and North Carolina Agricultural and Technical University(NC &T) traveled to Liberia for a conference on environmental matters. This conference was followed by the development of a curriculum for environmental degree programs at the William V. S. Tubman University and Stella Maris Polytechnic. In spite of all these efforts, EPA-L is still struggling to meet expectations, mainly because the problems are bigger than the agency can handle. In essence, much more needs to be done across the length and breadth of the country in sanitation-related areas, such as solid waste management, proper garbage collection, and providing safe drinking water. Currently, there is no sanitary landfill in Monrovia but temporary holding sites (dumpsters). This is inadequate, especially knowing that the city is inhabited by at least 1.5 million people. There are several dumpsites that don't meet the design criteria to control contaminants (United Nations Environmental Program 2009). As a result, garbage and other wastes are left uncollected, and they at times end up in drainage paths, leading to public health threats(African Environmentatl Watch 2011). Another concern that is worth mentioning is the fact that Liberia is a tropical nation and is situated in a hydrological location, which makes it prone to relatively high water levels, and therefore susceptible to flood disasters (United Nations Development Program 2010).

### **The State of Disaster and Emergency Management**

Disaster is the fuction of risk and vulnerability, hazards, poverty, and economic disparities. These situations lead to insufficient capacity to reduce the potential challenges to life. They constitute a serious disruption to the functionality of communities. They cause widespread, economic, social, and environmental losses. In most instances, such situations of disaster exceed the ability of an affected society to cope (United Nations Development Program 2009). Disasters often have an extended impact. In some circumstances, their impacts lead to massive economic and human losses, including the destruction of the environment. Consequently, global initiatives

are often exerted to mobilize all available resources.

Additionally, people seek ways to be proactive, instead of being reactive, whereas being reactive is capital intensive, being proactive is comparatively less expensive. Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) and Early Warning System(EWS), according to the United Nations International Strategy for Disaster Reduction(2011), are the best practices available to decelerate disaster impacts. Liberia, like many other countries, is expected to adhere to these global best practices. Liberia is party to the treaties or frameworks that promote DRR and EWS. However, there is little evidence that the country is in compliance. Liberia's disaster culture spans the nation's years of existence. It has been particularly rooted in poor environmental conditions, political and civil conflicts, and economic disparities. These factors have contributed, for example, to numerous floods in Liberia (United Nations Development Program 2010). The environment and disasters interlink, because so often disasters do not occur in isolation of environmental, social, and economic vulnerabilities(Coppola 2008; United Nations Environmental Program 2010). For example, Flooding in Liberia has increased from 15% to 40% over the past 10 years (African Environmental Watch 2010).

Communities are not equipped with the right tools, materials, and skills. Therefore, residents continually find the handling of floods extremely challenging (Ministry of Planning and Economic Affairs, Liberia 2010; United Nations Development Program 2010). Such a national neglect has affected vast segments of Liberians, whose livelihoods have been impacted for decades. Poor environmental and unmitigated disaster conditions are recipes for poor health, and deter potential self-driven human growth.

There have been environmental and disaster management advocacy groups in Liberia lamenting the continued peril of the human environment and disaster unmitigated communities, whose residents are being impacted. But, these issues receive very little

attention from the national government. With this buzz phrase, “pro-poor governance,” it is worth repeating that the critical issues of the environment, weak disaster management protocols, and the susceptible living conditions of the ordinary people still remain major threats, and cannot be ignored. They must form an integral part of programs of human development that drive positive social change for residents to realize their full potential. There is no way to get around it. These critical issues must be part of the formation and implementation of any development programs for numerous communities and the nation. Poor environmental conditions, and eventual disaster onslaughts, such as floods and other hazardous conditions have denied most residents the needed opportunities to thrive and excel; hence, they cannot adequately contribute to the much-needed national economic growth and social integration. “Pro-poor governance” comes with commitment and honest responsibility driven by passion and solidarity for the disadvantaged population of Liberia. It means ensuring an enabling environment for opportunities, and should not be just another empty phrase as has been the case for previous political leaders.

For the past 15 years, floods have occurred in many communities, particularly in Monrovia and its surroundings. Major flooding and destructions in poor communities have caused displacement and loss of property to families and businesses. During floods, major businesses, as well state entities such as the Freeport of Monrovia, which is the economic artery of Liberia, is interrupted, causing the government of Liberia to lose thousands, if not millions of dollars; so are many other businesses that pay taxes to the national treasury. In the absence of innovation, community capacity building, and the lack of functional institutions to deal with such crises, the danger is imminent and could undermine the successful implementation of “pro-poor governance” initiatives.

The outbreak of Ebola exposed the neglect of the healthcare of Liberia. The Ebola pandemic that killed over 5,000, including 189 healthcare workers, raised lots of questions than answers regarding

the healthcare system in Liberia. Health is an integral part of the environment; hence, disaster management infrastructures are critical to the sustainable future of any community or a nation. Even though post-war reconstruction for Liberia placed much emphasis on health transformation, and therefore received enormous resources from various international institutions and individuals for the building of effective and efficient healthcare infrastructure. However, it became clear later that the healthcare sector was largely dysfunctional. The Ebola outbreak in 2014 exposed the dismal inadequacies of the sector. The heavy negative effects on daily human lives, economic activities, and the general state of hopelessness remained conspicuous.

### **State of Healthcare in Liberia**

Poor environmental conditions largely from industrial pollution endangers public health and the resources generated from these concession agreements (economic gains) are not usually filtered into social program such as the environment, health, education and other social programs (Koffa 2018). There are many epidemics that residents have suffered from, and this continues to be the case. Malaria and Ebola, among others, are of grave concerns. Poor environmental conditions provide enabling environments in which these diseases can thrive. For example, the prevalence of malaria is aided by poor sanitary conditions. One of the resultant effects is that malaria kills about 3,300 children every year (Somah, 1994). For example, the doctor to patient ratio remains alarming high in Liberia. Prior to the Ebola outbreak, there was one doctor to every 14,000 patients (Ballah 2016). Multiple other sources paint a bleak picture: 100,000 patients to one doctor; one doctor to 40,000 patients; and one doctor to 30,000 or more patients. At a Ministry of Culture Affairs & Tourism (2015) press briefing, Dr. Stephen Kennedy, who is the Secretary-General of the Liberian College of Physicians, indicated that to every one doctor there are about 19,000 patients. By averaging all the statistics of doctor to patients ratio, Liberia is still at a great distance from the World Health Organization standard of

one doctor to 600 patients ratio (World Health Organization 2014). At the peril of the environment is the lack of access to safe drinking water, the increase in poor sanitary conditions, poor air quality, and other poor environmental conditions, as well as other hazardous conditions pose greater risks to the population. Such conditions are a recipe for poor health.

Medical research capabilities at the nation's higher institutions of learning are underfunded. Hence, many medical students are ill-prepared for challenges experienced by the nation's healthcare system. Liberia is ranked number 186 in the world according to the WHO in terms of healthcare delivery system (Ministry of Information, Cultural Affairs and Tourism 2015). This is dismal. If residents are not healthy, there will not be economic development, since human resources are needed to work at these entities that fuel economic growth. Liberia has 261 doctors; and of that number, 208 are Liberians and 53 are foreign. This suggests that Liberia is not investing in the training of Liberians to become medical doctors. The Ministry of Information, Cultural Affairs and Tourism (2015) indicated that there are six surgeons in Liberia, one orthopedist, and one urologist.

Clearly, these statistics also show a dismal picture, and are unacceptable by the WHO's standards. Therefore, there is a clarion call for such a balance between the environment and economic gains—by such long stretch, the argument is even stronger that economic and environmental balance at the very least is not being realized from all the economic gains made from concessional agreements and other economic activities. The Ebola outbreak made the situation even worse. Poor governance and corruption in previous governments have exacerbated an already dangerous situation. These previous governments failed to improve and expand healthcare infrastructures, when they could have engaged in sensible spending and prioritized health needs of the country. It may now be understandable why, even though Liberia was the last of the Mano River Union (MRU) countries—Cote d'Ivoire (was not affected by

the Ebola pandemic), Guinea, and Sierra Leone— to have been hit by the Ebola outbreak, the country was the hardest hit, considering the reported number of cases and deaths. Of the almost 12,000 total deaths recorded for the Ebola outbreak, Liberia recorded more than 43%. Hopefully, the new Weah administration, with its “pro-poor” agenda, will give significant priority to the healthcare sector, including an investment in environmental and disaster emergency management initiatives.

An eco-balanced environment and economic system produces healthy, productive and sustainable human resources capacity that are good for economic development and growth. No nation succeeds in its development goals, and the ability of sustaining those goals without the aforementioned eco-balanced initiatives. Neglecting or doing very little invites potential danger for the communities and country, since the growth and sustenance of a country’s economy depends on the potency of its human capital. The same goes for disaster management, which is an emerging threat that could impact “pro-poor” governance. Of particular concern is the ongoing unmitigated flooding in most impoverished communities, due to many factors such as clogged drainage systems, partly from garbage and other debris that are illegally dumped, lack of proper zoning ordinances, and the lack of an effective building permitting system. No doubt, climate change has also had its impact because it has invariably altered and increased rain frequency and intensity in Liberia. Yet, national government has the responsibility to respond, working with other stakeholders and the international community.

Public policies are quite often driven by public opinions. In the case of the environment and disaster management, awareness campaigns can profoundly reach wider audiences, if they are championed by political leaders and social activists. Against this background, it is recommended that President George Weah along with the head of EPA-L use the appropriate public platforms to stress the importance of the environment to the country and declare a date in every month for an environmental cleanup campaign for

the entire country and not just in Monrovia, as being carried out by the Monrovia City Corporation (MCC). If the EPA-L is given the leverage to fully operate as an autonomous agency free of all external and internal interferences, it could support its operational budget and still be able to contribute to the government's coffers.

On the disaster management front, similar capacity building is required. Since the creation of the National Disaster Management Agency (NDMA) in 2015/2016, it has remained virtually dormant due to the lack of budgetary allotment. The NDMA needs to be functional to fully address the challenges on hand, such as profiling or identifying potential hotspots, providing robust educational awareness that is community-driven. This would include prevention, preparedness, and response to and recovery from disasters. A community emergency response team (CERT) concept could be organized, since communities are the first line of defense when disaster strikes.

The indisputable fact is that national government cannot neglect salient social responsibilities in a country where unemployment stands at at least 85%. When people are unemployed, they have no insurance; but when they become ill, they visit government-sponsored hospitals with increasing service costs. "pro-poor governance" should provide the enabling environment and opportunities for residents to be healthy and able to help themselves, as well as help the nation produce ample goods and services.

Liberia is endowed with enormous wealth of natural resources that can be relied upon to adequately support a constantly growing population. In order for that to happen, Liberia's leaders and policymakers should understand the links with matters of the environment, development, and emergency management practices to drive the idea of sustainability (United Nations Development Program 2009: 20-25). Some of the resources include iron ore, gold, diamond, oil, evergreen forests, rubber, palm oil industries, and an arable land fertile enough to grow just about anything. In

the agricultural sector, there are rubber, coffee, cocoa, rice, cassava (tapioca), sugarcane, bananas, sheep and goats, among others. Development and growth can lead to environmental degradation if not properly and vigorously regulated. The same can be said about hazards generated from development that may also lead to disaster and dangerous vulnerability.

Resources are meant for investment and development and to create economic opportunities for citizens and for social development in communities. These communities need schools, healthcare systems, road network, housing, functional fire service and police departments. The resources can be used to mitigate environmental disaster and emergency management problems (United Nations Development Program 2010). The resources can also be necessary for poverty alleviation, which to a greater extent, helps to slow the accumulation of environmental and disaster impacts. There are over 225 timber species, all which, including the aforementioned, are largely Liberia's economic strength. It goes to say that if wisely explored and managed, these resources could contribute significantly to the country's sustainable future and curb the level of vulnerability that is so often seen in various communities in Liberia. Inequalities in growth and development, as well as unemployment at a national rate of 85% contribute to the decline of livelihood opportunities for a significant segment of the population. This along with poor governance became one of the causes of the first Liberian war of 1989. Unfortunately, that trend still persists in the country (United Nations Development Program 2006).

## **Conclusion**

Environmental and economic balance is necessary to protect the environment from wanton destruction that threatens a sustainable future. The balance also encourages locating sufficient funding to save the environment through robust laws and policies. Public policy initiatives in a country are driven by moments that often shake or test the resolve of a nation. The drivers may be war,



or other national upheavals emanating from economic, political or religious action,. diseases, storms and floods, Hence, a government that is led by conscientious and foresighted leaders often work to build structures that are strong enough to be both proactive and reactive.

The history of Liberia has demonstrated that for the most parts, the nation has been bereft of a significant corps of such conscientious and foresighted leaders. As a result, from rural and urban planning of the country to corporate, industrial activities in the country, no meaningful environmental and disaster management infrastructures, policies, and laws have been working. And where a few were initiated, the critical, appropriate regime of support has not been implemented. As a result, floods, chemical pollutants, and diseases, including epidemics, have adversely impacted the nation. The Ebola epidemic of 2014 became a demonstrative moment, showcasing what Liberia lacks, and what the country needs to do to face up to future challenges, be it the area of health, education, or unemployment. Among other things, the nation needs to pay attention to continuous engagement with academic institutions and the well-trained workforce available, as a way of sharpening the edge of scientific research, so that challenges—e.g., social, political, economic, religious, etc.—do not needlessly paralyze the nation. The nation also needs to create or use channels to constantly encourage citizens to reassess cultural attitudes, so that these citizens, working together, can brace themselves for changes necessary to confront new challenges. Further, the nation needs to create and ceaselessly support structures that reduce vulnerability and risks, especially among the mass poor of the country.

