



Consolidation of Post-Civil war democracy in Liberia: Implications for reconciliation

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Abstract

Ethnicity is considered to be an integral part of African society and it shapes economy and political structure. In Africa, ethnicity provides security perception, common history and culture, common language for communication and common vision. Modern Liberia was found by free American slaves in 1847. There are many ethnic groups in Liberia such as Krahn, Kpelle, Bassa, Kru, Mandingo, Mano, Konneh, Gio and other smaller groups. The ethnic conflict in Liberia is deep rooted between Americo-Liberians and indigenous Liberians. The Indigenous Liberians, who had been denied all social, political and economic freedom and other civil rights in independent Liberia became unhappy with new political arrangements and wanted to ensure inclusive political and economic affairs of the country. The small groups of Americo-Liberians held power until 1989 when Charles Taylor led National Patriotic Front of Liberia to oust the repressive regime of President Samuel Doe. But the demise of Americo-Liberians regime failed to bring peace and stable democratic government.

Liberia has consolidated democracy through UN Mission in Liberia, decentralization of government, justice and security reform, local participation in management of natural resources and decision making, national reconciliation, diversification and recovery of economy, impartiality of judiciary, independent national election commission, smooth political transition, civil society, youth leadership, iconic star leadership, large number of women participation in elections. This paper examines instruments and mechanism for the restoration of peace and consolidation of democracy in post-civil war Liberia.

Since 2005, the GDP has grown at an impressive pace. Following the twin shocks of the 2014-15 outbreak of the Ebola Virus and a global slump in commodity prices, Liberia's economy is expected to recover from 1.6% in 2016 to 3.6% in 2018. On social development, Liberia has achieved some Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) targets, including reduced child mortality, access to drinking water, health coverage, near universal primary school enrolment, and narrowed gender gaps in education. Interventions and increased spending on health and education are paying dividends. This paper explores the challenges and prospects for sustainable peace, inclusive economic growth, social development, reconstruction and reconciliation in the post-civil war Liberia.

Keywords: Ethnicity, social conflict, civil war, UNMIL, presidential election, democratic transfer of power, democratic government, reconstruction, socio-economic development

Introduction

After over one hundred sixty years of independence the Liberian state was close to total collapse as a result of fourteen years of civil war. The state's failure and breakdown of central authority has had debilitating social, economic, and political consequences, such as; destruction of valuable infrastructure, internal and cross-border refugee problems, unemployment, hunger and violation of human rights. The challenge for a post-conflict state such as Liberia is the consolidation of democracy and the implementation of the necessary steps required to achieve sustainable development.

The history of Liberia can be traced as far back as 1816 with the formation of the American Colonization Society (ACS). The primary objective of the organization was to promote and execute a plan for settling in Africa freed people of colour residing in the United States. From 1818 to 1847 the American Colonization Society with the support of the United States government began the process of emigration and repatriation of free persons of African heritage back to Africa. The process began with the passage of the Congressional Anti-Slave Trade Act of 1819, when the president of American Colonization Society Bushrod Washington was granted permission by President James

Monroe to execute the Congressional Act in Africa (Boas, 2005, p. 74).

However, between 1822 and 1847 Liberia was under the colonial administrative control of the United States government, which apart from protecting Liberia from other neighbouring European interests, it was also preoccupied with mounting opposition from the majority indigenous groups. Against this background, the settlers created their own ethnic identity, hence the Americo-Liberians. On achieving independence, the young republic of Liberia encountered several socio-economic problems; one of which was the hostility between the indigenous people and the Americo-Liberians. One of the causes of this hostility was the land tenure system and land ownership (Adibe 1997, p. 478). Thus, opposition by indigenous groups who were the original land owners in Liberia became common. Another reason for this hostility was cultural misunderstanding. The settlers, because of their acquired Western values, had become acculturated in Western culture while their counterparts lived according to traditional African mores.

