Irregular Warfare and Liberia’s First Civil War

George Klay Kieh, Jr.*

The article examines the causes of the irregular war in Liberia from 1989-1997, the forces and dynamics that shaped the war, the impact of the war on state collapse and the prospects for conflict resolution and peace-building. The findings show that the war was caused by a confluence of factors. Several warlordist militias were the belligerents in the war. The war and its associated violence precipitated the actual collapse of the Liberian State. Finally, the success of the peace-building project would be dependent upon addressing the causes that occasioned the irregular war.

Keywords: Regular warfare, irregular warfare, state collapse, conflict resolution, peace-building, Liberia

1. INTRODUCTION

Irregular warfare and its consequent precipitous impact on state collapse has been an enduring feature of human affairs. Even long before the inception of the Westphalian state system in the mid-seventeenth century, various state formations in Africa, the Americas, Asia and Europe emerged, and then collapsed. The precipitants ranged from internal imperatives triggered by issues such as the distribution of societal resources and territory, to the external imperialist impulse.

In the case of Africa, during the pre-colonial era, several polities emerged, and then collapsed as a consequence of myriad internal and external factors. During the first two decades of the post-colonial era, irregular warfare in African states was minimized by the regulatory dynamics of the “Cold War.” However, since the end of the “Cold War,” the incidence of irregular warfare, especially its capacity to precipitate state collapse, has accelerated. One of the major contributing factors to this phenomenon is the absence of a global tapestry akin to the “Cold War” that is capable of suppressing, containing and managing the undercurrents of irregular warfare (Kieh 1998: 151). Consequently, several African states have experienced collapse as a result of irregular warfare - for examples, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Liberia, Sierra Leone and Somalia. In the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), the irregular warfare pitted the armed forces of the Mobutu regime against the Alliance of Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Congo-Zaire. The war commenced in 1996, and ended later that year with the ouster of the Mobutu regime from power. In Liberia, the irregular war began in late 1989 and ended in 1997. Initially, the war was between the Doe regime and the National Patriotic Front of Liberia (NPFL). Later, the Independent National Patriotic Front of Liberia (INPFL), a breakaway faction from the NPFL, joined the fray. Subsequently, more warring factions emerged: Liberia Peace Council (LPC), ULIMO-K, ULIMO-J, the Lofa Defense Force and the National Patriotic Front of

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Liberia central revolutionary Council (NPFL-CRC). In Sierra Leone, the protagonists were the government of Sierra Leone and the Kamajors (a civil defense force) on the one hand, and the Revolutionary United Front (RUF), on the other hand. The war started in 1991 and ended in 2002. In Somalia, the war commenced in 1988, when a group of warring factions - the Somali National Movement, the United Somali Congress, the Somali Patriotic Front and the Somali Democratic Movement forged an alliance against the government of President Siad Barre. Interestingly, after the Barre regime was deposed, the various warring factions fought one another for control of state power.

Against this background, the focus of this study is on the irregular warfare that occurred in Liberia from 1989-1997. Liberia was chosen as the case study because as the oldest independent country in Africa with a long record of political stability, it provides an interesting case for studying why societies that seem stable degenerate into chaos and anarchy. The study will address the following questions: 1) What were the causes of the irregular warfare in Liberia, from 1989-1997?; 2) What were the forces and the dynamics of the irregular warfare?; 3) How did irregular warfare contribute to the actual collapse of the state in Liberia?; and 4) What are the prospects for conflict resolution and peace-building?

2. CONCEPTUAL ISSUES

The study uses three major concepts: regular warfare, irregular warfare and state collapse. In this section of the paper, these concepts will be defined. Regular warfare is a form of armed conflict between a state’s armed forces and an insurgency group or groups. That is, this form of warfare pits a regular military force against a rebel militia or militias. Irregular warfare is a phenomenon that goes by different names, including tribal warfare, primitive warfare, “little wars,” and low intensity conflict (White 1996: 57). Substantively, it is a form of conflict that pits an insurgent force or forces against a central government of a state, and/or that involves two or more insurgency forces fighting against one another. The raisons d’être for the war span a broad gamut of factors - ranging from disagreements over the distribution of political power to the allocation of economic resources.

State collapse is a situation where the structures, authority (legitimate power), law, and political order have fallen apart and must be reconstituted in some form, old or new (Zartman 1995: 1). State collapse is a process similar to a degenerative disease: It occurs over time in various stages, ultimately culminating in the final disintegration of a body politic and its governmental structures and processes. There are two major types of state collapse: partial and complete. In the case of the former, the state maintains some control over its territory and population. The latter case involves the total loss of control by the state over its territory and population.

3. THE IRREGULAR WARFARE MODEL

The study employs the irregular warfare model developed by Jeffrey White as its framework for discussing the forces and dynamics that shaped the irregular war in Liberia. Given the circumstances of the Liberian case study, two new elements were added to White’s model: 1) the pattern of recruitment among the warring factions; and 2) the relationships between the warring factions and the larger society.
The model is based on several tenets. The participants are irregular elements fighting against other irregular elements, regular forces of a central government, or an external intervention force (White 1996: 57). In other words, irregular war can involve an assortment of forces. The key determinant is that one or more of the warring factions represent private militias not associated with the formal armed forces of a sovereign state. Organizationally, the various insurgency movements generally have a loose command and control structure. Generally, there is a leader. However, the rest of the organizational structure may be nebulous. This makes it difficult to make a determination regarding the flow of commands.

In terms of the operational environment, it embodies a constellation of factors—ecological, geographical, historical, political, economic, social and cultural. In other words, the environment in which irregular warfare occurs is complex. It is the environment that conditions the conduct of irregular warfare. For example, it is the environment that dictates the utility of certain activities and the pursuance of certain strategies. The various combatants, including the government, employ an assortment of conventional weapons—rocket-propelled grenade, stingers, AK-47, etc. These weapons are obtained through purchase, theft, capture, or are locally manufactured (White 1996: 60). Logistically, the movement of supplies often covers a relatively short distance. Also, the weapons are easily transported; the needs for food and ammunitions are simple; the insurgents repair most of their own weapons. Importantly, these logistical dynamics reduce the vulnerability of irregulars to counter logistics strategies (White 1996: 60). Usually, other than the use of guerilla tactics, the various insurgency movements do not have clearly defined military doctrines. Consequently, their strategies are eclectic: They are dependent upon the dynamics of the war.