In order for a “pro poor governance” policy to materialize and become sustainable, the national government should not forget to include in its programs the capacitating of the Environmental Protection Agency of Liberia (EPA-L), which has been struggling due to the lack of enough budgetary allotment and the emergence of other bureaucratic neglects. The EPA-L needs to benefit from a

number of policy initiatives:

1. increasing its budget from under \$900k to about \$4.5 million dollars annually.
2. strengthening its human capital with trained personnel.
3. providing community-driven educational awareness.
4. establishing effective garbage collection practices.
5. collecting metals of all sorts in and around the country, especially in Monrovia and its environs.
6. building an engineering functional landfill.
7. allowing EPA-L to participate in the negotiation of every concession and any environment-related agreement, to identify and ensure all environmental compliance protocols.
8. allowing EPA-L to enforce all environmental laws and ordinances with no external interferences.
9. reviewing and strengthening current environmental laws.
10. instituting an environmental court or its equivalent for public redress.
11. researching environment-related challenges by using effective laboratory testing labs. The same goes for the National Disaster Management Agency (NDMA) with similar recommendations. NDMA, which was created about two years ago, needs all the support in order to function fully. Putting all of these recommendations in place with enforceable mechanisms, can certainly not only create eco-balance but also enhance economic balance.

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## **Developing a Revised and Modernized Curriculum for Cuttington University's College of Agriculture and Sustainable Development (CASD): A Collaborative Effort between Rutgers, North Carolina State and Cuttington Universities**

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### **Introduction**

With the declaration of peace after the civil conflict early in the new millennium, Liberia opened to a new chapter of growth and development. As a country emerging from such a devastating conflict, Liberia started a path of national reconstruction, to rebuild institutions and services, while promoting economic growth for all Liberians. The new Liberian strategy was an important move towards economic development while prioritizing sustainable development by utilizing natural resources sustainably, adapting to climate change, and maintaining and improving natural capital for ecosystem services, creation of jobs and improving livelihoods (Cassell et al 2014; Dorlie and Nichols 2012; Government of Liberia 2014). As Liberia rebuilds, there are many challenges, as the country remains highly food insecure, depending from imports of food and international assistance. Liberia's development strategy build upon five main pillars of which economic

transformation (e.g. private sector development, agriculture and food security, forestry), human development (e.g. education, health and social welfare) and cross-cutting issues (e.g. environment, youth empowerment, gender equality) are of utmost importance to achieve Liberia's development vision of achieving middle-income status by 2030 (Government of Liberia 2014; Word Bank Institute 2013).

The government declared that agriculture was a priority and would support the transformation of agriculture to include broad-based participation of farmers, using an integrated, sustainable and productivity driven, cash/food driven approach (Dorlie and Nichols 2012). As many countries in the region, with the exception of the larger industrial style plantations (e.g. for rubber, cocoa, rice, palm oil), agriculture is still considered a subsistence activity with potential to generate income for the rural communities, but at a high risk of failure due to many factors, including the lack of local expertise, weak infrastructure, lack of industry willingness to invest in agriculture including processing, packaging.

Liberia has the unique characteristic that still holds much of the Guinea forest, a large rain forest that used to extend throughout much of West Africa. Nowadays, Liberia holds up to 60% of what remains of that forest. There have been great efforts from different organizations and the Liberian government to preserve this natural legacy. The preservation of the natural resource base and economic growth is a challenging activity, however, with proper management the forest can provide sustainable opportunities for the Liberian people (Juliani et al 2013). Agriculture plays a major role in the Liberian economy, however, Liberia should move away from the shifting cultivation method to low land farming techniques and support mechanized farming (Dorlie and Nichols 2012).

The Liberia RISING 2030 long-term vision of socio-economic transformation and development has been the roadmap to take Liberia from recovery and reconstruction (2003-2012)

to an inclusive growth and wealth creation (2012-2030) toward middle income country status (Government of Liberia 2014). This growth has to be inclusive, particularly equal for men and women. The gender gap in Liberia and the region needs to be addressed to give women equal opportunities to ensure a more equitable society with more possibilities for growth. Thus the need to provide equal educational opportunities for girls and boys.

University curriculum is a process of preparing students for their role in society, thus the curricula is a critical link between institution of higher education and the wider society. Changes in education are related to the teaching and learning process, its tools and institutions. Changes include institutional innovation, curricula development, teaching materials, teaching and learning methods, deliver capacity for human resources and learning facilities. By introducing these changes, education influences society as graduates gain employment, faculty are involved in research, extension and outreach, public presentations and debates. Societal change take places with local, national and long term global trends, of which the most important are in agriculture and rural development linked to poverty alleviation and economic growth and environmental change (Rudebjer et al., 2005).

The curriculum for the CASD was developed in 2012, as the result of a collaborative effort between Cuttington and U.S. universities. The purpose of this article is to revisit the process of developing the curriculum to highlight its strengths and weaknesses.

### **Developing the New Curriculum**

Cuttington University reopened in Suakoko in 2000, when the agricultural program was upgraded to the degree-granting college known as the College of Agriculture and Integrated Development Studies (CAIDS) that offered bachelor's degree in

Agriculture and Integrated Development Studies. At the time, CAIDS assisted in the rehabilitation and training of ex-combatants with agricultural skills in animal production, fisheries, rice cultivation and vegetable production (Mulbah et al 2012). As Cuttington University became one of the two targeted recipients of the USAID funded project “Excellence in Higher Education for Liberian Development (EHELD)” in 2011, it was clear the necessity to revise and modify the agriculture curriculum in face of the new development trends of Liberia. The second targeted recipient was the School of Engineering of the University of Liberia, Monrovia.

The curriculum for CASD was developed to train skilled Liberians to meet current and future workforce demand for Liberia’s future sustainable development priorities of food security and access, economic development, poverty reduction, gender issues and the use and conservation of natural resources and services. Based on the classification of Rudebjer(2006) and collaborators, the curriculum development process at Cuttington University was faculty initiated using a participatory approach. A group of faculty from Cuttington University (Suakoko, Bong County, Liberia) and the US institutions—Rutgers University (New Brunswick, NJ), North Carolina State University (Raleigh, NC)— were tasked to propose a new curriculum.

A curriculum was drafted considering 1) Liberia’s priority needs; 2) a search of relevant curricula from other agricultural universities in the region, particularly that of the agriculture school at KNUST in Ghana, and others in the USA; 3) Cuttington’s higher education mission and vision for the future; 4) the strategic national goals of the Government of Liberia, among others (e.g. FAO, World Bank), and 4) consultations with partners outside the university, including USAID officials, faculty from the US and other African countries, and the private sector, which was in need of better trained Liberian college graduates majoring in agriculture. The “National Sustainable Development Report” provided



the framework to include Liberia's priority needs of a vibrant agribusiness sector for economic growth, income generation, food security, gender equality and the protection of the environment. Based upon intense and multiple discussions, retreats, focus groups and interviews with faculty and students, alumni, the private sector, and more, it was clear that apart from sustainable development topics in agriculture, stronger components on critical thinking skills, as well as needed hands-on practical experiences and trainings were needed; and that understanding gender and extension which had been missing or weak in the past needed also to be incorporated into a new modern curricula. Because of the Liberian situation, recovering after a civil conflict, it was also clear that the new curriculum needed to not only focused on hard-core technical aspects of agriculture but also to give the curriculum a gender, extension and outreach and agribusiness and entrepreneurship foci. Key social challenges in Liberia include poverty, education, health, and gender disparities that each need to be addressed for social development if the country is to transition to becoming a middle-income country (Dorliae 2012).

A curriculum development workshop was developed at Cuttington University where faculty from the three universities (Cuttington, Rutgers and NCSU) gathered to discuss and revise the proposed curriculum. The Cuttington University administration was invited to provide key input on course structure, university course requirements and the overall structure of the major, minors for the catalog, which was later, revised and published (Mulbah et al. 2012). USAID officials and members of the private sector participated in the workshop and provided input. One of the key objectives of the workshop was to generate a dialogue to facilitate the process of ownership of the curriculum by the local faculty. There was the concern that change is not easy to accept in such challenging environments, and that faculty and the administration could see such change as being imposed from the outside. As such, considerable time was invested in working with the faculty, interviewing the faculty and asking them to indicate what are

their most serious concerns. A highlight of their keys responses/ concerns included some of their following responses: “What’s in it for me”? Or, “Should the curriculum be modernized, do I then still have a role?” Or, “Is there a place for me in such a changing curricula?” How can we teach these new courses if we lack the expertise and experiences since given the war, the facilities are so limited and lacking?” We took these concerns to heart, and built into the design and development opportunities to address each, in order to engage the current faculty to serve as champions of the new curricula. New opportunities were crafted to have many of their faculty and instructors pursue graduate studies, as well as other shorter term trainings. After the finalization of the workshop, the curriculum was also shared with two visiting faculty from West African countries (Ghana and Nigeria) to provide additional input. A word cloud (Figure 1) was generated with text mining package (tm) and the word cloud generator package (wordcloud) available in R (STHDA.com, and statistical tools for high-throughput data analysis), to illustrate a thematic focus of the new curricula.

### **The New CASD Curriculum**

As Cuttington University became a recipient of the USAID project “Excellence in Higher Education for Liberian Development (EHELD)” in 2011, it was clear the necessity to revise and modify the agriculture curriculum. The original degree-granting college known as the College of Agriculture and Integrated Development Studies (CAIDS) was renamed to “College of Agriculture and Sustainable Development (CASD)” in 2012. These changes were made to reflect the new mandate of the college in line with Government of Liberia and USAID’s focus on economic growth and sustainable development. For the government of Liberia, agriculture is a high priority area of development with a specific focus on small-scale farmers.

The previous College of Agriculture and Integrated Studies

(CAIDS) had two departments: Plant and Animal Sciences. The curriculum team decided to create a new department and major in Natural Resource Management. CASD with three departments—Plant and Soil Sciences, Animal Sciences and Health and the newly created Natural Resource Management Department—, is now offering three undergraduate programs.

The curriculum was designed to follow the system of credits, with major and minor areas of study for a four-year program. The new college was designed to offer a Bachelor of Science in Agriculture (B.Sc. Agriculture), with major areas of study in Animal Science and Health, and Plant and Soil Sciences and a Bachelor of Science in Natural Resource Management (B.Sc. NRM). The college gave flexibility for students to focus on specialized and minor areas of study: Agribusiness, Agricultural Extension and Education, Agricultural Mechanization, Animal Science and Health, Gender Culture and Agriculture, Natural Resource Management, Plant and Soil Sciences.

The overall structure of the curriculum included required 40 credits of common university courses and, the common department courses for the agricultural majors, with 50 and 41 for the Natural Resource Management (NRM). Common courses to be completed included Independent Project Study and Writing with Presentations and Experiential Learning On-the-Job-Training.

For the agriculture majors, 36 credits were dedicated for courses, and 45 for the major in NRM. The minor areas of studies were composed by courses totaling 15 credits, with a total requirement of 138 credit hours for graduation.

### **Common University Courses**

The university requires 13 courses (40 credits) for all majors to cover courses that are part of basic sciences and the mandate

of the university, including: Principles of Biology, Principles of Chemistry , Introduction to Computer Science, Introduction to University Studies, Fundamentals of Communication I and II, Advanced Composition, Fundamentals of French I or Fundamentals of Kpelle, African History, Principles of Mathematics I and II, Introduction to Psychology, and Christian Ethics or Comparative Religion.

### **Common College Courses**

The courses for the college that are common to all departments and majors were designed taking into account the successes of the US land grant education system and Liberia's priority needs. The US land-grant university system has the three-part mission of research, extension, and education. Extension was designed to link the land grant college programs, with grass-root needs and national priorities (NRC 1996).

### **Introductory courses**

Three CASD courses have been designed to introduce students to agriculture and natural resources. The course, Introduction to Agriculture and Natural Resource Management (CASD 101), has a focus on how agriculture and forests are impacting the Liberian and the regional economies (Table 1). The second introductory course, Introduction to Geology, Soil and Environmental Sciences (CASD 104), has the main goals of introducing students to geology and the formation of soils, and the importance of soil management practices for maximizing the impacts on the economy and the environment. Agricultural Physics and Meteorology provide insights on the application of physics to understand the environment and meteorology.

### **Economics and Agribusiness**

Two courses introduce students to the business of agricultural production, with Agricultural Economics (CASD 204) examining economics and food markets, and the Entrepreneurship and Microenterprise course (CASD 301) providing students with fundamental knowledge, skills and characteristics of entrepreneurship and the components to understand how to initiate and develop small enterprises (Table 1). These courses echo the needs of the agricultural sector to promote a robust, competitive and modernized sector, to support priorities of sustainable economic growth and development (Dorliae and Nichols 2012).

### **Natural Resource Management**

After introducing agriculture and natural resources, soils, the environment, the next step is to understand the impacts of agriculture on society and natural resources. These are the topics that are covered by the course on Environmental and Social Impact Assessment (CASD 305) (See Table 1).

### **Gender**

Social development has been considered a critical factor for the transition of Liberia to a middle-income country. Thus, poverty reduction, education, health and gender issues were considered key priorities (World Bank 2013). Bridging the gap between genders is important for Liberia to promote a sustainable and inclusive growth. The development of gender courses and specifically a minor in Gender, Culture and Agriculture has been an innovative component of the CASD curriculum, and unique in the West African region. The common courses were designed to

have a strong gender component, with 9 credits with three courses dedicated to gender topics (Table 1). The first of the courses, Rural Sociology, Gender, and Culture (CASD 102), introduces students to understand the role and dynamics of rural life and organization, to better understand and contribute to rural development.

Rural Development, Gender, and Society (CASD 103) focuses on analyzing roles of women and men, discusses gender differences and inequalities. Innovative ideas were the discussion of factors that hinder rural development, and highlight inequality in agriculture as problems not only for women, the agricultural sector, food security and society as a whole. The course, Population, Food Security, and Sustainable Development (CASD 201), examines the links between population, and sustainable development on food security, with a focus on gender equity and the role of women in agriculture. Human Nutrition (CASD 202) is a key course to understanding the importance of food choices, food production and safety for an adequate diet for human growth and development.

