

CHAPTER II

CIRCUMSTANCES AND CONFLICT THAT OCCURS IN LIBERIA

In this chapter, the author will discuss the brief history of the Liberia State which is the country where the conflict occurred. After that, the author will also explain the history of Liberia Civil War. Furthermore, part two of this thesis will mention the impact of the civil war that suffered by the Liberian people.

A. The Condition in the Republic of Liberia

The American Colonization society initiated the process of sending former slaves from the United States of America to the 36 miles long strip coastline of West Africa in 1822. The formation of the State of Liberia by the black community of the United States was viewed critically since the beginning of the process. This is due to the intense tension that occurs between settlers and local indigenous people who have lived in the area that is intended to be made into the country of Liberia. The main factor originating from the tensions that occurred was that more than ten thousand settlers occupied the area that was home to the indigenous people who had lived there first. Black communities coming from the United States, estimated at more than ten thousand settlers and slaves freed by the American Colonies, called Americo-Liberians, dominated the political landscape even though it consisted of only five percent of the total population in Liberia. The Americo-Liberia community remained responsible to the United States, and the region became an independent state of Liberia in 1847 (Popovic, 2009).

Native Africans in the Liberian region are generally hostile to the founding fathers of Liberia, and they are not given the opportunity to play a role in decision-making around the principles and related documents for the establishment of the country of Liberia. African indigenous communities maintain their traditional lifestyle while also trying to adapt to the dominance of settlers. Liberia is a country rich in natural resources that have succeeded in bringing the country's economy to be able to build international trade from its territory. However,

Liberia began to face economic problems in the 1960s. Liberia became economically dependent on the other countries for taking high-interest loans from the United States and Europe in the 1870s (Dulce Foster, 2009).



Figure 2. 1 Liberia Map

Source: Britannica - Liberia Political Map. *published online at* [www.britannica.com](https://cdn.britannica.com/s:700x450/97/5097-004-BEF0740B.jpg) Retrieved from <https://cdn.britannica.com/s:700x450/97/5097-004-BEF0740B.jpg> [online source]

Liberia was ruled by a series of presidents of the Americo-Liberians who at that time made inequalities between the Americo-Liberians as a ruling minority and rural communities of 16 ethnic Liberian ethnic groups as a majority from 1847 to 1980 (Elana Luppino, 2011). For 133 years Liberia was ruled by citizens of Americo-Liberians as a country with only one party's political system. During the reign of Americo-Liberians by adopting the social-political structure of the West and introducing English as a national language had a rapid influence on developments in Liberia. Getting the support of foreign investment from America made the economy in Liberia develop,

which at first was difficult to enter into markets that dominated by colonial powers. Americo-Liberians get significant money resources and capital to develop plantations in Liberia from Firestone tire company. In return, the Firestone Tire Company took over 4% of the area to become the largest rubber plantation in the world in the 1920s (Patrick Vinck P. P., 2011).

President William V.S. Tubman, who ruled the country between 1944 and 1971, is particularly noted for his promotion of foreign investment and for attempting to bridge the economic, social, and political gaps between the descendants of the original settlers and the inhabitants of the interior (Roth, 2009). Liberia began to change during the 1970s. In 1971, President William Tubman died while in office. Following Tubman's death, William R. Tolbert Jr., come to be the President of Liberia (Dennis P. , 2006). During President Tolbert era, he gained a reputation as a force of progressive change and development in his country and as a conciliator in Africa at large (Pearson, 1980).

Tensions in Liberia first came to a head in April 1979 when the Liberian military opened fire on marchers protesting recent increases in imported rice prices (Roth, 2009). However, President Tolbert faced opposition from within his own True Whig Party, which accused him of selling out to the indigenous population. Additionally, Tolbert lost credibility by maintaining many of his family members in government. In the end, Tolbert's once progressive administration became marred by nepotism, corruption, and the continuation of privilege and poverty. The military brutally overthrew Tolbert's administration in 1980 (Massaquoi, 2007). He was placing Liberia under the rule of Samuel Doe, who served as dictator for the next ten years. Liberia's Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper identifies two broad causes of the conflict systematic exclusion of significant portions of the population and Liberia's economic collapse. Both of these causes began in the 1970's but were exacerbated by the Doe Regime (Elana Luppino, 2011).

