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THE EFFECTS OF INTERNAL CONFLICT AND CIVIL WAR IN
WEST AFRICA: A CASE STUDY OF LIBERIA (1989-1997)

BY

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EFFECTS OF INTERNAL AND CIVIL CONFLICTS IN WEST
AFRICA: A CASE STUDY OF LIBERIA

BY
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A THESIS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE
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KULLIYAH OF ISLAMIC REVEALED KNOWLEDGE AND HUMAN
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ABSTRACT

This study intends to examine the effects of the disasters the civil war of Liberia from 1989 to 1997 has caused. In fact, areas of research will be the effects of the war on the economy, the environment, and the human resources, on the international relations between Liberia and the neighboring countries, the role of Islam in fostering racial harmony, and the role of ECOMOG in the peace process to achieve development for the country.

The research intends to answer questions regarding the main causes of the civil war in Liberia and its effects .It tries to look at the implications of the Liberian civil war for international relations between Liberia and the neighboring west African nations, and with the international organizations as well as finding possible mechanisms to bring everlasting peace and stability in the country. Indeed, the study probes a new area that has not been seriously explored. Liberia, one of the two oldest independent African states on the continent, had been fortunate to have a lot of natural resources and privileges. But unfortunately, the country did not rise up to the expectation of the inhabitants in terms of development and progress. The serious mistakes committed by the rulers and the mismanagement of the wealth of the country, created a lot of feelings of discomfort that led to several conflicts.

The study will be also an insight to the issues of imitating other models of development such as the Malaysian style and to see how ethnic harmony can be achieved in a peaceful way while taking into consideration the socio-cultural and political environment of Liberia. Violence can be manifested in several forms and levels. Its consequences normally bring undesirable results that destroy the entire

nation—causing the loss of lives, damage of properties and collapse of economy. In this thesis, several theories regarding the causes of civil war will be analyzed. It is the desired objective of this study to examine some of these theories and to see their validity within the context of Liberia.

ملخص البحث

هذه الدراسة تنوي فحص تأثيرات الكوارث التي سببتها الحرب الأهلية الليبيرية من 1989 إلى 1997. في الحقيقة، مواضيع البحث ستكون عن تأثيرات الحرب على الاقتصاد، البيئة، الموارد البشرية، على العلاقات الدولية بين ليبيريا والبلدان المجاورة، دور الإسلام في تبني الإنسجام العرقي، ودور إكوموج (المنظمة الاقتصادية للأمم غرب أفريقيا) في عملية السلام لإنجاز التطوير للبلاد.

يحاول البحث الإجابة عن بعض الأسئلة الخاصة بالأسباب الرئيسية للحرب الأهلية في ليبيريا وتأثيراتها وتحاول تحليل نتائج الحرب الأهلية الليبيرية على العلاقات الدولية بين ليبيريا والأمم الأفريقية الغربية المجاورة، وبالمنظمات الدولية بالإضافة إلى إيجاد الآليات المحتملة لجلب السلام ولأستقرار الأبدى في البلاد. في الحقيقة، نتقصى الدراسة موضوعا جديدا لم يدرس من قبل. ليبيريا، إحدى الدول الإفريقية المستقلة القديمة في القارة، رغم أنها تحظى بالكثير من المصادر والإمميزات الطبيعية ولكن لسوء الحظ لم ترتفع قيادة البلاد إلى تطلع السكان من ناحية التطوير والتقدم. الأخطاء الخطيرة التي ارتكبت من قبل الحكام وسوء إدارة البلاد، خلق الكثير من مشاعر الضيق التي أدت إلى تعدد النزاعات.

ستنظر الدراسة أيضا إلى قضايا تقليد نماذج أخرى من التطوير مثل الأسلوب الماليزي ولرؤية كيفية خلق إنسجام عرقي الذي يمكن أن تتوصل إليه ليبيريا بطريقة سلمية بالأخذ بعين الاعتبار عوامل البيئة الثقافية الاجتماعية والسياسية لليبيريا. يمكن أن يظهر العنف في عدد من الأشكال والمستويات تجلب تبعاً له نتائج غير مرغوبة وعادة ما تحطم طاقة الأمة وتؤدي إلى ضحايا، تحطيم البنى التحتية وإنهيار الاقتصاد. في هذه الأطروحة، ستحلل عدة نظريات بخصوص أسباب الحرب الأهلية. الهدف المرغوب لهذه الدراسة هو فحص بعض هذه النظريات ولرؤية صلاحيتها ضمن سياق ليبيريا.