### **Extension and Gender**

These courses lay the foundation for other important issues in agriculture: gender extension and outreach. There has been less emphasis on the issue of gender in areas related to production, such as agriculture. In Africa, 70 to 80% of the agriculturalists are women, yet there is little focus on extension and outreach to women in agriculture. Besides, there is less emphasis on gender issues related to agriculture, when gender is key for social and economic development. The Ouagadougou Declaration on the Education of Girls (1993) acknowledges that girls' education contributes to increased quality of life, national development through, for example, increased economic productivity (Working Group in Higher Education 2006).

Investment in research and extension activities in West

African countries remains low with connections among research, extension, farmers and agribusiness also weak (World Bank 2013). The CASD curriculum gives a strong focus to extension and outreach to farmers and communities; thus, the course, Gender Relation in Extension (CASD 302), introduces gender concepts in agricultural extension to stress the importance of gender sensitive extension and outreach programs and services for sustainable agricultural development in Liberia (Table 1).

### **Project Study and Experiential Learning**

Three courses were designed to provide students with knowledge and experiences to build their workforce skills and future careers. The course Internship and Field Experience (CASD 306) (Table 1) gives students the real choice to work with businesses, NGOs and governmental agencies associated with the animal, plant and soil sciences and the natural resources. This course provides critical job and networking skills and linkages with employment opportunities.

The course, Experimental Design and Statistics (CASD 305), provides students with tools to introduce them to the process of science to develop hypothesis, design experiments to test them, with appropriate controls and replications, collect and analyze data and make conclusion for the research. These are important skills that are needed to initiate an independent project study. Two courses will guide this process: the first course, Research Methods and Proposal Development (CASD 401), engages students in designing and conducting their own real life applied research projects with appropriate faculty mentors. The course, Senior Project and Presentation (CASD 402), gives students the opportunity to analyze and interpret the data, to prepare a research report having the typical structure of a research publication, and later orally presenting and defending the results before his/her peers. All these courses provide students with critical thinking

and problem solving skills essential for any career. These courses provide students with the tools of scientific research that enable them to generate information, and provide them with important skills including writing, organizing and delivering oral presentations.

Table 1. CASD courses that cross departments, including independent project study and experiential learning (Mulbah et al 2012)

<b>Course Designation</b>	<b>Course Title</b>
CASD 101	Introduction to Agriculture and Natural Resource Management
CASD 103	Rural Development, Gender, and Society
CASD 102	Rural Sociology, Gender, and Culture
CASD 104	Introduction to Geology, Soil and Environmental Sciences
CASD 201	Population, Food Security, and Sustainable Development
CASD 202	Human Nutrition
CASD204	Agricultural Economics
CASD 206	Agricultural Physics and Meteorology
CASD 301	Entrepreneurship and Microenterprise
CASD 303	Environmental and Social Impact Assessment
CASD 305	Experimental Design and Statistics
CASD 307	Farm Mechanization and Technology
CASD 302	Gender Relations in Extension
CASD 304	Information Use and Technology
CASD 306	Internship and Field Experience
CASD 401	Research Methods and Proposal Development
CASD 402	Senior Project and Presentation



**Technology Courses**

Two courses involve the use of technology as applied to agriculture and natural resources: Farm Mechanization and Technology (CASD 307) and Information Use and Technology (CASD 304) (Table 1). This latter course provides essential tools to access information resources, to conduct literature reviews, a key activity for data mining for workplace literacy and lifelong learning (Kesselman et al. 2012). The course introduces students to new technologies, such as mobile devices, to have information on hand for a variety of purpose, including outreach to farmers. Farm Mechanization and Technology provide key insights in characterization and adoption of mechanization use to increase production in plant, animal and natural resource systems.

**Animal Sciences**

The Animal Science and Health curriculum offered in CASD addresses essential subjects including animal physiology, nutrition, reproduction, health, and end-product processing as well as sustainable systems for animal production and management (36 credits)(Table 2). Specifically for the animal sciences, an extension course has also been included to cover critical issues in knowledge and skills transfer in areas of animal products, handling, and sanitation to ensure their safety and quality. This course complements the Animal Products and Technology ones that highlights important aspects of animal products (e.g. meat, dairy, and egg products) and processing technologies. The course, Non-Traditional Animal Production (ASH 404), is a novel contribution to animal production system such as rabbits, game or bush animals, snails, among others (Table 2).

Table 2. Courses of the Department of Animal Sciences and

Health (Mulbah et al. 2012).

<b>Course Code</b>	<b>Course Title</b>
ASH 201	Introduction to Animal Production and Health
ASH 202	Animal Anatomy and Physiology
ASH 204	Animal Nutrition and Growth
ASH 301	Animal Genetics and Breeding
ASH 303	Animal Reproduction and Lactation
ASH 302	Ruminant Production
ASH 304	Swine and Poultry Production
ASH 306	Aquaculture and Fisheries
ASH 401	Animal Health and Disease
ASH 403	Animal Products and Technology
ASH 402	Extension and Food Safety
ASH 404	Non Traditional Animal Production

### **Plant and Soil Sciences**

The CASD Department of Plant and Soil Sciences trains students in sustainable crop production. Students learn to understand the relationships between crops and soils as a key strategy to increase productivity (Table 3).

The course, Soil-Crop Management Systems (PSS 306), is an essential course to understand the link among the crop being produced and soil conditions and pest management systems in the context of the farming enterprise. A critical extension component course on Crop & Soil Management Extension (PSS 204) has

been included to introduce students to the essentials extending information to end users, the Liberian farmers, on integrating crops and soil management for developing new enterprises, and increasing efficiency of crop production systems.

There are two courses that cover crop production for the Liberian economy, including Plantation Crop Production and Management (PSS 403) covering production of rubber and other crops, and Staple Crop Production and Management (PSS 404), including rice, cassava and legumes. As two-thirds of the food on the Liberian markets are imported, these courses are geared toward increasing the production of Liberian staple foods, rice and cassava to alleviate food security (Dorliae and Nichols 2012).

The course Horticultural Crop Production and Management (PSS 302), focuses on diversification of the farm enterprise and crops for nutrition and diet; thus such course is integrated with the Human Nutrition course. The course, Post-Harvest Handling and Processing, (PSS 407), provides critical skills to understand product preservation, after harvest in order to deliver quality products to markets, to avoid losses in yields and quality to maximize economic value.

Table 3. Courses of the Department of Plant and Soil Sciences

Course Code	Course Title
PSS 202	Principles of Crop Production I
PSS 204	Crop & Soil Management Extension
PSS 301	Principles of Crop Production II

<b>Course Code</b>	<b>Course Title</b>
PSS 302	Horticultural Crop Production and Management
PSS 304	Fertility Management and Plant Nutrition
PSS 306	Soil-Crop Management Systems
PSS 401	Principles of Pest Management I: Diseases and Weeds
PSS 403	Plantation Crop Production and Management
PSS 405	Plant Genetics and Breeding
PSS 407	Post-Harvest Handling and Processing
PSS 402	Principles of Pest Management II: Insects and Vert. Pests
PSS 404	Staple Crop Production and Management

Source: Mulbah et al. 2012

Table 4. Courses of the newly created Department of Natural Resources Management

<b>Course Code</b>	<b>Course Title</b>
NRM 201	Introduction to Agro-Forestry
NRM 202	Natural Resource Economics
NRM 204	Natural Resources Management Extension

Course Code	Course Title
NRM 206	Ecosystems and Biodiversity
NRM 208	Water Resource Management and Hydrology
NRM 301	Principles of Community Development
NRM 302	Ecology, Land Use, and Environmental Quality
NRM 304	Climate Change Impact on Natural Resources
NRM 306	Forest Ecology and Management
NRM 401	Urbanization and Sustainable Development
NRM 403	Regional Development
NRM 405	Land Rights, Natural Resources, and Benefit Distribution
NRM 407	Non-Timber Forest Products
NRM 409	Project Development and Implementation
NRM 402	Natural Resource Use and Public Policy

Source: Mulbah et al. 2012

### **Natural Resource Management**

The natural resource management curriculum starts with an introduction to agroforestry, as it is perhaps this discipline that is the future for forest resources and agriculture in Liberia. There is the need to avoid current practices such as slash and burn,

that remove the vegetation covers exposing the soils, and losing nutrients by the heavy rains. An economic component was also added as the course Natural Resource Economics (NRM 202) teaches economics principles of the management and benefits of such resources and their services (Table 4). The Natural Resources Management Extension (NRM 204) course gives the curriculum the extension component, the need to transfer knowledge and management skills to communities and farmers for efficient management of resources.

To provide a solid foundation on the interactions of living organisms with each other and the environment, courses such as Ecosystems and Biodiversity (NRM 206) were included. Allied courses include Ecology, Land Use, and Environmental Quality (NRM 302), Forest Ecology and Management (NRM 306), Water Resource Management and Hydrology (NRM 208) to have a better understanding of managing forest and water resources for ideal land use that protects the quality of the environment to continue rendering benefits to people. Thus, key courses were designed on Principles of Community Development (NRM 301), and Regional Development (NRM 403), to learn how development can affect the natural resource base, locally and regionally. These courses were the appropriate complement for the course Environmental and Social Impact Assessment (CASD 303) that furnishes student the abilities of assessing impact of human activities on the environment and communities. The course Urbanization and Sustainable Development (NRM 401) is an important course to explore the impacts of the changing landscapes due to urbanization. The course addresses key strategies to ensure an equitable and sustainable use of forest resources with rural and urban development.

The course Climate Change Impact on Natural Resources (NRM 304) teaches how changes in the climate are impacting the natural resources, thus the necessity for graduates being able to plan and implement programs for climate change adaptation and

mitigation, as stated by the African Forest Forum (2014).

Land Rights, Natural Resources, and Benefit Distribution (NRM 405) is a critical course to understand policies and laws in relation to land rights, inheritance, distribution of benefits and resources. The course, Project Development and Implementation (NRM 409), teaches critical skills in initiating, managing natural resource projects, including grant writing and application for funds searching. Other skills include inventory of vegetation, developing germplasm banks and designing mitigation measures for the impact provoked by natural resource enterprises.

### **Minor areas of study**

One of the innovative aspects of the CASD curriculum is the flexibility to select and focus on a major area of study, as well as having the choice of specializing in a secondary minor area of study. CASD was designed to offer seven minor areas of study for specialization in the following areas (15 credits each): Agribusiness, Agricultural Extension and Education, Agricultural Mechanization, Animal Science and Health, Gender, Culture, and Agriculture, Natural Resources Management, Plant and Soil Sciences. The curriculum was flexible enough to allow students to minor in another department within Cuttington University, such as peace studies, and education, among many others.

### **Minor in Agricultural Education and Extension**

Extension courses have been embedded throughout the curriculum from common department courses for each of the major areas of study, to learn those capacities needed to transfer the effectively the knowledge they gain to assist farmers and community members in production and management of natural resources. The Minor in Agricultural Education and Extension (AEE) strengthened the options for students in agricultural technology packaging, transfer and adoption in Liberia and elsewhere in Africa for sustainable agricultural development.

The minor is introduced by choosing 2 courses (Introduction to Agriculture and Natural Resource Management and Population Food Security and Sustainable Development) in the CASD general course listing (6 credits used toward the minor). Then, students select additional 3 courses, to complete the 15 credits requirement of a minor, from the following new courses that were design specifically for this minor; Educational Psychology and Extension (AEE 301), focuses on the theories of learning and motivations applied to agricultural extension and outreach. Extension Methods (AEE 303) focuses on the basic principles of cooperative extension. Public Policy and Agricultural Extension (AEE 402) builds capacities of graduates to understand how the public policies in agricultural extension can impact the development of agriculture in Liberian and the West African region. Leadership Impact in Agricultural Extension (AEE 404) provides graduates with strong leadership abilities for successful cooperative agricultural extension abilities.

### **Minor in Gender, Culture and Agriculture**

The mission of the minor is to prepare students in agricultural development in Liberia and the continent by focusing on the current differential of roles, challenges and opportunities for females and males in agriculture. The minor highlights the importance of gender issues in agriculture, particularly women as catalysts of agriculture and food production.

Due to the importance of gender in agriculture, the following courses have been identified for the minor: Gender and Society (SOC 305), Woman and Social Change (SOC 403), Environmental Justice (SOC 403) and Agroforestry and Gender Politics (SOC 409). Gender and Society introduces students to the application of gender to social issues in agriculture, nutrition and rural development. Women and Social Change assesses the women's movement as a force of social change, with a focus on



Liberian society and the West African region. The Environmental Justice course provides students with knowledge and tools with environmental justice perspectives, specifically in the legal processes in land use decision making. Areas of teaching include interactions between people and the natural environment, focusing on Agroforestry and Gender Politics. The course was inspired by the book “Shady Practices: Agroforestry and Gender Politics in The Gambia”, by Richard Schroeder (1999), and highlights gender issues and imbalances in Agroforestry. The course also focuses on the women involvement in agroforestry, and their motivations and challenges relative to men.

### **Minor in Agribusiness**

The goal of the minor is to empower students to advance their knowledge and skills to support development of various agricultural enterprises. One of the innovative courses is Value Chain Analysis in Commercial Agriculture (AGB 402), which covers the value chain approach to drive economic growth and poverty reduction, an important economic development approach followed by many international donors, including USAID (Marketlinks 2018). Another novel course, Economics of Agriculture Sustainability, furnishes students with abilities to expand economic concepts to environment economics that is now a significant player in environmental policies (Tietenberg and Lewis 2012). Other more traditional courses also expand on Agricultural Finance (AGB 303) for understanding and managing financial and credit resources, and Farm Production and Management (301), to understand business management decisions that are involved in organization and operation of a farm firm.