B. Conflicts That Occur in Liberia

1. Liberia Civil War I (1989-1996)

Most of Liberia's citizens gave great hope and support to the start of the Government by Doe and for the resignation of oligarchic government by Americo-Liberians regardless of their origins in a military coup. Unfortunately, because of the oppressive military regime of the Doe Government immediately destroyed the fragile economy in Liberia. As a result of this, the Doe Government created a fatal split in Liberia and sowed seeds for conflict with many ethnic-based militias (Patrick Vinck P. P., 2011). When a new constitution was passed through a referendum, President Doe and the People's Redemption Council (PRC) ruled with the decree until 1984 and through the referendum directed the holding of the General Election in 1985 (Cook, 2003). The historical failure of governance continued under Doe. In 1985 the country held the first national elections open to candidates from all ethnic groups and formally ended the one-party state. However, Doe is widely believed to have rigged the election and stolen the presidency from a native of Nimba, Jackson F. Doe (Patrick Vinck P. P., 2011).

Due to poor economic management, brutality, and ethnic bias (especially those supporting the Krahn and Mandingo ethnic groups) the Doe government became famous for its chaos in 1989 (Cook, 2003). The party that became opposition to the Doe government increased dramatically in response to the performance of the Doe Government which bankrupted Liberia. On December 24, 1989, a revolt by the Liberian National Patriotic Front (NPFL) group led by Charles Taylor against the Doe government directed at the execution of President Doe was the first phase of the civil war beginning in Liberia. As long as Taylor launched the rebellion, Liberia was divided into many groups and factions which were primarily based on ethnic lines as a result of what Taylor had done, that was to wage a brutal and terrible campaign that lasted a long time (Patrick Vinck P. P., 2011).

NPFL forces were not organized in carrying out attacks and were poorly armed in the first months of the conflict. This was used as an opportunity to take revenge on the ethnic groups that the Doe regime liked. Because the government carried out attacks on civilians encouraged Liberian youth to join the NPFL ranks and make the rebel forces stronger. Taylor chose to play political strategy by immediately separating from his former ally, Prince Johnson and killing many literary and experienced political figures who joined his camp. This was done so that there were no reasonable alternatives left for his government. The city of Monrovia was surrounded by Taylor's troops and Johnson's troops independently in July 1990. The incident caused some of the most violent battles in the war ever in Liberia history (Patrick Vinck P. P., 2011).

Many other armed factions came to join the NPFL which initiated hostilities in Liberia. A faction that broke away from the NPFL rebel group and called itself the Independent NPFL led by Prince Johnson who was a battle commander arrested President Doe and killed him in September 1990. In Liberia, there was widespread dissemination of videos of President Doe's brutal executions. A group of former Krahn officers dominated by the Liberian Armed Forces leads rebel groups. Namely, Liberian Armed Forces (AFL) in contrast to the NPFL is a group that its member forces are ethnically-mixed. The AFL group then allied with a small group dominated by Mandingo. As a result of the alliance another two rebel groups were born, ULIMO-K (Mandingo-dominated faction led by Alhaji Kromah) and ULIMO-J (Krahn-dominated group led by Roosevelt Johnson). Fierce fighting took place between ULIMO-K and ULIMO-J regularly. The Liberia Peace Council (LPC) led by George Boley's and the remnants of the AFL led by General Hezekiah Bowen is another key faction involved in the first civil war in Liberia. The tendency of the factions involved in the conflict is as follows: combatants and their leaders are known to change parties according to changing conditions of local security,

change tactical and political alliances, financial persuasion, and opportunities to loot or trade make conditions in Liberia very unstable (Cook, 2003).

During Liberia's civil war as the implication from the unstable situation motivate the following seven significant factions to involve to the war:

- a. NPFL
- b. NPFL-CRC (Central Revolutionary Council)
- c. LDF (Lofa Defense Force)
- d. ULIMO-K
- e. ULIMO-J
- f. AFL (Armed Forces of Liberia)
- g. Liberian Peace Council (LPC)

The dynamics of the first civil war in Liberia made it divided into two camps, the stronghold of the rebellion and the counter-insurgency camp. Amos Sawyer was the interim government for Liberia to replace Doe's position and during the war when the situation was still turbulent, Amos led Liberia by never leaving the territory of the City of Monrovia. The interim government by Amos Sawyer is protected and entirely depends on the security of West African peacekeepers from the Economic Community of West African States Monitoring Group (ECOMOG). Taylor established a parallel government structure and controlled the area outside of the city of Monrovia by making Gbarnga's second largest city, Negara Bong as the capital of his government. Taylor took advantage of the opportunity to control and extract Liberia's natural resources, including wood, metal, and diamonds with the parallel government he created. In order to be able to fulfill the need for war survival and as guarantor of the commander's loyalty and circle in his army, Taylor is estimated to earn around 100 million USD per year from the results of exploiting Liberia's natural resources. At the same time, Taylor supported a proxy force that made him explicitly involved in the Sierra Leone civil war as a way to continue to control diamond mines in Liberia. National elections were finally held with Taylor

included as one of the candidates, the only way to go after years of fighting and attempts to exclude Charles Taylor from any political solution. After the National Election, Taylor won the election and became the twenty-second President of Liberia in 1997 with 75% of the vote. With the election of Taylor as President, many Liberians hope that Taylor's strong hands will bring stability to the country (Patrick Vinck P. P., 2011).

