The First Liberian Civil War (1989-1997): The Ethnic Identity Contingency during the Violent Conflict

By: Harry Njuguna Njoroge[1]

Abstract

The dynamics of the Liberian first civil war (1989 - 1997) can be traced back to the historiography of Liberia, when ex-slaves from the United States of America (U.S.A.) were shipped to Liberia around 1822. Liberia remained under the U.S. government sovereignty until the Liberia-Americos declared their independence in 1847. But the indigenous people remained under the Liberia-Americo subjugation and domination. This created heightened antagonism between the new political elites and the indigenous population. Master Sergeant Samuel Doe, of indigenous stock, obtained power from the Liberia-Americo rulers through a military coup (1980), but failed to attend to the ethnicity problem that persisted in the country. Doe continued with the system of exclusion, repression, as well as oppression against Liberian communities outside his Krahn ethnic group. This management or mismanagement of politics in Liberia elicited much fury, disgruntlement and resentment from the marginalized ethnic groups, who identified and pushed Charles Taylor to start the first Liberian civil war (1989-1996) to scuttle Doe's system of exclusivism, marginalization and discrimination based on ethnic identity. This study aims to show how ethnic identity and ethnic mobilization shaped the First Liberian War. It is clearly demonstrated that Ethnic Identity card played a salient role during the first Liberian violent conflict and subsequent wars.

Key words: The first Liberian Civil War, Ethnic Identity, Ethnic Mobilization, Violent Conflicts,

Introduction

Ethnic identity is a source of both violence and cooperation in all societies. Conflicts erupt and escalate when they are ignited by political power struggles and human grievances, and are reinforced by complicated political

---

[1]*Master degree in Peace Studies and International Relations, Hekima Institute of Peace Studies and International relations (HIPSIR) in Nairobi, Bachelor degree (Economics) University of the District of Columbia (UDC) US. Diploma in Journalism, University of Nairobi.*

alliances, in which ethnic division and affiliations are key variables. The post-cold War global society is characterized by a rise in the scope and intensity of conflicts marked by violent and devastating ethnic rivalries and outcomes (Morgan & Kadivar,1995, p. 1). The former Yugoslavia, Somalia, South Sudan, South Africa, Sierra Leone and Liberia are some of the notable cases. To a greater or lesser degree, many of these interethnic rivalry situations that have either died or are still ongoing have antecedents involving colonial rule or a foreign group. While this historiography is probably a significant contributory factor to several of the varied internal political, economic, and social issues, the roots of such violent conflicts are shaped by actions and policies formulated during colonial rule (ibid 1995, p, 1).

In most cases, ethnopolitical situations arise out of politico-economic crises of the state and patterns on ethnic domination. Somehow, the eruption of ethnic clashes is predetermined and is neither fully anticipated nor completely intended by the actors. Unequal or competitive relations between ethnic groups assist to shape a society's state and ethnic structures thereby impacting the domestic narrative from which wars take place (ibid 1995, p, 1).

Certain forms of violent conflicts ensue out of perception of vertical political and economic dualism, where one ethnic group monopolizes privileges in a country. When conflicts erupt arising from ethnic inequalities, manifesting violence between the groups that monopolize most economic and political opportunities and those who are marginalized, the contestation takes the shape of who should exercise ultimate authority. The explosion of interethnic bloodletting has to do with power and control, and the focus on, and consciousness of these fuel ethnic violence and bloodshed (ibid 1995, p, 1).

Contextualizing armed Conflicts in Africa in post-World War
The internal violent conflicts in Africa in the post-Cold War period can be blamed on, and not limited the end of the Cold War game. Other contingencies responsible for violent internal conflicts comprise; ethnic and group identity, racial prejudices, political, economic, resource' grievances, self-determination, and poverty amongst other variables. The end of Cold-War marked the end of the global tapestry of suppressing, containing and managing the under-currents of violent conflicts in respective geopolitical areas of influence by the super powers. It left Africa exposed to the vagaries of mercenaries' maneuvers, and a ready market for weapons of destruction. (Olatude, and Ade, 2012, p.188).

Violent conflicts, however, do not occur per chance. As a matter of fact, the appearance of such violent conflicts is the reality of deep roots in the historiographies, and long-term disruptive political, economic inequalities, social-cultural disruptions, exclusivist, marginalization, racial segregation, and discriminative tendencies, that tend to target some particular ethnic community, or a minority group, within a state (Olatude, and Ade, 2012, p.188).

This study aims to demonstrate how the ethnic identity narrative in Liberia shaped the First Liberian Civil war.

