The Liberian Crisis:

Lessons for Intra-State Conflict Management and Prevention in Africa

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About the Author

Professor Aaron Michael (Mike) Oquaye had a distinguished legal career before entering academe. Having been awarded a B.A. (Hons) in Political Science from the University of Ghana in 1967, he went on to study law at the University of London, gaining both an Honours Ll.B. and a B.L. there, before becoming a barrister at Lincolns Inn and practicing in both the High Court in England and later the Superior courts of Ghana.

In 1984 he began teaching in the department of Political Science at his old University of Ghana at Legon and eight years later was awarded his doctoral degree from that university, following this with postdoctoral study at the School of Oriental and African Studies of the University of London. Since that time he has been a leading figure in the development of political studies in Ghana, helping to develop new curricula and postgraduate work in that field.

Until recently, Mike Oquaye's own work has focused on the politics of his own country and of Africa, and he is well known as an expert on the establishment and consequences of military rule, as well as the links between military rule, local (district) level politics, and various forms of development. He has written extensively on these subjects and his articles have appeared in *Africa Affairs, Human Rights Quarterly,* and the *Journal of Commonwealth and Comparative Studies,* as well as in many edited books. He himself has edited *Democracy and Conflict Resolution in Ghana's Fourth Republic* (Accra: Clear Type Publications, 1995)—an initial sign of his growing interest in conflict analysis and resolution—and he has written *Politics in Ghana 1972–79* (Accra: Tornado Publications, 1980), for which he was given the Ghana Book Development Council Award in 1981. At present he is awaiting the publication of his latest work, *Military Rule and Democracy in Ghana 1981–92,* from the same Ghanaian publishing house.

Among Mike Oquaye's honors have been the CODESRIA Award for Economic and Social Research in Africa (1987), the British Council Award of a Visiting Scholarship to the University of London (1993–94), and the Ghana Academy of Arts and Sciences Silver Award for the Social Sciences (1996). In 1997–8, he was awarded a Fulbright Fellowship to the Institute for Conflict Analysis and Resolution at George Mason University, where he became a popular and stimulating Visiting Scholar and where he wrote the first drafts of this Working Paper. At present, he is chair of the Department of Political Science at the University of Ghana, Legon.

About the Institute

The Institute for Conflict Analysis and Resolution at George Mason University in Fairfax, Virginia, has as its principal mission to advance the understanding and resolution of significant and persistent conflicts among individuals, communities, identity groups, and nations.

In the fulfillment of its mission, the institute conducts a wide range of programs and outreach. Among these are its graduate programs offering the Doctoral and Master of Science in Conflict Analysis and Resolution, clinical consultancy services offered by individual members of the faculty, and public programs and education that include the annual Vernon M. and Minnie I. Lynch Lecture Series.

The institute's major research interests include the study of conflict and its resolution, the exploration and analysis of conditions attracting parties in conflict to the negotiating table, the role of third parties in dispute resolution, and the application of conflict resolution methodologies in local, national, and international settings. The institute's Applied Practice and Theory Program develops teams of faculty, students, and allied practitioners to analyze and address topics such as conflict in schools and other community institutions, crime and violence, jurisdictional conflicts between local agencies of government, and international conflicts.

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Contents

Foreword

The topic of protracted conflict in Africa and what might be done about it has exercised some of the best minds in the field of conflict research for a number of decades, and has become an even more urgent problem with the upsurge of violence, civil wars, and collapsed states in the 1990s. The Institute for Conflict Analysis and Resolution is, therefore, particularly pleased to be able to publish Professor Mike Oquaye's analysis of and reflections on one all too typical case—that of Liberia—in its Working Paper series. Oquaye completed this work while he was a Visiting Scholar at the institute during the academic year 1997–98, and he has subsequently revised and updated the work after returning to his own University in Ghana.

Faced with the task of illuminating the complex and highly dynamic set of interlocking disputes in Liberia, Oquaye has chosen to address two broad questions in his paper. The first centers on the puzzle of the Liberian conflict's longevity: Why did it prove so difficult to arrive at a sustainable settlement of the conflict and why did the conflict protract in this apparently unstoppable manner? Certainly, the failure to find a solution was not for want of trying, as successive efforts to achieve a peace agreement that would end the violence and endure came and went. Oquaye suggests a number of plausible reasons for the conflict's intractability, pointing to the weakness and unpreparedness of the West African peacekeeping force, the lack of follow-up to some of the peace accords that were concluded—at least on paper—between the adversaries, and the sheer savagery of some of the combatant behavior. Most interestingly, he also focuses on the factor of disenchanted and alienated youth, whose lack of opportunities and alternatives initially led them into and then kept them in the warrior's role, sometimes at the age of 11 or 12.

Oquaye's second question is what might be learned from the Liberian case that could prevent similar breakdowns and violence in other countries. Here he offers a number of eminently sensible ways in which the fashionable search for "conflict prevention" measures could be conducted, particularly for Africa societies facing growing and in-

creasingly youthful populations and diminishing economic resources. Oquaye's focus on the necessary part to be played by civil society in a conflict prevention role builds upon his analysis of the Liberian case but also echoes many of the arguments of writers on conflict "transformation," who have noted the involvement of Latin American grassroots organizations in peacebuilding processes. There are obviously intercontinental bridges to be built here, both theoretical and practical, and this Working Paper indicates clearly Mike Oquaye will be one of the scholars to build some of them.

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War broke out in Liberia in December 1989 over a quest to oust President Samuel Doe from office. Doe himself had seized power in 1980 in an atrocious coup that eliminated many of the existing Americo-Liberian ruling elite and their families. The attacking force, known as the National Patriotic Front (NPFL), led by Charles Taylor, had entered the country from Côte d'Ivoire. Volunteers rallied in support of the rebels and they quickly gained ground. Some of them were child soldiers, orphaned and as young as 11 or 12. By June 1990, the NPFL had reached striking distance from the capital of Monrovia. Having gained ground, the NPFL consolidated itself on the outskirts of Monrovia and used the waiting period to train its youthful recruits. Its strategy was to cut off supplies of water and electricity and block all road access (Amoo 1993). Doe was thus confined to his executive mansion. Whereas the NPFL could not conclude the attack and take over Monrovia as a result of the intransigence of the Armed Forces of Liberia (AFL), Doe's government had nevertheless collapsed in essence. The AFL used this period of impasse to exact vengeance against Mano and Gio ethnic groups in Monrovia, including the attack on people in a church building leading to a tragic massacre. Atrocities were rampant. The human cost was high. The capital was virtually destroyed by the fighting. Up to 3,000 people died and most foreign nationals were evacuated. Almost half of the population was displaced.

While the bid to capture Monrovia protracted, other major warring factions emerged in a struggle not only to remove Doe from office but also to settle various scores and determine who would reap the spoils of governance after the dust of war had settled. The other parties in the

multifaceted war to "liberate" Liberia included the United Liberation Movement for Democracy in Liberia (ULIMO) led separately by Alhaji Kromah and Roosevelt Johnson, and the Liberia Peace Council (LPC) led by George Boley. Smaller groups emerged later.

The breakdown of law and order continued until the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) intervened for humanitarian and strategic reasons. Nigeria's president Babangida feared that if the rebellion of the youth succeeded in Liberia, the contagious effect would destabilize other West African nations including Nigeria itself. ECOWAS intervention started with mediation attempts in June 1990. In August 1990, ECOWAS moved from mediation to intervention and established a regional peacekeeping force, the ECOWAS Monitoring Group (ECOMOG), whose soldiers quickly gained control of Monrovia. The aim was to stem the lawlessness and provide a framework for a permanent solution to the crisis. Despite the presence of ECOMOG (from 1990) and the UN Military Observer Mission (from October 1993), peace proved elusive as more than a dozen peace accords were broken.

By the end of 1996, ECOMOG, despite its numerous shortcomings, had managed to frustrate the warring factions enough for the latter to wonder whether they could survive a perpetual war. The war-weary warlords finally accepted the ballot box as the means of determining who should govern Liberia after Doe.

On July 19, 1997, general elections were held, which swept Charles Taylor into power. Taylor's National Patriotic Party (NPP) won 75 percent of the total votes cast. In line with the system of proportional representation applied in the election of members of the legislature, the NPP was also entitled to 75 percent of seats in the Legislature—70 of the 90 seats. Peace seemed to have finally returned to Liberia.

Factors that led to the cessation of war are varied and deserve attention. In his leading article on war termination, Massoud (1996, 490–496) viewed war termination as a neglected topic. Since the end of fighting does not necessarily mean the resolution of a conflict, and because the cessation of hostilities can either escalate or de-escalate a conflict, this area needs close scrutiny. What variables account for the end of wars and how do we explain the duration of any war?[1]

On the other hand, we should ask what accounts for the protraction of the Liberian war? The most obvious reasons include the fact that the center had totally collapsed and the ethnic divide attendant to the conflict had fractured the nation almost beyond repair. Second, deep-rooted distrust characterized every attempt at peace. Third, each faction had engaged in serious human-rights violations, including rape, torture, extortion, forced labor, and so forth, and feared punitive measures if the war did not end in its favor. Fourth, war against Doe was not a mere patriotic encounter to remove an African dictator, but was perceived by each warlord as a gateway to political power. Until power was achieved, the war could not end. Fifth, ECOMOG was inexperienced, strapped for cash, and subject to suspicion. But was this the whole story?