### **Minor in Animal Science and Health**

The minor provides backgrounds for students from

other majors within CASD to specialize in animal production, and nutrition, among others. Thus, the major gives students opportunities to diversify other enterprises within the plant sciences and natural resources to include animal production topics that can help to make those enterprises more effective and profitable. The minor is introduced by two cross cutting courses (CASD 101, CASD 201), with students given the flexibility to select additional three courses from the following five: Introduction to Animal Production and Health (ASH 201), Animal Anatomy and Physiology (ASH 202), Animal Nutrition and Growth (ASH 204), Animal Reproduction and Lactation (ASH 303), Animal Products and Technology (ASH 403).

### **Minor in Plant and Soil Sciences**

The minor follows a similar mechanics as compared with the Animal Science and Health(ASH) minor, to give the opportunities for students majoring in animal sciences or natural resources to specialize in crop production. The cross-cutting courses (CASD 104, CASD 201) provide the foundation for the minor with students given the opportunity to further tune their careers to select three of the following six courses: Principles of Crop Production I (PSS 202), Principles of Crop Production II (PSS 301), Fertility Management and Plant Nutrition (PSS 304), Principles of Pest Management I: Diseases and Weeds (PSS 401), Principles of Pest Management II: Insects and Vertebrate Pests (PSS 402), Plant Genetics and Breeding (PSS 405). These courses complement the other two majors with key knowledge and skills in crop production, plant nutrition and pest disease management, critical areas to support professional development for majors in animal and natural resources.

### **Minor in Agricultural Mechanization**

The minor seeks to increase students' abilities in the appropriate technologies in production and post-harvest handling to increase efficiency of small and medium scale enterprises. The minor is introduced by two courses: Agricultural Physics and Meteorology (CASD 206) and Farm Mechanization and Technology (CASD 307). The course Farm Structures and Environmental Control (AGM 301) prepares students on environmental and structural requirements of farm structures. The course, Farm Machinery and Power (AGM 303), introduces student to farm machinery and power for mechanization of farm activities, with particular emphasis on sustainable sources of energy, including solar, wind and micro hydraulic. Irrigation Technologies (AGM 401) is an important course for the assessment and implementation of irrigation and drainage systems construction and management. Post-harvest Handling and Processing (PSS 407), a course from the plant science major, enriches students coming from the animal and natural resource major with abilities in preservation and increasing value of crop products after harvest.

### **Minor in Natural Resources Management(NRM)**

The minor in NRM goal provides additional background to students coming from the animal and plant science major with important abilities in areas that are common to both majors, as there are intersections between the animal sciences and plant sciences in term of production and conservation of natural resources. Wildlife is thus an important natural resource from the forest, as well as medicinal plants and species (Juliani et al. 2013) that need to be protected to ensure continue benefits for communities. The minor is introduced by two courses (6 credits): Introduction to Agriculture and Natural Resource Management (CASD 101) and Population, Food Security, and Sustainable Development (CASD 201). Students are required to choose three additional courses that are available for the minor: Forest Ecology and Management (NRM 306), Urbanization and Sustainable

Development (NRM 401), Land Rights, Natural Resources and Benefit Distribution (NRM 405) and Non-Timber Forest Products (NTFPs) (NRM 407).

### **Supporting an Enabling Environment**

The modernization of a curriculum to meet the expectations of a Center of Excellence could not be complete without (1) significant improvement of actual facilities; (2) informational sciences; and (3) significant faculty training. Toward that end, and during the latter course of EHELD, funds were allocated to the construction of new classrooms for teaching, computer resource facility, a resource room otherwise referred to as a library, as well as new plant and soil laboratory, and a new animal sciences laboratory. Investments were put into establishing a new field agricultural experiment station and the construction of a greenhouse and nursery, feeding directly into the new courses. As each undergraduate is required to conduct a final research project, all these facilities are needed and used. Clubs for the undergraduates were formed with faculty mentors to support new projects on raising plants and animals for sale, with funds used to support the clubs and for student fees. Informational and library sciences, considered cross-cutting (as is gender and extension), was a focus from the outset because the Internet was not functioning, and there was no library in the agriculture school. From the outset, and particularly after the new curriculum was designed, a library and resource room was built, remedial teaching and literacy was introduced for those students that needed additional assistance to bring them up to college level, a computer room was built with many desktops and tablets for the students to use. For the first time, students and faculty now had for the first time access and training in Internet, searching, computer use and writing. Agriculture data bases and hard copies of the required books and pdf versions of all such books were brought in so that with or without internet, the resource room could now meet the

Most importantly, an improved curriculum, with improved facilities is still only possible and sustainable with faculty engaged, trained and committed. As such, over the course of EHED, the number of faculty in CASD doubled, and over 13 of the original faculty and instructors received scholarships to pursue graduate studies, with 1 completing their Ph.D., 12 completing their MS studies in the needed scientific fields, where there were gaps in expertise. While those fellowship recipients went to the USA (Rutgers, North Carolina State University), and Ghana (Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology, KNUST, and University of Cape Coast), visiting faculty from various Sub-Saharan African countries and the USA were brought in to teach and to work with the older generation faculty.

### Figure 1: Word Cloud, the Visual Representation of Text Data

of the Catalog of the College of Agriculture and Sustainable Development (Mulbah et al. 2012).

The word cloud shows (Figure 1) that “Development”, “Agriculture”, “Students”, “Management”, “Production” are the most important words in the catalog of CASD. All in line with Liberia’s 2030 Vision “One People, One Nation, United for Sustainable Peace and Development”, addressing Liberia’s goals of economic transformation, human development and cross-cutting issues such as environment, gender equality and youth empowerment.

The EHED program funded by USAID (2011-2017) provided important resources to CASD to overhaul the college. The implementation of the new curriculum at the end of 2012, was one of the factors that generated interest in Liberia’s students to significantly increase enrollment in CASD, a trend that continues to this date. The growth and development prospects of the country and the focus of the curriculum on agriculture as a business have served to attract student to the college to pursue careers in agriculture and natural resources. Students appear attracted to the college with the various curricula for each department, as it has afforded them the opportunity to select specific discipline as majors within the College.

Most of the recent graduates have been fortunate to be employed in strategic areas relating to their fields of study. For instance, many of the graduates from the Department of Natural Resources Management are opportune to be employed with the Forestry Development Authority (FDA) of Liberia, the ArcelorMittal, and various forestry NGOs in Liberia. The excitement for having such a unique curriculum designed for the various departments of the College of Agriculture and Sustainable Development cannot be overemphasized. Students are guided in their various majors, while they do have the opportunity to select another as a minor.

Before the implementation of a new curriculum, the College of Agriculture had very low student enrollment; then came the introduction of the new curriculum, with students transferring as well as enrolling in the College, as they had the chance to choose their specific disciplines as Majors. The enrollment has since continued to increase up to present. At one point in time, the College of Agriculture put out the largest number of graduates within the University, during the time of the new curriculum's implementation.

One of the strengths of the CASD curriculum development process was the transdisciplinary approach to give graduates a holistic view to address the complex sustainable development priorities of Liberia focusing on food security and access, economic development, poverty reduction, gender issues and the conservation and use of natural resources and services. Two experts from West African Universities provided positive feedback on the curriculum, making only minor observations.

A potential weakness of the curriculum is perhaps the fact that it focuses heavily on courses that cover social development topics. In that respect, courses from KNUST for example, contain a high percentage of technical courses that deepen the knowledge of students in important technical aspects of the animal, plant science and natural resource management. The social development focus was an important aspect to strengthen the pillars of Liberia's development goals, as stated by the report of the World Bank Institute (2013) to achieve stronger results in a context of factors that contributed to civil conflict, including economic exclusion, high youth unemployment and the persistence of a fragmented society. As institutions and the primary and secondary education system strengthen, then the CASD curriculum can be revisited and upgraded to increase the number of courses that deals with the more theoretical and technical aspects of each bachelor program.

The CASD curriculum was a forward looking educational

instrument designed to make a significant impacts in the Liberian society by developing technically and professionally skilled graduates that were able to meet current and future workforce demands (public, private, and NGO sectors) and to address the country's development priorities. Yet, all the supportive pillars that provided a solid foundation for sustainability will only remain viable as long as the faculty and the administration of Cuttington University continue in their strong and proactive commitment to this vision of excellence.

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## **Neo-colonialism, Land Grabbing and the Land Rights Act, 2014**

**Fidel C.T. Budy**

### **Introduction**

The term land grabbing has become synonymous with most large scale land deals in the “global south” in the last two decades. Coined by the Barcelona based GRAIN non-governmental organization (NGO), it was quickly adopted by international media organizations and other civil society groups and used to depict the leasing or purchasing of large swathes of land in the “global south” by multinational corporations and governments from the West, Middle and Far East, which were contributing to the displacement of rural communities on the land and threatening already desperate rural livelihoods (Cotula 2013:4; Cotula et al 2009:55; Gilfoy 2014:185; GRAIN 2008; Hall et al 2015:468; Larder 2015:859). The land grabbing narrative, controlled and directed by actors exogenous to those communities that were being affected by large scale land deals, has mostly sought to promote the agendas of those exogenous actors who saw the deals as detrimental to the environment or as contributing to the climate change phenomenon (Corson et al 2015; Hall et al 2015:473). In most cases, campaigns against large scale land deals would originate in western capitals, where most international NGOs, civil society or media groups are based, and diffuse to the local or national level of those countries or regions that they felt were victims of the land grabbing phenomenon (Borras et al 2008:173; Edleman and Borras 2016; Corson et al 2015; Gilfoy 2014:185; Gingembre 2015). Furthermore, in those dominant civil society and media directed narratives, rural, indigenous, peasants and agrarian communities were victims and passive, being acted on by land grabbers supported by national governments (Hall et al 2015:468; Kaba and Madan 2014:9; Knight et al 2012:26; Siakor 2012:25).

Glaring in those literatures were evidence that the debate was being, in most cases, directed or influenced by exogenous actors (Gilfoy 2014:187). Clearly, by-products like the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People (UNDRIP), the Roundtable on Sustainable Palm Oil (RSPO) and the Free Prior Informed Consent (FPIC) frameworks, all on moral grounds, were intended to influence policies in nation-states although those who were being most influenced by them were not equal participants in the processes of formation and development of those frameworks (Champagne 2013:9; Pulitano 2012; Smis et al 2012:504).

One of such countries in the “global south” where those frameworks have had an impact is Liberia, a country with a long history of neo-colonial influences by the United States (U.S.) and other western powers like the United Kingdom (UK), France, Germany and Holland (Buell 1947:33; Hahn 2012:77; Johnson 1987:103; Lowenkopf 1976:39; Martin 1982). Liberia offered a great case to analyze the extent to which exogenous actors had sought to influence national policies around land rights and the land grabbing debate. In Liberia, since the end of the country’s second civil war in 2003, which devastated most of its infrastructure and economy (Budy 2015:2; Lanier 2012:5), efforts have been made by national leaders to get the country back on track with the full support of most western governments and the United Nations (UN). And so, in 2008, the country was “encouraged” by the International Financial Corporation (IFC) of the World Bank, the U.S. Department of Agriculture and others to offer out large swathes of the country’s vast land resources to multinational corporations in the oil palm industry as a means of generating revenues for the government but also to create job opportunities for rural dwellers who were and still are the poorest in the country (Lanier et al 2012:76; MacDougall 2016; World Rainforest Movement 2010).

However, prior to those new concessions, there were already some international civil society groups working with local

agents against large logging activities in Liberia, arguing that they were destroying the environment and contributing to deforestation (Alden Wily 2007:2; SDI 2018). Their shouts became louder and more profound from 2009 when one of the first of the land deals was signed by the Liberian government with Sime Darby for 63 years and over 300,000 hectares of land spread across four counties in Liberia, including land in Senjeh District in Bomi County originally leased to the America rubber company B.F. Goodrich in the 1950s (Gilfoy 2014:187; Siakor 2012:21; World Rainforest Movement 2010). For those against the deal, they argued that it was land grabbing whilst the Liberian government and its development partners argued that the deal was good for the country in terms of revenues and jobs for its citizens (Ford 2012; MacDougall 2016; Sayeh 2008:5; Siakor and Knight 2012).

Missing in all of this and the numerous literatures on the land grabbing and land rights debate in Liberia is an analysis through the lenses of neo-colonialism of the extent to which those debates and, actions for or against the land deals were being influenced by exogenous actors. Based on case study fieldwork in Senjeh District, Bomi County, Liberia in 2016 and 2017, this article will contribute to the existing literature on land grabbing and land rights in Liberia by arguing that efforts by international political and legal frameworks like the UN and World Bank, western superpowers like the U.S. as well as international media and civil society groups, to direct the land grabbing narrative, for or against, as well as proffer secure land tenures as being in the best interest of rural Liberians were all acts of neo-colonialism.

This article begins with a critique of the current literature on land grabbing and land rights in Liberia and identifies gaps in terms of a failure to analyse them through the neo-colonial lens. The article will then discuss the extent to which both of the debates have been controlled or directed by actors from outside of Liberia in true neo-colonial fashion. Finally, the article provides a summary of the key arguments and makes suggestions for further

research.

### **Land Grabbing and Land Rights Debate on Liberia**

The debate on land grabbing in Liberia has become louder in recent years as a result of the attention of numerous media and civil society groups predominantly with origins outside of Liberia (Cotula 2013:4; Ford 2012; Front Page Africa 2017; Gilfoy 2014:185; Siakor and Knight 2012; Unruh 2009:425). The term land grabbing which is now an established concept was first made prominent in 2008 when the Barcelona based NGO GRAIN published a report on large scale land deals globally and how it was impacting rural communities in the “global south”(Gilfoy 2013:185; GRAIN 2008; Larder 2015:859). Since then, the media, civil society groups and academics have adopted the term to refer to legal and illegal land deals, mostly in the global south, led by large multinational corporations mainly from the global north (Cotula 2013:4; Cotula et al 2009:17; Hall et al 2015:468; Larder 2015:863).

