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Developing Alternatives: Citizens Perspectives on Liberian Civil War

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Abstract

This article provides an alternative examination of the causes of the Liberian civil war from 1980 to 2003. I employed a constructivist epistemology and qualitative study based upon fieldwork in different African cities interviewing Liberians outside and within Liberia. A purposive sampling of fourteen participants was selected. Mainly qualitative methodology and data collecting methods and instruments, involving semi-structured interviews, document and textual analysis, were used. The perceptions of these participants on the causes and possible solution to the endemic conflict in their homeland hold key perspectives that have hitherto been ignored in the whole debate about the Liberian civil war and its legacies. Finally, from the synthesized findings of the investigation, we concluded that the causes of the Liberian civil war are found in competition for scarce resources, marginalization, bad governance, weak legal framework, historical legacy, external factors, incessant political power struggles and the proliferation of small fire arms entering the country. We then proffered some solution to the seemingly lingering and endemic legacies of the war, and they include: Youth training initiative by the Liberian government; inclusive conflict prevention structures encompassing all the ethnic groups into the Government policy implementation strategies; helping vulnerable groups to adapt to new challenges; employment opportunities and other income generating ventures. The Government, together with the sub-regional Organisation (ECOWAS), should enforce the following post conflict reconstruction activities such as social reintegration, Demobilisation and Disarmament, Military integration and restructuring, maintaining law and Order, Protection of Human rights, Institutional and Policy reforms.

Keywords: ECOWAS, Liberia, undemocratic, authoritarian, Americo-Liberians

INTRODUCTION

Liberia is a home to a lot of indigenous African ethnicity. It is bordering the north Atlantic Ocean between Cote D'Ivoire, Sierra Leone and Guinea to the north. It was curved out of land obtained from Cote D'Ivoire, Sierra Leone and Guinea. In 1822 freed slaves from the United States of America were brought and settled there. In 1847, it was established as a republic under the leadership of President Tubman and his vice President Tolbert who maintained political dominance of the government for decades. Tubman and Tolbert were both Americo-Liberians (Free slaves). Due to rampant corruption, widespread of poverty and Marginalisation of the indigenous African tribes, a military coup led by Master Samuel Doe, a member of the Krahn ethnic group seized power in a bloody coup in 1980. The coup d'état ended 133 years rule of the Americo-Liberians' True Whig party and ushered an era of authoritarian and dictatorship. Samuel Doe worsened the socio-political situation and provided Charles Taylor with the opportunity to start a conflict in 1989. Samuel Doe's regime of office was also succeeded by another undemocratic tenure led by Charles Taylor who was from the Americo -Liberian ethnic group. His regime encountered many problems, such as the breakaway of commander, Prince Johnson, to form his faction. Liberia, together with Cote d'Ivoire, was one of the model West African countries in terms of democracy and economy, Global Security (2003). In an effort to understand how a country with great potentials for development in Africa became a failed state. This study examines the causes of the Liberian civil war between 1980 – 2003, during which the infrastructure of the country was destroyed and growth and development are delimited. It becomes imperative to provide alternative perspectives that suggest measures to the final resolution of the Liberian conflict; to contribute to the current debate on the role of identity politics in Africa and to possibly make realistic

recommendations on how to avoid conflicts in future. In trying to achieve this task, necessary questions to guide this article are developed and they include: What were the main causes of the civil war? Who were the parties involved in the conflict? What are the political and socio-economic implications of the civil war? The objectives of the study were to determine the causes of the conflict, the parties involved in the civil war, the political and socio-economic implications of the conflict and finally determine the proffered recommendations to the civil war.

The conflict affects a large number of people, mostly civilians, and the world over. The recent history of West Africa indicates that Nigeria, Chad, Sierra Leone and now Liberia, have had their share of conflicts. The persistence of conflict despite international mediation efforts suggests that the causes and dynamics of conflicts are not well understood. For example, Kaldor (2004) blames the outbreak of conflicts in African on identity politics and turn a blind eye to other equally important factors such as human rights violations and the economy. The study seeks to provide an insight into the Liberians political civil war.

