
LIBERIA'S SECURITY AND FOREIGN POLICY DILEMA

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After several prolonged conflicts, civil wars and a two-year political transition, Liberia is gradually emerging as a peaceful and stable democracy. Rightly so, much optimism and expectation has surrounded Madam Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf recent inauguration as Liberia's and Africa's first democratically elected female president. However, Liberia still faces enormous development and nation-building challenges. This paper analyzes the current security and foreign policy dilemma in Liberia, and the challenges of postwar reconstruction and state-building in the country. The paper first examines the history, political struggles and the civil wars. The paper then presents eight policy recommendations that the new government, policy-makers and Liberian people can follow in addressing Liberia's security and foreign policy dilemma.

Introduction

Civil wars are tragic and destructive to nation-states and their people. Civil wars are sadly prevalent in African societies such as Angola, Côte d'Ivoire, Democratic Republic of Congo, Liberia, Rwanda, Sierra Leone, Somalia and Sudan among others. In West Africa, the Liberian Civil Wars¹ (1989-2003) which began with Charles Taylor in 1989 ultimately engulfed the neighboring countries of Sierra Leone, Côte d'Ivoire and Guinea. Instead of focusing on sustainable human development, economic growth, agricultural productivity and poverty reduction, African states have witnessed high risks of renewed conflict even after ending the civil wars by negotiated settlements and elections. For instance, the frequency of renewed conflict and civil war in Liberia has been about two to three years.

The nature of conflicts and civil wars in Africa has changed mostly from between states to within states with devastating consequences and huge social costs of horrific proportions on the civilian populations and physical infrastructures. As a

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result, the major challenge facing African governments is how to effectively manage a conflict to prevent it from escalating into war in the first place. Internal conflicts not only weaken African governments, but make each government less capable of asserting its authority to govern distant rural areas and populations. Internal conflicts also spread across regional borders like wildfires and often become new civil wars in neighboring countries.

This paper analyzes the current security and foreign policy dilemma in Liberia, and the challenges of postwar reconstruction and state-building in the country. The paper first examines the history, political struggles and the civil wars. After fully assessing different possible policy solutions, the paper presents several policy recommendations that the new Liberian government and policy-makers could pursue in resolving Liberia's security and foreign policy dilemma.

Liberia's Political Struggles and Civil Wars (1847-2005)

In the annals of the genesis of Liberia, there is a complex political paradox which requires an in-depth analytical knowledge and understanding of the country's political, economic, social and cultural realities.² Liberia was founded in 1822 by the American Colonization Society as a refuge for freed American black slaves. Liberia gained her independence on July 26, 1847. From its inception, the Liberian society created a republican form of government and democratic political system closely modeled after that of America. Political power was concentrated within an oligarchy comprised of the settlers from the 19th century repatriations from America and the Caribbean, and their descendants. The Americo-Liberians successfully expanded their jurisdiction into the tribal hinterlands by using taxation, military force, indirect rule, and other tight controls over religious institutions, church schools and the economic well-being of the indigenous people.³ So the primary objective of the political sub-divisions system was to maintain order and collect taxes for the central government of Liberia.⁴

The tenure of the First Liberian Republic (1847-1980) failed to create genuine democratic values and institutions. For over 157 years, Liberia's political elites did not want to institutionalize a genuine culture of democracy and participatory elections for the majority of the people. State failure was initially in public politics as political development in the 19th and 20th centuries followed a pattern of single-party system hegemony.⁵ This orderly succession gave Liberians and the international community, including the United States, a

false impression that the country was politically stable.⁶ It was only in 1904 when President Arthur Barclay extended Liberian citizenship to the tribal majority, and later President William V. S. Tubman granted legislative representation and universal adult suffrage for the tribal people in the mid 20th century.⁷

The Second Liberian Republic began with the new Constitution (1986) which concentrated power in the presidency and gave a new president six-year term in office before he/she could face the voters again. The constitution had deplorably set the stage for more political tensions and internal conflicts, and basically made it difficult to reform government and electoral politics in the country. The rise of multiparty oppositions in the 20th century further missed the first real prospect to create an acceptable political system and democratization in Liberia. While Liberia had enjoyed phenomenal economic and industrial growth in the 1950s and 1960s, the state suffered from stagflation in the 1970s, 1980s and beyond.⁸ Therefore, scholars, policy makers and social analysts engaged in African studies and foreign affairs should not have been totally surprised by Liberia's succeeding protracted conflicts of the 1970s, 1980s, and between 1989 and 2003.