Unable to pin down a universally accepted definition, land grabbing has meant different things to different people. However, there are two reputable authorities within the land grabbing debate that have each defined land grabbing in slightly contrasting manner. The International Land Coalition (ILC) in its 2011 Tirana Declaration defined land grabs as all land deals which happened without the free, prior and informed consent of those communities who lived on the land often resulting in forced displacements and threats to livelihoods (ILC 2011). Their definition raised questions about land rights. Do people own the land because they live on it? How long must one live on a plot of land for her or him to be the one giving consent to the commencement of a project? The other definition of land grabbing, which has been well received in the land grabbing debate, was provided by a group of academics and international development professionals. For their part, land grabbing was all large scale land acquisitions including purchases

and leases over 1,000 hectares of land (Cotula et al 2009:17). In here, legal or illegal, anyone taking more land than 1,000 hectares was in essence depriving others of the opportunity to have land to live on and source livelihoods needs (Cotula et al 2009:17). Key about both of these definitions, when taken in the context of Liberia, was that they were both developed by exogenous actors.

The Liberian land grabbing debate has been covered significantly in the growing numbers of literature by academics, media and civil society groups (Ford 2012; Gilfoy 2015:186; Hahn 2012:72; MacDougall 2016; Siakor and Knight 2012; Unruh 2009:425). For example, Neil Hahn writing in 2012 about the experience of land grabbing in Liberia suggested that the phenomenon was not new and that Liberia had experienced land grabbing as early as the 1820s (Hahn 2012:72). In his work Hahn described the arrival of freed slaves from the U.S. in 1822 on the shores of Cape Mesurado as being the first documented evidence of land grabbing in Liberia (Hahn 2012:72). In that example, the locals had refused to hand over the land to the new arrivals on a permanent basis and were only persuaded to do so by “mixing flattery with a little well-timed threat” by U.S. Naval Captain Robert Stockton (Akingbabde 1976:19; Beyan 1991:66; Huberich 1947:190; Kieh 1992:26).

That episode in 1822 marked the beginning of land grabbing in Liberia facilitated by support from exogenous actors. As Liebenow (1969:4) and Akpan (1973:220) documented later, the colonists, also referred to as Americo-Liberians, continued the expansion of their influence over the rest of the land in Liberia by a mixture of military conquests, protectorate arrangements with clans and chiefdoms who feared neighboring tribal groups more than they feared the Americo-Liberians and by voluntary acceptance of protection from Monrovia with support in some cases from the U.S. Military. However, whatever the reasons for those clans and chiefdoms surrendering their land to the government in Monrovia, once they did, their land became a part



of the state, with the administration of land rights directed from Monrovia, eroding customary land administrations which had been the mainstay of land use prior to the arrival of the freed slaves and the establishment of the Liberian nation state (Akpan 1973:220; Alden Wily 2007:19; Guannu 1983; Kaba and Madan 2014:3; Siakor 2012:19).

Those previous analyses of historic land grabbing in Liberia have been complemented lately with some contemporary analyses (Alden Wily 2007, 2012; Kaba and Madan 2014; Knight et al 2012; Siakor 2012). For example, Siakor(2012) published a good account of how the government of Liberia began in the 1920s to contemplate the development of legal stipulations that would give it the supreme power of administering land rights in Liberia, and, by extension, the legal grabbing of indigenous land (Siakor 2012:19). Siakor's work also highlighted how those efforts by the Liberian government culminated in the passage of the Liberian Code of Laws (1956) which declared all land not held under private deeds as belonging to the government. His work also covered later efforts by the government of Liberia in developing new legal instruments as it saw fit to continue to legitimize its erosion of customary land rights, contributing to the current state of ambiguity in the land laws of Liberia (Siakor 2012:19).

However, whilst Siakor's work discussed, for example, the arrival of Firestone in the 1920s as the first foreign-backed land grabbing episode in Liberia, which displaced a number of people from their land and forced some into working for the company, it was Neil Hahn who suggested that there was a link between Firestone land grab and neo-colonialism (Hahn 2012:74; Knoll 1989:18; Siakor 2012:15). Like Siakor, most of the scholarships, some of which are mentioned above, on land grabbing, and, by extension, land rights in Liberia, whilst, in some cases, led by Liberian researchers were directed and funded by exogenous civil society groups (Alden Wily 2007:2; Kaba and Madan 2014:2; Lomax 2014; Lanier et al 2012:15). Suggesting

that their contributions to the land grabbing and land rights debates were being influenced by the agendas of their exogenous backers in what Edeleman and Borras (2016) termed as one-way internationalization of the land grabbing debate. For example, the Civil Society Working Group on Land Reform (CSWGLR) which has been advocating for land rights in Liberia in recent years is a conglomeration of national NGOs and civil society groups whose funding and strategies are being influenced by their exogenous parent organisations (Front Page Africa 2017; Kaba and Madan 2014:2; Koinyeneh 2017; Land Rights Now 2016). Another example was found in the Land Rights Policy of 2013, which was the roadmap for the proposed Land Rights Act of 2018. The document clearly stated that it adopted, with direction from the World Bank the “Land Laws Report”(Land Rights Policy 2013:5).

Consequently, as documented above, the main actors directing the land grabbing debate in Liberia were exogenous actors whose direct efforts to influence and control the trajectory of the debate in Liberia mirrored the trappings of neo-colonialism. Utilizing framework like the Roundtable on Sustainable Palm Oil(RSPO) which was initiated by the World Wide Fund (WWF) in 2001 as well as the UNDRIP initially established in 2007 to further their position that large scale land deals were bad for rural communities in Liberia and, that it eroded their customary land rights were all neo-colonial (Champagne 2013:9; Ford 2012; Gilfoy 2014:185; Roundtable on Sustainable Palm Oil 2018; Siakor and Knight 2012). However, the only voice making any reference to land grabbing in Liberia being linked to neo-colonialism was Hahn(2012:74). There were a number of other more ground-breaking works on the land grabbing phenomenon in Liberia and its impact on the land rights of Liberians in general and rural Liberians in particular, as listed above, but none of these had analyzed the phenomenon or their own actions of trying to influence national policies with agendas set by actors from outside Liberia through the lenses of neo-colonialism (Alden Wily 2007:3; Kaba and Madan 2014:10; Knight et al 2012; MacDougall 2016;

Siakor 2012:5). And although Hahn made an attempt to analyse land grabbing in Liberia through the neo-colonial lens, his was more a historical analysis of the influences of neo-colonial powers over general governmental policies in Liberia than a specific analysis of land grabbing and land rights debates in Liberia (Hahn 2012:77).

So what is neo-colonialism? The origin of the concept of neo-colonialism can be traced to Marxists and Neo-Marxists thinkers' writing predominantly around the time of the decolonization of Africa from the grips of European imperialism (Amin 1973; Chomsky and Herman 1979; Fanon 1963; Martin 1982; Nkrumah 1965; Sartre 2005). The concept is closely linked to globalization, capitalism and neoliberalism (Amin 1973; Chomsky and Herman 1979; Nkrumah 1965). In its most basic definition, provided by Nkrumah(1965: ix), "it is the act of a country or group of countries who were politically and legally independent nations but whose economic, social and political policies were being directed by another country or by corporations without the use of military force". In economic terms, for example, it would be the case of the Liberian government being 'encouraged' by the International Finance Corporation(IFC) of the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) and the U.S Agency for International Development (USAID) that it should pursue economic policies that favored awarding large swathes of the country's land to oil palm cultivating companies as a way of restarting the country's economy affected by 14 years of civil war (Alden Wily 2007:29; Gilfoy 2014:191; Lanier et al 2012:76; MacDougall 2016; Sayeh 2008:5; World Rainforest Movement 2010). The word "encouraged" has been used loosely here. That was because within the neo-colonial framework, smaller countries, like Liberia, are blackmailed and sometimes threatened to do what their neo-colonizers want in order to keep them serving as sources of raw materials for the industrialized west (Asante 1979:338; Nkrumah 1965:26).

With a majority of the land concessions in Liberia currently considered as being facilitated by land grabbing and being foreign owned and, given evidence that the land grabbing debate was being directed by exogenous actors to further their own agendas, as well as suggestions above that the Liberian government had been ‘encouraged’ by neo-colonial international legal and political frameworks like the International Monetary Fund(IMF), International Finance Corporation(IFC), United States Department of Agriculture(USDA) and the United States Agency for International Development(USAID), there was surprisingly little in the existing literature on Liberia of a consideration of contemporary land grabbing through the lenses of neo-colonialism. Furthermore, given the fact that discussions around the development of the Liberian Land Rights Act (2018), a by-product of the land grabbing debate in Liberia, had been attributed to expressed interests of international civil society groups engaged in campaigns for the rights of indigenous peoples globally, which was suggested to have influenced the UNDRIP, RSPO and, by extension, FPIC framework (Champagne 2013:10; FPA 2017; Koinyeneh 2017; Smis et al 2012), there were limited or no suggestions in the scholarship of the neo-colonial influences on both land grabbing and the Land Rights Act.

### **Neo-colonial Influences on Land Grabbing Debate in Liberia**

The framing of large scale land deals in Liberia as land grabbing was neo-colonial in and of itself. The concept was developed initially by a Barcelona based NGO, as was mentioned earlier, whose agenda included reversing the climate change phenomenon, reducing the influence of multinationals in the global food system and reducing poverty in the global south (GRAIN 2008). Whilst these might have been good reasons for civil society groups to adopt the concept and get involved in advocacy against some land deals in Liberia, their actions had all of the trappings of being viewed as being neo-colonial. Firstly, the concept of land grabbing as a phenomenon and the strategies proffered to mitigate

it was not developed with the inclusion of rural Liberians (Corson et al 2015; GRAIN 2008; Larder 2015). As Corson et al (2015) argued, in the existing literature the discussions on the ways to frame the phenomenon and to combat it were being discussed at an international level with competing agendas whilst not being inclusive of the voices of those in places like Liberia where those mitigating strategies were diffused to local and national levels. The point here is that whilst communities in Liberia, affected by the “land grabbing” phenomenon, like in Senjeh District where the study was conducted, might be seen as independent and having the agency to, for example, form alliances with those exogenous civil society groups against “land grabbing”, the trajectory of the debate and its potential outcomes were being directed from outside of the district and Liberia by groups of international organisations with their own set agendas (Aden Wily 2007:2; Kaba and Madan 2014:9; Knight et al 2012:4; Siakor 2012:2).

In my experience during my fieldwork the evidence of the above suggestion was highlighted in the neo-colonial framing of the land grabbing debate in Liberia and strategies to mitigate it through internationally developed frameworks like the UNDRIP, FPIC and RSPO. The FPIC framework, which is a by-product of both RSPO and UNDRIP, calls for rural residents in the “global south” in general, and Liberia in particular to be consulted and for them to give their free and prior informed consent before any land concession could be operational (Champagne 2013:11; Roundtable on Sustainable Palm Oil 2018; Smis et al 2012:504). I am not saying that those frameworks are not on moral grounds or that rural residents should not or have not utilized them with good results. However, the point here is that the RSPO and, by extension, FPIC, which was initiated by the WWF in 2001, did not include the views of rural communities in Senjeh District in its development; but once created, they were expected to be directed or guided by them. In my experience, residents that I interviewed were more concerned about the terms of incorporation into the land deal than they were about consultation and consent. In fact, whilst residents

admitted to being consulted partially within the FPIC framework, they were more concerned about the fact that the promises made during the consultation processes were not kept.

During my fieldwork in Senjeh District in 2016 and 2017, it was clear that the efforts by exogenous civil society groups was neo-colonial in that the evidence on the ground differed from the narratives being proffered by civil society groups directing the land grabbing narrative in Liberia with financial and strategic support from their parent international civil society groups. Before providing some quotes from residents that I interviewed in Senjeh as part of my research to support this point, I would like to offer another example from the current literature of the narratives being put forward. In 2012, environmental activist Silas Siakor working with the Sustainable Development Institute (SDI), the Liberian national chapter of the international environmental group, Friends of the Earth, argued that rural communities in western Liberia, including Senjeh District, were against the land deal because it eroded their customary land rights, as well as threatened their livelihoods (Siakor 2012:23). SDI, was founded in 2002, seven years before the arrival of the Sime Darby land concession (SDI 2018). The organization's main objective at the time was to advocate for the protection of the environment. However, once the deal between the government of Liberia and Sime Darby was signed in July 2009, the focus of SDI, now with support from other exogenous actors like Nawati and the British government (Kaba and Madan 2014:9), began to shift their objective towards the land grabbing debate. Key here is the fact that the organization's shift in narrative was aligned with the narrative being purported by their exogenous backers and not those of the communities in Senjeh District.

Furthermore, those residents in Senjeh District who were suggested to be viewing the Sime Darby land deal as land grabbing did not confirm that during my research experience in the district. In fact most of the people that I spoke with confirmed

the suggestion that the narratives being proffered by SDI and its neo-colonial partners that the Sime Darby deal was viewed by those communities affected by it as land grabbing was incorrect and only furthering their neo-colonial agendas. When answering the question about their understanding of the land deal being a land grab here is how one resident put it:

“Before that, we were farming on the land. After the arrival of Sime Darby, we were told that the land was for B.F. Goodrich. They said that we were custodians of the land that our parents were taking care of the land for them. When they came, they went to the government. The government came to inform us through the Internal Affairs Minister that the land was for B.F. Goodrich. Because they were not around, our parents and us were given the opportunity to farm the land, so that whenever they come and request for the land we along with the government can negotiate with B.F. Goodrich on how the land will be handed back to them. They did that. They went through the process of negotiating with us, and we all came to an understanding before the land was given to Sime Darby.”