Liberia as an African Intra-State Conflict

This Working Paper is an attempt to contribute to the study of intra-state conflict in Africa highlighting the lessons from the Liberian crisis so as to avoid the repetition of past mistakes. Major aspects include the sources of conflict in Liberia that focus on ethnicity and youth frustration but also acknowledge the pain of bad governance and economic decadence in Africa; the West African peacemakers and peacekeepers and the fragility of the accords they helped to broker; the issue of justice after transition; the role of civil society in peacemaking and peacebuilding; democratic challenges; and measures to improve upon collective-security capacity in Africa, including early warning. The first part of the paper reviews some of these as problems well illustrated by the Liberian case. The second and third parts offer some possible lessons and remedies resulting from the Liberian experience.

Ethnicity or the Crisis of Youth?

The Liberian crisis has been perceived largely in ethnic terms. This deserves careful attention, particularly in view of reasonable perceptions that the crisis of the youth was a vital factor that found a resting place in the shadow theater of ethnicity. Doe built ethnic alliances for strategic

reasons. He forged a close ethnic alliance in order to seize power and to consolidate it; he then used the immense powers of the presidency that he had inherited, and particularly the patronage attached thereto, to build ethnic constituencies. The alliance was between two of the most-disadvantaged and least-educated ethnic groups in the rural part of Liberia—the Gio-Mano group from Nimba County and Doe's own Krahn group. This alliance was, however, not deep-rooted and was linked with the persons of Doe and Corporal (later General) Quiwonkpa, a Gio and Doe's right-hand man in the initial rise to power. Quiwonkpa was dismissed from office in 1983 and executed in 1985 for instigating an abortive coup. Quiwonkpa's body was tortured, mutilated, and ridiculed even after death. The AFL then massacred over 4,000 of his tribespeople in unprovoked attacks. Mano and Gio soldiers fled the country and later returned to fight Doe in a war that was bound to have ethnic connotations.

As Doe leaned heavily on his ethnic tribe and showered favors on its members, he was also effectively blackmailing all Krahns into giving unflinching support—as it became manifest that there would be serious reprisals against them should Doe fall from power. Doe's construction of ethnic clientelism led him to cultivate another ethnic group, the Mandingo. After the Quiwonkpa coup attempt in November 1985, Doe explicitly recognized the Mandingo as an ethnic group in Liberia. This angered many Liberians who had persistently regarded Mandingos as foreigners. Doe's soldiers also flushed out Gio and Mano soldiers, accusing them of being Quiwonkpa supporters. Civilian members of these tribes were looted, punished, harassed, and killed indiscriminately. In this, the Liberian military under Doe and his henchmen became the first generation of warlords whose activities were to ruin the nation. Refugees from Nimba County and Gio and Mano soldiers, who had fled for their lives in 1985, joined a previous wave of Liberians in exile. The latter were remnants of the True Whig Party oligarchy who had fled the country in 1980. The NPFL was born out of the common enemy in this drama.

The ethnic alliance against ethnic oppression fanned the flames of revolt. The NPFL was founded by Quiwonkpa himself, but it remained structurally and organizationally weak until Taylor assumed its leader-

ship. Notwithstanding the widespread feeling at this time that ethnic differences had eroded the political base of Doe, no one—including Doe and Taylor—expected that the Taylor-led attack would move with the speed it did and that it would lead to the collapse of the Liberian state. At this stage, it was expected that the invasion would lead to a coup against the regime.[2]

Ethnic affiliations were clearly exploited to fan the war. ULIMO was formed in Sierra Leone in 1991 by Mandingo and Krahn refugees, several of whom had served in the AFL. Its aim was to prevent Taylor from using force to capture political power and also to protect the interests of the Krahns and Mandingos. Incidentally, when ULIMO itself split up during the sharing of ULIMO posts under the Transitional Government, the split reflected the ethnic dimension. The Krahn section, named ULIMO-J, was led by Roosevelt Johnson, and the Mandingo group, named ULIMO-K, was led by Alhaji Kromah. Notably, the names of these groups were fashioned after their ethnic leaders. Other factions emerged to satisfy ethnic interests as the war progressed. The Lofa Defence Force was formed with the cooperation of NPFL to resist ULIMO in Lofa County. The Bong Defence Force was employed by ULIMO-K in similar fashion. Even the most powerful of the new factions, the LPC led by George Boley, had its ethnic connections. Formed with the cooperation of the ECOMOG and AFL, it served mainly to protect Krahn interests, as the Mandingos in ULIMO were unwilling "to spill blood to liberate Grand Gedeh (the county where most of the Krahn live)" from NPFL control (Human Rights Watch/Africa 1994).

It may, however, be argued that the real source of conflict in Liberia was youth disillusionment. Indeed, the civil war in Liberia, just as in Sierra Leone, may be seen as a crisis of youth. The fighters in the war were not soldiers at all, but armed civilians, mostly very young. They lived by the gun, stealing and looting, damaging property and terrorizing civilians, in ways more akin to the banditry of ancient times than modern warfare. Kaplan (1994, 46) viewed it as a situation in which "a pre-modern formlessness governs the battlefields, evoking wars in medieval Europe prior to the 1648 Peace of Westphalia, which ushered in the era of organized nation-states." As Richards (1995)—the chief proponent of the crisis of youth theory—observed, the wars in Liberia and

Sierra Leone were attempts to capitalize upon youth alienation beyond the retrenched margins of two African states wrecked by recession and political mismanagement. Such youths are poorly educated and yet are exposed to the international media, and they consume Western forms with deep passion. Yet they are simultaneously alienated from their own state by the collapse of educational and formal sector employment opportunities. Very often this discontent has been exploited under the guise of ethnicity. But it has been the real flame for violent action. In this connection, Richards plays down ethnic rivalries that he perceives as an opportunity for, rather than as a cause of, rebellion in Liberia and Sierra Leone. It is noted that before the Taylor onslaught against Doe, there had been several violent youth actions in workplaces and in the nation generally, especially outside Monrovia. Rebel leaders were to exploit this syndrome with cheap ex-Soviet weapons, particularly the AK-47 automatic rifle, which became commonplace, thereby transforming teenage adventurers into instant military men.

From the "crisis of youth" viewpoint it may first be argued that the dissident group in Liberia led by Taylor was mixed. This lends support to the evidence that ethnic loyalty was not the main factor in recruitment. Second, the war strategies adopted by the rebels aimed at molding different sets of local circumstances to their own ends. For example, the rebels aimed at potentially dissident populations in inaccessible regions. Their aim was to provoke the AFL. When the NPFL launched its military attack on December 24, 1989, it deliberately infiltrated the Nimba county in northeastern Liberia, home to the Gios and the Manos. This was not an ethnically motivated attack as such, but it was aimed at leading Doe into the belief that this was a resumption of the attempted coup in 1985 by Gio and Mano elements in the AFL. Government troops subsequently directed their fury towards civilian communities in Nimba County. Entire villages were burned and their populations massacred. As a result, aggrieved youngsters rallied to the NPFL that was then able to present itself to Liberians and the international community as the avenger of the Gio and Mano people. It should be noted, however, that unlike Quiwonkpa, Taylor himself is of Americo-Liberian and Vai descent. Taylor's popularity cut across ethnic lines with a strong dependence on the disgruntled youth.

The war in Liberia should direct our attention to this tendency for opposition groups to take advantage of youthful rebel elements in Africa. Rawlings did so in Ghana. The populism of Sankara in Burkina Faso in the mid-1980s was youth oriented. Doe himself had earlier exploited this sentiment. Ghadafi and Castro have called on the youth throughout the developing world to rebel. Around this period, Libya had been offering refuge to dissident students from several African nations, including Liberia, Sierra Leone, Ghana, and Burkina Faso. Ghadafi's "Green Book" had become a revolutionary blueprint among radical youth. Richards is categorical that the NPFL commanders entered Liberia—in the same way as the Revolutionary United Front (RUF) did in Sierra Leone—intending to appeal to the revolutionary awareness of these vocal youthful dissidents and with certain well-worked out techniques for their enforced military mobilization. The point is that the youth are easily drawn to revolutionary rhetoric with its promise of simplistic answers to the complex problems of underdevelopment, financial mismanagement, and national nemesis. The partly educated urban youth are as frustrated as rural youth who desperately gravitate towards the urban areas in search of nonexistent jobs.

Furthermore, the rebels sought to destroy the power of immigrant traders in Liberia by stirring up local antimerchant animosities. Richards is of the view that NPFL ethnocide against the Mandingo traders seemed related to the struggle to control their clandestine economic activities as opposed to genuine anti-Mandingo sentiment. For the rebel movement, raising and exploiting antitrader feeling served the double purposes of terrorizing and driving out the local representatives of the migrant trading network and building up popular local support for the rebel movement through cancellation of onerous debts owed to established traders. It is noted that the Mano, one of the main groups rallying to the support of the NPFL after its initial incursion into Liberia, long resisted the settlement of Mandingo traders in their midst.

Essentially, Kaplan sees the civil war in Liberia as a microcosm of a modern phenomenon—as the symbol of a worldwide demographic, environmental, and societal stress, in which criminal anarchy emerges as the real strategic danger. Such wars are the revenge of the poor, of the failures of modern society. In his view, the boys who engaged in war in

Liberia came from miserable homes. When wars are fought over scarce resources and in the face of poverty, misery, and disease, war itself becomes coterminous with crime as armed bands of stateless marauders clash with the private army of the leader. The savagery of the fighting in Liberia points to one truth that the world must gather courage to face: for the many to whom the comfort and stability of a middle-class life is unknown, war and a barrack existence is a step up, not down. As war becomes pervasive and environmental disaster more frequent, nations break up under the tidal flow of refugees, frontiers crumble, and a new border is erected—a "wall of disease." "It is time to take 'the environment' for what it is: the national security issue of the early twenty-first century" (Kaplan, 58).