Although the Liberian Civil Wars were extremely violent conflicts and political struggles involving the government, different political oppositions and rebel groups, instability had persisted in one form or another since independence in 1847. The first was when President Joseph Jenkins Roberts (1871-1877), a republican, of the True Liberian Party overthrew the True Whig Party government of James E. Roye in the coup d'état of 1871. The republicans took power until 1877 when Anthony D. Gardner, a True Whig, was elected president of Liberia. The True Whig Party then held vast political power throughout the rest of the 19th century. Yet, the party leadership failed to create a genuine culture of democracy and participatory elections for the majority of the people.

President William V. S. Tubman (1944-1971) became the first Liberian leader to radically consolidate and centralize political power in Liberia. He instituted the Open Door Policy and Unification Program; granted suffrage to all adult citizens – particularly women; and extended a county system of representation and governance to all political subdivisions in the tribal hinterland. The rural inhabitants were happy to live with this system for decades because it gave them greater political freedom and the right to vote for the first time. However, the political system was at best a sham democracy and gave an illusion to the rural population that they participated in the governance of the nation. Although local officials

were elected by rural inhabitants, they had to get the acceptance and approval of the president. Tubman successfully used the local officials to control government and strengthen his authority throughout the country. The president ruled for 27 unbroken years through a systematic manipulation of the tribal people, chiefs, county superintendents and municipal officials to vote a certain way -- usually for the incumbent president, members of the ruling party and class. The people experienced the swift and harsh reprisals that awaited them if they acted contrary to the wishes of their local officials and the president. Consequently, a deep-seated culture of fear and legitimate expectation for reprisals developed and still exists within the Liberian society.

The shortcomings of Tubman's reforms were only apparent during the tenure of his chosen successor, former President William R. Tolbert, Jr. (1971-1980). Tolbert's presidency came when many young educated Liberians directly challenged him to change the old political order. In fact, the opposition demanded multiparty democracy and willingly engaged in political activism and public defiance. President Tolbert was fearful of sharing political power and ignored the rightful grievances of the citizenry. In April 1979, tensions erupted into full scale civil disobedience when the Tolbert government increased the price of rice: *the staple food of Liberians*. Ordinary citizens and students were killed during the riots, and these deaths fueled more internal conflicts and frustration.⁹ Economic trouble was also abundant. The use of the U.S. dollar as a national currency fueled industrial growth through external multilateral corporations, but Liberia became a classic case of economic growth without development. Since the late-1970s, the country experienced high unemployment, rising prices, rising illiteracy, high infant mortality and the life expectancy at birth is today 40 years.¹⁰ Social class and ethnic tensions emerged as well. The emergence of political oppositions in the 20th century made no remarkable democratic change in public politics. President Tolbert and the True Whig Party hierarchy refused to lead any substantive political and economic reforms in the country.

Master Sergeant Samuel Kanyon Doe and his military colleagues of the People's Redemption Council then seized this window of opportunity, and toppled the Tolbert government in a violent military coup d'état on 12 April 1980. Doe launched the process of drafting a new constitution for the new republic on 12 April 1981 and the Liberian people approved the new draft constitution in a national referendum on 3 July 1984. The people had voted for the first real opportunity of fulfilling genuine nation-building and democracy

in Liberia. However, Doe frustrated the hopes and aspirations of the nation in April 1984, using calculated efforts to subvert the new constitutional process he had established, and instead postponed the elections until 1985. Prior to the elections, Doe suppressed the opposition and ruled by decrees, and then later exchanged his military uniform for a civilian suit after the elections. Following the election of 15 October 1985, Doe became the first president of the new republic with 50.9% of the vote. President Samuel K. Doe (1980-1990) was inaugurated on 6 January 1986 and that afternoon marked the beginning of the Second Liberian Republic. The Doe regime executed severe attacks against the opposition, journalists and students. The people saw no genuine improvements in their standards of living, and political discontent increased sharply against the Doe government in Liberia and abroad.