In terms of decisive battles that are critical to the outcome of the war, the insurgency movements avoid prolonged military operations; instead, they engage in combat on “as needed basis,” especially in response to threats. Allies are quite crucial especially for the insurgency movements. At the local level, these allies can provide myriad services for the insurgents—ranging from the provision of intelligence to the availability of sanctuaries. At the external level, allies can provide weapons, money, food and other logistics, access to the international community and critical political support in the global environment. The insurgency groups employ several recruitment strategies. Depending on the ethnic origin of the leader of the insurgency group, the recruitment of fighters may be from a particular ethnic group. The rationale is to ensure complete loyalty to the leader and the war-making project. In other cases, insurgency groups may recruit their fighters from across the ethnic spectrum. At times, the purpose could be to present a broad national outlook. The relationship with the larger society is quite critical to the prosecution of irregular warfare. Some of the insurgency movements make efforts to develop harmonious relationships with the various elements of society. However, others choose to antagonize either a segment of or the larger society as a whole. Clearly, the nature of the relationship between a segment or segments of society and insurgency groups modulates the conflict-cooperation dynamics that occur over the span of the war.

Irregular warfare occurs through various cycles—commencement, escalation/de-escalation, attrition, resolution, etc.
4. THE CAUSES OF THE IRREGULAR WAR IN LIBERIA

In the scholarly literature, the dominant explanation for the causes of the irregular war that occurred in Liberia from 1989-1997 is that the war was the consequence of ethnic antagonisms. Martin Lowenkopf (1995) in his chapter, “Putting the State Back Together in Liberia,” in William Zartman’s edited volume on State Collapse argues that the war was caused by ethnic antagonisms. The first phase was the perennial antagonism between the Americo-Liberians, the descendants of the freed slaves, who were repatriated from the United States to Liberia in the 1820s and the indigenous ethnic groups. The second phase pitted the Krahn ethnic group of President Doe, who came to power in a military coup in 1980, and the rest of the other ethnic groups. Similarly, Stephen Ellis (1995) in his article, “Liberia 1989-1994: A Study of Ethnic and Spiritual Violence” published in African Affairs identifies ethnicity as the driving force of the war. For example, Ellis posits that the Americo-Liberians and their political party, the True Whig Party controlled the Liberian polity. He maintains further that even in instances where some elements of indigenous ethnic groups were incorporated into the power structure, these indigenes had to be attached to dominant Americo-Liberia families. Ellis suggests that it was the monopolization of the polity that constituted the base of the ethnic antagonism between the Americo-Liberians and the indigenes.

This study disagrees with the dominant explanatory framework of the causes of the irregular war in Liberia. Alternatively, this study argues that the irregular war that occurred in Liberia from 1989-1994 was a by-product of a confluence of historical, cultural, economic, political and social factors. In other words, the irregular war was caused by multiple factors. Against this background, the historical, political, cultural, economic and social causes of the war will be examined in this section of the paper.

4.1. The Historical Factor

The roots of the irregular war in Liberia can be traced to the formation of the modern Liberian state, beginning in the early 1820s. With the increase in the opposition to the slave system in the United States and its plantation-based economy, several African-Americans slaves were freed (Kieh 1998: 157). Consequently, the American state was faced with a conundrum of what to do with a large pool of unemployed African-Americans. After various discussions, it was decided that the freed African-Americans would be repatriated to Africa, their ancestral home. Accordingly, the American Colonization Society was organized as the deus ex machina for the “repatriation project”. Initially, the freed African-Americans were repatriated to Sierra Leone, and later to Liberia.

When the freed African-Americans were repatriated to Liberia, they met several indigenous ethnic groups occupying the area. These indigenous ethnic groups were initially receptive to the African-Americans. Unfortunately, having been socialized in the vagaries of the slave system and its caste-based social structure, the repatriated African-Americans were interested in establishing a system of servitude akin to the Southern plantation system in the United States (Kieh 1998: 157). Under such an arrangement, they would be the masters, and their indigenous Liberian brothers and sisters would be the serfs (Kieh 1998: 157). The resultant polarization between the indigenous ethnic groups and the repatriated African-Americans ignited a conflict, including several wars. With American support, the “Americo-Liberians” were able to subdue the indigenous ethnic groups.
From the establishment of the Liberian settlement to the mid-1820s, the members of the various indigenous ethnic groups were not considered citizens of Liberia. However, they were required to pay taxes and to perform an assortment of civic tasks. Although the Tubman regime integrated the indigenous population into the body politic as citizens in the mid 1940s, nevertheless, the antagonisms between the “Americo-Liberians” on the one hand, and the indigenous ethnic groups on the other, remained.

4.2. The Political Factors

A broad array of political factors contributed to the irregular warfare in Liberia. At the base was the neocolonial state. Although Liberia was never formally colonized, nevertheless, the control of the American Colonization Society over the area mirrored the colonial architecture established throughout Africa by European powers. For example, the Liberian colonial state was repressive and exploitative. The nature of the state did not change with the declaration of political independence in 1847.

In terms of human rights, various regimes violated the constitutionally-guaranteed rights of the Liberian People - the freedoms of assembly, association, speech, thought, press, etc. For example, under the Doe regime, political murder was institutionalized as a device for silencing the opponents of the regime. For example, the Doe regime’s death squad beheaded Robert Phillips, an engineer and a member of the opposition Liberian Action Party (LAP), in 1985, following the abortive coup against the Doe regime. Also, beginning in November 1985, the Doe regime waged a campaign of terror, death and destruction on the people of Nimba County. Several hundreds citizens of Nimba County were killed during the senseless orgy of violence.