Situating the Liberian State Historiography

Liberia is located within the West African coastline. It shares borders with Sierra Leone to the west, the Guinea Republic to the north, Cote d'I'voire to the east, and the Atlantic Ocean to the south. Liberia is a natural resources rich country, and is endowed with enormous iron ore deposits of global significance, alluvial gold and diamonds, as well as forest resources, resources which have come to be a curse for its citizens (Olatude and Ade, 2012, p.189).

The Liberian state was founded by originally freed slaves from the United States of America. The first shipload arrived in Liberia in 1822. This new settler group, running to about 40,000, (Outram, 1999, p. 163). The justification for the establishment of Liberia was determined by dynamics that had nothing to do with considerations of the original Liberia inhabitants. The dynamics fit within the context of the highly explosive economic development experienced in the United States in the late 18th and 19th centuries, rendering the earlier labor-intensive economic approach unprofitable and untenable. (Olatude and Ade, 2012, p.189). Slave labor in the U.S. had become increasingly archaic form of economic investment. Abolitionists pushed for disbandment of slavery to set men free to enter the open labor market system. (Ibid, 2012, p.189).

The first fleet of freed slaves landed in present day Liberia in January 1822, after a supposedly negotiated purchase of the Cape Mesurado area (Monrovia) by the leaders of the expedition, and the local chiefs (Olatude and Ade, 2012, p.189). The new comers; who came to be known as "Americo-Liberians" or "Americos," proclaimed the Republic of Liberia in 1847. The declaration created intra-settler conflicts, which festered until 1871, when they were resolved by the True Whig Party, that ruled Liberia up to 1980. This regime was ousted from power through a military coup

(1980), thus marking the end of the "First Republic" of Liberia (Outram, 1999, pp.163-164).

The constitution of the Liberian Republic was modeled on the USA constitution, However, the democratic rights contained in the American constitution were not transferred to the Liberian indigenous populations. The democratic rights remained a privilege of the Liberia-Americos. For example, the indigenous Liberians were curtailed from the enjoyment of fundamental liberties and rights, such as the freedom of citizenship, which was not granted to them until 1904. Also, they were disallowed the right of political participation, and the freedom to elect their representatives in government until 1946, amongst other freedoms (Outram, 1999, p.164).

Formal grant to citizenship for the indigenous people came with the inauguration of a policy of "indirect rule" by the Americo elites, which was superseded by a policy of "unification" in 1944 during the beginning William Tubman's presidency. The unification policy viewed as the "policy of integration" from 1964, censured the divisions between the Americos and the indigenes. However, this policy which was intended to integrate the indigenes legally, politically and economically in Liberia was ineffective (ibid,1999, p.164).

President Tubman was replaced as president following his death in 1971 by vice president William Tolbert. Tolbert stayed in office until 1980, when he was ousted from office via military coup by Master Sergeant Samuel Doe; an indigene. A supposedly civilian government, the Second Republic" was formally launched in January 1986. A revised, yet equally non-effective constitution based on the US system of government continued to be operational. President Doe was removed from power in 1990 through a revolt. He was faulted for both of his individual as well as government's failure to actualize promises made to the people. He was captured and killed in the capital city, Monrovia by Prince Johnson forces; the Independent National Patriotic Front of Liberia (INDFL). Following Doe's death, Charles Taylor became the fourth President of the Liberian Republic in 1990 (ibid, 1999, p. 164).

Situating the Liberian First Civil War - 1989-1997
It has been adduced that the First Liberia civil war was shaped by two root causes. First; the multidimensional crisis of underdevelopment persistent in the country since independence (1847) to the Samuel Doe military coup (1980), and the failure of both the post-military coup, and civilian governments to offer viable leadership to solve these problems (Kieh, 2016,

p. 209). Various governments in Liberia since 1847 to 1980 failed to build national integration programmes between the new-comer settlers, and the indigenous communities. Furthermore, the succeeding governments failed enhance economic development to benefit of all citizens. The government also failed in efforts to promote social welfare, equal opportunities, democracy and good governance, and the rule of law. Therefore, these shortcomings and crises underpinned the reason for a military in April 1980. The coup champions committed to liberate Liberia democratically, introduce good governance, and promote economic development (which did not happen anyway) (ibid, 2016, p. 209).

The second root cause of the 1989-1996 First Civil war was constituted by poor performance of the Doe regime during both the military (1980-86) and civilian (1986-90) periods. During the military era, the system committed serious political mistakes, such as   exclusion and marginalization of some ethnic groups, unequal distribution of goods and services, human rights violations, abuse of citizens' freedoms including; muzzling of the media, curtailment of the freedoms of association, and speech etc. The US–based Committee for Human Rights accused the Doe government of a "promise betrayal" (ibid, 2016, p. 209).