Charles McArthur Ghankay Taylor, who had been jailed in the Plymouth Correctional Prison in Massachusetts awaiting extradition, mysteriously escaped to prepare an assault on the Doe government. First, Taylor and other dissidents went and trained in Libya, and then used Nimba County to launch the first brutal civil war against the Doe government from Côte d'Ivoire on December 24, 1989. In 1990 when the three distinct military groups were vying for power, it was the civilian population who suffered in the crossfire. Taylor emerged militarily as the strongest warlord in the first Liberian Civil War (1989-1996).

In 1997, Taylor finally went to the polls against the other warring factions and political oppositions. The people had little or no options because they were voting either for peace or war.¹¹ Based on legitimate fear, the people knew that Taylor would prolong their sufferings if he did not win. So Taylor won the presidential election with 75.3% of the vote on July 19, 1997.

However, Taylor seemingly suffered from an identity crisis and was unable to free himself from the doldrums, or behaviors of a warlord. Internally, he used his military and political powers to severely brutalize and grossly violate the human rights of the opposition, journalists and other critics of his regime. Externally, he sought a grand military strategy for controlling the natural resources - diamonds, timber and gold - within the Mano River Union sub-region.¹² This strategy linked directly to Taylor's execution of the war of terror in Sierra Leone, Côte d'Ivoire and Guinea. Acting with an acute sense of realism, these countries responded in kind by supporting subversive military actions against Taylor. The

international community also imposed sanctions, arms embargo and travel bans against Taylor's senior government officials. The people's hopes were dashed again under the Taylor Administration (1997-2003).

Consequently, two violent rebel groups emerged to oust Taylor. The Liberians United for Reconciliation and Democracy (LURD) launched the major military campaign against government forces in northern and western Liberia from Guinea on April 21, 1999. LURD invaded Lofa County along the Liberian-Guinean border, and then quickly captured large portions of territory. The Movement for Democracy in Liberia (MODEL) fought in Southeastern Liberia from Côte d'Ivoire in early 2003. Thousands of non-combatant civilians - mostly women, children and the elderly - died from the heavy fighting, loss of physical properties, towns/villages, and lootings. Liberians at home and abroad publicly pressured the government and rebels to end the war. As Taylor vowed not to leave office, the rebel groups refused to stop fighting until after his resignation and departure from Liberia. President George W. Bush also strongly denounced Taylor. Finally, strong persistent military, political and diplomatic pressures forced the tyrant into exile in Nigeria on 11 August 2003, under an international deal to stop the civil war. On 18 August 2003 exactly a week after he departed Liberia, the Taylor government, LURD, MODEL and eighteen political parties signed the Accra Comprehensive Peace Agreement which set up a two-year transitional government and subsequent presidential and general elections in October 2005.

Liberia's current security and foreign policy dilemma remain fragile. Meanwhile, Taylor is today fighting extradition to the UN Special Court in Freetown. Taylor is allegedly facing a 17-count indictment by the UN-backed court for war crimes and crimes against humanity committed in Sierra Leone.