2. Liberia Civil War II (1999-2003)

West African peacekeepers withdraw from Liberia, and the international community supports the disarmament agenda to strengthen further the end of the brutal conflict that took place in Liberia after the election and election of Taylor as president of Liberia. Another attempt to end the conflict in Liberia was to give essential positions to leaders of antagonistic rebel groups such as ULIMO Leaders in return for dissolving their rebel factions. The stable situation in Liberia did not last long in the two years of Taylor's reign. Conflict re-created tensions between ethnic groups because it was based on many corrupt practices, suppression of dissent, exploitation of ethnic divisions, and severe poverty felt by most Liberians (Kieh Jr, 2009). In the outbreak of the second Liberian civil war, the roots of the problem were similar to what happened in the first civil war. Also, several stakeholders in the second civil war have the background of the first Liberian civil war. Namely, some remain in the same role, and some positions are exchanged. There were two parties involved in the war and directly participated in Liberia's second civil war. The two parties were two rebel groups as opposition and regular security forces as the government side. Charles Taylor began forming 'oligopoly of violence with a large number of security actors' after being introduced as President of Liberia elected in August 1997 (Haasz, 2012).

As part of the government, the regular security forces consist of: the Liberian Armed Forces (AFL), the Liberian National Police (LNP), the Anti-terrorist Unit (ATU)

absorbing troops from the most experienced civilian fighters and these forces have primary responsibility for internal security in it there are forces consisting of elite special forces groups consisting mostly of foreign nationals from Burkina Faso and Gambia, as well as former fighters of the Sierra Leone Revolutionary Unity Front (RUF) and Special Security Services (SSS) which are large executive protective forces and fully armed (Pike, 2011).

Most of the bases of the opposition movement against Taylor's government in Liberia developed in the northern Lofa district. In 1999, the opposition group led by Sekou Conneh (a businessman married to the daughter of Guinean President Lansana Conté) namely United Liberia for Reconciliation and Democracy (LURD) was an opposition group which began its involvement in sporadic fighting with AFL (Dennis P. , 2006). Derived from the ashes of Liberia's civil war and ethnic persecution that happened especially to ethnic Mandingos and Krahn is the reason for the formation of LURD as rebel forces who later served at its command level. Members of the LURD forces mostly have backgrounds as ex-combatants who were forced to exile in the first post-civil war in 1998, not until a year after the Liberian general election was held. At the same time, the number of Liberian people who became refugees doubled and through displaced people's camps became a source of recruitment for members of the opposition forces. Also, the Ivory Coast conflict provides additional opportunities for more recruiting members for LURD. There are primary reasons for joining members to LURD forces. Because fighters think that their security is determined by the people they have fought for more than half a decade, causing feelings of anger and fear in the fighters. Also, with the hash of the economic environment after the first civil war is the reason for supporting the fighters to join the LURD forces (Kamara, 2003).

Liberians are once again returning to a situation full of chaos and feeling full of fear of the fate of their lives the same thing that happened during the first civil war. The

pressure on the conflict continued to increase when LURD launched its offensive from Guinea to Lofa District in September 2000. Lofa District became the center of violence since the initial invasion by regional hostilities between the borders of Sierra Leone, Guinea and Liberia. In 2000, the invasion by LURD forces left nearly 80 percent of rural areas in Liberia under its control. In February 2001, LURD intensified the activities of its forces to carry out raids in the rural Lofa area in northern Liberia (Dulce Foster, 2009). Until 2002 Taylor continued to maintain control of the City of Monrovia despite the pressure of ongoing fighting between government forces and LURD. During the fighting in Liberia AFL and LURD forces were considered to have committed extensive human rights violations against innocent civilians and used children as members of their army (Dennis P. , 2006). Suspicious LURD members were arrested and tortured for information, and this activity was a human rights violation which triggered by an invasion by government forces when Taylor tried to uncover suspected rebels. The government continued the practice of targeting opposition members suspected of using sweeps that specifically targeted LURD supporters (Dulce Foster, 2009).