The Americo-Liberians viewed the culture of indigenous Liberians as primitive and saw themselves as a civilizing force. Accordingly, President Jenkins Roberts, an Americo-Liberian leader, stated that Americo-Liberians had a manifest destiny to bring civilization to the tribal heathen of

the hinter land.” The hostility between Americo-Liberians and the indigenous groups led to several ethnic conflicts that were apparent in some of the inter-ethnic land conflict in Liberia when the first settler’s arrival during the pre-independence period of the republic. According to Gus Liebenow, the initial misunderstanding was over the traditional concept of land tenure, which was based upon use rather than ownership through purchase. This was compounded by the subsequent failure of the settlers or the American Colonization Society to pay even the low prices agreed upon; by the seizure of land for alleged insults against the colonists or for nonpayment of debts; and by constant disputes over land boundaries (Nilsson and Mimmi 2005, p. 398).

The land issue was subsequently complicated by the policies and practices in the use of native labour on farms owned by Liberian settlers. The native labour policies reinforced social inequities between Americo-Liberians and the indigenous groups. For instance, indigenous Liberians lacked basic amenities on farmlands, while Americo Liberians had the power to fine their indigenous employees. Also, the apprenticeship system under which indigenous youth were assigned to Americo Liberian families until they came of age was extensively abused and was at the root of a labour discord during the early period.

However, these actions created a situation in Africa not unlike the very one against which the repatriated Americo-Liberians themselves had rebelled against in America. The indigenous Africans were expected to give freely their labour for road construction and other public works; as well as their payment of taxes to an alien people (Kodjoe 2007, p. 271). It is under these inhumane conditions that a conflict between the Americo-Liberians and the indigenous Africans was further exacerbated. The Americo-Liberians were committed to Western culture and the capitalist system of labour exploitation. Consequently, they showed cultural hostility towards the indigenous inhabitants.

Background of Conflict in Liberia

To examine the causes of the conflict in Liberia, a brief background of the country’s civil war is needed. The Liberian civil war began in 1989. The country was ruled by Americo-Liberians (American descendants) until 1980 when Sergeant Samuel Doe, a native Liberian, became the first president of Liberia. Liberians for the first time thought they were going to be liberated under Samuel Doe’s regime. However, his regime became very authoritarian, discriminatory and abusive of human rights in Liberia. It was as a result of the repressive regime of Samuel Doe that Charles Taylor began an attack in 1989 which finally led to the overthrow of Samuel Doe’s government by a break-away faction from the rebels’ group of Charles Taylor (Murphy 2003, p. 70)

This group, known as the Independent National Patriotic Front of Liberia (INPFL), was led by Prince Johnson in September 1990. The ECOWAS Monitoring Group (ECOMOG), a regional peacekeeping group of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), mediated, and Dr. Sawyer acted as interim president until the 1997 elections when Charles Taylor of the National Patriotic Front of Liberia (NPFL) was elected as president (Adibe 2010, p. 475). Two years later, the civil war began with two rebel groups. One emerged from the border between Ivory Coast and Liberia and became known as the

Movement for Democracy in Liberia (MODEL), the other was started by a group of exiled Liberians in Guinea who called themselves Liberians United for Reconciliation and Democracy (LURD). These two groups that fought Taylor’s government destabilised the country. With international pressures and ECOWAS intervention, Charles Taylor was compelled to resign in 2003. He went into exile in Nigeria and his vice-president, Gyude Bryant, was chosen to act as interim president until the 2005 election, when Ellen Johnson Sirleaf was elected and sworn in as the President of Liberia in January 2006.

Many reasons have been given for this conflict. For Adebajo, the conflict is generally attributed to bad governance. Adebajo identifies six key issues, as indices of bad governance, that contributed to the Liberian War: ‘the exclusionary rule of the Americo-Liberian Oligarchy, the brutal and inept rule of Samuel Doe; the deleterious effects that Doe’s rule had on the armed forces of Liberia, ethnic rivalries and personal ambitions that resulted from Doe’s rise to bloody power; and the destabilizing effects of the withdrawal of the U.S. support from Doe, a strategic Cold War ally’ (Adebajo 2002, p. 19)^[1].