Here the resident was suggesting that they did not see the land deal as being a case of land grabbing as the neo-colonial civil society groups had suggested. They believed that the land was given away by the government of Liberia initially to B.F. Goodrich, and that now they were merely coming back to continue using the land. The suggestion in the response was that the company came in and talked to them about taking the land and that they, as a community, agreed for the company to use the land, suggesting that there were no forced displacements. Obviously, when taking Cotula et al (2009:17) definition of land grabbing

into consideration, it does not matter whether the deal was legal or illegal; as long as the land taken was more than a 1000 hectares in size, it would be considered a grab. But the point here is that from the response of that resident, which was echoed by others, in their understanding that was not land grabbing; they were merely giving back land that had already been offered to the company before.

Talking about local and exogenous actors having different views of land grabbing in Liberia brings me to another point. In my experience, one of the reasons that there were differences in the views of locals affected by the land deal and those neo-colonial exogenous actors purporting the land grabbing narrative was that locals viewed the land deal as a means to enhance their livelihood options, whilst the neo-colonial civil society and media groups viewed it as detrimental to the environment and global climatic conditions, or as a threat to rural livelihoods and way of life. In essence, the locals cared more about how they could benefit from the concession being in their district, whilst the neo-colonial civil society groups cared about stopping the deal to protect the planet. This was evident in answers given in response to a question about their hopes and expectations of having the company in their district:

“The only word of encouragement to give to the people who took the land is that we are appealing to them to find jobs for our husbands and brothers, so that they can work and earn a livelihood to support their families... So we are asking them to fulfil the promises that they made. If they are working we will be satisfied. We are happy to work and sustain ourselves.”

“They took the land and promised us jobs and they have not done so. We are all unemployed... because they promised to give us jobs so we came together as one family and agreed to



give them the land, but they have come and took the land and lied to us and have not given us jobs... They have not done any of it. They promised to build hand pumps for us, to build toilets and even a town hall but none of that has materialized.”

Residents were clear that they did not see the deal as land grabbing, and therefore wanting the company to leave, in contrast to neo-colonial civil society groups, but viewed the situation at the time as failed promises which needed rectifying.

Clearly, the efforts by exogenous actors to influence the narrative on land grabbing in Liberia begun a long time before the arrival of Sime Darby, and has continued since. It was also clear that those actors sought to control the outcomes of the narratives from outside of Liberia, just as multinational corporations and foreign governments would do to enhance their agendas within the framework of neo-colonialism. As the evidence presented suggested, the actions of civil society groups were intended to influence the debate to enhance their own agendas and not necessarily those of rural Liberians. Their efforts were also being directed from outside of those rural communities and Liberia agreeing with the suggestion of those actions being neo-colonial.

### **Neo-colonialism and the Liberian Land Rights Act of 2018**

Clear in the literature and numerous media and civil society reports are evidence of the neo-colonial influences which had been exerted on the process of directing the development of legal instruments for secured land rights in Liberia (Alden Wily 2007:2; Liberia Land Commission 2013; Unruh 2009:426). As we have seen in reports by Liz Alden Wily in 2007 and Kaba and Madan in 2014 the debate on land rights was clearly being directed by organizations like FERN in the case of Alden Wily’s work and Namati and the British government in the case of Kaba

and Madan's report. In both of those reports the authors did not hide the fact that the funding to conduct the research was being provided by the exogenous actors named above but also that the purpose of them providing the funding was because of their interest in influencing the development of secure land tenures for rural communities in Liberia. Also clear in these and other reports, including many by Liberian authors, was the fact that the strategic direction of those researches and their potential outcomes were all to further the agendas of the funding or parent civil society groups.

Central to the efforts of those numerous civil society groups exogenous to the places that they were trying to influence, and succeeding, was to further their notion that there was a need to identify and protect indigenous communities' access and rights to the land that they had inhabited for years (Champagne 2013:10; Smis et al 2012:504). However, for rural and indigenous communities in Africa, like those in Senjeh District, their position and voice were being represented not by themselves but by others acting in their interest with no clear evidence that they had been consulted to ascertain their points of view. Worthy as secure land tenures for rural communities in Liberia may be, the process employed by international civil society, the UN, western governments as well as the international media still embodied the trappings of neo-colonialism. Wherein those poor people in Senjeh District were being told that they needed to have secured tenures to land in order for them to have sustainable and secured livelihood sources whilst totally disregarding the fact that those communities were independent communities who should be allowed to decide what was best for them. Furthermore, one of the purposes of directing efforts exogenously for the passage of a land rights act in Liberia by those exogenous actors at the UN and in the head offices of civil society groups was to give rural communities and indigenous people the agency to negotiate concessions directly with large scale agro or extractive firms. What that notion does not take into account, in true neo-colonial fashion, is that rural, peasants and indigenous communities have a way of life that is

mainly void of mass production, digging the earth for minerals or endangering biodiversity for monetary reasons.

The UNDRIP, which was a product of years of civil society pressure on political leaders to respect the land rights of indigenous and rural communities the world over whilst not clearly asking for land tenure reforms in the “global south” in general and Liberia in particular, it paved the way for frameworks like FPIC to become prominent, even though it was not developed by those who it would affect the most. As an official of the Liberian Land Authority put it to me in 2017, the Liberian Land Rights Act of 2014 (proposed), a product of the 2013 Land Rights Policy, would not have reached the current stage in its development without the say so of their international partners. This is what he said when answering my question about the neo-colonial influence of global legal and political frameworks on the drafting of the proposed 2014 Land Rights Act:

“There is a global movement to recognize indigenous rights that has really taken root... Also a movement in western countries where a lot of civil society groups, young people and some corporate organizations are very mindful of the fact that they do not want products coming from conditions that exploit people. The introduction of the principles of FPIC, the protocols of the RSPO and the voluntary guidelines that are being pushed by the FAO. We are now pushing that they could become mandatory. So all of these best practices globally, and the fact that nationally a lot of international NGOs have sensitized communities to the extent that companies like GVL and Sime Darby are having trouble expanding because communities are now saying that no more Firestone will come here

and dislodge us from our areas without us getting any benefit... I also think that increased pressure from the international community, the fact that the REDD initiative has contributed a whole lot to how we are designing our forestry activities in Liberia. I believe that all of these international best practices have had strong influences on the direction that we are taking, and we have tried to adopt some of those provisions into our laws and a lot of them have been consulted. We have shared our drafts with them so that they could have an input and we have tried to be consistent in that regard.”

Here the official was admitting to me that had it not been for the neo-colonial influences of foreign partners, some multinational corporations and international civil society groups, the Land Rights Act would not have been possible. His suggestion was supported by statements in the Land Rights Policy of 2013, which was the roadmap for the drafting of a Land Rights Act, through initially, the establishment of a Land Rights Authority in 2016, to oversee the implementation of the stipulations of the Land Rights Act of 2018. In the policy, it was suggested that:

“In March 2011 the Land Commission adopted the World Bank funded report Reform of Liberia’s Civil Law Concerning Land (“Land Law Report”), which lays out a process for transforming the information gleaned from these projects into policy recommendations and draft laws... In accordance with the Land Law Report, the Land Commission has proceeded with policy and legal reform in clusters...’  
(Land Rights Policy 2013:5)

The striking component of the above quote, which

highlighted neo-colonialism at play in the coining and development of the Land Rights Act of 2018, was the phrase “in accordance with”. That clearly suggested that the policy was not merely adopting the World Bank’s suggestions, it was implementing a directive from the World Bank linked to its support for the Liberian government. That was something that I also gleaned from my conversation with the Land Authority official.

There were other cases specific to Liberia, which supported the suggestion here that the coining of the idea of a Land Rights Act to give rural Liberians like those in Senjeh District secured tenured rights, was neo-colonially influenced by exogenous actors whose agenda did not necessarily mirror those of the communities they sought to “help”. One of those was Liz Alden Wily’s major research in Liberia funded by FERN, mentioned earlier. The report from the project, which have been cited by many scholarships contributing to the debate on land grabbing and land rights in Liberia, including mine, argued that the current state of land tenure security in Liberia was so deplorable that a major shift was needed to alter the state of affairs. Just to clarify, I am not saying that Alden Wily (2007) report was not detailed and academically sound. I am also not saying that the land laws of Liberia were not ambiguous to say the least and restrictive in the worst case. What I am simply trying to argue here with evidence from the literature and my research fieldwork is that Alden Wily’s work like the others I have already mentioned was not born from the reaction to land grabbing from below but as a tool to further the exogenous agendas of civil society organizations in what they would argue was a moral fight against injustice being perpetrated by multinational agro and extractive firms with the support of national governments in the “global south” to deprive rural communities of their land.

Furthermore, when looking at the make-up of one of the main advocacy groups for land rights in Liberia, the Civil Society Working Group on Land Reform (CSWGLR), we see a clearer picture of how neo-colonial all of this talk about land rights in

Liberia is. The majority of those civil society groups in the alliance are national chapters of international civil society groups, who already had their land rights agenda in motion, before any recent land grabbing episodes had been recorded in Liberia. Linking this to what Edleman and Borras (2016) suggested in the literature, this suggests a kind of one-way internationalization of political reactions to land grabbing and, by extension, landlessness. That position was reinforced by a coordinator at SDI, one of the civil society groups working on land rights, and a member of the CSWGLR, when he answered my question about the impact that exogenous actors had on the process of drafting the Land Rights Act:

“I do not believe any of it has come from within the government that was a part of a national development plan. It has always been down to pressure from outside of the government. If you see the Liberian government talking about recognizing customary land rights it is as a result of civil society organizations, donor partners and international NGOs who want to see land tenure security clarity. As far as the government is concerned, the constitution of the country says that the resources are owned by the people of the country, and the government manages it on behalf of the people. In other words the government owns the resources. They feel comfortable with that arrangement. The only reason that they are trying to change things is because of the outside pressure.”

Here he was suggesting that political elites in Liberia did not establish the Land Commission, develop the Land Rights Policy of 2013, pass the Liberian Land Authority Act of 2016 and draft a Land Rights Act all of their own volition. He was suggesting that all of this was done as a direct result of pressure

from the outside in pure neo-colonial style. The view that political elites did not want to change things on their own was also echoed by the Land Authority official during our interview:

“But that is the prevailing thought of the establishment. I think that many of the so-called elites, be they Monrovia or traditional elites, they saw the vast pool of land that government owned as opportunities for them to grab 2000 acres of land and plant a rubber farm on it. It was conducive to keep the system in place but it did not benefit the vast majority of poor Liberian farmers, and that was the major issue going forward.”

Clearly, the views of those within the government as well as civil society, who have worked on the Land Rights Act of 2018, were in no doubt that the entire procession of reforming the land laws of Liberia was neo-colonialism in action.

## **Conclusion**

The dominant narrative in the existing debate surrounding land grabbing and land rights in Liberia is one in which rural Liberians were viewed by exogenous civil society groups and international political and legal frameworks as passive actors and victims of the global rush for the country's land. Those dominant views have led to political and legal reactions to the land grabbing phenomenon in Liberia originating from outside of the country and diffusing to national and local levels with all of the trapping of a neo-colonial effort to influence the state of play in Liberia. In this article, whilst not questioning the morality of the actions or trajectories employed by exogenous actors in influencing the land grabbing debate and land rights policies in Liberia, I have argued that their efforts to influence communities and the national government in Liberia from outside of the country mirrors the

practice of neo-colonialism. This article relied on the definition of neo-colonialism proffered by Dr Kwame Nkrumah in 1965, in which he argued that it referred to an independent state whose domestic policies were being directed by exogenous actors, governments as well as multinational corporations, in western political capitals. Even with that definition readily available and, given the fact that the land grabbing and land right debates in Liberia were being influenced by the political and legal frameworks of the UN, as well as civil society groups exogenous to the communities they were trying to help, there were limited mentions, if any, of their actions being neo-colonial. That was the gap that this article tried to help fill.

This article has argued for the actions of academics, civil society and other international political and legal frameworks, who have influenced the land grabbing debate, to be analyzed through the lenses of neo-colonialism to fully understand the extent to which exogenous actors have influenced the debate and continue to direct the trajectory of the land grabbing and land rights debate in Liberia. Utilizing available literature and fieldwork data from a case study in Senjeh District, Bomi County, Liberia, this article presented analyses of the land grabbing debate through the lenses of neo-colonialism and suggested that the level of outside influence on the framing of the debate to the point where it contrasted with the views and aspirations of those who it was suggested to be speaking for, mirrored the trappings of neo-colonialism. With evidence suggesting that most of the groups influencing the land grabbing debate originated outside of Liberia or were national level actors with full financial and strategic support from exogenous actors, as well as their agendas being both developed before contemporary episodes of land grabbing in Liberia were recorded and, contrasted with the view of those in my case study whose plight they were trying to address, it was clear that the debate had been influenced by neo-colonial practices. Similarly, the Land Rights Act which was recently passed by both houses of the Liberian legislature was neo-colonially directed by the actions



of exogenous actors to include the UN and international civil society groups. The actions to influence the drafting of the Land Rights Act included financial incentives, political pressures as well as coercion to adopt international best practices.

Whilst this article has not suggested that neo-colonial influences by exogenous actors on the land grabbing debate in Liberia and the drafting and passage of the Land Rights Act were morally ungrounded, there is a question that remains: how would rural communities in Liberia navigate the potential lopsided power relationship in negotiating land concessions directly with multinational corporations, as a result of secured land rights? This is a question that future researches on land grabbing and land rights in Liberia must interrogate.

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Accessed on June 20, 2016. HIGHWAY FAILURE IN LIBERIA

## **Highway Failure in Liberia**

**Samuka Konneh, Kieyee G. Bordolo and Augustus S. Moore**

### **INTRODUCTION**

Transportation plays a major role in developing a country's economy. The road systems in developing countries of Africa are in terrible conditions when it comes to traveling or transporting goods, and Liberia is no exception to such conditions. Research was conducted on the causes of these terrible conditions of roads in Liberia and their effects to the citizen, government and the economy of the country.