The economic landscape, social welfare space, and the material conditions took a deteriorating surge, and failed to show the slightest sign of growth. Even after Doe became Liberia's supposedly, "democratic" president, following the controversial 1986 election, the system lacked the zeal to entrench democratization and good governance in Liberia. The system also unable to reduce wide-spread poverty that caused untold suffering of Liberian people. The resulting crises of underdevelopment provided a rich fodder for the First Civil war to unfold (Kieh, 2016, p. 209).

Organized violent conflicts in Liberia prior to 1980s were largely influenced, and energized by an overarching complex of differences, such as economic inequalities, cultural differences and status inequalities between the Americo-Liberian elite and the indigenous Liberian population. These persistent inequalities, inconsistencies and social differences worked as catalysts for ethnic mobilization, violent conflicts formations, and revolt against different governments. The structure of political, economic, and status inequality in Liberia was based on the effective monopolization of the commanding heights of the state apparatus by the Americos elite (Outram, 2012, p.165) It was the control of the state machinery that empowered the Americo elite to illegally appropriate land and exploit labor. It was also through the state that the revenues accrued from the surpluses of the modern

minerals and plantation sectors were stolen by the ruling class. Worse still, it was through the state machinery that the resources for development aid could be diverted to wrong places. Furthermore, it was largely through the state that education, accession to "civilized" cultural status and admission to membership of the Americo elite could be acquired (Outram, 2012, p.165). The overarching political culture of marginalization, exclusivism, discrimination and authoritarianism in Liberia further complicated the inherent weaknesses to the violent conflict management approach. The absence of a tradition of democracy and accountability, combined with the patron-client structure of political, economic and social relationships, and possibly the pre-republican historical legacies of both the settlers and natives led to the development of a political culture among the Americo elite and its agents, characterized by authoritarianism, injustices, exclusivism, violations of human or legal rights of the indigenous groups, predation, bribery and corruption (Outram, 1999, p. 166). This culture was exhibited in a long history of Americo disregard for and humiliation of the indigenous people, both as individuals, and represented by traditional leaders which continued despite the policy of national unification. The culture produced deep and irreconcilable resentments against the state apparatus. This, therefore made a mockery to the Americo claim of a "civilizing mission," and raised the question of the legitimacy of the Liberia's state (Outram, 1999, p. 166).

The Fist Civil war conflict actors including; Sergeant Doe and his the forces, several civilian-based militias such as the National Patriotic Front of Liberia (NPFL), the Independent National Patriotic Front of Liberia (INPFL), the Liberian Peace Council (LPC), the Liberation Movement of Liberia for Democracy(ULIMO-J) led by Johnson, the United Liberation Movement of Liberia for democracy(ULIMO-K);belonging to Kromah, and the Lofa Defence Force committed repulsive, and senseless crimes against civilians; such murders orgies , maiming, rape, torture, plunder and looting amongst several other criminal acts against humanity (Kieh, 2016, p. 210). Collectively, different ethnic warlords' militias conscripted into war, and marshaled fifteen thousand child soldiers; as young as nine-year-olds to commit heinous crimes against innocent, and unarmed civilians, including women, children and elderly persons. (Kieh, 2016, p. 210).

The First Civilian war, claimed the lives of about 250,000 civilians. Another one million persons were internally displaced, and about 850,000 people sought refuge in the neighboring countries, including Cote d'I'voire, Guinea, Sierra Leone, Ghana, Nigeria. Several others sought refuge abroad in the United States of America (Kieh, 2016, p. 211).

During the reign of Doe, different ethnic groups had developed a dreadful hostile relationship, which was further transferred to his government. Lack in support by the majority of the Liberians, forced Doe to turn to his ethnic Krahn group as his only political cleavage. Doe framed the power struggle between him and his main rival; General Thomas Quiwonkpa; a member of the Gio/Mano ethnic group, as a struggle between two ethnic groups, rather than a political rivalry between two personalities (Kieh, 2016, p. 211). In a typical case of scapegoating in 1985, Doe accused the Gio/Mano ethnic groups for his regime's poor performance. He blamed them of harboring treasonous ambitions following an aborted coup led by General Quiwonkpa; a former advisor to Doe, and a leader who assisted Doe rise to power (Kieh, 2016, p. 211).

Locating Ethnic Identity and Tribal Mobilization context within the Liberian First Civil War (1989-1996)

The preamble of the 1847 constitution, stating "We the people of the Republic of Liberia were originally the inhabitants of the United States of North America…." (Liberia, 1839) … confirmed the emergent segregated society. Citizenship was restricted to only those of the settler breed to the exclusion of the original inhabitants, and rightful owners of the land and state of Liberia. Worse still, the constitution ignored provision in regard to the government of the indigenous communities, but left all that to be determined by the government of the Americo-Liberians. In effect, the new comers' government never perceived the indigenes to have a past worth of inclusion in the corpus of Liberian history (Olatude and Ade, 2012, p. 190). In place of a common Liberian identity, an internal colonialism model was fashioned, in which the dominant minority core exploited the majority periphery and used its political and economic strength to maintain its superiority, and subjugation of the indigenous population (ibid, 2012, p. `190).