APPROVAL PAGE

I certify that I have supervised this study and that in my opinion it conforms to acceptable standards of scholarly presentation and is fully adequate, in scope and quality, as a thesis for the degree of Master of Human Sciences in Political Science.



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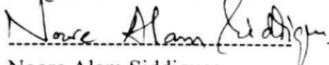


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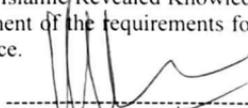


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Knowledge and Human Sciences

Date:

DECLARATION

I hereby declare that this thesis is the result of my own investigations, except where otherwise stated. Other sources are acknowledged by footnotes giving explicit references and a bibliography is appended.

Name: Brima Sylla

Date:

Signature: -----

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Thanks to the Almighty God, who enabled me to finish this thesis. He is the first to thank for giving me guidance, courage, inspiration through my work.

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EFFECTS OF INTERNAL AND CIVIL CONFLICTS IN WEST AFRICA: A CASE
STUDY OF LIBERIA

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To my father, Mamadou Sylla, who passed away in 1988.

To my Mom, whom I have missed for so long, and to my brothers and sisters.

ملخص البحث

هذه الدراسة تنوي فحص تأثيرات الكوارث التي سببتها الحرب الأهلية الليبيرية من 1989 إلى 1997. في الحقيقة، مواضيع البحث ستكون عن تأثيرات الحرب على الإقتصاد، البيئة، الموارد البشرية، على العلاقات الدولية بين ليبيريا والبلدان المجاورة، دور الإسلام في تبني الإنسجام العرقي، ودور إكوموج (المنظمة الإقتصادية للأمم غرب افريقيا) في عملية السلام لإنجاز التطوير للبلاد.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION: HISTORICAL SETTING OF THE LIBERIAN CIVIL WAR

The civil war in Liberia which lasted from 1989 to 1996 has been regarded as one of the horrible events in the history of the Liberian people. It has brought a lot of sufferings to the population and has led to the loss of lives, destruction of the economy, environment and has not only badly affected the relations between Liberia and the neighboring countries namely, Guinea and Sierra Leone but with the international community in general. To know more about the effects of the war, one has to look at the general history of Liberia since its foundation. This is important as it will show the political and sociological setting of the nation and will make clear some of the causes of the war .

Contrary to other African states, Liberia was not subjugated by an European power. It has had a long informal affiliation and relation with the United States of America.¹ The other African countries, generally speaking , were either colonized by the French, British, Portuguese etc. The whole history of relations with the USA started when a colored man, Paul Cuffy, a philanthropic, born in New Bedford, Massachusetts, a rich owner of a vessal made a first journey to Sierra Leone to allow the settlement of forty colored people. ²

Under his influence and other Americans, a philanthropic organization, the American Colonization Society was established. Its main aims were to extend assistance to the free

¹ C. Lower Robert et al (1966), Growth without Development:an Economic survey of Liberia,(Evanston: Northwestern University Press, USA), P.3

² H.Foote Commander Andrew, (1970), Africa and the American Flag, Folkestone and London , Uk p. 109

slaves with the intention of settlement in Africa. It was believed by John Kizel, a South Carolina prosperous black, that "Africa is the land of black men, and to Africa they must and will come ". This statement was mentioned due to the racial reality of the blacks in America where they could not live as real citizens enjoying their natural human rights as others.³

In 1821, the American Colonization Society with the assistance of the US navy, took possession of land in Liberia in order to settle freed American slaves.⁴ During the next year, 1822, the first survived slaves came to Liberia.⁵ And in 1847, the Republic of Liberia was established under the leadership of Joseph J. Robert, the first president of Liberia. This was the beginning of the reign of the Americo- Liberians. They formed the oligarchy of the freed-slave settlers who, through their entire administration deprived the indigenous majority of equal rights in education, wealth, justice and political power even though they only constituted 2% of the population of Liberia. ⁶ As a matter of fact, this unconscious discrimination can be seen as the hidden beginning of the future violence to come. In reality, those free-slaves were to come to Liberia to contribute in the social, political and economic development of Africa in general and Liberia in particular. They have come to know the pains of slavery, subjugation and deprivation in America because of the color of their skins. At the beginning of the declaration of independence, England, France, Prussia, Belgium and Brazil successively acknowledged the