Although the Liberian constitutional order was hoisted on the doctrines of the separation of powers, checks and balances and judicial review, the presidency dominated the political landscape. For example, from the Tubman to the Doe administrations, the President handpicked the members of the National Legislature. Accordingly, legislators took their “marching orders” from the President. Similarly, during the Tubman and Tolbert Presidencies, the president appointed members of the cabinet and other officials of the executive branch without the constitutionally required “advice and consent of the Senate”. Moreover, it was common knowledge especially from the Tubman to the Doe regime that the president instructed judges on the verdict in cases that had political implications. The most famous example was in 1968, during the famous “Fahnbulleh Treason Trial.” According to many court insiders, President Tubman instructed the Supreme Court of Liberia to find Ambassador H. Boima Fahnbulleh, Sr. guilty of treason. Subsequently, Ambassador Fahnbulleh was found guilty in a “kangaroo trial,” and sentenced to 20 years in prison with hard labor.

In the area of free and fair elections, Liberia had the notoriety for conducting fraudulent elections. For example in 1927, the presidential election between the incumbent President Charles D.B. King of the ruling True Whig Party, and the opposition candidate Thomas J.R. Faulkner was recorded in the Guinness Book of World Record as one of the most fraudulent elections in the world. President King “won,” with the number of “votes cast for him” being by far more than the number of eligible voters. In the same vein, from 1955-1980, the elections held under the aegis of the one party state were equally fraudulent: It was a common practice to give the True Whig Party candidates for the presidency and other elected offices “99.9% of the vote.”
As for the rule of law, only members of the subaltern classes were subjected to the law. In the case of the members of the ruling class and their relatives, they regularly flaunted and violated the law with impunity.

4.3. Cultural Factors

What role did ethnic and religious factors play in precipitating the irregular war in Liberia?

4.3.1. The Ethnic Factor

As Table 1 indicates, Liberia has sixteen major indigenous ethnic groups plus the Americo-Liberian stock, other Africans, and those from the Caribbean. The data, based on the 1974 census, the most recent in Liberia's history, show that the Kpelle ethnic group is the largest. The Kpelles’ principal terrain is Bong County in central Liberia. Additionally, they can be found in Lofa, Margibi and Montserrado Counties. The Belle, Gbandi, Kissi and Lorma ethnic groups are found in the northwest. The Grebo, Kru and Krahn ethnic groups occupy the southeastern portion. The Vai ethnic group is found in the west. The Bassas occupy the south central, the east and the west central sections.

Table 1. The Ethnic Distribution of Liberia

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ethnic Group</th>
<th>Percent of Population</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Kpelle</td>
<td>20.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bassa</td>
<td>16.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gio</td>
<td>8.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kru</td>
<td>8.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grebo</td>
<td>8.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mano</td>
<td>7.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lorma</td>
<td>5.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Krahn</td>
<td>5.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gola</td>
<td>5.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kissi</td>
<td>4.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mandingo</td>
<td>3.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vai</td>
<td>3.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gbandi</td>
<td>3.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Belle</td>
<td>0.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dey</td>
<td>0.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mende</td>
<td>0.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Americo-Liberians</td>
<td>2.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Miscellaneous (Caribbean Origin)</td>
<td>0.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Alien Africans”</td>
<td>1.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The Gio and Mano ethnic groups are found in the north. The Mandingo ethnic group is found principally in the north and the west. Additionally, since this is the principal entrepreneurial group, its members are found in other sections of Liberia.

Naturally, like in other societies, conflict had been an enduring feature of the Liberian polity, even before the return of the repatriated “Americo-Liberians” from the United States. The various pre-Liberian state conflicts assumed myriad forms, involved a constellation of actors, and each had its own dynamics. Prior to the return of the repatriated “Americo-Liberians”, there were various conflicts, including wars, between and among the various indigenous ethnic groups. These conflicts principally revolved around land, trade and other economic issues.

Beginning in the early 1820s, several major conflicts between the repatriated “Americo-Liberians” and the various indigenous ethnic groups ensued, including some bloody wars. The conflicts revolved around issues such as territory, citizenship, political participation, taxation without representation, cultural differences, and control of political and economic power. The conflicts were anchored on a major philosophic belief among the “Americo-Liberians” Because they had lived in the United States, howbeit in slavery and servitude, they were nevertheless more “civilized” than the members of the various indigenous ethnic groups. The practical demonstration of this belief found expression in the parlance developed by the Americo-Liberians in which they referred to themselves as “civilized”, while they called the members of the various indigenous ethnic groups “country people”. Interestingly, even after eight years of bloody war, these appellations are still being used in Liberia.

Importantly, there were varieties of conflicts among the Americo-Liberians based on the differences in skin pigmentation, class, profession and region. In the case of the differences in skin pigmentation, the light-skinned Americo-Liberians believed that they were better than their dark-skinned kin. This view was buttressed by the American Colonization Society’s practice of giving junior level positions in the colonial bureaucracy, and siding with the members of the light-skinned cluster. Accordingly, the light-skinned cluster insisted that it controlled the economic and political arenas.

Class-wise, the light-skinned sector consisted of lawyers, “merchant princes”, and junior managers in the state bureaucracy. Initially, they occupied the middle stratum of the caste cum class structure constructed by the American Colonization Society. From 1839-1926, it constituted the local ruling class. On the other, the dark-skinned sector consisted of small-scaled producers, self-employed farmers and artisans. From 1820-1939, its members occupied the lower stratum of the social structure. From 1839-1926, its members graduated to the middle tier of the caste-class structure. Importantly, the intra-Americo-Liberian class differences found expression in the domination of all spheres of national life by the light-skinned Americo-Liberians.

Professionally, the Americo-Liberians were also divided: Some were lawyers, state managers, merchant princes, preachers and agricultural barons, while others were artisans and self-employed. The professional differences also reflected the light-skinned/dark-skinned divide: The former occupied the “high profile jobs,” while the latter had the low-leveled positions. These professional differences polarized the two groups, and help fuel the conflict.

Regionally, the Americo-Liberians were divided into the “Monrovia Club,” “the up river settlement groups,” and the “outer Monrovia Group.” During the first one hundred years, the “Monrovia Club” dominated the political and economic arenas. In turn, this ignited
various conflicts between the “Monrovia Club” on the one hand, and the other circles, on the other hand.