The indigenes were segregated and treated as a subordinate, and inferior crop of people. The indigenes were treated to humiliation, excluded and discriminated through a hardened policy of habit of mind (Olatude and Ade, 2012, p. 190). The caste system nurtured and promoted ethnic animosity among the Liberia people. The colony government enacted a law which placed indigenous African children who came to live in the colony in servitude (Olatude and Ade, 2012, p. 190). (Olatude and Ade, 2012, p. 190). The law prohibited the native youth under the age of eighteen from living in the families of the colonialist without being bonded for a specified term of years, according to the stipulation of the rules prescribed in an Act of apprentices (Olatude and Ade, 2012, p. 190)..On Independence Day (July 26, 1870) speech to the Common Council, in Monrovia, Alexander

Cromwell lambasted Americos-Liberian elites, and called upon the government to respect and assimilate the indigenous groups into the Liberian society (Olatude and Ade, 2012, p. 190).

Ethnic identity, and by extension the exclusion from political participation, inequality, poverty, exploitation, discrimination and violation of human rights, and civil liberties to particular ethnic groups (Gio and Mano) by the Doe regimes, and his Krahn tribe significantly caused the eruption of violent conflicts and subsequent ethnic mobilization, leading to the start and sustenance of the First Liberian War (Call, 2010, p. 348). After its founding in 1847, Liberia was ruled by Americo-Liberians comprising only 5 percent of the total population. These elites dominated and oppressed the roughly 16 main "up-country" (comprising 95 per cent of the population) groups, most of whom who had been separated by borders from their clansmen in neighboring Guinea, Sierra Leone, and Cote d'Ivoire (ibid, 2010, p. 348). Indigenous tribes were disenfranchised and could not participate in government affairs for over a hundred years from 1847, until they were granted the right of franchise in 1964 (ibid, 2010, p. 348).

The 1985 fake democratic elections called by Doe turned out to deeply compromised, and were highly contested. There were claims galore of voting irregularities, such as, rampant rigging, voter intimidation, threats, and coercion, bringing the whole exercise into disrepute. Doe's regime was considered to have perfected the order of things; promoting inequality in all sectors of life, undermining political and socio-economic structures, and scaling up the already existing widespread poverty rate, particularly among ethnic groups regarded by the regime as politically incorrect - not belonging to either the Krahn or the Mandingo ethnic stock (Call, 2010, p349).

The Gio and Mano, making up about 15 per cent of Liberian population were subjected to injustices, such as unequal opportunities to employment, land ownership, and violation of human rights; all incidents that played key role in ethnic identity recognition and ethnic mobilization in the arrangement to depose Doe from the perch of power (Call, 2010, p. 349). In the aftermath of the 1985 failed attempted coup, Doe's Krahn, then domineering the military ranks, and other security apparatus went a pitch higher molesting and hunting down people belonging to the Gio and Mano ethnic groups., and killed at least 3,000 Gios and Manos. The government also adopted a systematic exploitation and plunder approach, targeting ethnic groups viewed to be anti -system; "them" against "us" (Call, 2010, p. 349). Doe's regime committed grievous crimes against humanity, such as killing unarmed civilians (children, women and the elderly), rapes, torture, and

The First Liberian Civil War (1989-1997): The Ethnic   *(2021) Journalofcmsd Volume 7(1)*
Identity Contingency during the Violent Conflict:
Harry Njuguna Njoroge

kidnapping, contrary to the international humanitarian law code. The regime was also involved in mass looting, and did not care to protect and secure private property rights, particularly for ethnic groups unjustifiably labeled as enemies of the state. All these illicit atrocities, combined with utter erosion of democracy during Doe's regime significantly contributed toward the manufacture of the Liberian First Civil war (1989**-**1997**),** and the consequent aftermath (Call, 2010, p. 349).

There was no fundamental transformation on either political, economic or social order in Liberia during Doe's rule to disclaim the popular street slogan of the day in Liberia: "same taxi, different driver" (Outram, 1999, pp. 167). Instead, Doe got consumed by the violent conflict ill-conceived template of previous regimes, in an increasingly desperate fiscal context; during a progressively tense political climate marked from 1985 onwards by several perceived and actual coup attempts. The only significant change manifested in conflict administration was Doe's creation of a power base contemplated on ethnic solidarity between himself and his own Krahn tribe. (Outram, 1999, pp. 167).