It would unveil the reasons why Liberia, has deteriorated politically and economically. The study is intended to initiate debates on identity politics (Kaldor, 2004 p. 6) and greed and grievances (Collier, 2004, p. 207). This will provide data for students in political science, diplomacy, international relations and other related disciplines to appreciate the causes and effects of civil strife in Sub Saharan Africa. The research would draw the attention of all the concerned institutions such as Africa Union (AU) and ECOWAS as to how to avert similar situations like that of Liberia and how to manage related problems. In addition, it would add new knowledge and approaches to different organisations involved in conflict resolution in Africa.

METHODOLOGY

A purposive sampling of fourteen participants was selected. The respondents were selected based on their involvement in Liberia civil war. Their experiences on the causes and effects of the conflict were tapped for analysis. The fourteen respondents who were selected for the study, were comprised of both males and females. Mainly qualitative methodology was used in the data collecting. The instruments involve semi-structured interviews, document and textual analysis. The study took place among the Liberian diplomats in South Africa (Liberian Embassy), Citizens resident in Monrovia, Liberia and refugees in Ghana, Conflict Analyst in Pretoria Institute for security study, Liberian communities in Johannesburg, Cape Town and Mthatha. Their perceptions on the causes and possible solution to the endemic civil war in their homeland hold key perspectives that have hitherto been ignored in the whole debate about the Liberian civil war and its legacies.

A REVIEW OF LITERATURE ON CAUSES OF WARS

It is necessary to review theoretical and empirical works in African conflict areas in moving forward. Provided here is a section of theoretical and empirical background discussions relevant for the study in terms of debates and discourses on-going around the causes and consequences of war. They are here discussed below:

Old Wars and New Wars

War is a social activity. It involves the mobilization and organisation of individual men, for the purpose of inflicting physical violence. It involves the management of certain types of social relationships and its own particular logic (Kaldor,2001 p. 76). Every society has its own characteristic form of war. What we see as war and what

policy makers and the military call war was a specific phenomenon which took shape in Europe between the fifteen century and eighteen centuries. It was a phenomenon that was initially bound with the evolution of the modern states (Kaldor,2001). War was a construction of the centralized hierarchically ordered territorialized modern states.

New wars have as a political goal, the claim of power on the basis of traditional identities, nations, tribes and religion. However, the upsurge in the politics of particular identities cannot be understood in traditional terms. It is explained in the context of growing cultural discord between those who participate in transnational network of communication and those who do not have access to that global process, though their lives may be shaped by those processes (Kaldor, 2005 pp.79-80). Hence it would be a mistake to assume that those who support particular identity are reacting against the process of globalization, while those who favour more tolerant, multicultural approach are part of the new global class. On the other hand, among the globalists are Diaspora nationalists, fundamentalists, realists and neoliberals who believe that compromises with nationalists offer the best for stability as well as transnational criminals who profit from the new wars (Kaldor, 2001 p.76).

Identity politics is a movement that mobilized around ethnic, racial or religious identity for the purpose of claiming state power. In a narrow context, it means a form of labelling. Whether we talk of tribal conflict here or there, the common feature is the way in which labels are used for political claims. These conflicts are ethnic conflicts. Though there is no racial basis of ethnic claims, the fact is that these labels tend to be treated as something one is born with and cannot change; neither can it be acquired,

through conversion or assimilation. For instance, one is a Liberian if his grandfather was a Liberian, even if he cannot speak a Liberian language (Kaldor,2001 p.77).