1926 was a watershed epoch in the history of Liberia: With the coming of Firestone, and the subsequent introduction of a wage-based economy, a new class system emerged in which the individual’s relationship to the major means of production became the principal determinant of social status. However, ethnicity still remained an important cleavage, and served several major functions. First, within the expanded local ruling class, the Americo-Liberians remained the dominant ethnic group, up until 1980. For example, the members of the stock continued to occupy the four major positions in the state bureaucracy - the presidency, the vice presidency (with one exception, when H. Too Wesley, an indigene, was Vice President under President Charles D.B. King), the speakership of the House of Representatives and the chief justiceships. From 1980-1989, for the first time, several individuals from varied ethnic backgrounds controlled state power; and this was reflected in the distribution of political offices. The office holders cut across the ethnic divide. The distribution reflected the commonalities of economic and political interests, rather than ethnicity. Although the exiled former President Taylor was from the Americo-Liberian stock, the distribution of political power during his tenure of office reflected the immediate post-1980 pattern. For examples, the two persons, who served as Vice Presidents under Taylor are from the Mano and Gio ethnic groups; the Speaker of the House of Representatives is Kru; the Chief Justice is Vai; and the members of the cabinet are from various ethnic backgrounds.

Second, ethnicity has an instrumental value. Warlords used it and political entrepreneurs to mobilize mass support for their private causes and agendas, by appealing to people’s crude primordial instincts. This was critical in light of the fact that 85% of the Liberian population is illiterate. Accordingly, they lack the analytical skills to transcend the ethnic appeal.

Significantly, any conflict resolution effort must be comprehensive: It must seek to address the underlying conflicts on which the various cleavages are anchored. For example, in the ethno-cultural domain, the so-called “civilized” versus “country” divide that has historically underpinned the relationship between the Americo-Liberians and the various indigenous ethnic groups must be examined and addressed.

4.3.2. The Religious Factor

Liberia is divided into three major religious clusters: Traditional religions, Christianity and Islam. About 42% of the population belongs to traditional religions; about 35% of the people are Christians; and about 23% belong to the Islamic faith. According to a study conducted by David Barrett and others, by the year 2000, Christianity will constitute 40% of the population, 34.1% will become adherents to the traditional religion; and 22% will become Moslems (Barrett ed. 1982: 456).

Although, some Christians have promulgated the false notion that Liberia is a Christian state, however, it has not generated a major conflict. That is, even though the Moslems, the adherents to the traditional religion, and others have protested the Christianization of the Liberian state, nevertheless, it has not led to religious strife. Accordingly, religious differences did not contribute to the development of the irregular war in Liberia.
4.4. The Economic Factors

Like the economies of other peripheral capitalist states, the Liberian one is non-industrialized and export-oriented. The bases of the economy are rubber, iron ore, timber and other minerals. Since the mid-1920’s, foreign multinational corporations like Firestone and Bong Mines have controlled these levers of the economy.

Prior to the civil war, at the vortex of the Liberian economy was a class system with various clusters. The ruling class consisted of both Liberians with positions in the state bureaucracy and the private sectors, and the barons of international finance capital, who owned and controlled the major means of production. Both tiers of the ruling class collaborated in keeping the subaltern classes under control. For example, the state managers recurrently used the coercive instruments of the state to crush labor strikes against multinational corporations like Firestone, LAMCO and Bong Mines.

The intelligentsia class consisted of lawyers, technocrats, academics, artists and other entertainments and students. The major asset of the members of this class was a know-how. Some of them collaborated with the ruling class, while others formed an alliance with the working and peasant classes.

The working class consisted of workers from various sectors of the economy - agricultural, mining, timber, maritime, etc. The members of this class sold their labor to the members of the ruling class. Some of the members of this class held simultaneous membership in the peasantry.

The peasantry was composed primarily of farmers, who engaged in subsistent agriculture, and the production of cash crops. The members of this class reside in the rural areas, and were the most deprived in terms of social and other services from the state.

The resultant struggles pitted the ruling class and its allies in the intelligentsia class on the one hand, against the working and peasant classes and some members of the intelligentsia class, on the other hand. The loci of the conflict were abysmal distribution of wealth and income, political power and social services. For example, the ruling class, which constituted 4% in the 1970s, and 6% in the 1980s, controlled 65% and 70% of the national wealth respectively (MOJA 1980: 3; Kieh 1989). Moreover, the conflict was fueled by the inability of the ruling class to provide the modicum of basic human needs, especially during the Tolbert and Doe eras. Additionally, in the midst of deplorable living conditions for the members of the subaltern classes, the ruling class and its government engaged in wholesale corruption, exorbitant life styles at the expense of the state, and the government undertook frivolous non-revenue generating projects, such as the $100 million spent to host the 1979 conference of the Organization of African Unity.

4.5. The Social Factors

Several social factors helped to create the contingent conditions that contributed to the occurrence of irregular warfare in Liberia; these included the poor educational and health care systems.

4.5.1. Educational Factors

The Liberian education structure is divided into four tiers: Primary (up to the sixth grade), junior high (seventh to ninth grade), high school (tenth to twelfth grade), and college
or the university level. There were two universities - one public and one private; community colleges, and a host of public and private primary, junior high and secondary schools. The preponderant majority of the educational institutions are located in metropolitan Monrovia, the capital city and its environs.

The literacy rate in Liberia stands at a dismal 85%. Most of the illiterates are rural dwellers. No serious effort has been made to address the serious problem of illiteracy. The high illiteracy rate has made the population vulnerable to various machinations and manipulations by ethnic and political entrepreneurs.

Importantly, the poor educational system and the very high illiteracy rate clearly demonstrated to the members of the subaltern classes that the members of the ruling class were not interested in their welfare, and in the development of the human resource pool of the country. Consequently, it contributed to class antagonisms, and eventually to the development of the irregular war.

4.5.2. Health Factors

The inadequacy of the Liberian health care system was reflected in the very small number of hospitals, clinics and equipment. The resultant effects were two-fold. First, by 1989, only 33% of the total population of about 2.5 million people had access to health care (Ministry of Health and Social Welfare 1998: 5). Second, the population, especially rural dwellers, was vulnerable to diseases.

Amid the inadequacy of the health care system, the members of the ruling class used state financial resources to pay for the medical care of them and their relatives in the United States and various European countries. This helped fueled the antagonism between the ruling class and the subaltern classes. For example, it contributed to the loss of mass support for the Doe regime.