These observations are in line with the argument advanced by Bayart (1993) that in postindependence Africa, the marginalized youths have in general an uncompromising political role. Unlike those who grew to adulthood in the first decades after independence, the youth of today perceive their youth as indefinitely prolonged. Having nothing to lose and being so resentful of the situation, they are the most resolute in confronting the system of domination. Because their marginalized position limits access to resources, they are poorly equipped to make effective opposition and will never be capable of throwing off the shackles of their ancestors. The male elite, Bayart concludes, have institutionalized the "absolute seniority" of "small men," thus reinforcing the saying according to which the "dominated of yesterday make up the mass of the dominated today." Therefore, the emergence of a counter-hegemony that depends upon the emergence of a counter-elite remains a possibility rather than an actuality.

Whatever the balance of causal factors underlying the Liberian conflict—ethnicity or youth marginalization—it is clearly also the case that the intervention of outsiders played a major role in the conflict and arguments continue as to whether this role was positive or negative. We now turn to this issue.

Intervention by ECOWAS and ECOMOG: The Failure of Formal Accords

From June 1990 outside influences began to play a role in the Liberian conflict through the involvement of ECOWAS and the establishment of a new military force of "peacekeepers"—ECOMOG. The initial ECOMOG agenda had three main elements: first, to persuade Doe to step down as the president of Liberia, since he had effectively lost control of the greater portion of the nation; second, to disarm the combatants; and third, to establish a congenial playing field for elections to be conducted.

However, Doe continued to hang on to power, invoking the elections that had put him into office. His opponents claimed, however, that Doe possessed no mandate and that the elections under reference had been rigged. With the possibility of winning power in sight, the opposition force itself was divided, and Doe harbored some vain hope of playing one faction against the other. This dynamic accounted for Doe's surprise visit to ECOMOG headquarters where he was captured and killed by the followers of Prince Johnson. This event would seriously undermine the credibility and stature of ECOMOG as a peacekeeping force (Amoo 1993).

The event in the immediate aftermath of Doe's death that gave a ray of hope was the peace conference of all the parties in March 1991 that appointed the Interim Government of National Unity with a respectable statesman, Amos Sawyer, as interim president. The underlying aim was to have governmental machinery in place backed by the coercive authority of ECOMOG while the competing factions agreed upon a timetable and modalities for permanent peace and good governance. ECOWAS was to play a supervisory role in the process. This accounts for the "politics of accords" in Liberia. The Yamassoukro Accord IV, for example, agreed upon in March 1993, was particularly significant. However, even though the accord received the backing and approval of the UN, it was doomed to failure. First, Taylor refused to abide by the terms agreed upon and accused Nigeria in particular of bias. Second, ECOMOG troops were attacked by Taylor's soldiers. In one incident, a detachment of Senegalese troops were ambushed and

killed by NPFL soldiers, resulting in the withdrawal of Senegalese troops from the ECOMOG contingent. Ironically, this increased Nigerian dominance over ECOMOG with the result that Taylor refused further cooperation because of Nigerian monopoly of the force.

A period of impasse prevailed between March 1991 and October 1992 that Taylor used to stockpile arms, after which he launched the notorious Operation Octopus on October 15, 1992. This was a direct attack on ECOMOG. The latter fought back and launched an offensive against the NPFL with the sympathetic approval of the Organization of African Unity and UN. The ports of Buchanan and Greenville, used to export timber and minerals from which income was obtained by Taylor to import arms, were bombed. Taylor was thereafter effectively confined to areas already occupied by him. This halting of Taylor's expansionist adventure had two important consequences. First, Taylor was compelled to abandon the precondition that he should be made interim president of Liberia. Second, it opened the doors for further negotiations.

The Cotonou Accord of July 1993, the most comprehensive of all the accords, was crafted with the assistance of the UN. It formed the basis for subsequent agreements in Akosombo, Accra, and Abuja. It provided for the formation of the United Nations Observer Mission in Liberia (UNOMIL), the expansion of ECOMOG, and mechanisms for cease-fire observation and monitoring. It also provided for the encampment, disarmament, and demobilization of combatants. On the political plane, it provided procedures for the conduct of general elections and for a return to constitutional rule. It also provided for an executive council of state comprising all key factions to superintend national administration and nurture consensus for a smooth return to constitutional rule.

The Cotonou Accord became problematic due to factional disputes over the allocation of government posts. New factions emerged, while cease-fire violations undermined meaningful disarmament by ECOMOG. It was against this background that Ghana's president Rawlings became chairman of ECOWAS and warned that ECOWAS troops would be withdrawn if the impasse continued. This led to the Akosombo Accord and the Accra Clarification. These underscored the

basic principles of Cotonou. Incidentally, the developments in Ghana coincided with the formation of the Liberia National Conference, a civil society group that protested against abandoning Liberia into the hands of factional leaders. These latter attempts at peace failed partly because of strange feelings in Nigeria at this time that Ghana was upstaging her by virtue of Ghana's chairmanship of ECOWAS. Nigeria expressed dissatisfaction over what it regarded as a new alliance between Ghana and Taylor. On the grand stage of subregional politics and rivalries, commitment to principle was eschewed.

By a clever act of diplomacy, President Rawlings sought the assistance of some northern NGOs to secure a truce between Taylor and Nigeria's Abacha, who had become head of state in place of Babangida. Ghana was even prepared to stage further proceedings in Nigeria—hence the Abuja Accord signed on August 19, 1995. One significant achievement of Abuja was that it brought the leaders of the major warring factions into government as members of a six-man Council of State. Headed by Professor Wilton Sankawulo of the University of Liberia, the Council was formally inaugurated on 1 September 1995. Faction leaders Charles Taylor, Alhaji Kromah, and George Boley were made equal vice chairmen. Two other civilians were included: Oscar Quiah, nominated by civil society and Chief Tamba Tailor, a traditional ruler nominated by ULIMO-K and the NPFL. A second achievement was that Abuja resolved a major source of impasse, providing that the warring leaders could run in future elections if they resigned from the council three months before standing.

The Abuja Accord also had its share of problems inherent in the peace process. The exclusion of Roosevelt Johnson, ULIMO-J leader, raised some disaffection. Posts were distributed on ethnic lines that seemed to serve only the interests of faction leaders. The council fell under the dominance of Taylor, and criticisms and skepticism prevailed until "peace" was finally achieved through elections in 1997. However, this political "peace" still had to deal with the horrors that had been perpetrated during the long period of fighting, with the many human-rights violations that had occurred, and with the quest for subsequent calls for justice and desires for retribution.

Obstacles to Peace:
Human Rights Violations and the Search for Justice

This section takes the form of a brief study of issues pertinent to Liberia's return to peace, with particular reference to the rule of law and justice after the transition to constitutional rule.[3] It conceptually examines the calls for retribution and reconciliation in dealing with the past, including the human cost of war and attendant issues, noting that, in themselves, these calls can be a barrier to achieving even a minimum level of peace in conflicts such Liberia.

The human cost of the war in Liberia in terms of human rights abuses is a sordid tale to recount. All the major factions engaged in torture and other cruel, inhuman, and degrading treatment. Victims exhumed in Liberia had been "tarbeyed" before being killed.[4] Rape, pillage, and burning of villages were rampant. Pregnant women were disemboweled. In one instance, ULIMO-Mandingo fighters herded hundreds of displaced civilians into their Bomi County headquarters, Suehn, and held them hostage to attract relief food. When UN humanitarian workers were finally able to enter ULIMO-Krahn-controlled Tubmanburg, they found 20,000 starving civilians. According to health workers, the malnutrition rate stood at 83 percent. Several had died who could not be accounted for. Humanity was in such jeopardy that when humanitarian workers found some civilians who had starved for six months, those civilians took an immediate supply of food to consume and refused further supplies to keep because the fighters would certainly kill them for their food. Armed men had become so brutish that they were not capable of seizing food from unarmed and helpless men and women without slaughtering them. All the rules of modern warfare were thus overturned. Even humanitarian relief workers were detained, molested, and stolen from.

Charges of cannibalism against all factions were rampant. It was common to kill an enemy and eat his flesh as a ritual that brought invulnerability to the perpetrator. The factions committed summary executions, individual and gang rapes, mutilations, and trials by ordeal, and abrogated freedom of movement, assembly, and association. In April 1996, the Mandingo AFL chief of staff Mohammed Doumouyah was

ritualistically tortured, murdered, dismembered, and cannibalized by Krahn fighters in front of hostages at the AFL Barclays Training Center in Monrovia. No arrests were made at the time or since (U.S. Department of State, 1997). The major warring factions inflicted considerably more harm on noncombatants than on each other. They deliberately targeted, tortured, and murdered civilians, and regularly murdered women, children, and the elderly, indiscriminately ransacking villages and confiscating scant food supplies. The massacre of more than 20 people, mostly women, at Sinje, Grand Cape Mount County, in September 1996 illustrates the factions' disregard for humanitarian law. An exhumation of the bodies revealed, for example, that a baby girl's skull had been crushed. She was buried still strapped to her mother's back; her mother had been shot. Another eight-month-old girl was unearthed with her foot cut off. There was nothing to identify the group responsible for these atrocities in particular.[5]

The majority of civilian deaths took place during factional raids on villages. ULIMO fighters executed civilians, and looted and burned their villages in Grand Cape Mount and Bomi counties. Even after the cease-fire of the Abuja II Accord went into effect in August, killings continued. The killings at the latter part of 1996 when the fury of war was abating gives an idea of the horrendous nature of human rights abuses in Liberia. Local human-rights monitors reported that on September 16, in Dia Town 14 civilians were killed and the village and the hometown of State Council chairwoman Ruth Perry was burned to the ground. On September 23, in Gunn Town, 17 civilians were murdered, On December 7, in Zwanna Town, 8 civilians were murdered. On December 14 in Armadu Town, 4 people were killed. None of these cases was ever investigated and no action taken, just as it had been with the notorious December 1994 massacre at DuPont Road and the murder and cannibalization of a university student in August 1995 (U.S. Department of State 1997).