According to Zartman (2005 p.71), current research has indicated that highly multi-ethnic and essentially single-ethnic nations tend towards stability, but plural-ethnic situations with dominant ethnic group are the most prone to conflict. He further proves that in this situation, relations among groups tend towards conflict if one group is more favoured in the distribution of state resources or if another group is subjected to discrimination and repression. Ethnic relations come out with their own difficulties for preventive actions. Criterion for healthy ethnic relations could be useful for evaluating peace and stability and for conditioning development when used by distant funding resources. For example, World Bank programmes were criticised for not listening to the experts' advice about the dangers in directing resources towards the majority Hutu ruling group in Rwanda in the early 1980s: they foresaw the Tutsi reactions that overthrew the government but not before the genocide took place (Zartman, 2005 p. 36).

Increasingly violent manipulation of ethnic identities, disputes over land and natural resources, tension in civil-military relations, the proliferations of small arms, law and order problems and deep structural weaknesses of governance trigger large scale conflict (Reilly & Wainwright, p. 2005).

Human Misperception

According to Stoesinger (2005 p.10), leader's personality was of critical importance and has spelled the difference between the outbreak of war and the maintenance of peace. The most important factor in the outbreak of war is misperception. Such

distortion can manifest itself in 1-4 ways: in a leader's image of him and the outbreak of war. Each leader expects victory after a brief successful campaign. Leadership assumes a powerful emotional momentum of its own and therefore becomes one of the causes of war. Anything that triggers such optimism about a quick and decisive victory makes war more likely, and anything that dampens it facilitates peace (Stoesinger, 2005 p.76).

State Failure

The sum of both internal and external factors has led to the failure and collapse of some states in Africa. State failure according to Zartman (2005) is firstly, when the state can no longer perform its basic functions. Secondly, when the state's authoritative decision making and organizing body paralyzed and can no longer operate. And thirdly, when the state has lost his powers of control over society and can no longer provide security and welfare services to its citizens and finally has lost its political legitimacy and right to rule as well as having its socio-economic apparatus destroyed. The break-down of government, law, order and loss of control over political and economic space can start social fragmentation (Francis, 2006 p.45).

It is not easy to prevent state collapse and failure because they present insoluble challenges as well as being the work of human error. Structural problems, political and market failure are relatively easy to overcome compare with the deliberate efforts of some dictators in Africa, Sierra Leone and Angola. This is not to suggest that the work of state failure and collapse is only that of egregious rulers, just that they are easier to identify than collective forces of government and oppositions. The challenge is how to prevent government and oppositions from collaborating to commit politicide (Zartman,2005 p. 78).

There are two kinds of states that present different types of problems in such prevention, soft or weak state and hard state. Weak states are flabby constructions and are incapable of decisions and executions. They are incompetent in providing international and external security. They are open to incessant failures. Examples are Ghana in late 1970s, Egypt in early 1950s and many other states. Such states need help in dealing with pressing problems and strengthening their structure and institutions and countering threats which feed on their weaknesses. This is called nation building (Zartman, 2005 p. 78).

Certain state failure dramatically increases the likelihood of civil war. The weakening of the state institutions increases the probability of violent conflict in several ways. First, the erosion of state authorities gives rise to the security dilemma for minority groups within the state. Second, in weak states, ethnic concept of nationalism or other exclusionary ideologies such as religious fundamentalism are more likely to prevail than the civil concept of nationalism with the former being more conflict prone than the latter (Von Einsiedel,2005 p.39).

CAUSES OF CONFLICTS IN AFRICA

The causes of conflict in Africa are categorised into four distinct areas, namely: the crisis of state formation and nation building, the factors contributing to the failure disintegration of the post-colonial state, cultural factors with specific reference to the manipulation of ethno-religious and nationalist identities, socio-economic factors and the availability and proliferation of weapons (Francis, 2006 p.34).

According to Francis (2006), DFID report on the causes of conflict in Africa can be classified into three distinct groups. First, the root causes of conflict i.e., fundamental

grievances including political, economic and social inequality between groups within the country. Indeed, where political and economic resources are dominated by one group to the disadvantage of another and the privatization of the official state by ruling and governing elites and official state may collapse the state (Francis, 2006 p. 51).