4.6. The Military Factors

The Liberian military was organized in 1904, as an integral part of the “Barclay Plan”. The plan finalized the incorporation of the hinterland into the modern Liberian state. Traditionally, the Liberian military has been used to protect the interest of the dominant caste and class. For example, prior to 1926, the military was used as an instrument of the Americo-Liberian controlled state: It protected trade routes, secured land for the settler state, and coerced the members of the various indigenous ethnic groups to pay taxes and to undertake civic projects.

Since 1926, the Liberian military’s principal function was to protect the members of the ruling class - both local and foreign - , and their private properties from the members of the subaltern classes. For example, the military was used recurrently to crush various labor strikes at multinational corporations such as Firestone, Bong Mines and LAMCO. Even with the seizure of state power by the military in 1980, its principal post-1926 function remained unchanged.

Historically, the command structure of the Liberian military has been a cesspool of patronage. That is, personal and political connections, rather than performance, were the major determinants of promotion. For example, the majority of the generals had little or no military training. This was a decisive factor in both the planning and the execution of the counterinsurgency strategy during the civil war: The poorly trained top brass was incapable
of designing a containment strategy. Hence, ultimately, the rag-tag National Patriotic Front of Liberia was able to defeat the Liberian military, and overrun the country.

Organizationally, the Liberian military is under the direction of the President, who is Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces of Liberia. Operationally, the Ministry of National Defense manages the military. The Chief of Staff is the highest-ranking officer; and he is assisted by a staff consisting of a Deputy Chief of Staff (a Major-General), and five Assistant Chiefs of Staff (each is a full Colonel). Structurally, there is one brigade, under the command of a Commanding General with the rank of Brigadier-General. There are thirteen battalions, each commanded by a full Colonel.

Traditionally, the relationship between the military and civil society has gone through various cycles. For example, from 1904-1980, the relationship was adversarial. Civil society viewed the military as a cesspool of illiterates, a marauding band of gangsters, drunks and indiscipline hatchet men and women, whose principal role was to protect tyranny. However, following the military coup d’etat in 1980, this view was altered for a short time: The Liberian society was prepared to forgive the military for its past transgressions because it overthrew the undemocratic and tyrannical government of Liberia. Notwithstanding, after less than a year, the military junta began to demonstrate the same tendencies of the previous era. Particularly, the level of indiscipline, greed and thuggery within the military increased, as reflected in the predatory and ruthless behavior of the members of the People’s Redemption Council (PRC), the ruling body.

When Charles Taylor and his National Patriotic Front of Liberia initiated the war on December 24, 1989, the Liberian military characteristically harassed, brutalized and even murdered scores of civilians. This and past behavior deprived the Liberian military of the popular support it needed to wage a successful counter-insurgency strategy. Instead, the bulk of the Liberian population initially supported the Taylor-led rebellion.

The taproots provided the pretext that was used by the National Patriotic Front of Liberia to initiate the irregular war in Liberia. That is, the Taylor-led NPFL used the legitimate grievances of the subaltern classes of Liberia in the efforts to dislodge the Doe regime from power. Similarly, the other militias also used the legitimate grievances of the Liberian People as a pretext for prosecuting the war. In reality, the various anti-government forces in Liberia participated in the war because they wanted to gain control of state power, and use it for the private accumulation of wealth. In other words, although there were mass grievances, the war was motivated by greed for political power and wealth. D.F. Davis et al. provide an excellent summation of the common motivation of the warlords: “Neither political philosophy nor long-running historical tribal clashes were at the roots of the [Liberian civil] war [Instead, it was motivated by greed]” (Davis et al. 1997: 2).

5. THE FORCES AND THE DYNAMICS OF IRREGULAR WARFARE

Using the irregular warfare model as a framework, this section of the study will examine the forces and dynamics of the war. Specifically, the various protagonists will be discussed based on the model’s contours.
5.1. The Forces

The irregular warfare was designed and shaped by a broad constellation of forces: the military of the incumbent president Samuel Doe and various militias. Between 1989 and 1994, the number of militias in the war increased from two to seven. The precipitous increase was propelled primarily by the desire of would-be warlords to acquire wealth. In other words, having observed the phenomenal increase in the amount of territory with natural resources - gold, diamond, etc. - under the control of the Taylor-led NPFL, the potential warlords were convinced that they too could successfully pursue the “warlord logic”: They could organize militia; acquire some weapons; take and hold territory, and the attendant natural resources; and become political actors.

In this part of the study, the various warring factions will be assessed in terms of their agendas, recruitment bases, capabilities, external support, fighting technique, roles in the war and relations with civil society. In other words, what were some of the major attributes of the various warring factions?

5.2. The National Patriotic Front of Liberia (NPFL)

The late Brigadier-General Thomas Quiwonkpa, former Commanding General of the Armed Forces of Liberia, organized the National Patriotic Front of Liberia in 1984, and the number four man on the ruling military council. The purpose of the group was to overthrow the government of Samuel Doe. Accordingly, in 1985, using neighboring Sierra Leone as a launch pad, the NPFL launched a coup attempt under the leadership of General Quiwonkpa. Unfortunately, Sergeant Doe foiled the coup, and General Quiwonkpa and several of his lieutenants were arrested and killed. However, some of the remnants of the NPFL fled to Sierra Leone and Côte d’Ivoire.

After Charles Taylor, the former Director-General of the General Services Agency and Deputy Minister of Commerce, Industry and Transportation, fled Liberia in 1983, amid charges of embezzlement, he made several stops in Côte d’Ivoire, Ghana and the United States. During his visit to Côte d’Ivoire, he met with the remnants of the NPFL. Using money and the murder of the new leaders of the group (Moses Duopu and others), Taylor was able to install himself as the head of the NPFL. Taylor was able to bribe several of the original members of the NPFL to support him as the leader. Also, he arranged for the incumbent leaders, who posed a threat to his leadership to be eliminated. Subsequently, he used ethnicity as a tool for the recruitment and the mobilization of resources. For example, he capitalized on the differences that ensued after the abortive 1985 coup between the Gio and the Mano ethnic groups, on the one hand (General Quiwonkpa’s ethnic groups), and the Krahn ethnic group (President Doe’s ethnic group), to recruit fighters from the Gio and Mano ethnic groups. Taylor assured the Gio and Mano fighters that by joining him, they will have the opportunity to exact revenge on President Doe and his Krahn ethnic group.