³ Ibid p.111

⁴ Jean Heson Bruce w and Thomas G. Paterson, (1997), Encyclopedia of US Foreign Relations , Vol 1, Oxford University Press , New York, p.26

⁵ Ramsdell , Eric The New Africa vs the Old, US News and World Report , 11/23/92 , Vol 13, issue 20 p.54, on line <http://www.epnet.com/hostrial/login.html>

⁶ Human Right Quarterly 21.2(1999)265-307, p.2.

independence of Liberia. Only after few years the US government recognized Liberia as an independent nation during the American civil war⁷. The capital of Liberia was called Monrovia, named after the US president James Monroe. The last Americo-Liberian in power was William R. Tolbert. He became president in 1971 after the death of Tubman. Based on what was expressed by some scholars, he is said to have adopted a highly corrupt and manifestly oppressive political system. The administrative model was referred to as the "Black Imperialism" or black colonialism which invites further political violence⁸. In fact, many believe that such immoral and inhuman practice by the Americo-Liberians in depriving the indigenous population from participating actively in the leadership of the nation led to the coup d'état of 1980.

The Americo-Liberians governed the country in a discriminatory way till 1980 when a 28 year-old Master Sergeant, Samuel K. Doe put an end to their reign in a bloody coup d'état in which president Tolbert and 13 of his top ministers were killed. At the beginning, Doe was thought to be savior or liberator from the oligarchic oppressive elite of the Americo-Liberian system, but in reality he became the symbol of "Khran-imperialism" in which his Khran tribe dominated all the major posts of the government.⁹ In fact, such situation led to the breakout of the civil war by 1990.

⁷ <http://memory.loc.gov/ammen/gmdhtm/libhtml/liberia:phtml>

⁸ M B Akpan, "Black Imperialism": Americo-Liberian rule over the African peoples of Liberia, 1841—1964 in Canadian Journal Of African Studies (Toronto, 7,2,1973, p.217--36

⁹ Adibe Clement, (1996) Managing Arms in peace processes : Liberia , United Nations, New York and Guinea, p.6

In 1989, Charles Taylor, an exiled former cabinet member in Samuel K. Doe's government, launched offensive attacks from the eastern part of the country in an attempt to overthrow Doe's administration. His movement, NPFL(National Patriotic Front of Liberia) engaged in a revolt against the military –based regime of Doe's army (The armed forces of Liberia—AFL).The fighting became more intensive as a lot of warring factions emerged . In fact, the conflict became a civil war where ethnic cleansing was very apparent throughout the country. The faction leaders were: George Boley of the LPC, Al-Hag Kromah of ULIMO-k, (United Liberation Movement of Liberia For Democracy , Roosevelt Johnson of ULIMO- J, Prince Yordi Johnson of INPFL and Charles Taylor of the NPFL.¹⁰ After several years of blood shed among all the different warring factions, an election was conducted in 1997 in which Charles Taylor became the president of Liberia.

PROBLEM STATEMENT

Between 1990 to 1997, Liberia witnessed one of the most horrible civil wars in the world. The war was given serious coverage by several mass media of the international community. In view of the disasters that occurred, it will be interesting to come up with significant research regarding the effects of the civil war.

In fact, this topic is essential because it gives ideas about how reconstruction and development can start. Areas of research can be the effects of the war on the economy, the environment, the human resources, on the international relations between Liberia and

¹⁰ Outran Quenti , Encyclopedia , Africa South of the Sahara 2001 Europa publications, London, England, P. 664

the neighboring countries, the role of Islam in fostering racial harmony, and the role of ECOMOG in the peace process.

Furthermore, based on the general look of the problems mentioned and the negative impacts of the war, some recommendations will be useful to avoid similar conflict in the future and to achieve development for the country. This will involve the question of having better policies in a way to bring concrete development to the tiny nation and creating good relations with neighboring countries for the sake of stability in the region. In the light of policies dealing with reconstruction of Liberia, the damage the war has caused will be evaluated. But the questions to be asked are what are the main causes of the civil war in Liberia? What are the effects of the civil war on Liberia? What are the implications of the Liberian civil war for international relations between Liberia and the neighboring west African nations? What are other possible ways to bring everlasting peace and stability in the country? And finally, what are the recommendations to be made to avoid similar civil war elsewhere?