Second, cause of conflict is perennial economic decline as a result of poor economic management and performance, natural disasters notably famine, drought and flood. Further than that, the particular historical context of a country, most especially, in situations where political violence and historical patterns of violence are embedded, and the struggle over control of natural resources, either in terms of resource abundance as in the case of Angola, Congo, Sierra Leone, or resources scarcity as in access and control over grazing and water rights for nomadic people in the Horn of Africa (Francis, 2006). Third cause includes high levels of unemployed youth lacking education and other socio-economic opportunities. This is a cause that triggers and sustains conflict. The politicization, abuse and the mobilization of identities such as ethnicity, religion and nationalism, democratisation and democratic transition, and the availability and proliferation of arms also fuels and sustains conflict, Francis, (2006).

Most African politicians lacked experience of how to work out the system of parliamentary democracy left by the Europeans. Faced with difficult problems, they often failed to cope and government becomes corrupt. This led to the creation of one-party states as the only way to achieve progress. In Tanzania, this worked well providing stable government. On the other hand, since it was impossible to oppose such governments by legal means, violence became the alternative route to self-realisation. A military coup to remove unpopular rulers becomes popular (Lowe, 1997

p.14). As a microcosm of a larger African problem, Liberia counts as one among the numbers ridden with conflict and civil wars.

CAUSES OF THE LIBERIAN CIVIL WAR

Liberia is home to a lot of indigenous African ethnic groups. It is bordering the North Atlantic Ocean between Cote D'Ivoire and Sierra Leone and Guinea to the north. It was curved out of land obtained from Cote D'Ivoire, Sierra Leone and Guinea. In 1822 freed slaves from the United States of America were brought and settled there. In 1847, it was established as a republic under the leadership of President Tubman and his Vice president Tolbert who maintained political dominance of the government for decades. Tubman and Tolbert were both Americo-Liberians (Free Slaves).

Due to widespread poverty, rampant corruption and marginalization of indigenous African tribes, a military coup led by Samuel Doe, a member of the Krahn ethnic group, seized power in a bloody coup in 1980. The coup d'état ended 133 years rule of the Americo-Liberians' True whig party and ushered an era of authoritarianism and dictatorship. Sumuel Doe worsened the socio-political situation and provided Charles Taylor with the opportunity to start a war in 1989.

Samuel Doe's tenure of office was also succeeded by another undemocratic regime led by Charles Taylor who was also from the Americo-Liberian ethnic group. His regime encountered many problems, such as the breakaway of his commander, Prince Johnson, to form his own faction. Liberia, together with Cote D'Ivoire, was one of the model West African countries in terms of democracy and economy. Against this background, we traced the underlying factors that explain why Liberia had experienced such political, social and economic fragmentation and decline (Global

Security, 2003), which inadvertently is a background to and a product of the Liberian civil war. The Liberian civil war was caused by a number of factors: these included historical and socio-economic factors (Catholic world news, 1996). These factors can be further explained in the following themes.

Marginalisation of Indigenous People

The cause can be traced far back to the formation of the modern state of Liberia dominated by freed slaves who maintained dominance and control of Liberian state of affairs from independence until the military coup of 1980. Most of the freed slaves from America became masters of the indigenous people. This historical factor has polarised relations among the groups of people. There was often brutal treatment of the indigenous people, for example is the brutal treatment from the Liberian army, leading many of them into exile in Cote D'voire, where Charles Taylor was able to organise and recruit them as rebel soldiers. Many years later, this marginalised group formed the core of the National Patriotic Front of Liberia's rebellion, which subsequently toppled the government (Catholic world news, 1996).

The first factor of interest is the various ethnic groups that formed the core of the different rebel movements and served as a source of recruitment to fight. Charles Taylor's National Patriotic Front of Liberia (NPFL) was of mainly an Americo-Liberia ethnic structure, Prince Yormie Johnson's Independent National Patriotic Front of Liberia (INPFL) was backed by Gio and Mono ethnic groups, Movement for Democracy in Liberia (MODEL) was Krahn ethnic supporters, and the Liberians United for Reconciliation and Democracy (LURD) was a Mandingo ethnic majority rebel movement. None of these groups had an interest in securing national peace, but rather to make claim for their ethnic groups with them (Catholic world news, 1996).