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1 In 1983, General Thomas Quiwonkpa fell out of favor with Head of State Samuel Doe; while Doe was planning to arrest him, General Quiwonkpa fled the country and settled in the United States.

2 The conflict between the Gio and the Mano ethnic groups on the one hand, and the Krahn ethnic group on the other hand was manufactured by Head of State Doe, following the raid on Nimba County, after the 1985 Quiwonkpa-led abortive coup d'état. It was designed to win support for the unpopular Doe regime from his Krahn ethnic group, amidst the regime's crisis of legitimacy.
Similarly, Taylor admonished some wealthy “Americo-Liberians” to support his NPFL, as a way of getting even with President Doe, and restoring them to power. Also, Taylor received money and training for his initial 150 commandos from Libya. He assured Colonel Khaddafi that by supporting his rebellion, Libya would be helping to eliminate an American client regime.

Clearly, the agenda of the NPFL was to make Taylor the President of Liberia, and to make him wealthy, through the plundering and sale of Liberia's natural resources. The NPFL recruited its fighters primarily from the Gio and Mano ethnic groups; other fighters were recruited from the various ethnic groups. Also, the NPFL recruited several “child-soldiers”. The NPFL was the best-equipped of the militias: It had an assortment of conventional weapons. The NPFL received considerable support from Burkina Faso (arms, fighters and access to the world), Côte d'Ivoire (logistics and access to the world) and Libya (money and training). The NPFL's fighting techniques consisted of immersing its fighters into the civilian population, as a way of launching attacks without detection; hitting selected targets and fleeing; and engagement in selective battles for short periods of time. In terms of relations with the civilian population, the NPFL fighters robbed, plundered, tortured, killed, raped women and destroyed various public and private facilities.

5.3. The Independent National Patriotic Front of Liberia (INPFL)

The Independent National Patriotic Front of Liberia (INPFL) was a breakaway faction from Taylor's NPFL. Organized in 1990, and led by Prince Johnson, one of Taylor's confidantes, the establishment of the INPFL reflected a split between Prince Johnson and Charles Taylor over the complexion of the post-Doe era.

The INPFL’s agenda was twofold: The removal of the Doe regime, and the prevention of Taylor from succeeding Doe as President. Compared to the other warlords, Prince Johnson was less interested in political power and the acquisition of wealth. The fighters were recruited from all ethnic backgrounds. The INPFL had some conventional weapons, which were captured from, the NPFL and the Armed Forces of Liberia, and received from the United States and ECOMOG. The INPFL's fighting techniques were similar to those of the rival NPFL. Although it committed its own share of atrocities, however, the INPFL had a relatively better relationship with civil society than the other warring factions.

In 1992, Prince Johnson and Charles Taylor concluded a modus vivendi, under which their two militias agreed to cooperate in taking over Monrovia. Under the operation dubbed “Octopus”, both the NPFL and INPFL were to launch a joint military assault against ECOMOG. However, Prince Johnson reneged at the “eleventh hour”. Consequently, the NPFL overran the INPFL’s Cadwell Base, and killed some of its fighters. Prince Johnson surrendered to ECOMOG, and was given sanctuary in Nigeria. Thus, the INPFL ceased

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3 The United States and ECOMOG, the peacekeeping force of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), denied providing logistical and intelligence support for the Prince Johnson-headed Independent National Patriotic Front of Liberia (INPFL). However, independent accounts indicate that the United States did support Prince Johnson’s warring faction for a short period of time. In fact, these independent accounts posit that the United States provided intelligence to the Johnson-led Independent National Patriotic Front of Liberia that led to the capture and subsequent killing of President Samuel Doe. Similarly, according to these independent accounts, ECOMOG supported the INPFL as a counter-strategy against the NPFL.
existence in October 1992.

5.4. The United Liberation Movement for Democracy in Liberia (ULIMO)

The United Liberation Movement for Democracy in Liberia (ULIMO) was organized in 1991, following the capture, and subsequent killing of President Doe by the NPFL. The group consisted of some of the former officials of the Doe regime, including his closet allies from his Krahn ethnic group. Initially, General Albert Karpeh, former Minister of Defense in the Doe military junta, led the group. In a power struggle, General Karpeh was killed and replaced by Alhaji Kromah, former Minister of Information and Director-General of the Liberian Broadcasting Corporation under the Doe regime, and Raleigh Seekie, a former official in the public financial sector under Doe. The power struggle within ULIMO continued, resulting in the division of the militia into two factions: ULIMO-K led by Alhaji Kromah, and ULIMO-J led by Roosevelt Johnson, a former low-level civil servant under the Doe regime. The two factions used ethnicity as the bait for their recruitment: ULIMO-K appealed to the members of the Mandingo ethnic group, while ULIMO-J appealed to the Krahn ethnic groups. Also, most of the fighters of ULIMO-J were soldiers in the Armed Forces of Liberia. The two militias’ agendas, fighting techniques and relations with civil society mirrored those of the NPFL. In terms of capabilities, although ULIMO-J had few conventional weapons, it nevertheless had the best fighting force, as demonstrated during the April 6, 1996 round of the civil war. Its principal external source came from some Liberians residing in the United States.

ULIMO-K had limited fighting capabilities. Its major external support was from Guinea. Its fighting techniques and relations with civil society were similar to those of its counterparts - NPFL and ULIMO-J.

5.5. The Liberian Peace Council (LPC)

George Boley, former Minister of State for Presidential Affairs, Minister of Post and Telecommunications and Chairman of the National Investment Commission during the Doe regime, organized the Liberian Peace Council in 1991. Its fighters were principally recruited from the Armed Forces of Liberia. Like ULIMO-J and ULIMO-K, it used ethnicity as the centerpiece of its recruitment: It appealed to “Krahn nationalism” as the vehicle for recruiting fighters. The agenda was similar to those of the NPFL, ULIMO-J and ULIMO-K: Its leaders wanted to gain political power, and to enrich themselves. Like ULIMO-J, it had limited fighting capabilities. Also, its fighting techniques were similar to those of all of the other militias. Like the NPFL, ULIMO-J and ULIMO-K, it gained notoriety for harassing, brutalizing and killing civilians, and for burning down homes, private businesses and public buildings.