These are questions to be answered by the research so as to see the various mechanisms that may positively contribute in finding solution to the Liberian crisis with the intention to enable the country to stand on its feet among other nations of the international community.

PROBLEM JUSTIFICATION

This study probes a new area that has been unexplored. It has immediate significant contributions. Liberia, one of the two oldest independent African states on the continent, has been fortunate to have a lot of natural resources and endowments. But unfortunately, the country did not raise up to the expectation of the inhabitants in terms of development and progress. The serious mistakes committed by the rulers and the mismanagement of the wealth of the country, created a lot of feelings of discomfort that led to several conflicts.

Not many serious studies have been done on the effects of the civil war in order to come up with developmental projects for the nation. In fact, since independence, a century and half ago, Liberia has not really gone through a tangible and concrete progress. Therefore, this study is going to contribute to ideas to formulate policies that will lead to the development of all sectors that have not been developed. It is also an opportunity to make a general historical analysis of the economy so as to enable the researchers to implement better systems for the infrastructure of the nation.

Finally, the study will be an insight to the issues of imitating other models of development such as the Singaporian or the Malaysian style and to see how ethnic harmony can be achieved in a peaceful way while taking into consideration the socio-cultural and political environment of Liberia.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

Within the context of the questions brought forward in the statement of the problem, the purpose of this research is :

1-To explain the root causes and the background of the political conflict and civil war in Liberia.

2-To evaluate the effects of the civil war and the ensuing conflict in its aftermath; on the economy, human resources and the environment .

3-To point out the implications of the Liberian conflict for international relations between Liberia and its neighbors in West Africa .

4-To explore possibilities of conflict resolution so as to achieve political stability in the country in light of an Islamic perspective to conflict resolution.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Since the outbreak of the civil war in 1989 to 1996, Liberia has gone through a lot of problems. The war has affected the entire nation. The effects of the war can be seen not only on the economy, human resources, environment, but also on the relation between Liberia and the neighboring countries. In deed, the effects of the war can be found in various literatures, and studying the impacts of the conflict helps policy makers to pay careful attention to how development can be properly achieved. Since the eruption of the civil war in December 1989, tragedies that include the massacre of thousands of innocent

civilians demonstrate the disintegration of Liberia ¹¹ (Gall Timothy L and Gall Susan B, World Mark, Vol 1, Africa,1999). Indeed, the conflict led to the suffering of the entire population and the destruction of the infrastructure on a big scale ¹² as mentioned in Africa Quarterly ,Vol 40,No.3,2000,P.13. It is believed that during the conflict 300,000 refugees were displaced out of the country to the neighboring countries. ¹³Not only the population was affected but large plants such as the hydro plant that supplied much of the power and water to Monrovia.¹⁴ An author such as Arie M. k Cowicz, in his article, Negative International Peace and Domestic Conflicts, attempts to draw our attention to the impacts of the civil war on the neighboring countries in the sense that the war created serious humanitarian and economic burdens in terms of overflow of the refugees into the neighboring countries and the returns of the repatriated nationals.¹⁵ Based on article written in Africa Economic Digest, due to the gravity of the Liberian crisis, there is an urgent need for the US to help build Liberia so that the 500,000 refugees can return to their homeland¹⁶. This constitutes a serious problem as more and more refugees are still outside the nation whose population include some of the brilliant human resources. But the question to be asked : is the US willing to help bring all these refugees back ? Indeed, a relief worker of the UN says that the situation in the country is "absolutely horrible".Monrovia has no water supply , nor sewage system , no garbage collection, very sporadic electricity, hardly any food, no post offices, no banks, no schools and no

¹¹ Gall Timothy L. and Gall Susan B(1999),World Mark, Chronology of the Nations , Volume 1, Africa , Farmington Hills, Mi , USA, P.287

¹² Africa Quartely, Vol 40, No 3, 2000, Indian Council for Cultural Relations, New Delhi, India p.13

¹³ Jean Afrique , No 1560 , from 22 August to 30 Jan , 1991, p.14

¹⁴ West Africa, No 1430, 26 october -1 November 1993 p.1822

¹⁵ Arie M. K. Cowicz., Negative International peace and domestic conflicts,The Journal of Modern African Studies,p.369