Traditionally, Americo-Liberians have dominated the political platform, followed by President Doe and his Krahn ethnic group. Other groups such as the Americo Liberians, Gio and the Mono tribes felt it was an opportune time to make claim for political representation. This is epitomized by Johnson, breaking away from INPFL, at a time when the odds were in favour of NPFL to capture Monrovia. Another example was the unsuccessful marriage between Mandingos' and Kahn's in forming the United Liberation Movement for Democracy in Liberia (ULIMD) (Catholic world news, 1996).

In effect, these ethnic groups were not so much as interested in seeing a peaceful Liberia without them having a stake in the political affairs. This opposing interest had an enormous impact in the kind of relationship that existed between them and as a result they were not prepared to work together. Each group tried to claim some form of victory at one time or the other so as to inform the other group of their capabilities. A perfect example is the video-taping of how President Doe was tortured to death. The tapes were sold throughout West Africa, just to show how potent INPFL was. Had all these groups been interested in seeing a peaceful Liberia, the death of President Doe would have provided the greatest window of opportunity, but it did not. Each group felt it had enough to make zero-sum win. As a result, instead of these groups building on the genesis of the war, (ethnic discrimination) as a capacity of achieving peace, they rather expanded their opportunity for war.

Ethnic discrimination that informed the various actors and resulted in the mushrooming of rebel groups is the same thing that resulted in the erosion of the state control as identified as a cause of war. The 1980 coup was very popular with indigenous Liberians and felt they had been taken out of bondage. Doe was

proclaimed a hero, but he "made himself the 'hero' of only higher ethnic group by replacing the Americo-Liberians who had occupied the commanding heights of Liberia's Political economy – Krahn elites" (Binnen and Omar, 2008).

Human Rights and Electoral Malpractice

Human rights were violated by both the colonial regimes and subsequent regimes. For example, resistance by indigenous Liberians during the pre-independence era was often marred by a brutal and stiff repression by the government. During the Doe regime, political murder was institutionalized as a device for silencing opponents of the regime. During 1985 the regime led a campaign of terror, death and destruction against the people of Nimba County, killing several hundreds of people during the senseless orgy of violence. Such human rights abuse largely contributed towards the deepening of the crisis in Liberia (IRIN, 2008).

The culture of fraudulent elections became entrenched in the country. These electoral malpractices have deep historical roots. For instance, the 1927 presidential elections between the incumbent president Charles, King of the ruling True Whig Party, and the opposition candidate Thomas Faulkner was recorded in the Guinness Book of World Records as one of the most fraudulent elections in the world. Subsequent elections that also took place from 1955 – 1987 were equally fraudulent (IRIN, 2008).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

We report the results and findings of the conflict in Liberia. The first section of the chapter is about the outcome of an investigation of the crisis. It is organized in terms of the four research questions posed. It reports the respondents' answers to the four

questions of the study. The content and the format of the results follow the research questions earlier posed. The major findings of the study are also presented.

Table 1:   Gender Distributions

GENDER	NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS	PERCENTAGE (%)
MALES	8	57%
FEMALES	6	43%
TOTAL	14	100