None of the horrors outlined above should deflect our attention from another result of the type of intra-state conflict represented by the Liberian crisis, namely the fate of women and children during such conflicts. Gender-based violence such as rape has posed problems for conflict resolution practitioners even in peacetime. Generally, it is ob-

served that women's interests are not adequately protected in the legal system or by alternative dispute resolution mechanisms (Astor 1991, 70–71). Traditionally, the legal system has been less accessible to women, even in "developed" nations. Human rights abuses against women in Liberia before, during, and after the war continue to undermine their humanity and their capacity to play an active part in the task of postwar national reconstruction. Many women who lost all their property during the Liberian war or were abused in several ways or whose property was taken by men—soldiers and civilians—are now heads of households. They have been subjected to indignities including rape and have been traumatized. The task of rebuilding their lives continues to be a nightmare in social, psychological, moral, economic, legal, and cultural terms. This deprivation of 53 percent of the population, who also are not only heads of households but generally responsible for the acculturation of the youth, poses a great threat to permanent peace and stability.

There is also considerable evidence that sexual violence was highly prevalent during the war. One study conducted by the Center for Abused Women and Girls, a Liberian nongovernmental organization, found that rape survivors included women and girls from ages 10 to 65 years. Fighters from all the groups regularly raped women and girls, keeping them for long periods as prisoners of war for sex and menial chores. Women who have been through the trauma of rape, both in peace and in war, are often reluctant to speak about their ordeal because of feelings of shame, guilt, and self-blame. As a result, many of these Liberian women have been unwilling to seek the help they need in order to address the health complications, psychological trauma, and social isolation they have experienced as a result of the violence inflicted upon them (Human Rights Watch 1997, 27).

During the war, moreover, traditional family and community support networks upon which women tend to depend more than men, broke down.[6] Furthermore, many young girls who should have been in school or vocational institutions were forced by pillage and poverty into prostitution or low-wage household labor in order to survive. These problems facing women have resulted in not only sexual exploitation, particularly of girls as young as 8 or 10 years old, but also the spread of sexually transmitted disease, including HIV/AIDS. A human-rights ac-

tivist noted that "the number of pregnant girls in Liberia is frighteningly high from rape and exploitation. We are seeing more thirteen-year-old girls being exploited. For instance, young girls are taken in by relatives and in return they are expected to clean the house and have sex with the man of the house. Often these girls have no immediate family to return to and no other choice but to remain" (Human Rights Watch 1997).

Thus, children's rights need reconstruction in the new Liberia. The tragedy of traumatized children deserves attention. According to the UN Humanitarian Assistance Coordination Office, about 21 percent (about 4,000) of the soldiers demobilized were children, but there was a wrong conception of actual child participation in the war because children were first released upon demobilization. UNICEF estimates that some 15,000 to 20,000 children directly participated in the war. Many of them were engaged in brutally violent acts, were forced to kill or maim, were exposed to fighting, and were themselves victimized and beaten. Some fought with different factions as a means of survival. The ages of demobilized fighters ranged from 6 years to 72 years old. The average age of the fighters was between 15 and 28 years old. Because the largest number of fighters came from Lofa County (approximately 6,000), there has been great pressure on the locality for youth rehabilitation facilities. Although most fighters had some formal schooling, at least 4,000 had no educational qualifications. The rest had only elementary education. Very few fighters had attended college or vocational schools. In addition, many of the fighters had been introduced to drugs such as marijuana. Human Rights Watch has noted that there has been little or no social demobilization to reintegrate these soldiers into their communities. Child soldiers have been returned to their families, but with little support the process of reintegration has become problematic. In some cases families are struggling with the after effects of having their children turn into killers. The plight of one father is reported thus: "I have two sons . . . forced to become fighters at ages fourteen and seventeen years old. Their minds are polluted. My son does things differently. He beats and kicks his sisters. He has no respect for me. I have tried to talk to him but it is not easy to love him anymore. My other son has been easy to come back. I think it is the commanders that they were

under" (Human Rights Watch 1997, 30).

We conclude that unless some sense of justice and some practical restorative activities are invoked in any postwar situation, the reality of peace and the arrival of the rule of law will remain illusionary. Yet, without the latter, peace is unreal. Thomas Jefferson once observed, "While the laws shall be obeyed all will be safe." One ugly face of intra-state conflict in Africa—which tends to protract insecurity in the post-conflict era—is the impunity with which the law is broken, thus making life, liberty, and property unsafe. The process of national reconciliation and reconstruction in a postconflict situation requires the strengthening of the rule of law.[7] This involves a feeling of justice and accountability within the society. In this connection, there is a close correlation between the legal structures and their application within the postconflict state, the return to normalcy, and the sustenance of lasting peace.[8] We return to this issue in the latter part of this paper.

Liberia: Political, Economic, and Other Lessons

Certain lessons flow from the Liberian conflict that should be noted for posterity, but especially for other intra-state conflicts in Africa. We discuss lessons arising from our previous reviews of ethnicity and youth alienation, peacekeeping and peacemaking efforts, and the search for justice and human rights. However, it is first necessary to review some of the structural issues that the Liberian crisis has highlighted.

Political Participation and Economic Equity

In Liberia, as in much of Africa, unless the economic and political inequalities and deprivations are properly noted and prevented, we would argue strongly that conflict is likely to recur. The discussion that follows also emphasizes the need to ensure social, political and economic justice in African nations as a conflict prevention mechanism. There is a close nexus between poverty and conflict within states. 38 of the 51 nations in Africa are listed among nations in the low human development category. Burundi, Sierra Leone Somalia, Liberia, Angola, and Mozambique

are among the poorest nations in the world. Despite economic mismanagement, the main cause of poverty in Africa stems from an unjust world economic order. Africa remains the producer of raw materials and importer of finished products in a global economic relationship where the advanced nations dictate the prices of both raw materials and finished products. The resultant poverty has compelled the state to put subsidies on food and primary goods to sustain the poor. When economic constraints or IMF "conditionalities" compel the state to withdraw or modify these subsidies, chaos results. In Zambia, violent riots erupted as a result of drastic cuts in the subsidy on maize. The price had doubled as a result of IMF-sponsored "economic adjustment plan." In 1989, Benin witnessed mass demonstrations by civil servants as a result of accumulated salary arrears. In 1990, students in Côte d'Ivoire went on strike over electricity cuts that preceded examinations. In Liberia, the increase in the price of rice due to a reduction in state subsidy triggered the coup that brought Doe into power and the politics of conflict from which the nation has not yet recovered.

The Liberian crisis largely stemmed from economic malaise, while scarce resources in the face of population density has undermined national security in several other states. Part of the legacy of violence in Liberia springs from the control of scarce resources. Just as in Nigeria, Rwanda, Burundi, and other African nations, the conflict that erupted over the control of scarce resources was linked with the ethnic card. The struggle for control of natural resources invariably polarized a society dominated by Americo-Liberians. There was always the fear that one group would be left out as the "spoils of state" were monopolized and shared unevenly among a few. Food scarcity and shortfalls aggravated the situation while corrupt leadership and abuse of power also took their toll. Ellis (1995) observed that the causes of collapse of governmental authority may be traced as far back as the presidency of William Tubman (1944–71). The crisis was also related to Doe's nine years of corruption, rule of the gun, fear and physical destruction, discrediting of the electoral process, and the promotion of interethnic hatred. Doe crushed the previous regime only to replace it with his own followers, largely from his own Krahn ethnic group. He brought no qualitative changes in the lives of Liberians, as he merely reversed the existing pa-

tron-client network. The Krahns, who had been at the bottom of the social hierarchy, moved quickly to the top of a social pyramid that became steeper with the passage of time. The state became a looting machine in a reckless quest to retain power to protect the illicit accumulation of wealth.

Apart from political violence, economic decadence characterized Doe's regime. During 1980–87, GNP declined at an estimated average rate of 2.1 percent per year, while GNP per head declined at an estimated average of 5.2 percent (Europa 1996). By 1998, Liberia's foreign debt stood at $1.4 billion and domestic debt at $507 million (Pereira-Lunghu 1995). The fiscal weakness of the economy tempted the government to print more currency that in turn escalated inflation. These factors opened a gateway to conflict.

Serious economic reconstruction is imperative in the quest for permanent peace in Liberia. This is partly because the warring factions dissipated the nation's natural resources during the war and state revenue has evaporated. The basic infrastructure, electricity, water, and hospitals also collapsed while the hustle and bustle of Liberia's pride—the free port—was deprived of merchandise in terms of both imports and exports. In this regard, the World Bank, donor nations, and the United States in particular should consider massive recovery financial assistance to Liberia. Such aid should be perceived as humanitarian aid calculated to prevent the resurrection of conflict.

When power is sought or applied wrongly, political struggles ensue. The Liberian crisis should, indeed, be seen as the culmination of the nation's "unresolved past." Before Doe stormed the political scene, power had been monopolized by freed North American slaves resettled in Liberia by the American Colonization Society in the mid-1800s. This group, also known as Americo-Liberians, totally dominated politics, society, and economy in Liberia to the exclusion of the indigenous Liberians. In this institutionalization of elitism, the executive, legislative, and judicial branches, churches, lodges, civil society organizations, political parties, and schools became the preserve of Americo-Liberians. The Grand Lodge of Freemasons, for example, became a house in which state appointments were brokered and distributed. By a system of well-knit intermarriages, this closed shop was impenetrable to native Liberians.