The Security and Foreign Policy Dilemma

The possible solutions to Liberia's real security and foreign policy dilemma are arguably linked to Charles Taylor. The security dilemma theory, or offense-defense theory, is "a quite optimistic theory of international politics, which argues that when defense has the advantage over offense major war can be avoided."¹³ International relations scholars and foreign policy analysts have utilized offense-defense logic to explain the "causes and possible solutions of ethnic and civil wars."¹⁴

Chaim Kaufmann argues, “Stable resolutions of ethnic civil wars are possible, but only when the opposing groups are demographically separated into defensible enclaves. Separation reduces both incentives and opportunity for further combat, and largely eliminates both reasons and chances for ethnic cleansing of civilians.”¹⁵ “The severity of ethnic security dilemma is greatest when demography is most intermixed, weakest when community settlements are most separate. The most mixed the opposing groups, the stronger the offense in relation to the defense; the more separated they are, the stronger the defense in relation to offense.”¹⁶

Liberia's sixteen different ethnic groups are largely separated into fifteen different political sub-divisions called counties. The population is generally intermixed in the big urban areas but each county has a major tribal group and minorities from other tribes. Accordingly, Kaufmann would contend that the existing intermixed ethnicity cannot guarantee durable peace in Liberia because the country is not fully homogeneous.¹⁷ Three major alternatives to demographic separation on possible solutions to ethnic conflict are suppression; power-sharing and state-building; reconstruction of ethnic identities.

Different governments have tried forcible suppression of the population and tribes for political control, or reduction of violent conflicts in the past but this failed to bring lasting peace in Liberia. If oppression did not work before, it is then highly unlikely to work in the future. Kaufmann explains, “Population control, however, cannot be guaranteed solely by physical control over territory, but depends on careful intelligence, persuasion and coercion.”¹⁸

As a multi-ethnic state, Liberia's best hope for lasting peace is not necessarily power-sharing but a democratically elected government that is respected at home and abroad. In any highly troubled society, the timeframes for state-building and reconstructing ethnic identities are enormous. Public politics must thus equitably ensure the protection and interests of all. Key components are post-conflict reconstruction, peace-building, security sector reform, democratic governance through free and fair elections and managing the spoilers' dilemma.

The effective management of spoilers is the single most sensible and inevitable challenge facing Liberia and the global community. The spoilers' dilemma poses a grave security dilemma toward the collective security for the West African region. In his article on international security, Stephen John Stedman offers a framework for solving the spoiler

problems in peace processes. Stedman states, “A negotiated peace often has losers: leaders and factions who do not achieve their war aims. Nor can every war find a compromise solution that addresses the demands of all the warring parties. For example, the most perfectly crafted power-sharing institutions in the world are useless if one of the parties does not want to share power.”¹⁹

The first step toward successful management of the spoilers’ problem is to properly identify the various types of spoilers.²⁰ Stedman provides three major strategies to manage spoilers: “(1) inducement, or giving the spoiler what it wants; (2) socialization, or changing the behavior of the spoiler to adhere to a set of established norms; and (3) coercion, or punishing spoiler behavior or reducing the capacity of the spoiler to destroy the peace process.”²¹

Stedman’s framework has practical relevance for managing a number of potential spoilers in Liberia, as illustrated by the following four cases. Prince Yormie Johnson is a former warlord and tribal leader who briefly claimed the presidency of Liberia for a few weeks in the fall of 1990. When Taylor consolidated power, Prince Johnson went into exile in Nigeria where he became a born-again Christian and evangelist. In the October 2005 Elections, Johnson ran as an independent candidate and won the senior senatorial seat from Nimba County. Similarly, the infamous General Butt Naked²² who was a brutal fighter also became a pastor and is today preaching in the Liberian refugee camp in Ghana. These cases illustrate spoilers who are now reformed to accept standard social norms in society. On the other hand, Samuel K. Doe was apparently a total spoiler because of his determination to only leave the presidency “over his dead body.” Unlike Doe, Taylor is a perfect yet greedy spoiler who always calculates his own opportunity cost or risk, and then acts accordingly. Taylor’s resignation at the most crucial moment in August 2003 is typical of this type of spoiler.

Moreover, the security dilemma theory explains the internal conflicts and civil wars in Liberia. Liberia’s major struggles were historically intractable and extremely violent resulting into the deaths of thousands of innocent civilians, destruction of property and the entire country. These struggles were battles over the control of physical territory, natural resources, population, the public sector, and political and economic governance. Both ethnicity and ideology are likely key factors. Ancient and/or ethnic hatred still exist between the settlers and natives and amongst a few tribal groups. Nevertheless, ethnicity is a

secondary factor for the general population which, remarkably, has shown a keen sense of tolerance and willingness to cooperate in vital areas of education, intercultural marriages, religion and the economy.