Source: Researcher's Database

The table above shows a greater participation from men than from women. Though the difference is not that much, it implies that men showed much interest in participating in this research than women. Since the purpose of this research explained to participants at the time they were contacted. An almost equal number of men as well as women were contacted for this research; it suggests that men are more committed to revealing their feelings and opinion about the causes of the civil war in Liberia than women. Women could not comment much because they regard themselves not to be involved much in wars simply because of socio-cultural believes in Africa. They are delineated to have inferiority complex hence they desist to air out their view on issues that matter most.
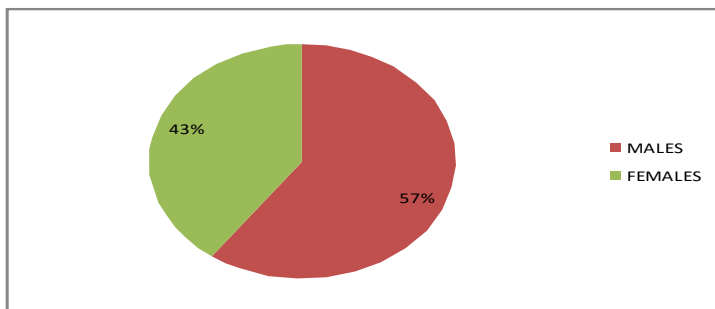
Chart 1: Gender Distributions
Source: Researcher's Database

With regard to the participants, 57% of the respondent comprised of males and 43% constituted females. This is linked to the fact that more men willingly accepted to take part in the research than women.

Table 2:   Main Causes of the Liberia Civil War

CAUSES	NO. OF PARTICIPANTS	PERCENTAGE (%)
Power	8	28%
Resources	5	18%
Ethnic Discrimination	7	25%
External Forces	3	11%
Tolbert's Death	2	7%
Bad Governance	3	11%

Source: Researcher's Database

Table 2 shows the main causes of the Liberia civil war. Eight (8) participants said the conflict was caused by power struggle. Five (5) said it was caused by the resources.

Bad governance was also a factor according to three (3) of the respondents. Seven (7) also said it was due to ethnic discrimination. Two (2) and three (3) of the participants said it was Tolbert's death and external force which led to the civil war in Liberia.
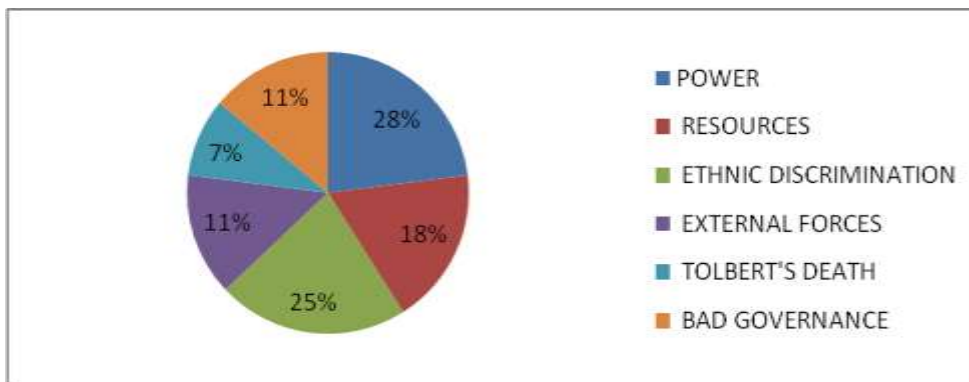

Chart 2: Main Causes of the Liberia Civil War
Source: Researcher's Database

The above pie chart represents the views of participants as to what the main causes of the civil war were. The size of each chart segment has determined firstly, by the number of respondents who mentioned each attribute. Secondly, emphasis is placed by the respondents on the answers to the question and thirdly, by the implication determined by the responses.

Twenty - eight percent (28%) of the respondents said it was the struggle for power that led to the civil war. They related how Charles Taylor and Prince Johnson split following disagreement after the death of president Doe. The chart shows that seven percent (7%) of the respondents emphasise the death of president Tolbert which also suggest the power struggle. Those who thought that ethnic discrimination was the cause of the conflict constituted twenty-five (25%), those who said resources led to the civil war constituted eighteen (18%), and those who thought that bad governance led to the war were eleven (11%).