The 1985 coup attempt by Thomas Quiwonkpa, a Gio, caused the Gio and the closely related Mano ethnic groups to be associated with the coup attempt. They were held accountable for Quiwonkpa's action, and punished in various ways by government agents. Ethnic identities apparently became significantly salient marked by intense hostilities pitting especially the Krahn on the one hand and the Gio and the Mano on the other, The Mandingo people, associated closely with the state because of their long-standing history of cooperation with the Americo elite, also came to realize the salience of ethnic identity as others groups branded them with disdain as collaborators of the Krahn oppressors.

The Liberia state of 1980 and before was marked by a complexity of differences and inequalities between the Americos and the indigenes. After 1980, clear ethnic differences among the indigenous population were not uncommon. These grievances can be said to have partly contributed to the invention of the 1986 internal civil war (Outram, 1999, p. 168). However, as a matter of fact, these conflicts had all along been there for well over a century, but aptly and successfully manipulated by state apparatus until the 1980 coup. Unfortunately, by time of eruption of the military coup, the state machinery had lost agency, and therefore militating the emergence of the coup d'état and the following civil wars. (Outram, 1999, p. 168).

The success of the April 1980 coup d'état by non-commissioned officers commandeered by Sergeant Samuel Doe brought to the imminent end of the Liberia-Americo rule. (Conteh-Morgan& Kadivar, 1995, p. 9). A few days (10) after Doe's takeover, the People's Redemption Council (PRC), with Doe at the head decreed the summary execution of thirteen top ranking officials of the immediate former regime at a public square in Monrovia. Many Liberians of native origin celebrated this dastardly act by Doe and his compatriots (Conteh-Morgan& Kadivar, 1995, p. 9). Contrary to the popular belief that 1980 coup d'état would bring greater fortunes to the indigenes, instead it undermined solidarity of indigenous ethnic communities (Conteh-Morgan& Kadivar, 1995, p. 9).

The PRC, the "guardian of the revolution", and Doe, self-proclaimed "liberator" did not honor pledges made to the Liberians, and the international community. In order to consolidate power and secure his position, Doe hastily placed members of his small ethnic community, the Krahn in positions of authority to the exclusion, marginalization and exploitation of other ethnic groups (Conteh-Morgan& Kadivar, 1995, p. 9). Doe, his lieutenants, and cronies nearly all, from his Krahn tribe used state power to unfairly amass wealth, to the chagrin and disillusionment of other ethnic groups. (Conteh-Morgan& Kadivar, 1995, p. 9).

Onset of the 1986 Liberian First Civil War
The onset of the 1986 Liberian Civil war was kindled by the November 1985 attempted coup by General Thomas Quiwonkpa of the Gio ethnic group. The hyped expectations of 1980 faded slowly into utter despair. Doe literally dashed away hopes of a better politically, economically and socially managed state of Liberia. Heightened favoritism extended to the Krahn on the one hand, and the exclusivism approach visited on other ethnic groups on the other hand aggravated ethnic tensions, and exposed the under-belly of Doe's regime (Conteh-Morgan& Kadivar, 1995, pp. 9&10). By 1985, the Krahn had disproportionately dominated the entire government sector, and other channels of opportunity. This translated into marginalization of certain communities, erosion of democratic rights, as well as infusion of political, and socio-economic inequalities alongside other opportunities (Conteh-Morgan& Kadivar, 1995, p. 10).

The extreme levels of political and economic repression coupled with increasing Krahn nepotism seriously exacerbated ethnic frustrations tensions, and widened the social rift among the indigenous peoples; a phenomenon that had been long kept concealed by Americo-Liberian hegemony (Conteh-Morgan& Kadivar, 1995, p. 10). The 1980 coup had just

exchanged ethnic domination by one group (Liberia-Americo versus local populations) for ethnic domination (Krahn against others) by another. The grievances and concerns of ethnicity remained the same, and had even worsened in many ways (Conteh-Morgan& Kadivar, 1995, p. 10).

The frustrations and atrocities perpetrated by Doe and his minority ethnic group; the Krahn upon other ethnic communities provoked General Thomas Quiwonkpa to stage a coup d'état on the Doe regime in November 1985. The coup was however, foiled by Doe forces, yet it sparked the Liberian First Civil war, that began in earnest in1986. Spontaneously the Krahn tribe went on enraged rampage hunting and butchering members of the Gio and Mano tribes, resulting in senseless bloodletting in Liberia (New Yok Times, 1985).