5.6. The Lofa Defense Force (LDF)

François Massaquoi, a former civil servant during the Tolbert and Doe regimes, organized the Lofa Defense Force in 1991. The militia was purportedly organized to protect

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4 During the April 6, 1996, round of the irregular war, ULIMO-J led by Roosevelt Johnson defeated the combined forces of the Taylor-led NPFL and the Kromah-headed ULIMO-J.
Loafa County, the largest region in Liberia, and the home of the Belle, Gbandi, Kissi and Lorma ethnic groups form attack by the other militias. However, in reality, like the other militias (excluding the INPFL), the LDF was organized as an instrument for François Massaquoi and the other ethnic entrepreneurs to negotiate and secure political positions in the various interim administrations. Organizationally, the LDF was very small. Its fighters were recruited mainly from the Loafa region. The LDF was tangentially involved in the prosecution of the civil war.

5.7. The National Patriotic Front of Liberia’s Central Revolutionary Council (NPFL-CRC)

The NPFL-CRC was a breakaway faction from the National Patriotic Front of Liberia. Established in 1994, its leadership consisted of erstwhile confidantes of Charles Taylor - Samuel Dokie (late), J. Lavela Supuwood and Tom Woweiyu. Its fighters consisted of defectors from the NPFL. Its capabilities were quite limited. Its agenda and fighting techniques were similar to those of the NPFL, ULIMO-J, ULIMO-K, and the LPC. In terms of relations with civil society, they were relatively harmonious.

5.8. The Armed Forces of Liberia

When the civil war erupted in 1989, the Doe regime was faced with several serious conundrums. First, the Liberian military had small selectively trained units that were not sufficient to contain and crush the NPFL. In other words, overall, the military was not well-trained.

Second, since the rise to leadership positions in the military historically has been dictated by personal connections, and not merit, the military top brass was not prepared to provide the requisite leadership. In fact, Lt. General Henry Dubar, the Chief of Staff of the Armed Forces of Liberia, fled Liberia, at the onset of the civil war.

Third, historically, the military has been very undisciplined; and this was detrimental to its capacity to wage a successful counterinsurgency strategy. For example, the soldiers continued to harass and brutalize civilians, especially those who were suspected of being sympathizers of the “rebels”. Thus, more time and energy were spent on terrorizing civil society than that spent on the war itself.

Fourth, the Doe regime recruited several criminals, who were serving prison terms into the military, to both buttress the ranks and to replace defectors. These criminals did not have the minimum or basic military training; hence, they were liabilities.

Fifth, the Doe regime did not have the support of the preponderant majority of the population; the legitimacy of the regime finally eroded by 1981; thus, the military did not have the support from civil society that was critical to pursuing a counterinsurgency strategy.

Sixth, the majority of the soldiers were ill-equipped. Given its extreme paranoia, the Doe regime only provided weapons to those who were determined to be loyalists. Hence, several soldiers went to the battlefront without the requisite weapons.

Seventh, the Liberian military did not have an effective counterinsurgency doctrine. Accordingly, the NPFL was able to undertake successful ambushes, and rapidly gain territory.

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5 Later, Tom Woweiyu defected from the NPFL-CRC, and rejoined Charles Taylor.
6. THE DYNAMICS OF THE IRREGULAR WAR IN LIBERIA

The war began on December 24, 1989, when a group of fighters from the National Patriotic Front of Liberia (NPFL) led by Charles Taylor, a former official of the Doe regime, launched an attack from Côte d'Ivoire, Liberia’s eastern neighbor. Using Ivorian territory as a launch pad, the NPFL quickly took control of various towns in Nimba County. This was made possible by the high degree of mass disenchantment with the policies of the Doe regime. In other words, the Doe regime had become so illegitimate that most Liberians were prepared to support any kind of change. The mass disaffection was pivotal in helping the NPFL to recruit fighters, to collect intelligence and to secure safe havens in their various battles with Doe’s forces. Despite the support of civilians, NPFL fighters committed various human rights violations - rape, beatings, torture and murder - in an indiscriminate fashion. The NPFL’s military successes in Nimba were replicated in the adjacent counties of Lofa, Bong, Rivercess and Grand Bassa. Later, the NPFL successfully took control of more territories. By early March 1990, the NPFL was in control of about 90% of Liberia’s territory.

Interestingly, as the NPFL scored one military victory after another against Doe’s troops, dissension began to set in. The problem was caused by two sets of factors. It became clear to some of Taylor’s top lieutenants, including Prince Johnson, that the war was not designed to oust a repressive regime in order to democratically reconstitute the Liberian state. Instead, the war was designed to make Charles Taylor the President of Liberia. Taylor’s penchant for selling Liberia’s natural resources in the territories under his militia’s control, and using the revenue for private accumulation offended some of his lieutenants, who saw the war as one of liberating the Liberian masses. Another issue was Taylor’s tendency to order the murder of popular members of his militia, who he perceived as posing threats to his omnipotence. For example, Taylor ordered the murders of Cooper Teah and Edmond Johnson, two very popular commanders of his militia. Taylor’s ostentatious lifestyle in the midst of a war further helped convinced his skeptical commanders that the war was about the deification of Taylor. Amidst the “tug and pull” within the ranks of the NPFL, Prince Johnson, one of the top commanders broke away and organized the rival Independent National Patriotic Front of Liberia (INPFL).

As Taylor’s NPFL continued to make advances and the Doe forces struggled to hold onto state power and the attendant vitriolic human rights abuses and anarchy, the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) intervened in the war in May 1990. ECOWAS’ initial approach was the use of mediation through the holding of the Banjul Meeting as a medium for trying to arrest the tide of violence in Liberia. The Banjul Meeting was a national conference that brought together all of the stakeholders in Liberia. Unfortunately, Taylor’s NPFL refused to attend the conference. The rationale was that Taylor was convinced that his militia was on the verge of winning a military victory and taking over control of Liberia; hence, he saw ECOWAS’ mediation efforts as a hindrance to his overall objective of capturing state power.