Ethnic Discrimination

The fact remains that ethnic conflict still exists. Irrespective of the fact that we live in the same country and continent, conflicts will continue to occur. Liberia has a lot of ethnic groups but the major ones are the Americo-Liberians, Gio, Mono and Krahn and among these groups there were major discriminations. The researcher found out that president Doe and his Krahn people were discriminating against other Liberians in terms of social amenities. Catholic World News (1996), stated that the conflict can be traced to the formation of Liberia where the Americo-Liberian dominance and control over the country's resources led to the conflict. During this period, they were able to marginalise the indigenous people until the 1980 military coup by Samuel Doe who took over the leadership of Liberia. The 1980 coup was very popular with the indigenous Liberians and they felt they were out of bondage.

It was also revealed that the American settlers also did the same when president Tolbert was in power. The researcher further found that the oppression of the Americo-Liberians, Gios and Monos by Doe's people led to the eruption of the war. According to the respondents, most people were denied socio-economic facilities like health centres, good drinking water and roads.

Conflict over Resources

Liberia is blessed with many natural resources such as gold, diamond, iron ore, timber and oil palm. These resources have made the leaders in the country to have interest in ruling the country. About eighteen percent (18%) of the respondents stated that the civil war was as a result of the resources in the country. This fall in line with the DFID reports which illustrated those political and economic resources are dominated by one

group to the disadvantage of another and this was realised in the case of Liberia (Francis, 2006 p.51). According to the respondents, Charles Taylor and his group were much advancing to the areas where the major resources are. One respondent claimed that some rich Lebanese were behind Charles Taylor and his rebels by sponsoring the conflict due to the resources available in Liberia.

Power Struggle

After independence in 1847, several political parties were created. First among the lot is the True Whig Party. The dominance of this party necessitated the creation of strong political parties such as the LURD, the Progressive Alliance of Liberia, the NPFL, the INPL and the MODEL. Apart from the fact that Liberia has experienced some military take overs in 1980, twenty eighteen (28%) of the respondents stated that the conflict in Liberia was as a result of power struggle. The conflict was actually due to power struggle because Prince Johnson who was with Charles Taylor split from him when he was able to capture President Doe and form his own faction in1990 known as Independent National Patriotic Front of Liberia (INPFL). This was clear to show that all of them were fighting for power.

Poor Governance

From table 2, eleven percent (11%) of the respondents related that the conflict was due to bad governance. This includes rampant corruption, patronage and greed. All these culminated to the conflict. According to Kofi Annan, the former UN Secretary General, observed, "the nature of political power in many African States together with the real and perceived consequences of capturing and maintaining power is a key source of conflict across the continent" Issaka (2006 p. 43) also said that where there is

insufficient accountability of leaders, lack of transparency, lack of rule of law, respect for human rights and leaders failing to hand over peacefully to others leads to conflict. In the case of Liberia there were some instances of mismanagement, misuse and illegal exploitation of natural resources by the leaders. During the conflict Charles Taylor seized diamond reserves in Sierra Leone and was mining to sponsor his agenda in Liberia. This is not only in Liberia but also common in almost the entire sub-region. Nigeria, Sierra Leone and Cote d' Ivoire cannot be left out.

External Forces

In Chart 2, eleven percent (11%) indicated that the conflict can be traced from external forces. From the respondents the war was motivated by the president of Libya, General Gaddafi and Cote D'ivoire's president, Houphouet Boigny who supported Charles Taylor's NPFL rebels. The rebels were trained in Libya and camped in Cote D'ivoire. The same respondents said Charles Taylor was sponsored with funds by the Burkina Faso president.

From Catholic World News (1996), Charles Taylor's rebels were trained in Cote D'ivoire and Libya due to president Doe's differences with them. The Northerners who were brutalised by Doe's military also moved to Cote D'Ivoire and finally joined Charles Taylor's rebels.

Tolbert's Death

Chart 2, further shows that seven percent (7%) of the respondents said Tolbert's death made the Ivorian president to have differences with Doe because Adolphus Tolbert was married to Daisy who was President Houphouet Boigny's adopted daughter. Therefore, this made the president to support Charles Taylor's rebels.

Displaced People

The research revealed that a number of people were displaced internally and externally. Many people found themselves in refugees' camps internally and externally in the neighbouring countries like Ghana, Nigeria, Cote D'Ivoire and Guinea.