Given these issues outlined by Adebajo, it can be seen that Liberians suffered from the Americo-Liberian rule in that they were systematically discriminated against in terms of employment, political representation and development projects. Samuel Doe’s government became more repressive, authoritative and abusive of human rights. Indeed, there were political, social and economic factors that led to a resumption of the civil war in 1989. Firstly, after the 1985 elections, instead of establishing inclusive democratic governance, Doe deepened ethnic exclusion by disproportionately appointing his own tribe, the Krahn, and co-opted the Mandingoes, who were the wealthiest business people, into his cabinet to the neglect of the rest of the fourteen tribes of Liberia. Secondly, the extra-judicial execution of Colonel Thomas Quinwokpa and his military men, including the Gios and Manos, brought about counter-reaction. Thirdly, the execution of William Tolbert and several members of his cabinet, and the reckless confiscation of property, led the Americo-Liberians to support Charles Taylor’s uprising (Obi 2009, p. 124).

From the above account of the factors that led to the civil war in Liberia, it is sufficiently clear that bad governance was the main reason for the violence that followed. As can be seen in Liberia, a crisis of governance as exhibited in the abuse of human rights, dictatorial rule, social and ethnic exclusion, and institutional failures led to the overthrow of Doe’s government and the turmoil that then engulfed the country. Samuel Doe’s regime was very repressive and pursued ethnic discrimination policies. As Amos Sawyer argues, ‘Sergeant Samuel Doe ascended to power from the lumpen elements of the Liberian Army. Within a few years, he purged the military of all his rivals and of its trained officers, and relied on an under disciplined core recruited largely by his Krahn ethnic groups’ (Sawyer 2004, p. 444)^[19]. This means that the professionalism of the military was undermined, and this not only negated merit principles in the military but also weakened the military institution.

The Consolidation of the Peace Process

Liberia was engulfed in a vicious and brutal cycle of conflict that lasted 14 years (1989 - 2003) and resulted in the deaths of 270 000 people, the displacement of 800 000,

and the devastation of the economy and national and civil machineries. Destabilisation of the entire West African region occurred as Liberia's neighbours, Sierra Leone, Guinea and Côte d'Ivoire also became embroiled in conflict. While it was hoped that elections in Liberia in 1997 would restore order to the country (indeed, the United Nations Observer Mission in Liberia-UNOMIL-withdrew from the country on this basis), violence continued unabated and between 2000 and 2003 a new wave of conflict gripped the region (Knight 2008, p. 32).

The key actors to the conflict signed the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) in Accra, Ghana, in August 2003, and a National Transitional Government of Liberia (NTGL) was established in October 2003. The CPA was a comprehensive peace agreement intended to address the civil war within Liberia as well as the regional conflict dynamics, and to firmly place Liberia and the region on the path to post-conflict recovery and sustainable peacebuilding. In 2005, Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf was elected president in the first post-conflict elections, and a unity government took power in 2006. While the elections marked an important milestone toward the attainment of peace, the critical challenge of the post-conflict building processes still dogged the country (Paes 2005, p. 260)

The UN Mission in Liberia was established by the UN Security Council Resolution 1509 and was deployed in October 2003. UNMIL was a wholly integrated mission which, practically, meant that all key components of the mission were located under a unified command structure. Some in the humanitarian sector doubted this integration and feared that the mix of the humanitarian with political and security imperatives would compromise core humanitarian principles. Others in the humanitarian and NGO sector, however, did not object to working with UNMIL. Generally, there was a positive attitude toward UNMIL in the country (Olonisakin 1996, p. 44).