The Charles Taylor Moment

Exile groups in Ghana and Cote d'Ivoire harbored plans to oust Doe from power. They identified, and effectively recruited Charles Taylor, a disaffected former member of the Doe regime to lead them in the execution of the onerous task (Outram, 1999, p. 167). The first target by Taylor's NPFL force consisting between 90 and 167-men including Prince Johnson, was government officials and soldiers, as well as some Mandingo individuals suspected of being informants to the Doe regime (Young, Feb., 2008, p. 9). Taylor on New Year's Eve was announced on the BBC broadcast radio as claiming NPFL's responsibility for launching the attack, and confirmed that NPFL's forces had entered Monrovia capital (Young, Feb., 2008, p. 9). Doe hit back with equal force, and this marked the beginning of a steady stream of murders characterized by the appearance of headless corpses in the morning" (ibid, Feb., 2008, p. 9). The government forces outfit; the Armed Forces of Liberia (AFL), rounded up hundreds of Gio and Mano civilians during the following two months in Monrovia, suspecting them by reason of ethnic origin alone of being potential (NPFL) enemies (ibid, Feb., 2008, p. 9). Doe's scorched-earth tactics culminated with thousands of deaths and over 30,000 refugees (ibid, Feb., 2008.

Taylor and his NPFL wing unleashed the initial attack from Nimba County, an area inhabited by the Gio and Mano ethnic groups. This violent conflict by 1990 assumed a "near genocidal" character, and by May, Taylor forces invested Monrovia and victory was without doubt. It took the efforts of Economic Organization of West Africa States (ECOWAS) to scuttle Taylor's coveted prize (Outram, 1999, p. 167). The ECOWAS Cease-fire monitoring ECOMOG group's forces, numbering between 4000 and 19000 stalled Taylor's forward match, and surrounded Monrovia, therefore preserving the remnants of the collapsed Liberia. (Outram, 1999, p. 168).

An ineffectual diplomatic initiative to negotiate a peace deal dragged over the next six years. The complex political, military, and economic undercurrents exacerbated a prolonged humanitarian crisis. (Outram, 1999, p. 167). By end of 1990, Liberia was but a pale shadow of its former -self. Even after the installation of the Interim Government of National Unity (IGNU) on April 20, 1991, (INGU) could not perform any of the 'empirical' functions of the state outside the enclave of Monrovia (Outram, 1999, p. 168).

Taylor, received a lot of tributes and admiration from the Gio and Mano ethnic communities for rescuing them from the humiliation, exploitation, marginalization and discrimination they had endured under the Doe government (ibid, Feb., 2008, p. 9). The Gio tribe, particularly of Nimba County joined the NPFL in large numbers and attacked the Krahn tribe, whom they considered, no matter how unjustly, collectively and individually responsible for Doe's misrule. The Gio and Mano also attacked the Mandingo ethnic group for their role as collaborators in the perpetration of crimes upon them (ibid, Feb., 2008, p. 10).

Brutality from both the NPFL and AFL sides was openly demonstrated during 1990. In July, 1990, NPFL slaughtered 500 Mandingos in Lofa county, and the AFL not to be left behind killed 600 displaced citizens, mainly of the Gio and Mano ethnic groups sheltered at St. Peter's Lutheran Church in Monrovia. The NPFL was notorious for testing people not able to speak Gio or Mano lingua franc. Those who failed to speak either of the languages were committed to instant death (ibid, Feb., 2008, p. 10).

 By summer 1990 Taylor controlled 90 per cent of Liberia, nearly the whole of Liberia, except the enclave of Monrovia which had been surrounded, and secured by the Anglophone wing of the Economic Community of West African States Monitoring Group (ECOMOG) force, in a bid to buttress the Doe regime, so as to stabilize the capital, as well-wishers and people of goodwill arranged for a cease -fire. Although the Anglophone group of the ECOWAS claimed to be non-partisan, the underlying motive was to undermine the support of Francophone Cote d'Ivoire and Burkina Faso to the NPFL wing (ibid, Feb., 2008, pp. 10 and 11).

The AFL in full realization that it had no chance of securing a victory in conflict agreed to cooperate and work with ECOMOG, as the Independent National Patriotic Front (INPFL), (a splinter wing from NPFL) led by Prince Johnson, had done earlier. (Ibid, Feb., 2008, p. 11). During the ECOMOG stand-off with the NPFL, the INPFL was allowed to stay in the areas of

The First Liberian Civil War (1989-1997): The Ethnic   *(2021) Journalofcmsd Volume 7(1)*
Identity Contingency during the Violent Conflict:
Harry Njuguna Njoroge

Monrovia already under ECOMOG's control, and remain armed. In an unclear circumstance on September 9, 1990, Doe while unarmed made a visit to the ECOMOG headquarters in Monrovia., Doe and his entourage of 75 were attacked by INPFL armed soldiers. Doe's body guards were gunned down. Doe was kidnapped and later on a video was circulated in the media of him being tortured, Eventually, he was eliminated as Prince Johnson watched (ibid, Feb., 2008, p. 11). Taylor was cajoled and entered into a ceasefire agreement in Novemder1990, An Interim Government of National Unity (IGNU) was formally inaugurated in Monrovia, and Amos Sawyer, a Liberian Scholar, who had been coaxed by Doe earlier to draft his constitution sworn in as the new president of Liberia on April 20, 1991 (ibid, Feb., 2008, p. 11).