Table 3: Numbers of Displaced People due to Liberian Civil War

Population of Liberia	2,600,000
Refugees to Ghana	42,034
Refugees to Nigeria	2000
Refugees to Guinea	15,000
Internally Displaced People	1,000,000
Numbers Killed	200,000

Source: UNHCR, 2OO4

Table 3 shows the number of people who were displaced during the civil war in Liberia. Liberia has a population of 2,600,000. During the civil war 1,000,000 were displaced internally and 42,034 people were also displaced externally to Ghana. Further 15,000 and 2,000 people were displaced to Guinea and Nigeria respectively. About 200,000 people were killed.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The causes of the conflict have been as a result of marginalisation of the indigenous people, competition for scarce resources, political power struggle and the rest are bad governance, Tolbert's death and external forces from president Houphouet Boigny (Ivory coast president), General Gaddafi (Libyan president) and Burkina Faso

president due to their difference with president Doe concerning their friend Torbert death. Finally, weak legal framework and proliferation of small fire arms entering the country cannot be left out. The journey has been very rough and tough, Liberia has witnessed deaths, starvation, famine, rape, looting, bombardments, torture and many inhuman treatments have been observed.

In regard to the four research questions posed in the introduction: What are the main causes of the civil war? Who were the parties involved in the conflict? What are the political and socio-economic implications of the conflict? What was the role of ECOWAS and other institutions in solving the problem? We find that the causality of the conflict was found to have been entrenched in historical parlance, poor governance, resources cause and foreign interference. Parties to the conflict were both local and external. The conflict resulted in great destruction of the socio-economic fabric of the country and resulting from human deaths and suffering. Finally, the West African sub-regional Organisation (ECOWAS) and the UN played leading roles in ameliorating the conflict. In moving forward, Liberia still hope for restoring vibrant, stable and sustainable democratic governance along with socio-economic growth and development in future – to achieve this, the researcher present the following recommendations:

Role of the Government: The Liberian government should increase youth training, involvement in education, vocational training and leadership developmental programmes in order to enable them to become good future citizens. The Government should put conflict prevention structures that will include all the tribes in the Government administration in order to prevent future conflict among the various tribes. The Government, together with the sub-regional Organisation (ECOWAS),

should enforce the following post conflict reconstruction activities such as social reintegration, Demobilisation and Disarmament, Military integration and restructuring, maintaining law and Order, Protection of Human rights, Institutional and Policy reforms.

Employment Opportunities: Employment opportunities and other income generating ventures for Liberians should be created.

Role of NGOs: The Non-governmental organisations should be encouraged to empower women participation in national issues.

National Reconciliation: Efforts should be made to strengthen good relationship among different ethnic groups and help them adapt to new challenges.

Truth and Reconciliation Commission: There should be a truth and reconciliation commission to revisit horrors of the past in order to heal wounds and prevent future occurrence of the conflict. Beside the above-mentioned recommendations, the researcher is aware that no single recommendation can perfectly and completely solve the problem in Liberia, but unless Liberians themselves agree to bury their differences and see others as fellow Liberians who have common identity of building the Liberian economy. Any move by the authorities concerned must bear in mind that Liberia is a country containing Americo-Liberians and the indigenous Liberians alike and that they are bonded by blood through intermarriage. A number of neighbouring countries share Liberian complex ethnic fabric. Countless people identify themselves along ethnic lines rather than national affiliation. Ethnically-driven destabilization will endanger the entire Liberia, as well as the West African region and can attract extremist and terrorist organisations.

The article unveils the reasons why a country with great potentials for development like Liberia, has deteriorated to that extent, and will allow policy makers to make realistic policies in respect to related cases in future not to occur. It has also provided new knowledge and approaches to different organisations involved in conflict prevention and resolution areas in Africa. And it is hoped that this will further initiate debates on identity politics, conflict resolution and thereby contributing to local, national, continental and international peace efforts in Africa and beyond.

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