In the process, plantations, imports and exports, warehousing, industry, the legal, medical, and accounting professions, and all areas of power, influence, and authority were monopolized by this privileged class. At the national, county and locality levels, the non–Americo-Liberians were excluded from the decision-making process, even in matters that exclusively affected them. Indeed, it was a modern black colonization. Until the latter part of the Tubman administration, property-rights qualifications had disenfranchised the ordinary Liberian people. The reforms that Tolbert brought about were not only too little but also a little late. Hence it is right to say that while the civil war was sparked by the excesses of the Doe regime, its roots run deep in Liberian history. The civil war can perhaps be seen as just one link in a long chain of events by which an exclusionary political establishment might one day be replaced with a more democratic order. Together with economic hardship, this explains the popular euphoria that greeted both the 1980 coup and the NPFL invasion in 1989 (Accord 1996: Nelson 1993).

Ethnicity: Problem or Opportunity?

The Liberian civil war may also be seen as the result of unbridgeable ethnic cleavages, for even persuasive arguments about youth exploitation to settle political scores do not rule out the force of arguments concerning ethnicity. The ethnic factor remains potent, and it has wreaked havoc in Liberia as in other African nations. To prevent future conflict, we must ask, what should we do with the ethnic albatross? My answer is that it should be reframed to positive ends. In sharing this optimism, Amoo (1997, 6) wrote that the fact that ethnicity constitutes perhaps the most significant instrument in internal conflicts may even be axiomatic, but that ethnicity is the sole cause of conflict may be an invalid conception of the problem. Ethnic heterogeneity does not inevitably produce conflict; nor is sociopolitical pluralism absolutely incompatible with responsive governance and democratic practice. Political leaders are not simply at the mercy of communal forces. Enlightened institutional arrangements and accommodations can reconcile ethnic heterogeneity that is an African reality, with open and enabling

politics.

Ethnicity is capable of a constructive application if perceived positively. The UN secretary-general's representative for internally displaced persons, Deng (1992), deplored that "Africa has cornered itself into rejecting ethnicity as an organizing concept in the process of nation-building. The challenge then is whether it is possible to reverse the mindset, so that ethnic groups which are African realities could be seen in reverse light as resources or building blocks that can provide a sound foundation for a sustainable political and socio-economic development from within." The secretary-general of the commonwealth, Chief Anyaoku, stated that for national unity to become truly nurtured beyond the limits of rhetoric and realized in a way that generates genuine patriotism among the citizens, there has to be a minimum of openness and accountability in the governance system. It should also mean a democratic government that recognizes the importance of reaching out for consensus among the significant component units of a pluralistic society.

To solve our problem, it is important that we admit the unnaturalness of the African state. Conceptually, Aristotle perceived the naturalness of a state in its development from the level of husband and wife, families, villages, towns, and ultimately to the state. Even though he wrote within the limited confines of the Greek city-state, his idea nevertheless portrays the pride of ancestry that can underscore the state. This is why, whenever this naturalness is missing, it has taken some strong force to unite people into nations, as Bismarck did with Germany through "blood and iron" and William the Conqueror did with Britain. Colonized Africa was not only arbitrarily partitioned into states convenient for European management, but the reality of international relations did not allow realignment by conquest or otherwise after decolonization. The question is this: Since ethnic ties are so meaningful to Africans, and ethnic affiliation takes precedence over civic ties, what can be done to harness this force (which need not be negative) to some positive good? We recommend effective local autonomy and governance in Africa together with a system of proportional representation at the national level that will allow smaller locally based groups and political parties to have a meaningful voice in affairs of state. Such arrangements should help ethnic groups appreciate their uniqueness in a positive way

and help in self-development.

Upon the attainment of independence, African leaders empha-
sized national integration, "oneness," nation building, and development.
The impression was given that a monolithic approach to policy formu-
lation was crucial and any policy that recognized or accommodated eth-
nic differences was prejudicial. In Ghana, Nkrumah passed the Avoid-
ance of Discrimination Act that proscribed, inter alia, political parties
organized on ethnic lines. But if people are given primary responsibility
over their own localities, they will learn to discharge it. Furthermore,
the reckless exploitation of the resources of one region or district to the
disadvantage of the local people and to the advantage of people in other
regions, as with oil in Nigeria with regard to the Hausa/Fulani-Ogoni
fracas, can be avoided by effective decentralized management of resources.
It should be pointed out that decentralization could remove the temp-
tation in Africa of people to persistently complain against the national
government and the disenchantment with government that this gener-
ates. In addition, decentralization can satisfy the needs of group iden-
tity, security, autonomy, and participation. Moreover, it should lay a
foundation for the development of a democratic culture, tolerance, and
accommodation in our societies.

As a further advantage, decentralization will lead to the develop-
ment of civil society organizations at the local level. This will also en-
courage the development of competition among groups at all levels.
Last, when politics is local, competition is also inter-ethnic, not extra-
ethnic, and will help to tone down ethnic tension and the perception of
other ethnic groups as enemies. Decentralization is a costly exercise.
Nevertheless, as a conflict prevention mechanism it should attract closer
interest and resource commitment than postconflict repair.

Electoral systems also have a role in managing conflict. The "win-
ner-takes-all" political system whereby political parties contest elections
and one party wins power while the other goes into opposition—typi-
cally described as the "Westminster model"—has plagued African poli-
tics. It has been a gateway to the monopoly of political power. If, after
the elections that Doe "won" in Liberia, there had been a positive shar-
ing of political power, other ethnic groups might have been less appre-
hensive. The desire to remove Doe from office by hook or by crook

would have been less. The problem with party politics in Africa is that it has tended to heighten local and ethnic rivalries and provide for the tyranny of the majority.

It has been observed that in states where group tension has already erupted into conflict, conflict resolution through the electoral mechanism not only has been found to be problematic, but sadly, has created conditions for self-perpetuating bloodshed and the progressive ruin of societies. When electoral competition becomes part of the legitimization of the envisaged outcome of a peace process, an optimum level of viability of the civil society is required. There also needs to be time to begin to heal open wounds and restore popular confidence in the political process, and to establish a minimum level of trust among key actors. It is often more conducive to conflict resolution for elections to be preceded by the negotiation (facilitated by a mediator) of a peace package with implementable details that would ensure that all actors and groups involved win at some level. Elections cannot be the sole arbiter of the disposition of vital stakes in a deep-seated conflict. Further, elections in a conflict environment should be to decide the proportions of a national unity government, not to declare a winner-takes-all outcome. National unity governments and power sharing arrangements impose on all factions the responsibility to let peace work, and foster the "notion that electoral losers have a stake in the government." (Amoo 1997, 30–31; Zartman 1995, 271)

Next, what might be said about the creation and operations of external peacekeeping forces, which will inevitably continue to be multinational, relatively lightly armed, and in need of a clear political mandate to achieve any level of success? What lessons arise from the Liberian crisis?

ECOWAS and Lessons for African Peacekeeping

It seems clear that vital lessons can be learned from the uneasy trajectories of ECOWAS intervention. First, the poor democratic credentials of ECOWAS leaders at home constituted a stumbling block to effective diplomacy and collective conflict resolution. Having themselves

stolen political power by bloodshed and through the barrel of the gun, several ECOWAS leaders lacked the moral right to censure those who strove for power through conflict. It is recommended that the process of democratization should proceed to its logical conclusion on the continent so as to remove the stigma that afflicts our leaders in this connection.

Second, the absence of early warning meant that West African leaders were taken by surprise. There is the need for a systematic study of conflict in the subregion and for early-warning systems to be effectively developed. This argument is expanded in our next section.

Third, Anglophone-Francophone differences took a toll. The continued distrust and feuding between the two groups—whose only difference is that they were colonized by the English and French respectively—has plagued ECOWAS, the OAU, and Africa generally. It is necessary to tackle the problem boldly. Our leaders need to meet on and take measures to obliterate this artificial dichotomy.

Fourth, we realize that the financial cost of ECOMOG intervention was very high. Nigeria and Ghana, the leading nations, have not released figures on expenditure. This had been shrouded in secrecy. Nevertheless, as seen above, the Ghanaian government did indicate at one stage that if the warring factions did not cooperate to ensure a return to peace, the huge financial sacrifice entailed in the intervention would compel Ghana to withdraw from ECOMOG. It is recommended that as Africa takes steps to resolve its conflicts by its own initiatives, the UN and other international agencies should come to its assistance.

Fifth, ECOWAS should devise a strategy whereby even if conflict erupts in any state, no warring person should be allowed to obtain or contest for political power. Any person who aspires to future leadership should stay out of armed conflict. It may be argued that this recommendation is tantamount to disenfranchising certain citizens. Nevertheless, the rise of "the presidency" as a trophy for waging war on one's nation has become too rampant on the continent and a recipe for continuing conflict. The Congo is a typical example. Ghana and all other nations where soldiers have seized power and the ruling military men have "won" subsequent elections are also warning lights. After all, this principle underscored the earlier demand of ECOWAS that the warring leaders could not run in any future elections. In this connection,

ECOWAS should decide on this as early as possible to guide future conduct.

Sixth, civic education generally and development of responsible leadership from villages, towns, and cities should be pursued. Systematic training for leadership is vital. The war in Liberia did not spring from bottom to top. It was largely the creation of men in leadership positions who craved power and who employed the barrel of the gun when this seemed the only option available to them.

Seventh, and flowing from the sixth, the lesson should emerge that men seek power and are entitled to do so. There should at all times be in the body politic a proper pathway for achieving this goal. If ECOWAS can find an answer for this, the politics of conflict will subside.