The Liberian government has already constructively engaged the international donor community to assist in expanding capacity and creating an enabling environment for peace, economic prosperity and reconstruction. To date, the US is the most influential bilateral donor in Liberia, followed by the European Union, the World Bank, the United Kingdom, Germany, Japan, Denmark, Sweden, Norway, the Netherlands, Ireland, Spain, France, Italy, and the People's Republic of China. In addition, a growing number of multinational corporations, non-governmental organizations, the Roman Catholic Church and other religious organizations are acting as private-sector donors in Liberia.

In this scenario, the government should make a considerable effort to promote the socio-economic well-being of the citizens as its main priority. A democratically stable environment will enhance the prospects for successful reconstruction projects addressing the basic needs of the people such as water, electricity, roads, education and job creation. Despite the fact that shortly after her administration was sworn in, President Johnson-Sirleaf restored electricity to certain areas in Monrovia, many Liberians still rely on generators as a source of energy. The restoration of the infrastructures, particularly roads, is a labor-intensive project that could provide jobs for thousands of young people currently demobilized and/or unemployed. Although it is unrealistic to expect miracles from the present regime in just two years, better management of resources,

objective identification of priorities and a strong political will could lay the foundations for the rise of an economically viable and socially cohesive Liberia before the next elections (Kaihko 2015, p. 256).

One of the most significant impediments to the successful completion of the reconstruction process in Liberia is the poor mobilization of resources both internally and externally. While the Liberian government is working hard to improve the utilization of its domestic resources, donors have done little more than make promises. Liberians are of the opinion that, while the US has an important role to play in the post-reconstruction process, the country needs to diversify its partnerships. According to Lansana Gberie, "Liberia's problems are simply overwhelming and the US appears unwilling or unable to invest enough to make a difference" (Gberie 2007, p. 142). This echoes the sentiments of the Liberian people who would prefer that their government adopt an inward looking approach and work closely with regional actors such as the African Development Bank, the West African Bank for Development, and other regional partners such as Nigeria to decrease its excessive dependence on the US.

This will foster Liberia's pride and at the same time promote the empowerment of the people. As a war-torn country with a heavy debt burden, Liberia certainly needs sustainable and coordinated external support in its post-war reconstruction phase. This should not, however, be at the expense of domestic ownership and control over the process. It is expected that the government will have to increasingly take a leading role in co-ordinating external assistance through its established institutional framework, the Liberian Reconstruction and Development Committee (LRDC), to improve the effectiveness of the reconstruction plans. The LRDC has identified five important areas that require attention: security, economic revitalization, governance combined with rule of law and infrastructure that provides basic services.

Foreign debt will remain a huge obstacle to the recovery and the healing process in Liberia. The massive debt, if not cancelled or dealt with adequately, will severely restrict Liberia's capacity to combat poverty. This situation will be aggravated if donors fail to fulfill their pledges. Inconsistencies in government policies on corruption and actions on the ground could cause donors to withhold funding. In this case, the government will have to rely on domestic resources, which appear insufficient for the implementation of the recovery programmes. Even though some bilateral as well multilateral donors are prepared to provide aid to Liberia with no strings attached (Ahunna 1998, p. 34), the political considerations on the part of influential donors (the US for example) may affect the flow of financial assistance and delay the state's response to the basic needs of the people. Therefore, the government may not be able to keep its promises to the people, who, if the democratic consensus remains in place, will manifest their disappointment through the ballot box or through popular protests.

Finally, post-conflict reconstruction involves exit strategies for the donors and peacemakers. Unfortunately, the local community in Liberia has no exit strategy. People living in the rural areas ultimately have the greatest need to build a sustainable peace. Often, the international community sees only the highly visible ex-combatants and those in power, while ignoring the faceless majority. Therefore, conflict-

affected people need timely and effective support to regain confidence in the ability of the state and its institutions to deliver and so embark them on the path to sustainable peace (UNDP Report 2006, p. 152).