Additionally, Liberia's foreign policy dilemma links directly to a moral justification and peaceful resolution of the Charles Taylor case. President Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf is on record as saying that Taylor must face prosecution before the UN Special Court. In her recent speech to the Joint Session of the U.S. Congress, President Johnson-Sirleaf stated, "Liberia has little option but to see that justice is done in accordance with the requirements of the United Nations and the broad international community."²³ This recent speech now clarifies her previous statement that Taylor is a "secondary" matter for Liberia. The United States and the European Union have been the loudest supporters or advocates for Taylor's prosecution. The African Union and ECOWAS are also likely supporters for Taylor to face trial in Sierra Leone.²⁴ Liberians at home and abroad and major human rights groups generally want Taylor and other warlords to be held accountable and brought to justice for war crimes and crimes against humanity committed in Liberia and Sierra Leone.²⁵

By contrast, Taylor supporters in the national legislature and the country have expressed frustration on his extradition. Nigeria and South Africa, the two regional powers in Africa, appear less willing to support Taylor's prosecution. While many Nigerian peacekeepers died to end the war and secure the peace in Liberia, the Nigerian government has resisted persistent pressures to hand Taylor over to the war crimes court. In a recent statement, President Olusegun Obasanjo has informed Liberian President Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf that "the government of Liberia is free to take former President Charles Taylor into its custody."²⁶ Amazingly, the United Nations has also become silent on the Taylor case in recent times. Thus, the Liberian government must take the lead on this critical issue by acting decisively after well-targeted strategic and diplomatic consultations. Internally, the government needs to prepare the Liberian people. External assistance is vital to enforce a decision for prosecution, as well as robust funding to create essential opportunities for youths and ex-combatants.

Policy Recommendations

Liberia's current security and foreign policy dilemma demand that the new Liberian government and global community pursue various key policy prescriptions:

1. *Building National Consensus and International Support*

A critical first step should be for the Liberian government to call an international conference on regional security and peace to be held in Monrovia and to tactically use *Track I and II Diplomacy*²⁷ to negotiate and secure the active participation of the West African governments. The United Nations, United States, European Union, African Union, and ECOWAS should encourage West African leaders to support and participate in the Monrovia conference on regional security and peace. This action sends a powerful signal to all regional governments in West Africa that the Liberian government means business and takes their national security interests seriously. Key tools are dialogue, engagement, persuasion, diplomacy, negotiations, healing and reconciliation using formal and informal channels of communications among regional governments and non-governmental organizations. Having once been a major exporter of insecurity and terror under the Taylor regime, Liberia could become a major place to negotiate regional security and peace among governments. The Monrovia Consensus would be a vital first step toward collective security in West Africa. Liberia's potential leadership role cannot be over-emphasized.

2. *Strong Military Presence*

The UN Security Council should extend the mandate of the United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL) for four more years from 2006 to 2010. The new government then has a chance to restructure national security, assert its authority, secure peace, and maintain law and order in the country. The government should also create a national security agency with the mandate of solely focusing on intelligence gathering to protect the country from both external and internal threats. Otherwise, the propensity for conflict to resume still exists if the UN peacekeepers leave prematurely without proper government preparedness to control its territory.²⁸

The UN presence is essential because its 15,000-strong multinational peacekeeping force has effectively maintained peace and order throughout the country since 2003. Liberia further presents an opportunity to serve as the regional hub for UN peacekeeping and humanitarian operations in West Africa. Internally, the new government can put greater emphasis on its national security to protect the country and people from violent extremists. This collaborative effort will thus advance Liberia's future stability and UN long-term interests in West Africa.

3. *Creating Opportunities for the People*

The government should create ample opportunities to persuade the people to voluntarily participate in the country's future, as well as advance genuine political and public sector reforms aimed at accommodating the hopes and aspirations of the entire population. It is particularly imperative for the new government and civil society to cooperate in discouraging vulnerable children and young adults from engaging in criminal activities.