This article defines pavement failure in the sense of reduction in serviceability, undesirable structural condition or appearance caused by inadequacies of the technical or economic factors that must be sufficiently understood in order to design, build and maintain better pavements. Since the problems associated with pavement maintenance are unprecedentedly complex due to the dynamic and unpredictable nature of pavements where elements of the pavement are changing and deteriorating with time, the need to punctually maintain pavements in good condition must be commensurate with substantial expenditure. Along with the numerous maintenance techniques, there are several methods of pavement preservation, which can aid in enhancing the life of pavements and delaying the failure of pavements.

In pavement engineering, road defects are referred to as the evidence that is visible of an unfavorable condition in the pavement



affecting serviceability, structural condition or appearance. The section of a road, highway, or construction site that does not meet the regulations for a safe road is referred to as a “road defect”. In all parts of the world, the defects that most often cause injuries to people or damage vehicles include, but are not limited to potholes, lack of proper shoulders, improperly marked road signs, malfunctioning traffic lights, and construction carelessness. In turn, terrible road conditions lead to highway failure.

In Liberia, various roads have defects, which then lead to highway failure. These problems play significant roles in accidents that occur in the country. The prospects for automobile accidents are particularly much higher at night. This is because the lack of visibility coupled with the road defects inhibit the capacity of motorists to make the determination about the condition of the various parts of roads, especially highways. What are the causes of highway failures in Liberia? How can these causes be addressed? These questions will be the focus of this article.

**LIBERIA ROADS CLASSIFICATION**

Liberia has about 7,145.77 miles of roads spread all over the country, with about 621.37 miles, paved and 6524.40 miles unpaved. The roads in Liberia are classified into three classes: primary roads, secondary roads, and feeder roads(See Tables 1 and 2)

**Table 1 Classes, Surface Type, Conditions and Length of Roads in Miles**

Class	Surface Type	Excel-lent	Good	Fair	Poor	Bad	Type Total	Class Total
	Paved	353.36	53.84	28.27	12.55	16.28	96.46	1987.49
	Un-paved	26.35	53.83	552.03	717.47	168.52	1518.20	
	Paved							

Class	Surface Type	Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor	Bad	Type Total	Class Total
	Un-paved	48.23	58.65	435.16	426.93	109.80	1078.77	1078.77
	Paved							
	Un-paved	54.66	102.03	1190.68	1920.38	745.15	4012.90	4012.90
Total	All	482.59	273.35	2206.14	3077.32	1039.75	7079.16	7079.16

**A= Primary Roads, B= Secondary Roads, C= Feeder Roads**

Source: Detailed Assessment on Liberia's roads and bridges was done by the Bureau of Highway Construction and Bridge Unit of the Ministry of Public Works, Republic of Liberia, Monrovia, 2018.

**Table 2 Surface Type, Conditions and Length of Roads in Miles**

Surface Type	Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor	Bad
Paved	364.50	58.84	28.27	12.55	16.28
Unpaved	129.24	214.51	2177.88	3064.78	1023.47
Total	482.59	273.35	2206.14	3077.32	1039.75

Source: Detailed Assessment on Liberia's roads and bridges was done by the Bureau of Highway Construction and Bridge Unit of the Ministry of Public Works, Republic of Liberia, Monrovia, 2018.

## CAUSES OF HIGHWAYS/ROADS FAILURES

### Traffic

The surface of the road experience wear as result of traffic, most especially when the road is in a very good condition, and also after it is newly constructed. Traffic tends to increase on newly constructed roads because both the drivers and passengers' benefit. The drivers benefit in that their costs for vehicle maintenance are reduced, while the passengers enjoy the rideability, comfort, and

have accuracy on travel time reliability. However, deformation of the roadway is caused by heavy traffic, which can change the intended profile of the road. The result of this is due to the application of overload that is beyond the design of the road constructed. The roads in Liberia are overloaded with traffic that can be diverted through other modes of transportation like water transportation, and railway transportation. Once the roads are over loaded with traffic, the roads start to experience some distresses like fatigue crack, rutting, potholes, among others, that will affect the rideability, comfort and the reliability of travel time. (Okigbo, 2012)

### **Inadequate Road Design and Construction**

The design of a road requires nothing short of critical consideration to details and a complex judgment in evaluating design. Unfortunately, some issues that must be considered, during the design phase of a road or highway are often overlooked in part or in full. Thus, this contributes to the construction of roads with inherent defects. In turn, this puts drivers, who travel along these roads, at a significantly greater risk of being involved in an accident. Most of the roads in the country are designed and built by contractors within limited defect liability period. Most of these contractors are not familiar with the environment. Therefore, they tend to use experiences gained from other countries.

While borrowing design ideas from other countries is not a bad idea, it often leads to the road designs not being tailored toward the peculiarities of Liberia. In addition, the resulting designs have defects in their perimeters. For example, situations arise where preliminary studies of the environment that will help the design and project engineers are not adequate for appropriate design and construction.

### **Maintenance**

The best roads built in the world need adequate maintenance

for sustainability of their design life span. In Liberia, the main problem with roads is maintenance. The roads in the country are rarely maintained; and whenever maintenance is attempted, it is randomly done. The Liberian government is responsible for the financing of maintenance, the rehabilitation and the conservation of the roads after construction. But, usually, the Liberian government fails to perform its responsibilities.

Most of the roads contracts have defect liability periods that are between two to five (2-5) years. After the expiration of these contracts, the Liberian government assumes the full responsibility.. Maintenance is a serious issue for roads in rural areas, because most of the roads are feeder roads. And they become impassable during the middle of the rainy season. This causes farmers problems. This is because there is no easy way for them to bring their products to the market for sale. In addition, this leads to economic hardship for rural dwellers. The lack of maintenance on roads increases the transportation costs for commodities. For example, during the rainy season, roads that connect the southeastern counties of Grand Gedeh, Grand Kru, Maryland, River Gee, and Sinoe are terrible, as compared to other parts of the country (Oguara 2010).

### **Highway Facilities**

There are series of highway facilities that cause road failure. One of the facilities is drainage, which causes defects like roadway deformation and potholes, when the drainage is lacking in performance. When the water sets on the road because of poor drainages construction, the water tends to weaken the binder, and the aggregates start to leave apart and leads to potholes on the road. When the drainage is properly designed and constructed, it helps to improve the life span of the road. Poor drainage also has the tendency to weaken the subgrade materials that serve as the foundation of the road(Onoyan-usina et al 2013)

In road construction, the quality of materials used during

construction is key. Low quality of material affects road construction greatly in Liberia. This sometimes occurs in the form of the improper grading of aggregates for base course, subbase and even subgrade materials. When the materials are of high quality, most especially for the sub grade soil, the material prevent consolidation and excessive settlement of the roadway and if the sub grade is of low quality it implies that the soil has a low bearing capacity that will cause the sub grade to fail.

### **Poor Supervision**

The supervision of road works in Liberia has negative effects on construction, if the engineer has inadequate knowledge about road construction. The Ministry of Public Works assigns engineers to road projects to work alongside with the construction firms during construction. Some of the supervisors, who have inadequate knowledge about the work, find it difficult to deliver adequate supervision at the site. Some of the distresses like depressions, cracks, and even potholes can occur because of improper supervision. Inadequate supervision could result in the improper application of the construction materials and the overall operations. For example, the application of bituminous materials, soil compaction, and field density tests could be done poorly. Hence, it is advisable for the project engineer that is assigned to a road construction project to have laboratory knowledge about materials that will be used in the project(Okigbo 2012).

### **Some of the Major Effects of the Failure of Highways in Liberia Background**

The proper construction of roads contributes to the economic recovery of post-conflict societies like Liberia. One of the major benefits of adequate construction is the connection between points of origin and destination. Against this backdrop, the safety and riding quality on the pavement are taken into high consideration. Another

key factor to look at is the ponding of water on the pavement. This increases the chances of aquaplaning, which causes traffic hazard. Similarly, in pavement cracks and joint sealant should not be overlooked, because they allow the penetration of water into the sub-base or sub-grade.

### **Travel Time Reliability**

Travel time is delayed because of some distresses on roads. In Liberia, most of the time, because of road faultiness, there is excessive traffic congestion on the roads. Most of the time because of road distresses like potholes, and rutting motorists are constrained to use one-lane, and drive facing vehicle coming from the opposite lane. In addition, vehicles have to wait to use the same lane as the opposing vehicles. The reason is to avoid potholes, rutting on pavement and other defected parts of the roadway. This increases congestion in traffic on route, and as such negatively affects the travel time reliability from origin to destination.

### **Accidents**

The number of accidents that occurs on Liberia's roads, which is due to the nature of the roads, is quite alarming(See Table 3). Usually most drivers use excessive speed, especially on rural roads. Consequently, in the process of slowing down or changing lane because of road distresses, these drivers are often involved in traffic accidents. According to the Liberia National Police, some drivers refuse to attend driving school to understand road signs. The police also mentioned that drivers most of the time do not use seatbelt when driving. In Liberia, the data collected over a three-year period (2015-2017) show that passengers are usually the main victims in motor vehicle accidents, follow by pedestrians.

Table 3: Road Accidents in Liberia, 2016-2018.

Table 3: Road Accidents in Liberia, 2016-2018

Year	# of Accidents	# of Occupants	# of Pedestrians	# of Injuries	# of Deaths
2016	1865	9325	189	5595	80
2017	1554	7770	123	4662	34
2018	1498	7490	101	4494	25

Source: Constructed by the Authors from the Traffic Division of the Liberian National Police Force, Liberia, Road Accidents, 2015-2018, (Monrovia, Liberia: National Police Force).

**Traffic Congestion**

The congestion of traffic in Montserrado County, specifically, is a serious issue because of road failures in certain areas of the region. In some areas like the intersection of Somalia Drive and United Nation Drive, Freeport, Coca-Cola Factor and Nezoe, and 72<sup>nd</sup> intersection, citizens using these routes going to work will have to leave as early as 5 a.m.-6 a.m., in order to get to work and school on time. The congestion of traffic at these locations also have impact on the number of accidents. This is because of the slow movement of some vehicles, and the lack of good breaks in some of the vehicles. Another issue is that almost all of these major intersections are not signalized to help regulate the free flow of traffic.

**SOME REMEDIES TO HIGHWAY FAILURE IN LIBERIA**

**The Development of Adequate and Appropriate Road Construction Designs**

The construction of a road starts with the conception, then the planning, and then finally the design. Without a good design of the road, the functionality of the road may not be achieved. Even when the construction and supervision are adequate, without the design process being well done, the resulting road project will not be functional. The Ministry of Public Works that is in charge of road works in the country, and other entities, whose works are related to

road construction in the country, should implement more practical steps in the activities leading to the design and construction of roads in the country. For example, they should be able to give appropriate supervision, direction and control to road design consultants and road construction companies in the country.

### **The Adequate Testing of the Soil in Road Construction**

Soil plays a major role in the stability and lifespan of a road. In Liberia, one of the main reasons why highways fail is due to the lack of adequate knowledge about the soil situation. The knowledge of the soil situation is important in both the design and construction stages of a road. The subgrade that serves as the foundation of the road needs testing. Also, the results should be satisfactory, according to the specifications, before the commencement of the construction project. In addition, the sub-base, the base course, and even the wearing course of the pavement need to be tested to ensure that they satisfy the standard specifications of the project, before the road is accepted for use.

### **The Use of Appropriate Construction Materials**

The materials for road construction and maintenance must be tested and confirmed as adequate by competent laboratory technicians, prior to being used. Clearly, those materials that are of standard quality are required for good road construction. Using properly tested materials will help ensure the construction of sustainable roads.

### **The Maintenance of Roads**

The sustainability of roads in Liberia is dependent upon adequate maintenance. Highway maintenance ensures that the roadways, the roadsides, facilities and traffic structures are kept in conditions of high functionality like when the roads were newly constructed. This process is done by constantly checking for faulty



locations on highways. When faults are detected, adequate repairs should be done.

The detection of faults is achieved by using experienced road engineers, and the appropriate equipment that can locate or detect potential weaknesses on the pavement before they visibly occur. Based on the location and the type of the road, these operations include the grading of the roadways, paving, resurfacing, replacing damaged traffic facilities, the patching of roadway surfaces, drainage maintenance, the cleaning of road surfaces and sidewalks, and disposing of the refuse that are littered on the roads (Zumrawi 2015)

## **THE PROVISION OF HIGHWAY FACILITIES**

Highway facilities like drainages, shoulders, highway signs and markings are needed for the functionality of the roads in Liberia. The problems of the roads start to occur from faulty design, the lack of the facilities like the drainages, and very thin coatings that are easily washed away by floods, and pavements that can hardly withstand heavy traffic. Highway facilities such as shoulders prevent the road from experiencing edge cracks. Similarly, road signs and markings help to reduce the rate of accidents, and drainages help to prevent edge erosion on the road.

## **CONCLUSION**

The article has attempted to examine some of the major causes of the failure of roads in Liberia, and the resulting negative effects. The article then offered some remedies for addressing the serious problems of highway failure in the country. Some of the causes of highway failure are the failure to adequately test the soil, the use of poor quality materials, and the use of complements such as shoulders. In terms of remedies, they include the development of appropriate construction design, the adequate testing of the soil, and the use of quality materials.

Finally, the use of qualified personnel is also critical to both the construction and maintenance phases of roads. Against this backdrop, the Ministry of Public Works, which is responsible for the construction and maintenance of roads need to employ qualified engineers, who are knowledgeable about the best practices of road construction. In addition, the Ministry of Public Works also needs to contract with competent engineering firms that can construct high quality roads.

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## **WHEN YOU'VE RUN OUT OF PLACES TO RUN, MAYBE IT'S TIME TO CHANGE THE WORLD**

**Allan D. Cooper**

### **BOOK REVIEW**

Caree A. Banton, *More Auspicious Shores: Barbadian Migration to Liberia, Blackness, and the Making of an African Republic*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019.

Francis Musoni, Iddah Otieno, Angene Wilson, and Jack Wilson, *Voices of African Immigrants in Kentucky: Migration, Identity, and Transnationality*. Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2019.