By the end of 1990, Liberian state was but a pale shadow of its former-self. Even with the installation of the Interim Government of National Unity (IGNU), it came short in performance of the "empirical" duties of the state outside the Monrovia enclave (Outram, 1999, p. 167). IGNU was wholly dependent on ECOMOG for external and internal security. The legislature hardly functioned, and the judiciary missed the little relevance it had previously. IGNU collected taxes only from the Maritime Programme; the sea and airport, and the provision of government services were effectively conducted by UN agencies, the European Union, and donor governments, as well as international and national non-governmental organizations NGOs (Outram, 1999, p. 167).

The IGNU and its successors; the Liberation National Transitional Governments (LNTG) I and II had only an unclear juridical role among international "community of states". For example, the EU refused to accord formal diplomatic recognition to both LNTG-l and LNTG-ll. The European Union community effectively down-graded the Monrovia diplomatic status from "Embassy" to a "Mission," However, IGNU and the successors LNTGs continued to carry out issuance of passports and visas, present and receive diplomatic credentials of diplomats, and   also continued to hold its seat at the U.N. (Outram, 1999, p. 167).

Road to Peace in the Liberian
The Liberian peace process was long and tortuous Journey. It did not take less than eleven (11) peace accords between 1990 and 1996 period (Call, 2010, p.350). Peace initiative started in the *e*arly period of the war, and the ECOWAS facilitated the platform for the negotiations. The regional body sponsored 3,000 troops under the auspices of ECOMOG. The deployment reflected ambivalence among the hegemonic powers, the UN, African states

took a lackluster attitude in resolving problems in their continent. ECOMOG gradually became an interested actor to the conflict, and gave support to forces feuding with the Taylor's side. This conduct by ECOMOG reflected Nigeria's antipathy toward Taylor's NPFL. However, by 1995, in a crucial paradigm shift, the Nigerian government accepted the Ghanaian position of the need to accommodate Taylor and his forces as part of a peace settlement (C all, 2010, p.350).

The peace agreement that ended the war was signed after a rapprochement between Taylor and Nigeria (an influential regional power broker) in June 1995. The Abuja accord was signed in August, and a cease-fire launched in the Fall of that year. Liberian wars were brought to an end through the "Abuja-II peace agreement of August 1996. Presidential and legislative elections were conducted in July 1997, and Taylor snatched victory with a 75.3 per cent majority win. The election process, monitored by international observers, including U. S. president Jimmy Carter were declared to be free and fair (Call, 2010, p.350). Taylor, by far the most powerful of the warlords, was in a position to continue the war should he have lost. This at least, justifies the bizarre election slogan of Taylor's electoral machine; the National Patriotic Front of Liberia: "He killed my Ma, he killed my Pa, but I will vote for him" (Outram, 1999, pp. 168&169).

Conclusion
The eruption and continued participation in violent conflicts in post- Cold War Africa can be traced back, and not limited, to colonial legacy, political, economic, socio-cultural, resource grievances, and ethnic identity contingences. The colonial powers used a divide and rule policy in the colonies, that left the local populations sharply disaggregated. The colonialists also entrenched a form of inequalities among different groups that induced disenchantments, disillusionment and deeply-seated hostilities amongst different communities.

During the Liberian violent conflict of 1986-1990, the ethnic identity card played key role in the formulation and the continued sustenance of the crisis. Beginning with the Liberia-Americo regime, the repressive regime oppressed, marginalized and discriminated against the indigenous people. For example, the local community was disallowed participation in government., was also denied voting rights, and opportunities among other fundamental rights in their own country. This brewed distrust and animosity from the indigenes, directed to the ruling elite and their settler community. These long-term injustices meted on the indigenous populations ultimately

The First Liberian Civil War (1989-1997): The Ethnic
Identity Contingency during the Violent Conflict:
Harry Njuguna Njoroge

(2021) Journalofcmsd Volume 7(1)

fermented the coup d'état of 1980, by a handful (17) of non-commissioned officers led by Sergeant Samuel Doe.