¹⁶ Africa Economic Digest vol 12(1991) March p.1

hospitals. Nearly one fifth of the children in the country are severely malnourished. Many are orphans due to the estimated 10,000 to 20, 000 deaths in the civil war and others separated from their parents are roaming the streets in gangs.¹⁷

From another angle, the civil war in the west African region is so dramatic that it caused, according to the Economist, poverty, and fighting have produced thousands of ill-educated, frustrated young people who are easily recruited into a life of murder, rape and looting.¹⁸ In another development, the peacekeeping force “attempts to find political solution designed to prevent a recurrence of the civil war, which had cost 15,000 lives since the end of 1989.”¹⁹

As far as the economic sector is concerned, it is believed that there has been a rapid increase in the exploitation of Liberia’s timber, diamond and gold resources and this has been managed with scant regard for sustainability.²⁰ Indeed, there are no data on US bank notes in circulation in Liberia, but some indications of trends may be gained from the fact that the volume imported and exported through the National Bank of Liberia had declined sharply since 1980, mirroring the increase in the quantity of local coin.²¹ Diamond mines fell to ULIMO, timber- rich areas to the LPC, and much of “Great Liberia” became contested, with negative consequence on civilians.

¹⁷ Ibid p.1

¹⁸ The Economist, May 19 th—25th, 2001, vol . 359, Number 8222.p.15

¹⁹ Africa Research Bulletin, Number 10259, September 1st-30th, 1991 , p 34

²⁰ Qutran Quentin ,op.cit .p.675

²¹ Dr. Honohen Patrick(1993), The Journal of Modern African Studies, Cambridge University Press, Vol 31, pp 53—55, UK

The civil war has created a lot of environmental disasters throughout the country. Since the major ways of gaining money to sustain their activities involved the natural resources, the various warring factions were seriously engaged in exploiting the natural resources without any regard to environmental consequence. Indeed, the foreign partners with whom the warring factions were making deals did not bother about it. In fact, the French failure to back UN criticism of the environmental consequences of the NIMCO project signaled French commercial interests strength in resisting IGNU efforts to scupper Taylor's business deals. ²² This situation makes the entire process of respecting environmental policies complicated as major powers countries engaged in business with the warring factions are really reluctant to implement certain policies that will be in the interest of Liberia as mentioned in an article on the UN General Assembly on the issue of the protection of Mount Nimba ,Guinea, New Resolutions, P .47. Bruce K.Maclaury, president of the Bookings institution, mentioned that the toll is monumental in terms of war, damage to the productivity, scarce resources divested to the armaments and military organizations and the resulting insecurity, displacement and destruction to the environment (Maclaury, 1991: vii) ²³

The civil war also led to bad relations between Liberia and the neighboring countries. Indeed, the rebel incursion by the National Patriotic Front of Liberia (NPFL), caused as many as an estimated 600, 000 Liberians – out of a population of about 2,500,000 flee to

²² U N General Assembly ,(1990) 18.51 Protection of Mount Nimba, Guinea, New Resolutions ,New York, UN General Assembly, p.47

²³ A. M Honerom The African Review.Consociational Democracy as mechanism for African Ethnic Conflict Arrendtion , Pros and Cons p. xiii---xx

Sierra Leone, Guinea, and Ivory Coast thereby threatening to destabilize other states in the region that harbor similar ethnic-cleavages within their boundaries.²⁴

Finally, the civil war of Liberia has seriously complicated the relations between Liberia and the neighboring countries namely Guinea and Sierra Leon . It has also displaced the much of the population including the human resource upon which the nation depends on for development. The economic and environmental problems can not be ignored .

But the important thing is to find out the mechanisms different authors try to use to foster better relations between Liberia and those neighboring countries and to restore good economic infrastructures , preservation of the environment and management of the natural resources on the analysis of the effects of the civil war.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

In order to achieve legitimacy about the study of conflict in Liberia, it is very necessary from the beginning to establish a theoretical framework to act as guide to understand the nature of conflict. Violence can be manifested in several forms and levels. Its consequences normally bring undesirable results that destroy the entire nation—causing a lot of lives, damage of properties and collapse of economy.

In this thesis, several factors are to be analyzed as the main causes of the civil war in Liberia. One theory valid for the explanation of the causes of the civil war in Liberia is

²⁴ Kacowicz Arie M, OP Cit, *The Journal Of Modern African Studies*, 35, 3 (1997),P.369