Consolidation of Post-Civil War Democracy in Liberia

Liberia is now to recover from the scars inflicted by 15 years of warfare, which claimed the lives of more than 200,000 people and further displaced a million others into refugee camps in neighbouring countries. Some had been forced to flee as many as five times from one zone to another. This resulted in unprecedented social dislocation, which could still have a lasting impact on Liberia's socio-economic recovery plans. It is estimated that 80 per cent of the country's housing had been damaged or destroyed in fighting (Richards *et al.*, 2006). Sexual violence and gender-based violence were perpetrated against the civilian population to the extent that trauma caused by ruination, grief and loss still affect a considerable number of Liberians (Richards *et al.* 2006, p. 72).

After more than a decade of war, there is no doubt that the oldest republic in Africa needs a combination of internal and external resources to rise again. A well-considered setting of priorities and overall mobilization of the various players around those priorities will help Liberia to successfully complete the peacebuilding and economic recovery process. It has become evident that a major factor affecting reconstruction in Liberia is using the opportunity to learn from the relative success in neighbouring Sierra Leone. Many Liberians are of the opinion that Liberian post-conflict reconstruction affords the citizens and their authorities the historical opportunity to lay strong foundations for a stable and economically prosperous society. It is an opportunity for those who now have the responsibility of building the Liberian nation, to bring into being the development projects that were compromised and delayed by a century of political exclusion, dictatorship and war (Boas 2010, p. 710)

With the November 2005 elections, Liberians entered into a new social contract based on the commitment of the main political actors and the population to establish a political order based on good governance and the promotion of socio-economic recovery (Harris 2006, p. 384). The imperative of peace in this volatile West African region compelled George Weah, a favorite in the general elections, to abandon his challenge of the results that declared Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf, President of Liberia. George Weah came out on top in the first round of the presidential elections only to lose to the Harvard graduate and veteran politician, Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf in the run-off. It is speculated that George Weah's lack of education coupled with the 'fear of Doe syndrome' made some development partners nervous about the possibility of the Liberian football legend becoming president of the war-torn state of Liberia (Gray 2005, p. 80)

Despite the controversies over the outcome of the elections, President Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf's government has been sworn in with a double mandate to rebuild Liberia and to demonstrate the commitment of the new administration to addressing some of the complex problems that lay at the root of the conflict while promoting sustainable socio-economic development. The imperative of consolidating state authority throughout the country is as critical as reforming the security sector and meeting the socio-

economic expectations of the population (Harris 2006, p. 22).

The elections in Liberia in 2005 were extraordinary, not only did the Liberian electorate elect the first female president in Africa ever, but the elections were also historic from a national perspective. In several different areas the elections excelled expectations; they were free and fair and were more similar to African peacetime polls than post-conflict elections (Kieh 2009, p. 16). The elections were also highly competitive yet violence-free. Given this remarkable assessment, this paper has attempted to evaluate the perceptions of these elections among the ex-combatant community in Liberia, and their possible impact on the long-term democratization process. When assessing the political culture among the ex-combatants, it is important to take note of Sawyer's assertion: Liberia has never had a democratic electoral culture; these were only the first free and fair competitive elections in modern times.

The elections in Liberia in October and November of 2005 have generally been hailed as very successful and democratic, indeed some have called them "the freest and fairest elections that Liberia has ever seen" (Amos 2005, p. 107). Presidential and legislative elections were held at the same time, and since no candidate received 50 % plus one vote, a runoff presidential election was held a little later. In the end, Ellen Johnson Sirleaf (a Harvard graduate, minister during the Tolbert regime in the late 70s and a former World Bank employee) won with 59.4 % of the votes against George Weah's (a high school dropout and international football star) 40.6 %. Despite logistical problems, Liberians registered and voted in very large numbers (an estimated 90 % of the population registered, and participation in the first round of elections stood at 74.9 % and in the runoff presidential election at 61 %) (Boas and Utas 2014, p. 52).