The Doe regime proved no better than the one of his predecessors. As a matter of fact, it was even worse, in the sense, that this time the hatred amongst local communities hardened based on ethnic identity contingency. Doe's Krahn ethnic group was unjustifiably placed at the top of all other local ethnic groups. They dominated the military, and government security agencies, held nearly all cabinet posts in the government, and other important positions in government, Doe also favored the Mandingo ethnic community, who were his allies, and induced some of its members with government plum jobs and land gifts. On the other hand, the Gio and Mano ethnic groups were marginalized, excluded, discriminated and denied opportunities by the Doe regime, forcing them to enter into an ethnic violent conflict, and the ultimate overthrow and murder of Doe.

Ethnic identity and recognition are crucial for peace and security in any country. When an ethnic group perceives rightly or wrongly that its rights to existence are under threat, it is bound to react in a way that shall cause eruption of violent conflicts or wars, and their sustenance as it happened in Liberia in the First Civil war of 1986-1992, and subsequent violent conflicts in that country.

References

Alpastan Ozerdem A, and Sukunya Podder, 'Youth in Conflict and peace-building', pp. 102-139, linkspringe.com/chapter/10.1057/9781137314536_5.

-Antony Vinci, "Greed- Grievances Reconsidered: The Role of Power and Survival in the Motivation of Armed Conflicts, <u>Civil Wars Journal</u>, Vol 8, No. 1, pp. 25-45, 2006.

Asim Rizvanovic, "Violent Peacekeeping: An Evaluation of the Performance of ECOWAS in the First Liberian Civil War, <u>E-International Relations, e-ir.info/2013/o9/05violent.</u>

Charles T, Call T, "Liberia's War: Grievances over Greed", <u>Civil Wars Journal</u>, Vol. 12, No. 4, pp. 347-369, Dec. 2010.

Earl Contech-Morgan E., & Kadivar S "Ethnopolitical Violence in the Liberian Civil War". <u>Journal of Conflict Studies,</u> V0l 15, No. 1,1995, pp1-14.

George Klay Kieh Jr., "Civilian Wars in Africa: The Case of Liberia, Sierra Leone and Cote D'Ivoire," <u>Peace Research</u>, Vol. 48, No. 1/2, pp. 203-228, 2016.

Ibid., "Irregular Warfare and Liberia's First Civil War," <u>Journal of International and Area Studies,</u> Vol.11, No. 1, pp. 574--77, 2004.

Ibid, The Roots of the Second Liberian Civil war," <u>International Journal of World Peace</u>, Vol.26, No. 1 pp. 7-30.

Harvard Hegre, Qstby and Raleigh (), "Poverty and Civil War Events: A Disaggregated Study of Liberia," The <u>Journal of Conflict Resolution</u>, Vol 53, No,4, pp. 598-623, Aug. 2009.

Innes, A Michael, "Denial-of-Resource Operations and NPFL Radio Dominance in the Liberian Civil War," <u>Journal of Civil Wars</u>, Vol. 7, Issue 3, 2005.

Johanna Speyer and Christina Stobwasser, Liberia NPFL-1989-19996" <u>Journal of Conflict Resolution</u> Vol 53 No.4, pp. 1-11, September 14, 2016 .

Julian Wucherpfennig, Nils W Metternich, Lars-Erik Cedermon & Kristian Shriede Gleditsch, Ethnicity, the State, and the Duration of the Civil War," World Politics Journal, Vol. 64, No. 1 pp. 79-115, 2012.

Mamdani Mahmood, "Making Sense of Political Violence in Post-Colonial Africa: War and Peace in the 20th Century and beyond, pp. 71-99, https://www.worldscientific.com>
Marten Bedert, "The Complementarity of Divergent Historical Imaginations: Motives of Mobility and Alterity in Contemporary Liberia," Journal of the Study of Peace, Nation and Culture, Vol. 23, No. 4, pp. 430-445, 2017

Max Ahmadu Sesay, Politics and Society in Post-war Liberia" Journal of Modern African Studies, November, 11, 2008

New York Times, New York Archives, "Liberia Say it foiled Attempt Coup" (November 13, 1985), nytimes.com/1985/11/13/world/Liberia-says-it-foiled-coup-attempt-html.

Olatude O.M and Ade A.G, "An Exploration of the Historical and the Political Background of Liberia," An International Journal of Arts and Humanities, Vol. 1 No 1 pp. 167-200, August 2012.

Outram Q, "Liberia Roots and Fruits of the Emergency," Third World Quarterly, February 1999, Vol. 20, No. 1, pp. 163-173.

Veronica Nnoma, "The Civil War and the Refugee Crisis in Liberia, Journal of African Studies, Vol. 17, No.1, 1997.

World Peace Foundation, ""Liberia Mass Atrocity Findings:" Journal of Peace Research, Vol.56, No, 5 pp. 6335-6440 Liberia," August 7, 2015,