Eighth, ECOWAS leaders should create a more disciplined ECOMOG in the future. ECOMOG in Liberia was guilty of both human rights abuses and corruption. It has been documented that ECOMOG soldiers concentrated on stripping Liberia of its fixed assets, railroad stock, mining equipment, and public utilities, which the soldiers sold abroad. The LPC, with the backing of some Nigerian ECOMOG soldiers, operated a rubber plantation firm that exported about 3,000 tons of rubber through Buchanan in 1994, netting an estimated $1.5 million (Reno 1996). The U.S. State Department spokesman Nicholas Burns observed in 1996 that "ECOMOG troops have been heavily involved, since the day they arrived, in ripping off Liberians, in looting goods, in dealing in contrabands." It is only a disciplined ECOMOG that can find a way to take control of the natural resources of a warring nation and prevent the exploitation of resources by warlords.

Many of these ideas about the politics and practicalities of peacekeeping will take time to plan and implement, given the state of Africa's armed forces, but there is one that could be started in a very short time: the establishment of an "early-warning" system for Africa, a proposal to which we now turn.

ECOMOG, Africa, and Early Warning

The Liberian crisis illustrates how African states are taken totally by surprise by conflict any time it occurs. It is necessary to think about what mechanisms may be designed to deal collectively with those factors likely to bring about conflict in the future and how to deal with them in advance. In this connection, early-warning mechanisms should be devised. Early warning has become a vital tool in conflict management. Though complicated in its application, early warning has been applied by the United Nations in refugee matters, for example. It is an important way of dealing with man-made disasters and useful in providing preventive response by organizations responsible for conflict resolution.

Former UN secretary general Boutros Boutros-Ghali (1992, 6) has observed that the most efficacious manner to handle conflict is to "act swiftly to contain it and resolve its underlying causes." This requires "early warning based on information gathering and informal or formal fact-finding." He added that "in recent years the United Nations system has been developing a valuable network of early warning systems concerning environmental threats, the risk of nuclear accident, natural disasters, mass movements of populations, the threat of famine and the spread of disease. There is a need, however, to strengthen arrangements in such a manner that information from these sources can be synthesized with political indicators to assess whether a threat to peace exists and to analyze what action might be taken by the United Nations to alleviate it" (Boutros-Ghali 1992, 8).

Africa must develop its own early-warning systems along with global efforts. We cannot afford to be interested only in the resolution of conflict but must also work for its prevention. The latter implies that we should be able to deal with simmering conflict before it erupts into a conflagration.

Davis and McDaniel (1994) have argued that effective early warning systems should include, at the very least, analytical information on variables reflecting both the current context and the background conditions in potential conflict/crisis areas, as well as the ongoing stream of actions and reactions of the parties involved in each of these areas. This implies the need for

- Software to support ready access to, and interfacing among, such data banks, and to facilitate the development, testing, and application of such models, to guide the user in making early-warning projections from the data. The data banks should serve as a filter to draw from the overwhelming volume of raw information available on each potential conflict or crisis (whether from public sources or peace monitoring) consistent narrative and analytical descriptions of key variables identified through experience and model testing as useful elements in early warning indicators.

- Empirically testable frameworks or models to identify patterns of variables that can serve as indicators of developing conflicts or crises across a range of political and cultural contexts. The study of variables, for example, will help us appreciate that conflict in Africa is not merely an ethnic affair. A citizen in an African polity is influenced by a multiplicity of factors of which ethnicity is only one. Indeed, very often other factors are predominant.

The African/ECOWAS effort suggests a need for the effective participation of the following

- The media, with special emphasis on radio and local newspapers. The approach should be rurally focused to allow input from the hinterland where the bulk of the people live.

- Researchers trained in the collection, sifting, and analysis of scientific data. Historical and background information needs to be gathered scientifically and used in understanding the sources and nature of conflict with special reference to Africa and to predicting trends.

- Civil society organizations.

- Nongovernmental organizations involved in conflict studies and areas of conflict analysis and management—for example, the International Red Cross, Amnesty International, or UNHCR.

- Independent think tanks, databases, and networks.

- Governmental organizations are needed to provide a support base, but they should not be given supervisory functions, to avoid the politicization of an organization that should be autonomous.

An ECOWAS early-warning data system (EWD) should thus be the product of a joint effort of academics, diplomats, reporters, monitors, and practitioners. Spencer (1994, 114) has suggested 15 ideas that may help to lead to a greater utilization of early-warning data. If enacted, such steps might initiate specific preventive measures by African policy makers that would reduce violent conflict and suffering. These are

- Experiment with a team approach to EWD pipeline management.
- Investigate application of communication research to EWD field.
- Create policy maker focus groups to determine range of end-user criteria for format of EWD.
- Study how to reduce "time to market" of EWD by examining pipeline and stakeholder interest and involvement.
- Develop scenarios and trial indicators.
- Use scenario development to change policy maker minds.
- Put EWD messages in a format that can be used.
- Repeated messages.
- Find a "home" to serve as a structured center for coordinating EWD flowchart activity.
- Experiment with nontraditional indicators.
- Work toward creating a culture of prevention by involving policy makers earlier in the flowchart.
- Provide the media with briefings on the availability of EWD and specifically the existence of an EWD flowchart. Advocate media coverage of cost-saving early intervention, given different scenarios.
- Continue team-building activity among members and stakeholders of the flowchart to increase awareness and cooperation.

- Organize blocks of progressive nations to advocate a greater use of EWD. Educate the public, recognize successes, and reward individual and organizational efforts.

Postconflict Justice and Reconciliation

The Liberian case has underlined once again several issues to do with human rights, the rule of law, and the nature of justice in war-torn societies, relevant both as contributory causes of conflict and as problems to be dealt with in any postconflict situation. Often in conflict-torn states, the first thing to be in doubt is the ability of the general populace to freely elect the rulers and thereby participate in and influence the political process. Second, a separation of powers is lacking, so that the executive in particular is not prevented from arbitrariness and high-handedness in determining or disposing of the rights of individuals. The essence of this is an independent judiciary that enforces the law without fear or favor and is devoid of external control. In most conflict situations in Africa, warlords and revolutionaries are laws unto themselves. Third, due process is vital. This does not mean the adoption of foreign forms. African customary laws and cultural norms may be adopted. Nevertheless, there should be prior determination of unlawful conduct and there should be effective mechanisms for enforcement of the law in a systematic manner, so as to avoid a society where violence makes life nasty, brutish, and short.

There is a legacy of violence in Liberia and elsewhere that must be eschewed. Especially in a postconflict situation, unless the rule of law is strengthened so as to make people feel secure, the process of reconciliation is tricky, but if the rule of law is to be upheld in the transition from conflict to normalcy, how should that be done? Should we have retributive justice or total reconciliation that automatically buries all past wrongs? Speaking for one school of thought, the proponents of retribution argue that it is the essence of justice and it serves as a deterrent factor. They point out that not only should crime be necessarily punished, but also, reconciliation and national reconstruction will inevitably continue to be haunted if the perpetrators of atrocities go unpun-

ished. Legal justice, on both the domestic and international planes, emphasizes punishment of the guilty and compensation for the victim. The process may be perceived in terms of "an eye for an eye" and by the innate human zeal for retribution to be satisfied. In some cases, the tenets of legal justice are satisfied if there is restitution, usually in financial terms but sometimes in the form of property and other kinds of restoration. Public hearings in courts of justice can also satisfy the cry for justice inherent in any human being who has been wronged. Such hearings then serve, inter alia, as psychological satisfaction apart from any other satisfaction that may be attained.

Postconflict Africa needs a clear appreciation of the retributory and conciliatory schools of thought regarding "justice after transitions" for future stability. The former school argues that punishing human-rights offenders would (1) satisfy the tenets of retributory justice that crime must be punished; (2) fulfill the demands of international law that oblige governments to investigate and punish serious human rights violations—such as the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide and the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman and Degrading Treatment or Punishment, which require signatory countries to prosecute offenders; (3) act as a deterrent against future violations; (4) establish standards for protecting human rights; (5) heal the wounds of victims and their families; (6) create national self-respect and make a symbolic break with the past; (7) establish credibility in the new rulers as they build democracy; and (8) break the military's power. On the other hand, the conciliators maintain that (1) democracies that emerge after conflict situations and militarism have fragile life spans that cannot survive retribution; (2) realism requires an appreciation of the fact that the military or the leaders in a protracted conflict remain a force in such nations; (3) a process of healing is a way to bury the past and build safe bridges for the future; and (4) a policy of national conciliation and amnesty for past abuses is the practical way to protect human rights in the future (Oquaye 1995, 55, and Benomar 1993).

In the Liberian case, it may be argued that, in the desperation to broker peace by all means, accountability was glossed over. This caused one human-rights observer to lament thus: "the whole peace process

undermined justice" (Human Rights Watch, July 14, 1997). This represents the viewpoint that those who are responsible for atrocities must pay for their crimes. In this connection, it is pertinent to consider the effect of Article 19 of the Cotonou Peace Accord signed on July 25, 1993, which granted a general amnesty "to all persons and parties involved in the Liberian civil conflict in the course of actual military engagements." Human Rights Watch/Africa (November 1997), for example, has expressed the view that this amnesty does not cover acts outside the scope of combat that are prohibited under international law, such as killings of civilians and torture. Where former combatants have wantonly committed human-rights abuses, they should be held accountable in a Liberian court of law.[9]

The deterrence principle is debatable, however. Burton (1990) has argued in terms of the human needs theory that human behavior is not infinitely malleable, and no mechanism that merely aims at deterrence can control human behavior indefinitely. It is noted that in Rwanda and the former Yugoslavia, the transition processes were marred by violations of international law and flouting international tribunals with impunity. Whereas it may be necessary to hold people accountable for their actions, deterrence often fails to work in deeply divided societies. In this connection, reconciliation advocates emphasize that contrition is fundamental to the process of reconciliation (Montville 1993, 112–128).