The conduct of campaigns and actual polling were orderly and professional, and very few incidents of violence occurred. The election was also exceptional since no incumbent nor former warlord was on the ticket, which left the field wide open. This also meant that most seats were a very close call; no party or presidential candidate achieved a landslide victory so common in Africa in general. Of significance to this paper is also George Weah's challenge of the election results, his claims of electoral fraud were, however, never proven to have systematically biased the results.

Besides, to consolidate democracy, peace and development in Liberia, the role of civil society is significant. As Stedman argues, 'there is the necessity for democratic reform to reorient state-society relationship so that the political accountability of the rulers is the hub of political life'. The empowerment of civil society will enable them to hold government accountable and ensure transparency. It will also enable civil society to play a watchdog role over the conduct of government to avoid mismanagement of the economy, as well as corruption, political patronage and rent-seeking. To that extent, it is important that civil society has inputs into the policy process, in such areas as the drafting of the national budget and the implementation of policies, development projects and programmes that government pursues. It is important that the tax payers exercise their rights regarding what their monies are used for and how they are used. Indeed, the test of the current leadership and the stability of Liberia will depend on the pursuit of good governance and security policy. What follows now is a

discussion of the security policies that will be required to maintain peace in Liberia (Sawyer 2008, p. 180).

Implications for Reconstruction and Reconciliation

Reintegration in the context of post-conflict development involves two aspects: social reintegration and economic reintegration. The social aspect of reintegration involves healing the wounds of victims occasioned by past human rights abuses. Thus, the social aspects of reintegration will require the Government of Liberia to use the reconciliation process and to encourage religious bodies to address issues with regard to the acceptance of ex-combatants into their communities. This involves persuading offenders to admit to their crimes through the hearings of a Truth and Reconciliation Commission, and for the victims to forgive them for their misdeeds. An alternative would be for the state to institute a retributive justice system in which perpetrators are prosecuted for crimes committed during the civil war. The current government has thus far adopted a reconciliation process. It has also adopted a retributive system for some officials in that Charles Taylor is currently being tried by the International Court of Justice in the Hague for his alleged involvement in crimes against humanity (Armstrong 2002, p. 475).

On the economic aspects of reintegration, the state needs to provide compensation for those whose properties were confiscated, or who lost relatives. These have been the traditional approaches to reintegration. Though these are necessary, they have been short-lived. I argue that there is a need to pursue a combination of a short and a long-term development approach that aims simultaneously to address security and development (Rookwood 2011, p. 195). Because most conflicts exploit short-term dissatisfaction among the populace to initiate conflict, it is imperative for the state to provide short-term jobs or the means of livelihood to all Liberians. However, a long-term development plan is needed to promote sustainable peace and socio-economic development. This can be reached through investment in education by building schools to enable Liberians and ex-combatants to acquire new skills and fully engage in economic activity. Simply forbidding the use of arms does not provide livelihood, and can lead to a return of conflict. Thus, policies are required to promote human security which encompasses survival and the provision of jobs, health care and education.

These are the key issues to be addressed by the government that can in the long run address illiteracy, unemployment, poverty and vulnerabilities. This means that peacebuilding is a long-term process that requires a developmental approach linking security to development. The reintegration of ex-combatants as well as the provision of jobs to Liberians becomes crucial in the country's strides to stability. Post-conflict peacebuilding is a complex, costly and multi-faceted one aimed ultimately at providing security, development and social rehabilitation through institutional transformation, and tackling the root causes of conflict (Rookwood 2008, p. 480). It needs to address security challenges under which military, DDR, political, social and economic problems are linked.

Development cannot be achieved without security. At the same time, security is not sustainable without development. There is a synergy of development and security. If developmental problems such as poverty, unemployment, regional inequalities, lack of access to health care and

education are not addressed in Liberia, the chances for a resumption of conflict are high. Also, if issues such as the professionalism of the military and the domination of the military by one ethnic group are not addressed and the control of SALWs is not done at the borders and internally, the stakes for opportunistic politicians or greedy individuals to hire rebels from other countries to enter the borders and destabilise the stability of the state are also high (Hoffman 2006, p. 259). There is, therefore, a need to view security and development issues as interwoven and inextricably linked.