Another rebel group closely related to LURD is the Movement for Democracy in Liberia (MODEL) based in the Cote d'Ivoire area which actively intensified attacks in the southeastern region of Liberia in March 2003. The primary target of the MODEL rebel group was to destroy government trade such as timber production export by attacking government forces guarding Buchanan Port in Grand Bassa District (Haasz, 2012). President Taylor controlled only about a third of the territory of Liberia in May 2003 (Momodu, 2017). The LURD rebel forces controlled Two-thirds of the territory in Liberia in June 2003 (Pike, 2011). Sierra Leone produced an indictment accusing Taylor of being involved in war crimes committed by the RUF. Fighting around Monrovia increased and ECOWAS once again deployed peacekeepers to defend the city in July 2003 (Ekomo, 2012). Taylor finally resigned and voluntarily went

to exile in Nigeria because it was under increasing international pressure on 11 August 2003. Officially the end of the civil war in Liberia was marked by the existence of a Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) signed by the Taylor Government, LURD, MODEL and with representatives of civil society in Accra, Ghana on August 18, 2003 (Patrick Vinck P. P., 2011).

C. Impact of the Conflict in Liberia

All parties involved in the conflict in Liberia have carried out extreme acts of violence against civilians which are not at all aimed at a more significant strategic problem but, only aiming to achieve the interests from several parties and in pursuing these interests must sacrifice many lives. For fourteen years the civil war that took place in Liberia has had a tremendous impact (Patrick Vinck P. P., 2011). The Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) in Liberia defined twenty-three violation types based on the nature of the violence in Liberia and the TRC's analytical objectives. Table 7 provides the total number of reported violations for each type and the percent of all reported violations for each type (Kristen Cibelli, 2009).

Table 2. 1 Reported Violation by Violation Type

Violation Type	Reported Violations
Forced Displacement	58849
Killing	28042
Assault	13222
Abduction	13045
Looting	7619
Forced Labor	7560
Property Destruction	5881
Robbery	5817
Torture	4937
Arbitrary Detention	4017
Rape	2308
Extortion	2095
Exposure/Deprivation	2048
Forced Recruitment	2033
Sexual Abuse	2031
Missing	1436
Gang Rape	1107
Sexual Slavery	1023
Ingesting Taboo Item	255
Cannibalism	86
Drugging	81
Multiple Rape	65
Amputation	58
Total	163615

Source: Kristen Cibelli - *Descriptive Statistics From Statements to the Liberian Truth and Reconciliation Commission*. Liberia: Benetech [Journal source]

Individuals and groups use conflict to take revenge based on pre-existing complaints about land use or other local problems. It is estimated that around 250,000 people were killed because of the fourteen-year conflict that occurred in Liberia according to data from TRC (Patrick Vinck P. P., 2011). Around 500.000 people became internally displaced within the country

(Soderstrom, 2014). The internally displaced person is at high risk of ongoing armed attack, malnutrition, sexual violence, exploitation, enforced military recruitment, and disease including HIV/IDS. Following the end of the conflict, many were struggling to return or to resettle and reintegrate in situations in which infrastructure is lacking and access to essential goods and services, including health and education facilities, remains limited.

The internally displaced often face discrimination, unable to access food, education, and health care. Too often, they lack the necessary documentation and the ability to exercise their political rights (Wyndham, 2006). United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees reported 320,000 Liberian refugees in exile in neighboring countries at the end of 2003 (Haasz, 2012). Liberian refugees depending on which country they arrive in, they risk being forcibly returned to their country of origin or recruited as fighters while inside the refugee camps. Liberians who make it to the relative security of refugee camps have to survive in poor camp conditions where there is often a shortage of food, a lack of hygiene and sexual violence (Frontiers, 2003). The prolonged civil war had a devastating effect on the economy and society. Basic economy and social infrastructure are severely damaged such as local industries, roads, ports, bridges, schools, market facilities, clinics, hospitals, water, and sanitation facilities (Liberia T. G., 2001).

Problems with rebel groups and factions in Liberia have further exacerbated security conditions. The case that occurred in 1989 finally broke again and expanded in 1999. The emergence of this conflict made hundreds or even thousands of victims, the majority of whom fell again. However, behind the situation that is not favorable for women as explained above, women are also able to be the pioneers of conflict resolution, especially in Liberia. The explanation for this will be discussed in the next section of this paper.