Mechanisms that may be effectively employed are varied. In Burundi, for example, a National Debate was instituted which became a strategy for building bridges for reconciliation. It began through the efforts of some well-meaning people from both the Hutu and Tutsi factions to seek peace and reconciliation. In this connection, the undercurrent was that in view of the fact that the rule of law is also based on traditional concepts, ideas, beliefs, and values, customary methodologies should be employed in the process of reconstructing the postconflict society. It is a form of negotiated rule-making otherwise known as "regneg" that is widely used in the United States in the legislative process, particularly in areas of the environment, trade, and labor. Kaufmann (1996, 163) sees the National Debate as an attempt to implement a process of participatory decision-making about the guidelines, principles, and values on which a new, commonly accepted constitution could be

based, a process that supports the rule of law. He observes that the process is manifested in conflict resolution theory in the following ways: First is the value of inclusion—that all groups affected by a process should actively participate in the process, with an end product reflecting their inputs and interests; second, the process must recognize the existence of multiple "truths," and thus the focus must be on learning, understanding, and building on the common ground represented in each person's view rather than arguing over whose view is right or wrong. The practicality of the National Debate means inviting all sections of civil society—including ethnic, social, and political groups—to debate on issues including security, defense, minority protection, independence of the judiciary, work and education. Despite difficulties encountered in Burundi, the system is capable of reasonably wide application.

One way of establishing a sense of justice and accountability is the tribunal system. Prosecution before tribunals has one major therapeutic effect. In all such cases, victims have ample opportunity to tell their stories in full. This has the effect of relieving victims of their pain, as is well known in conflict resolution theory and practice. Furthermore, the official record from such painstaking proceedings becomes a historical document that gives satisfaction to victims simply because the facts have come out and the truth known. This helps the reconciliation process.

The question is, should we have an international tribunal in the post-conflict African state, or should we depend on local judiciary? There is good argument for the participation of international tribunals in the restoration of the rule of law in postconflict situations. First, the wartime breakdown of legal institutions demands that international personnel should be employed until reasonable normalcy has been established. This serves as deterrence against future abuses. In Liberia, one of the arguments used against the trial of wartime offenders is that there are not enough resources for the exercise that, if undertaken, would dissipate resources, time, and energy available to the nation. Notably, in Rwanda, when in 1995 the government attempted the trial of persons accused of genocide, the judicial system collapsed in the face of over 20,000 people awaiting trial. Second, international tribunals bring human and material resources into play. Third, they emphasize the point that such crimes are crimes against humanity and that the world will

not sit by unconcerned as atrocities are perpetrated. Fourth, international tribunals may help bring to trial persons who are alleged to have committed offenses but who have gone outside local jurisdiction.

We cannot, however, be oblivious to certain limitations associated with international tribunals. In a situation where a new government has been elected, as in Liberia, that government will gain credibility—and domestic institutions will be better served generally—if the authorities are given the opportunity to administer justice locally. Second, it has been argued that foreign judges come in "cold," make pronouncements, and leave, whereas local judges are more capable of appreciating all the dimensions of the matters before them. Third, it has been pointed out that international institutions are simply impractical. As a judge reportedly said, "People cannot go to the Hague every time their house is burnt down" (Kaufmann 1996, 166). Fourth, it is argued that emphasis should be placed on the role of traditional conflict resolution mechanisms such as arbitration by traditional leaders.

Any commission on human rights in Liberia should be effective in order to satisfy the quest for justice after the transition from lawlessness to the rule of law. In this connection, certain conditions must necessarily be fulfilled. First, the commission should possess real investigatory powers. Second, it should have the capacity to fulfill its mandate. Third, it should address specifically all abuses so that the objectives of its establishment will be realized. Fourth, the commission should be given autonomy as well as human and material resources required for effective performance. Fifth, not only should it be independent but its findings should be made available to the public. These issues have not been resolved, and the earlier the government sees the need to follow in this track, the better. The end result will be useful to other African nations in conflict. It is my recommendation that ECOWAS should set up a commission to deal with all issues relating to justice after transitions from violent conflict. The problem is too glaring to deal with on an ad hoc basis any longer.

Our discussion of the dilemmas posed by postconflict conciliation and the issue of "justice" has raised, by implication, another important lesson from the Liberian case regarding the necessary conditions for a satisfactory peace process. This is the importance of involv-

ing all possible aspects of civil society in the search for a solution, a sustainable accord, and an acceptable process of reconciliation—individuals, groups, organizations, and political movements both within and outside the conflict-torn country. We now turn to this last theme.

Civil Society and Its Involvement in Peacemaking

Civil society organizations are vital for conflict resolution in Africa. In Liberia, they played a major part in the search for peace. Indeed the first attempt to resolve the Liberian conflict peacefully came from civil society. As early as May 1990, the Liberian Council of Churches and the National Muslim Council of Liberia formed the Inter-Faith Mediation Committee (IFMC) for the sole purpose of helping to bring the war to an end. In this effort, the religious leaders were hoping to bring the store of goodwill they held to practical use. The churches—which wield both spiritual and temporal influence in Liberia—had for ages been involved in health, education, relief work, and social services. In recent times, the Muslims have also received some help from countries such as Saudi Arabia and Libya, with which they had been able to render a number of services. Since most of Liberia's leading people and warlords had some religious affiliation or had at one time benefited from services provided by the religious bodies, there were expectations that a strategy by religious leaders to end the war might work. The first step taken by the IFMC was to get the warring factions to talk to each other. After several attempts had failed, a meeting was arranged at the U.S. Embassy in Freetown, Sierra Leone's capital, in June 1990. Despite all the pontification on love for God and man, and warnings by the church leaders on the heavy cost of war, proceedings broke down over the status of President Doe. Taylor called for Doe's resignation as a prelude to peace, and when that was not forthcoming, the NPFL withdrew and formed an alternative government. It should be noted that this peace effort did not fail completely. The IFMC was duly recognized as the only credible neutral organization in Liberia. When ECOWAS came in to deal with the resultant carnage, it adopted the prescription of the IFMC. From that time, civil society groups met under the aus-

pices of the IFMC. In some cases the warring leaders or their representatives were invited and were present at IFMC meetings.

In March 1991, the All-Liberian National Conference came into existence to help broker peace in Liberia. It sought and obtained the cooperation of the IFMC. At the final stages of the Cotonou Accord, the IFMC contributed to resolving a deadlock surrounding an impasse over posts allocation in the proposed interim government. In this the IFMC worked in close collaboration with ECOWAS leaders, the warring factions, and other individuals and groups. Even though the IFMC helped to reach an agreement, it became uncomfortable with certain provisions and issued a statement to that effect. In this Archbishop Michael Francis was highly instrumental. He made the statement that the truth is not neutral, "it is a position," and he argued against meaningless appeasement on legal, moral, or religious grounds. Any policy that compromises with crime only tends to perpetuate conflict and negates genuine desire for peace in the long run.

When the working of the transitional government became problematic around mid-1994, the peace process seemed to be in grave danger. This was because Taylor had tried to exploit the situation to his advantage in demanding that the AFL should be abolished as the national military force and replaced with a military force from all the factions. In opposing this proposition, the IFMC issued a public statement citing the human-rights abuses of the warring factions, among other things. It argued that in the interest of peace it was better to defer decisions on such a delicate issue that could seriously endanger the process of orderly disarmament. When Chief Tamba Tailor was proposed by the NPFL and a faction of ULIMO to replace David Kpomakpor as head of the Transitional Government, the IFMC argued that the chief was too old to fulfill the task involved. The IFMC attained its goal in both instances.

In Africa, women in the religious groups, especially Christian churches, have societies that are both intra- and inter-church in their functioning. The same applied in Liberia during the war. Women have also been known in traditional Africa to adopt a number of tactics to demand peace such as hooting at warring men or lying on the floor in between the fighting men. Religious women's groups in Liberia joined

the search for peace. They met from time to time to discuss matters of concern during the war, particularly from 1994–95. The IFMC developed a useful alliance with these women's groups and others associated with them, such as the traders. In one instance, the loose amalgam of women organized a demonstration demanding that all parties involved in the peace process—warring factions and local and international peacemakers—should redouble their efforts to achieve peace. What the IFMC did was to bring the women's groups and others together into a broad coalition of students, workers, businesspeople, professionals, and so forth to demand "disarmament, peace, free and fair elections."

The IFMC-led consortium staged a one-day strike in March 1995 during which all services were withdrawn and everyone stayed at home. This brought home to the warriors that their countrypeople were war weary and desired peace. A second demonstration was staged on February 15, 1996, six months after the Abuja Accord. This culminated in the "Civic Disarmament Campaign" that gave all people and groups interested in peace an opportunity and collective platform to cry for peace. The following words echo their role: "We assemble here today to say 'enough is enough.' We will take our country back. It is complete insanity to let our country, already plundered and raped, continue in the path of utter destruction. We have assembled here to say 'NO' to the warlords and want to publicly declare that we will do every reasonable thing within our powers to ensure that their desire to ruin our country will not be tolerated but in fact resisted and prevented" (Pajibo 1996).

This initiative of civic group amalgamation included the voice of the powerful Togba-nah-Tipoteh, chairman of the Interest Groups of Liberia, who was a director of the development organization Susukuu. It was emphasized that the groups were out to obtain, with the support of ECOMOG, a congenial atmosphere in which ordinary Liberians would interact with fighters to convince them to disarm, thus quickening the pace of the move from disarmament to democratic elections and democracy. Susukuu had launched the Schools for Guns Program that took guns from a number of young men and helped them resettle until the program ran into difficulties. Its efforts were to be revived and further strengthened with the cooperation of the IFMC. Susukuu reported

that "with the protection of ECOMOG, unarmed Liberians have influenced over 15,000 combatants to disarm without any massive people's action. So far, combatants who are tired of fighting have been laying down their guns like plums falling from a plum tree without any shaking of the tree. As most fighters are tired of fighting, and we want disarmament to move fast, all we have to do is to take massive action now for disarmament and combatants will lay down their guns fast just like plenty plums falling with the shaking of the plum tree. In reaching out to combatants to influence them to disarm, we must reach out with love and some concrete help to assist them to return to civil society and get a good chance to build a new and better life" (Susukuu, 1996).