4. *Encouraging Unified, Inclusive National Identities*

The government and civil society should play key leadership roles in encouraging "individuals and groups to adopt more benign, inclusive identities."²⁹ Ordinary Liberians themselves should also foster a common national identity based on their own shared common interests and shared common values, culture, history, education and language – English.

The reconstruction of ethnic identities into unified inclusive, national identities will bring public awareness and better understanding on how political rivalries and elites are guilty of manipulating the population and using "hypernationalist propaganda to gain and hold power."³⁰

5. *Internationally Harmonized Peace Accords & Security Sector Reform*

The UN Security Council, United States, European Union, African Union and ECOWAS should actively undertake proactive measures to harmonize globally acceptable provisions in peace agreements, which eliminate warlords and ex-fighters from rank-and-file officers for security sector reform. Security sector reform should accomplish key policy objectives in forming newly restructured armed forces; training military; reducing costs by downsizing; demobilizing ex-combatants and child soldiers; controlling small arms; reforming local and national police and other security services; preventing conflict recurrence; and improving people's lives.

Three key points are vital for security sector reform. The first is that security bodies must be accountable to democratic civil authorities. Second, an open, free and transparent relationship is essential between the judiciary, police and correction services. Ideally, liberal democracy requires that the judiciary is separate from the police and insulated from political society, or partisan politics. This is presently not the situation in Liberia. Further, armed forces should neither be assigned the roles of maintaining law and order, nor should the police be militarized. Third, warlords and ex-fighters often agree to sign negotiated peace settlements if the negotiation allows them to occupy the rank and file of the newly

restructured armed forces, national police and other security services. The division of spoils inadvertently makes security sector reform the breeding ground for renewed conflict. A vital lesson learned from the Liberian conflict is that security sector reform is actually a vital public policy issue.

6. *Democratic and Economic Governance*

All Liberians should constructively engage with the current development challenges facing the country, as well as commit to protecting the civil liberties, freedoms, security of all. A productive interplay between the executive, legislative and judiciary branches of government should advance completeness in rebuilding the Liberian society. Furthermore, the government and people should invest more in promoting Liberia at home and abroad.

Liberia's first postwar general and presidential elections were historic for the country and Africa as a whole. In the first round of voting on 11 October 2005, the national legislature was elected. Madam Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf (UP) won second place with 20% to George Manneh Weah (CDC) with 29%. In the second round run-off on 8 November 2005, Liberians voted in overwhelming numbers and elected Johnson-Sirleaf with 59.4% of the vote while Weah received 40.6%. In the 2005 elections, the Liberian people demonstrated a strong desire to think Liberia first by voting for experience, development and peace rather than inexperience, mediocrity and extremism.³¹ Madam Johnson-Sirleaf is indeed Liberia's and Africa's first democratically elected woman president. Liberia's 2005 elections were peaceful, transparent, free and fair because the people showed a high degree of discipline and political maturity. So this was unquestionably an historic and bright moment for the Liberian people. Also, the new government and its global partners are presently implementing the Governance Economic Management Assistance Program (GEMAP), which is an internationally supervised program for economic recovery and fighting corruption in Liberia.

7. *Managing the Spoilers' Dilemma*

The UN Security Council should impose tight travel/visa restrictions, freezing assets and other punishments on former senior officials from the Taylor regime. West African governments should also cooperate to identify all past, present, and future potential spoilers, violent extremists and warlords. They should employ effective strategies to manage the current security dilemma including offense-defense balance and coercion against brutal rebel groups and warlords; socialization and persuasion for less-violent ex-fighters, child-soldiers

and moderates. The vast majority of child soldiers and moderates should be given adequate opportunities for rehabilitation, training, education, labor-intensive employment, rather than expensive money-for-arm incentives. Severe punishments or coercion should be the only alternatives for controlling the activities and misbehaviors of the worst spoilers, brutal warlords and violent extremists.