The Covid-19 pandemic of 2020 revealed the underlying foundations of institutional racism in the global capitalist system; the awareness that people of African descent were disproportionately affected by the virus, added to the public slaughter of members of this diaspora by law enforcement officials in the USA and elsewhere during the pandemic, reawakened white liberals to join millions of protestors that filled the streets of cities large and small across the globe. At the same time, there was a renewed interest in the history of the African diaspora and the various genocides that have confronted this community. The two books reviewed here are important contributions to this literature.

Scientists can provide authoritative advice on how to avoid a deadly virus, but a central question in the study of African people is where can one go to escape the disease of racism? Both of the books being reviewed examine communities of the African diaspora that chose to migrate to find a more promising land to achieve their dreams without being subject to racist practices. In many ways, the African diaspora is similar to other ethnic groups that exercised mobility to free themselves from conditions of

oppression; the primary difference is that a large segment of the African diaspora migrated involuntarily and has had to reimagine itself again and again as circumstances warranted. Banton explains why prominent black Barbadians chose to populate Liberia during the 1860s, rather than place their bets on a post-slavery America. Liberia was founded as a refuge for free African Americans by liberal whites that believed America could never overcome its racism, and that 'freedmen' would be truly free of racist oppression if they went 'home' to Africa. For Barbadians, Liberia represented a chance of political empowerment where they could join the leadership class of the new West African country, an opportunity that was deemed impossible in the United States. A similar mindset motivated freed slaves in the USA following the Civil War to head westward to establish more than 200 Black Towns, of which most were in the (Indian) territory of Oklahoma. These black nationalists preferred to build their own communities on the outskirts of American society rather than travel the blood-stained waters of the Atlantic to a place that had failed to protect them in the first place. Both the Barbadians and the freed slaves of America had concluded that moving was a better option than standing still.

By the dawn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, both Barbadians in Liberia as well as freedmen in the Black Towns of Oklahoma were enjoying relative success in their endeavors. In 1903, a Barbadian, Arthur Barclay, was elected President of Liberia. He held this position until 1912. His achievement inspired other Caribbean intellectuals such as Marcus Garvey to organize more African Americans to join the 'Back to Africa' movement. The counterpart to Arthur Barclay among the communities establishing Black Towns was Edward P. McCabe who left his job at the Palmer Hotel in Chicago to migrate to the Black town of Nicodemus, Kansas in 1878. McCabe quickly became a rising star in the Republican Party. In 1889, McCabe moved to Oklahoma's territorial capital in Guthrie when President Benjamin Harrison appointed him deputy territorial auditor. In this position he promoted African

American migration to nearby Langston, one of the 50 Black Towns in Oklahoma, and urged the President to convert Oklahoma into a Black state. When President Harrison deliberated on whether to make McCabe the first governor of a mixed-race state of Oklahoma, the *New York Times* reported that a government official acknowledged that “if President Harrison appoints McCabe Governor, the latter will be assassinated within a week...” (see Johnson, 39). Oklahoma eventually became a state in 1907 under the leadership of white supremacists who imposed a grandfather clause in the new constitution to prevent black citizens from being able to vote. It would seem that Barbadians had made the wiser choice.

Caree A. Banton’s insightful examination into the Barbadian presence in Liberia reveals that the wisdom of migrating to Liberia had its pitfalls for both Barbadians and, especially, for the indigenous Africans of Liberia. The success of the War Against Slavery in the USA gave hope to most African Americans that life would be better; this sentiment was even more pervasive among African Americans moving to the Black Towns of Oklahoma. As a result, fewer African Americans chose to migrate to Liberia. The influx of Barbadians to Liberia was thus welcomed by the Americo-Liberian community which remained vastly outnumbered by indigenous Liberians who were not keen to be ruled by foreigners. But this was more a political marriage of convenience than a celebration of black unity. Americo-Liberians embraced their own version of racial supremacy over Africans within their country, and Barbadians were invited to form their own segregated communities and to accept a caste position between the ruling class and the indigenous population. The election of Arthur Barclay to President of Liberia resulted not from the acceptance of Americo-Liberians of their Barbadian neighbors but, rather, a strategic alliance of Barbadians with indigenous Africans as well as “recaptives” that had been settled in the country. Banton credits the Barbadians with uniting Liberians under the True Whig Party (TWP) but doesn’t explain why Americo-Liberians joined this

party or how they came to dominate it.

Under Barclay's leadership, Liberia was able to obtain better credit terms from the United States and to transfer real authority of the country's economy to the Firestone Rubber Company which converted the territory into a massive rubber plantation to serve the consumer interests of the rising middle class of America that desired to own their own automobile. Barclay commissioned traditional chiefs and headmen to be government officials, and shared with them the revenue of a hut tax imposed in 1910 that forced native Liberians off the land coveted by Firestone. When the Grebo and Kru rebelled against the new tax, Barclay invited the USS *Birmingham* to engage in hostilities against these communities to force them to comply with the power of the Liberian government. The political alliance represented by the TWP maintained their hegemony over Liberian politics until the 1980 coup led by Samuel Doe. Once Barclay retired from the Presidency, he served in other government capacities before finally, at the age of eighty, joining the legal staff of the Firestone Company of Liberia. When the League of Nations asked him to join their commission to investigate Firestone's use of slavery in Liberia, he reluctantly agreed and when confronted with the overwhelming evidence that African Americans had enslaved native Liberians, he chose to sign the report of the Commission without offering amendments (Banton 323).

Banton reveals that Americo-Liberians contradicted their own pan-Africanism discourse by refusing to embrace inclusiveness and equality within the Liberian state. They ignored the political rights of native Liberian communities, and created divisions between West Indians and recaptives that also had sought freedom in Liberia. Banton argues that "In questioning the humanity of African indigenes and liberated Africans, the immigrants were, in turn, questioning all black humanity. And as a result, they sacrificed their cause at the altar of white supremacy"

(330). In post-colonial Africa, Liberia came to resemble every other independent African state that found itself within a global economy dominated by white capitalists.

The Black towns of Oklahoma faced similar circumstances as well. They were equally dependent upon the economic structures beyond their city limits, and remained vulnerable to white supremacists that envied their success. As more and more young African Americans left Black Towns for economic opportunities in nearby Tulsa, the Greenwood district of that city became a national center for successful African American businesses, earning it the distinction of "Black Wall Street." White supremacists showed their rage at this extraordinary success in 1921 when they burned down the community, slaughtering up to 300 residents and forcing 6,000 others to seek shelter. A similar white riot had previously decimated Wilmington, North Carolina, the first Black Wall Street, in 1898. Altogether, state-sponsored terrorism led to over 4,000 African Americans being lynched between 1877 and 1950.

It would seem that the Back to Africa movement, as well as the organization of Black Towns beyond the American South, proved disappointing to black nationalists seeking to flee the domains of white supremacy. In retrospect, the assumptions behind these movements were premised on a false narrative: that there are territorial environments that are free from capitalism and the racism that sustains capital accumulation. It may be possible for groups within the African diaspora to create their own institutions that are relatively isolated from white structures of power, but these communities and institutions are merely polka-dots in a fabric that remains under the authority of white colonial authorities in North America and Europe. The global economy dominated by white capitalists depends on Africans and African Americans to perform the extraction of raw materials, as well as basic services and other modes of production that are likely to fall under the category of unfree labor or are compensated at or

below the minimum wage, an observation analyzed more fully by W.E.B. DuBois and Cedric Robinson among others (DuBois 1979; Robinson 2000). The pandemic of 2020 revealed how vulnerable these populations are to exposure of a virus, as well as the lack of health care that is available to the middle classes of the world whose incomes are financed off the profits of black labor. Middle class jobs may have been lost as a result of Covid-19, but African children never stopped digging for the coltan in the Congo that makes mobile phones and computers possible, or to harvest the chocolate beans in Cote d'Ivoire that middle class consumers enjoy on a global scale, or to extract the diamonds from the earth and the coastline of Africa that are desired by patriarchal husbands and grooms to represent the love that is supposed to form the basis of intimate relationships.

And this is where the *Voices of African Immigrants in Kentucky* becomes a curious interest. Despite the slavery, colonialism, and genocide perpetrated against Africans and their descendants throughout the diaspora, Africans continue to migrate to Europe and North America seeking a better life. Francis Musoni, Iddah Otieno, Angene Wilson and Jack Wilson have put together a snapshot of how and why it is that Africans have decided that racist America offers a more hopeful future than remaining in an Africa that continues to be exploited by foreign capitalists exercising the most crass and blatant forms of economic exploitation. And in the backyard of the Deep South, no less! The book follows the stories of many Africans that have made a home in Kentucky, and examines where they came from, why they migrated, the struggles they have faced, and the successes they have achieved.

The book is part of a series organized to identify and celebrate the various ethnicities that have populated Kentucky, and seeks to show how that state has opened itself to global citizens seeking to achieve the American Dream. Of the two million Africans that have immigrated to the United States in recent



decades, more than 22,000 have landed in Kentucky. In 1990, there were only 1,000 Africa-born immigrants in Kentucky, which is to say that most of this migration occurred at a time of mass incarceration of citizens of African descent, as well as the epidemic of white police killings of young men of African heritage. How desperate would Africans have to be to seek shelter in a country where the police openly murder people of African descent with impunity? *Voices* explains that the largest number of African immigrants to Kentucky came from the Democratic Republic of Congo, followed by the war-torn states of Somalia and Sudan. In the Congo, more than six million people have died in wars in recent decades related to the extraction of coltan, diamonds, and other minerals necessary to sustaining middle class standards of living in the leading capitalist powers in the world. Clearly, 'Black Lives Matter' is a global issue.

While most Americans give little thought to picking up and moving to Kentucky for a better life, it is intriguing, but understandable, that thousands of Africans would voluntarily cross the Atlantic to settle there. Many of these migrants are young people sent by their families to obtain educational opportunities that are lacking back home. Many of the 'voices' expressed in the book found open doors at Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) in Kentucky, or attended other HBCUs in other states prior to settling in Kentucky. A large percentage of these immigrants had parents that were teachers and doctors that understood the value of a good education. The book reminds readers that Kentucky lost 770 freed slaves that opted for a future in Liberia in the 19<sup>th</sup> century; these slaves were sponsored by a Kentucky state affiliate of the American Colonization Society, formed in 1828, that bought a 40-square mile site along the Saint Paul River in Liberia and named it 'Kentucky in Africa.' Clay-Ashland was the main town of this community. Liberia's 10<sup>th</sup> President, Alfred Francis Russell, was born in Lexington, Kentucky, and was among the immigrants to Clay-Ashland. Liberia's 13<sup>th</sup> President, William Coleman, was among

the immigrants from Fayette County, Kentucky. 'Kentucky in Africa' is not a subject discussed in *Voices*. Obviously, Kentucky has attracted more Africans in the past twenty years than it had previously lost during the founding of Liberia. African migrants to Kentucky include some that initially settled in the Black Towns of Oklahoma, including a professor at Langston University that ended up serving as a Dean at Kentucky State University, one of the state's HBCUs. Other HBCUs figure prominently in the *Voices*, including Lincoln University, Howard University, Morgan State University, Bethune-Cookman College, and Prairie View A&M. Other African immigrants came to Kentucky after attending predominately white universities known for having opened doors to Africans and African Americans before the Civil War such as Otterbein University and Berea College. In short, the Africans migrating to the USA are much better educated than most other immigrant communities, and have been much more intentional about where they could find opportunities in education and employment, even within a society known for its racism.

Africans in Kentucky have persevered despite being subject to racist circumstances, and they have had to endure the ignorance that most Americans have about Africa (none of the migrants grew up in trees surrounded by lions; in fact, many were accustomed to cities much larger than Louisville while growing up in Africa). African immigrants quickly learn that in America they are no longer Kikuyu or Kenyan; as an immigrant from Zimbabwe explained, "I never thought of myself as 'black' before coming to the United States" (97). Some Africans complained that they faced hostility even from African Americans; one African explained that when she departed a bus in New Orleans, a group of young African American children approached her and began pulling her hair, inquiring "What are you? You ain't black, you ugly, you ain't black" (101). Another immigrant confided, "I can't believe I'm standing here in 2017 fighting for the same principles I fought for in 1994 in South Africa..." (103). Still, African immigrants accept that for all its faults, they and their children have opportunities in

the United States that did not exist in Africa for them. Said one African, “Where in the rest of the world, for example, would a person of color come, meet a Caucasian lady, have a child, and that child become president” (129).

In many ways, these books validate the thesis of Neil Roberts (2015) who contends that ‘freedom’ is marronage, the process of fleeing from slavery. It is through mobility that people sense freedom. Slavery and mass incarceration are first and foremost a technique to curtail mobility. Freedom is not a place, but is an expression of mobility that negates the imprisonment of slavery. The establishment of Liberia and Black Towns, the migration of African Americans from the South to the industrial centers of the North (and back South again), and even the immigration of Africans into the United States – all represent different strategies to keep moving in and towards freedom. As a Ghanaian explained in *Voices*, “If you keep looking back you cannot go forward” (101). After Tulsa, “Black Wall Streets” emerged and declined in Chicago and Durham (Slocum 9). The Black Town concept was reimagined in the Free Villages of Anglophone Caribbean, as well as Soul City, North Carolina in the 1970s. African American intellectuals found refuge in Ghana. But even in Ghana there existed an ethnic and color hierarchy that influenced who became successful or prized as a marriage partner (see Pierre). Ghana, too, learned that its desires to build a Pan-African utopia was constrained by a global system of domination by racial capitalism. Listening to the ‘voices’ of Africans in Kentucky, one hears the same desires of those African Americans that established Black Towns in Oklahoma, as well as the Barbadians that sacrificed their colonial identities to become Liberian. It is a sentiment common to most global immigrants, including the parents of the children locked in cages along the U.S.-Mexico border. As a South African pharmacist in Kentucky stated, “Every decision is based on setting our kids up for their future” (144).

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