Given the lessons learned in the previous conflicts in Liberia, the post-conflict situation demands a democratic, all-inclusive governance approach. Nepotism, political patronage, rent-seeking, corruption and identity politics which characterised the previous governments should not be repeated. This will require marshalling the necessary political will to address issues such as identity, participation, distribution, penetration and legitimacy (Binder 2011, p. 373). To overcome the crisis of governance in Liberia, it is imperative that these five issues be dealt with. There is a need for the state to provide an enabling political and regulatory environment for civil society to participate in the policy process and decision-making processes either through their representatives in parliament or by grassroots participation. One of the crucial policy actions required by the Government of Liberia is to endeavour to ensure equitable distribution of resources to benefit all regions, and that is where penetration is important, because a lack of penetration and the concentration of development projects in some regions to the neglect of others lead to marginalisation and regional imbalances. Governance also requires that leadership be willing to bargain and incorporate the inputs of the various groups into decision making that reflects broad consensus and values (Omotola 2006, p. 45).

Building National Capacities

Liberia has had a functioning government for only five years now. It is still in the post-war reconstruction stage, and capacity building is required to address the poor infrastructural state of public institutions, education, justice, the public sector and the health care system. The UNDP defines capacity building as 'the process by which individuals, organizations, institutions and societies develop abilities (individually and collectively) to perform functions, solve problems, and set and achieve objectives' (UNDP Report 1997, p. 3). Capacity building is providing individuals, institutions and organisations with the technical, regulatory, political, social and economic tools to empower themselves. Capacity building in Liberia will need to take place at the national and local levels.

At the national level, there is a need for two levels of capacity building to be put in place: one that empowers and improves the skills, capabilities, and competencies of the people put in place to manage the country (politicians, policymakers and public servants in the various ministries); and, secondly, a system of rules and frameworks to guide them in the implementation and management of the affairs of the country. As such, a key priority of the government should be to focus on building leadership underpinned with managerial skills, public service values and ethics, integrity and encompassing national interest, and also administrative and technical capacities at various levels both in the public and private sectors (Jahr 2006, p. 25).

Arguably, measures urgently required are: building a strong public ethics commission, establishing the office of an ethics commissioner to investigate complaints of unfairness, conflict of interest, abuse of office and authority, unethical behaviour of public servants and workers in public institutions, and introducing an ethical model to train public servants in virtue ethics of excellence of character and of duty and obligations. Workshops and training must focus on ethical standards, a code of conduct for public officials, and duties and obligations required of public servants and leaders, especially politicians, to fulfil their obligations of the state-citizenship contract. In addition, building strong audit institutions to promote transparency and accountability, and a new leadership underpinned with ethics and managerial skills are urgently required to address the massive levels of corruption which led to the prolonged war and the execution of past presidents in Liberia. A key capacity-building effort will be required to strengthen the General Auditing Commission (GAC) of Liberia established in 2005, by recruiting staff with integrity and solid experience and understanding of audit practice (Chesen and Krech 2010, p. 56).

Building local capacities

Building local capacities to participate in policy formulation, implementation and evaluation is vital if Liberia is to attain socio-economic development and sustainable peace. Building local capacity and ownership will engineer sustainable peace and enhance democratisation and the rule of law in a post-conflict society. The best guarantee of stability is to ensure that people do not only have the capacity to govern themselves, but also have control of the structures put in place to govern. Therefore, strengthening local capability through training and the development of skills to analyse government and local budgets, manage and implement policies, and monitor and evaluate government's programmes and projects is urgently required to enable Liberians to participate in the development process (Beleli 2011, p. 30).