The emerging security paradigm is instructive for managing conflict in Liberia. Realists contend that rebel groups, like states, are instrumentally rational and think strategically about how to survive and protect their best interests.³² Accordingly, brutal African warlords must be prosecuted.

8. *Active Citizens' Participation, Mobilization and Reconciliation*

The proposed Truth and Reconciliation Commission should genuinely seek fairness, truth, social justice and healing in its honorable efforts to reconcile the Liberian people. Liberians should demand that the selection process of the commissioners must be above and beyond politics and politicking so that former warlords, their financiers and other cronies will not influence the reconciliation process. Otherwise, the public credibility and legitimacy of this process is undermined. The people will ultimately bear the heavy burdens of such grave miscalculation and unacceptable misjudgment. Second, civil society should mobilize and prepare the citizenry through advocacy, publicity, sensitization, and grassroots campaigns so that ordinary people will have the requisite knowledge of how to fight against the spoilers' criminal enterprises. Such an awareness campaign should enable the people to embrace an independent process which addresses the fundamental root causes of the conflict and advance genuine reconciliation and social justice for crimes in the country.

Conclusion

There is clearly no single solution to reducing or preventing internal conflicts and civil wars. Liberia is no exception to finding possible solutions on the security dilemma. Kaufmann points out different possible solutions including demographic separation; suppression; reconstruction of ethnic identities; and power-sharing and state-building. Yet, the policy options for Liberia and the West African region depend on the real security dilemma on the ground. For Liberia, the best policy recommendation is first a democratically elected government that is respected at home, by neighboring countries and the entire global community. Liberians recently elected a globally recognized and respected

Harvard-educated economist, President Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf, in the 2005 Elections. Internally, the expectations are high for the new government to restructure the security apparatus, secure the peace and revive the economy and social services programs.

In the foreign policy arena, regional security is a top priority. West African governments need a larger regional approach in order to finally negotiate and resolve regional security matters. In the midst of the current internal and regional complexities, the Liberian government must recognize the urgency of regional security if peace is to endure in the country. The Liberian government should take bold, decisive and strategic steps toward building trust and confidence on regional security and peace in West Africa. Accordingly, the Liberian government should consider the Taylor case a top priority, and then act with courage and commitment in resolving it fairly and squarely. The African Union, ECOWAS and the global community should give robust funding and logistical support to the Liberian government. The United States and Nigeria should also play the crucial pivotal roles in finding possible resolutions on all outstanding issues.

To reduce the current security dilemma in Liberia and improve regional security in West Africa, this paper advances shared common values and shared common interests so that Liberia's and West Africa's political leaders can actively undertake greater regional cooperative efforts toward collective security and balance of power amongst states. This approach assumes an acceptable level of deterrence by states, and gives weaker states more security against attacks by stronger neighbors, or even rebel groups from their territories. All Liberians should learn a priceless and timeless lesson about how to protect their shared common values, national security and economic interests at home and abroad.

Last but not least, good government policies should foster the broad range of contextual issues dealing with regional security, peace, political stability, domestic tranquility, social justice and economic development rather than any narrow political and economic interests of individuals or groups. Whatever the circumstances, the people will create a better Liberia where peace and prosperity endure. All Liberians will finally realize that the land is endowed abundantly for their happiness and betterment. Thus the people must treat the country and the environment with great care, love, reverent fear and even healthy paranoia.

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Endnotes

¹ Liberian crisis included two distinct civil wars: First Civil War 1989-1996; Second Civil War 1997-2003.

Global Security at <http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/ops/liberia.htm>

² Katherine Harris, *African and American Values: Liberia and West Africa* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1985).

³ J. Gus Liebenow, *Liberia: The Quest for Democracy* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1987).

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Conceivably, the dominance of the American-Liberian oligarchy and a single political party system was arguably a consequence of Liberia's adoption of a presidential form of government from the United States. The U.S. political system of a separation of powers among three equal branches of government (executive, legislative and judicial) only really works where there are two pre-existing parties or factions. Presidential systems are also more susceptible to military coups, as the experience of many African and Latin American states demonstrates.