A women's organization that deserves mention for its work in the search for peace, first as an organization by itself and second in collaboration with the IFMC, is the Liberia Women's Initiative (LWI). It organized women's meetings and fora to discuss peace. It also organized demonstrations and sent petitions to ECOWAS leaders and factional leaders demanding and suggesting ways in which peace could be found. In December 1994, this writer witnessed a moving demonstration staged in Accra by the LWI asking for peace by all means. The Accra Clarification was signed soon after.

Civic groups contributed to the peace process as a voice of reason and a storehouse for critical examination. They deplored the commercialization of the war and provided international organizations with evidence of such commercialization. Evidence of human rights abuses were channeled by individuals through the IFMC and used to embarrass warlords. These actions helped to bring out aspects of the ugly face of the war. Civil society groups organized meetings and fora to discuss peace and staged demonstrations to back their views with action. They made disarmament less dangerous by heightening its voluntary nature. The process of turning in arms required the participation of groups and individuals who could be trusted. In some cases, however, the armed factions questioned the impartiality of these groups—largely because the NPFL in particular, and others generally, had been embarrassed, in their quest for power through bloodshed, by the intervention of these civil society organizations. The work of the IFMC also had one important consequence. It prevented a religious backlash in the Liberian war.

Before any of the factions could turn the war into a confrontation between Christians and Muslims as had happened in other conflict-torn states, the people of God had buried their differences and were busy seeking peace under one banner of one Almighty God and not Christ and Mohammed. This is worthy of emulation in the search for peace in Africa.

Conclusion

In this essay, we have discussed aspects of the Liberian war in order to draw lessons concerning the analysis, resolution, and prevention of intra-state conflict in Africa. Certain causative factors have been discussed in the hope that they will provide lessons and guides for future action in conflict amelioration and prevention. The shadow theater of ethnicity has been visited to appreciate the ethnic dimensions in Liberian politics and society that militate against peace. We have noted, however, that in our appreciation of intra-state conflict, we should not forget the vital factor of youth in crisis and the fact that youth are manipulable victims, without independent resources and organizational skills. An understanding of their frustration is vital to conflict analysis and prevention.

In seeking an end to the conflict, we have discussed some of the key players including the efforts of ECOWAS and civil society organizations in conflict management and the difficulties inherent in subregional conflict resolution in Africa. It is necessary to caution that our security rests not in an African military command but in collective institutions of freedom and justice. In the process, there is the need to ensure justice after transition from war so as to uphold fundamental human rights, especially the rights of women and vulnerable groups, and to ensure the enforcement of the rule of law. It is the viewpoint of this work, however, that a process of healing in psychological terms is also vital. Psychological reconciliation is an important component of postconflict peace building (Reychler 1996, 6), especially in the aftermath of genocidal ethnic conflict and mass rape (Lamborne 1997, 25). Knowing the truth is always vital, and Gronov (1996) argued that sym-

bolic justice—having one's personal story believed and validated—is an integral part of the reconciliation and healing process. She draws attention to the example of the Truth Commission in El Salvador and her interview with rape survivors as follows: "While these women realized it was too late for them, a ruling that rape is a war crime would be an important verification that what they had experienced was not only unacceptable and illegal, but also that it should never have happened, and will not happen again. Justice does not demand revenge, just as peace does not demand forgetting" (Gronov 1996, 10).

In this connection, Donald Shriver (1995) has argued that postconflict reconciliation requires the political equivalent of the religious notion of "forgiveness." Indeed, legal solutions are limited in their ability to promote reconciliation because of their reliance on an adversarial approach to dispute settlement. A court of law is not generally the best of forms for generating true conflict resolution as it does not allow the parties to explore and analyze the underlying reasons for the conflict, and the purpose is to decide on a winner and a loser, imposing a judgment rather than allowing the parties to come to a mutually agreed win-win (or at least a compromise) solution. Furthermore, the rules of evidence tend to treat an apology as an admission of fault that may be used to prove wrongdoing. The emphasis is on the accused avoiding any hints of admission of guilt in order to avoid conviction and punishment. Western legal traditions do not, therefore, encourage apologies and forgiveness.

We have also argued that early warning is vital to modern day conflict prevention and we have seen its desirability in Africa. However, we need to be aware that the path to early warning is not an easy one to tread. Early warning has failed in the Horn of Africa and former Yugoslavia. The fiasco of Somalia was described thus: "(It was) as close as one could come to a textbook case of human rights monitoring and the failure of early warning" (Beyer 1992). We need to develop an African approach to early warning techniques in conflict management. This will provide regional, subregional, and allied organizations public officials, media practitioners, and others with scientific data to make predictions. Through these methods, before conflict occurs, we would be able to know the likelihood of the event, and its possible dimensions, duration,

and consequences, so as to take appropriate action to eliminate or minimize it.

The Liberian conflict has shown us that peace cannot be taken for granted. Conflict's nature, causes, consequences, and prevention need to be well understood. A dispute is a human problem to be solved together, and not a combat or battle to be won. Conflict—so natural to humankind—cannot be inherently harmful. It is miserable management that is the source of our woes. Of this, Africa has more than its fair share. Through appropriate social, political, economic, cultural, and institutional arrangements as well as systematic learning and public education processes, we should reach a consensus on a vital pathway to peace—let's talk it out; no fights!

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Notes

1   The methodology in this regard has ranged from case studies to "rational" models. Carroll (1969, 313–14) identified nine variables associated with the war-ending process: war aims, military conditions, morale or war moods, costs, vulnerability to destruction, military and economic potential, domestic conditions, external conditions, and terms of peace.

2   The manner in which the state collapsed like a pack of cards reveals the porosity of the ethnic-woven bullying state in Africa. Despite the state's notoriety in human-rights violations it attracts little legitimacy and loyalty beyond the contours of ethnicity. Its military lacks professionalism, being the den of tribal warriors and it dissolves once attacked with spirit. This requires a reconsideration of the nation-state in Africa. It reveals the praetorian nature of the state and the truism that, in essence, the state is as fictitious as it is suspect.

3   In the light of the pangs of human suffering that linger on, several human-rights issues remain unresolved. The culture of violence has manifestly nurtured impunity. State institutions, including the judiciary as well as the economy, are seriously fractured while Liberia is a de facto one-party state. At his inauguration, President Taylor pledged to respect human rights and uphold the rule of law. He announced that he would establish a commission on human rights and a commission on reconciliation. Progress in this direction has been alarmingly slow.

   Elections and the formal return to constitutional governance do not imply normalcy, peace and security. Human rights violations still continue while past abuses call for justice. Frustrations in several quarters indicate an uneasy peace. An aftereffect of the war—as is common in such situations—has been a wide array of property disputes as people returned to find their lands and houses occupied by others. The situation in Liberia, as one person told this writer, was as if the right to land was being redetermined and subject to reallocation. There have been several threats of reprisals and violent crime has become common. The

human-rights aspects of this presentation have relied in part on Human Rights Watch/Africa, 1997.

4   Their arms were tied tightly behind their backs at the elbow and wrist—an excruciating torture.

5   It has been reported that child soldiers were engaged in various forms of imitative violence inculcated from constant exposure to brutality, reinforced by repeated showing of wild films including "kung fu" and "Rambo" videos and regular drug abuse (Accord 1996; Richards 1995). The World Health Organization reported that nearly two-thirds of High School students in Liberia had seen someone killed, tortured, or raped and that 77 percent had lost a close relative. Trauma on this scale leaves deep scars on a country's collective psyche. It is this human cost of the war which many see as the greatest challenge for the healing process of the 21st century . See also U.S. Department of State, 1997.

6   The postwar plight of women in Liberia was compounded by the fact that when women return to their homes of origin, they encounter long-standing customary practices that militate against them. These further limit their ability to reclaim their property or the property of their dead or lost husbands in the face of rival claims by members of their husbands' families. Displaced women have returned to their villages with their children only to find these homes occupied. Women who are married under the customary law—most ordinary folk—have been most vulnerable in this regard. The Association of Female Lawyers in Liberia, a Liberian NGO, has initiated a bill in the legislature to correct this anomaly akin to what has taken place in Ghana, for example. Not only should this legislation be effectively applied in due course, but also public education must accompany its implementation in order to protect the rights of women in the present circumstances in Liberia.

7   The new Liberia Constitution provides for respect for the integrity of the person, including freedom from political and extrajudicial killing, torture, and other cruel, inhuman, or degrading treatment or

punishment, arbitrary arrest, detention, or exile. It also prohibits denial of fair public trial, arbitrary interference with privacy, family home, or correspondence, as well as the use of excessive force and violations of humanitarian law in internal conflicts.

8   The rule of law goes beyond legal institutions and applications. Moore (1990, 2) wrote that it includes the view that "governmental decisions must be rooted in the consent of the governed, acting only through structures and procedures designed to prevent individual oppression or governmental tyranny, which protect fundamental rights and freedoms, and which are subject to appraisal by an independent Judiciary rendering judgments based on law."

9   A further argument is that accountability may also be achieved by public disclosure and condemnation in cases of lesser responsibility or less-severe abuse. This should go in hand with—but not be an alternative to—a Truth Commission that would collect evidence and testimony on wrongs that have been done.

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