It also requires decentralising political, administrative and financial structures to enable local communities to administer their own localities, generate revenues to undertake development, and link local development plans into the national development plan. Each community is unique and has its own developmental needs and priorities, it is imperative that they should decide about their own development policies and participate in the decision-making process. Building their capacities thus involves leadership training, technical capacities to analyse budgets and knowledge about the policy processes and institutions of governance. Thus, there is a need for the state and development partners in Liberia to invest in equipping local leadership with institutional and technical capacities to participate in the development process (Nilsson and Kovacs 2013, p. 12).

Conclusion

This article has examined the causes of the Liberian Civil War of 1989–2003 and the policy alternatives that are now available in the country's transitional period to ensure a durable peace and development. It argues that the root cause of the civil war in Liberia was a crisis of governance. By crisis of governance is meant an arbitrary exercise of power (without due regard to the rule of law), authoritarianism,

abuses of human rights, the politics of exclusion, the politicisation of the military, inequitable distribution of resources, ethnic discrimination and the suppression of the right to dissent.

It also means the maintenance of the spoils system, a system whereby the ruling government gives government jobs to party supporters as a reward for winning power, and as incentive to keep them in power. This leads to the marginalisation of certain ethnic groups, regions of poverty and inequalities that gradually lead to discontent, revolt and violent conflict. This is what took place during the regimes of Samuel Doe (1980–1989) and Charles Taylor (1990–1999). The case of Liberia, as of many countries in Africa, illustrates the view of Stedman (1991:393) that 'a yawning gap lies in the normative theory of how governments in Africa should act and the explanatory theory of how governments in Africa do act'.

This means that the principles of the rule of law, accountability, transparency, independence of the judiciary, press freedom, a robust civil society and a fair distribution of resources, which are the normative principles of democracy, are undermined. As a result, it has led to civil war and the negation of peace and development in Liberia. In this light, there is a need to recognise that democratic consolidation is conditioned by a number of factors 'the speed with which ethnic issues are recognized; the level of ethnic tension when the democratization process begins; the size and power of different ethnic groups within the state; the ethnic composition of the previous regime and its opposition; the political positions of the leaders of the main ethnic groups; the presence or absence of external ethnic allies; and the ethnic composition of the military'.

The article makes the case that good governance is the key to addressing the root causes of conflict and to maintaining sustainable peace in Liberia. It argues for responsible governance that is participatory, inclusive of ethnic groups, accountable, transparent, and supportive of democratic principles as the equitable distribution of resources and the pursuit of the rule of law. It is also imperative that the state builds strong institutions to strengthen security. These security policies should go beyond mere DDR and include economic reintegration, adoption of a strong national security policy and a regionalised collaboration between police and customs officers to control the proliferation of small arms and light weapons.

More importantly, post-conflict development is more than the temporary cessation of violence, the provision of humanitarian relief and the holding of early elections to enable the exit of peacekeepers and the international community. It is a long-term developmental approach, which requires time and the financial support of the international community and regional actors, to help Liberia undertake the necessary infrastructural reconstruction and the provision of jobs to maintain peace and stability. The security and development are so tightly linked that policy makers should move beyond the artificial separation between 'conflict as belonging to the field of security and development as the domain of economics'. There is no denying the fact that enhanced development will promote security. Conversely, the lack of development will trigger insecurity.

The policy implication is that security and development are so intertwined that Liberia, like any post-conflict country, should pursue both policies in tandem, if it is to replace

conflict through a sustainable peace and prosperous development. It also implies that development policies and programmes should benefit not only the rich but also the poor. It is important that the four pillars of the Liberian Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper launched in 2007, namely (i) Security; (ii) Economic Revitalisation; (iii) Governance and the Rule of Law; and (iv) Infrastructure and Basic Services (Liberia Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper 2008), are vigorously implemented. In particular, the revitalisation of the economy and the provision of infrastructure and basic services need to be implemented to address sanitation and water issues, agriculture and food security and engineer livelihood empowerment for the poor at the rural level.

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