⁶ J. Gus Liebenow, *Liberia: The Quest for Democracy* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1987).

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Stagflation is a term in macroeconomics which describes a period characteristic of high inflation combined with high unemployment, economic stagnation or recession.

⁹ Frustration-Aggression Theory argues that collective behavior can be an aggressive response to feelings of frustration. Thus the general anger and frustration felt by the Liberian people at the time was quite predictable.

¹⁰ CIA – The World Factbook – Liberia, <http://www.cia.gov/cia/publications/factbook/geos/li.html>. This is an estimate for 2006.

¹¹ Terrence Lyons, *Voting for Peace: Postconflict Elections in Liberia* (Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution Press, 1999).

¹² Mano River Union (MRU) was originally established in 1973 as a custom union with the primary objective of sub-regional economic integration among Liberia, Sierra Leone and Guinea. Côte d'Ivoire was slated to join later.

¹³ Charles L. Glaser and Chaim Kaufmann, "What Is the Offense-Defense Balance and Can We Measure It?," *International Security*, Vol. 22, No. 4 (Spring 1998), pp.44.

¹⁴ Chaim Kaufmann, "Possible and Impossible Solutions to Ethnic Civil Wars," *International Security*, Vol. 20, No. 4 (Spring 1996), pp. 136-175.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 137.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 148.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 150.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 140.

¹⁹ Stephen John Stedman, "Spoiler Problems in Peace Processes," *International Security*, Vol. 22, No. 2 (Fall 1977), pp. 7.

²⁰ Stedman defines three diverse types of spoilers based on their ultimate goals as follows: *Limited spoilers* have limited goals such as recognition, power-sharing, resolving a grievance, and basic security needs of supporters; *Total spoilers* position themselves at the other end of the spectrum and do pursue total power and exclusive recognition of authority. Their leaders often view the world as a zero-sum game and do not compromise on the issues; *Greedy spoilers* place themselves between the limited and total spoilers. A greedy spoiler expands or contracts his goals based on careful calculation of his cost and risk.

²¹ Stephen John Stedman, "Spoiler Problems in Peace Processes," *International Security*, Vol. 22, No. 2 (Fall 1977), pp. 12.

²² This was a most unfortunate name paradoxically chosen for protection during the Civil War era.

²³ Liberian President Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf's Address to the Joint Session of the U.S. Congress, 15 March 2006 The Perspective at <http://www.theperspective.org/articles/0317200601.html>

²⁴ BBC NEWS, "Nigeria to give up Charles Taylor," 25 March 2006 <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/africa/4845088.stm>

²⁵ Liberian Daily Observer, "After Taylor's Trail in Freetown: Other Warlords Must Face Justice," 24 March 2006

²⁶ Kelvin Ebiri, "War crimes court asks Nigeria to arrest Taylor," *Guardian Newspaper* <http://www.guardiannewsngr.com/news/article01>

²⁷ Track I Diplomacy refers to official government to government, or inter-governmental diplomacy. Track II Diplomacy normally refers to as 'citizen diplomacy' or 'multi-track diplomacy'. It includes unofficial or informal third-party intervention by non-governmental actors such as civil society organizations, religious institutions, humanitarian organizations, academics and former government officials among others.

²⁸ Chaim Kaufmann, "Civil Possible and Impossible Solutions to Ethnic Wars," *International Security*, Vol. 20, No. 4 (Spring 1996), pp. 150.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 152.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 152.

³¹ On 10 October 2005, the Liberian people had voted against presidential candidates who included former warlords and other individuals whom the people generally considered either political "failures" or tainted in one scandal or another. During the run-off election on 8 November 2005, most of these candidates supported football legend CDC's George M. Weah. This is likely a key factor why Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf won the recent presidential election in Liberia.

³² Realism is a particular view of the world which explains that the international system is anarchic. The world contains independent political entities called states. States usually act in their own best interests involving economic, security and foreign policy matters.