Exacerbated by the burgeoning level of violence, ECOWAS intervened in the war with a peacekeeping force (ECOMOG); the force entered Liberia in August 1990. The military intervention by the regional body was welcomed by Prince Johnson’s INPFL and Doe’s forces, but opposed by Taylor’s NPFL. Accordingly, Taylor’s NPFL attacked the peacekeeping force. In the end, the peacekeeping force prevailed, and was able to push Taylor’s forces out of Monrovia, the capital city, and to confine the INPFL to Cadwell, a
suburb of Monrovia.

By September 1990, a major development occurred in the war: President Doe was captured, tortured and killed by Prince Johnson’s NPFL. Doe’s death witnessed an increase in the level of violence as Doe’s loyalists burned down public buildings and murdered those suspected of supporting Taylor’s NPFL. Subsequently, the remnants of the Doe forces regrouped and organized new militias: The United Liberation Movement for Democracy in Liberia (ULIMO) and the Liberia Peace Council. Later, ULIMO splintered into two groups: ULIMO-J and ULIMO-K.

By late December 1990, ECOMOG was able to establish a security zone in Monrovia and its environs, and to maintain a modicum of “peace” for almost two years. But in October 1992, the Taylor-led NPFL launched a military offensive against Monrovia. Code-named “Octopus,” the military offensive was designed to overrun ECOMOG’s position and ultimately seize control of state power. ECOMOG was able to repel the attack. This decisive war led to the disintegration of the INPFL, which has collaborated with the NPFL in planning the attack and using its Cadwell base as a sanctuary for NPFL fighters. However, the INPFL reneged on the arrangement at the last moment.

From late 1992, ECOWAS continued to make concerted efforts designed to end the war. This was evidenced by the holding of numerous peace conferences. While ECOWAS was engaged in peacemaking efforts, the NPFL and ULIMO-K collaborated and launched a massive military attack on Monrovia in April 1996. After sitting on the sidelines and watching the bloodletting between the NPFL and ULIMO-K on the one hand, and ULIMO-J and the LPC, on the other hand, ECOMOG finally intervened and brought the situation under control.

After several failed agreements (16 of them), the Abuja II Accord succeeded in formally terminating the war in 1997. This was followed by the holding of presidential and legislative elections in July 1997. Given its dominant military position, Charles Taylor and his National Patriotic Party (the off-shot of the NPFL) won the elections by more than 75% of the vote. Subsequently, Charles Taylor became the President of Liberia, and Liberia’s “Third Republic” was ushered in on August 2, 1997.

7. IRREGULAR WARFARE AND STATE COLLAPSE IN LIBERIA

The collapse of the Liberian State began in November 1985, following the abortive coup attempt against the Doe regime. The coup occurred as a protest against the rigging of the October 1985 national elections in Liberia. By all independent accounts, Doe and his National Democratic Party of Liberia (NDPL) lost the presidential elections to Jackson Doe (not a relative) and the Liberian Action Party. However, using the power of incumbency, President Doe was able to manipulate the results of the elections. The resultant mass disenchantment and campaign of terror waged by the Doe regime occasioned the beginning of the collapse of the state’s authority: Opponents of the regime - the student and labor movements and other civil society organizations, opposition political parties and others - engaged in the mass mobilization of the citizenry to resist the authority of the state and its illegitimate regime. To make matter worse, the state’s capacity to pay government workers regularly and to provide basic social services for the populace fueled the resistance to state authority.
By the beginning of the war in December 1989, the Liberian state had partially collapsed. The process of collapse was accelerated as the NPFL wrested away territory from the Doe regime. With the loss of territory came the disintegration of state institutions and processes. That is, as the NPFL took control of Nimba and other regions of Liberia, the state institutions in those areas collapsed and the state’s capacity to make and enforce laws and to collect taxes became non-existent.

By September 1990, the Liberian State experienced final and total collapse, when President Doe was captured, tortured and killed by Prince Johnson’s INPFL. The aftermath was marked by the complete disintegration of state institutions and processes throughout Liberia. In fact, Taylor and his NPFL established an alternative authority structure in Gbarnga, the “capital city” of Taylor’s National Patriotic Reconstruction Assembly Government. The NPFL made efforts to establish alternative state structures and processes.

In essence, the irregular war hastened and ultimately occasioned the total disintegration and collapse of the Liberian State. The violence and anarchy that the war unleashed and the corresponding incapacity of the state to respond, resist and overcome the challenge led to the acceleration of the pace of state collapse.

8. FROM WAR TO PEACE:
THE PROSPECTS FOR CONFLICT RESOLUTION AND PEACE-BUILDING IN LIBERIA

Liberia’s first civil war ended in June 1997, under the aegis of the Abuja II Peace Accord. The Abuja II Peace Accord was the eighteenth peace agreement signed by the belligerents. The previous seventeen peace accords failed to end the first civil war for three major reasons. First, the Taylor-led National Patriotic Front of Liberia wanted to resolve the war through an outright military victory; hence, the NPFL was convinced that a pace accord would prevent it from taking sole control over the Liberian government. Second, the international community did not develop a robust peace enforcement mechanism under any of the previous seventeen peace accords. That problem was subsequently addressed in the Abuja II Peace Accord, the eighteenth peace agreement. The Abuja II Peace Accord contained a robust enforcement mechanism that, *inter alia*, stipulated the establishment of a war crimes tribunal to try recalcitrant warlords. It was the fear of being tried for war crimes that made Charles Taylor reluctantly comply with the terms of the Abuja Peace Accord.

Third, having controlled most of Liberia’s territory during the first civil war, Charles Taylor and his NPFL were convinced that they had an advantage, in the case of the holding of elections. That is, since the NPFL had its militia stationed in various parts of Liberia, it was therefore easy to coerce the electorate to vote for the NPFL.

In July 1997, Liberians went to the polls *en masse* to vote in special elections for president and the national legislature. Given NPFL’s huge advantage in financial, material, logistical and control terms, the militia’s political party, the National Patriotic Party (NPP), won more than 75% of the votes in a landslide victory. About a month after, Charles Taylor, the warlord of the National Patriotic Front of Liberia (NPFL), was inaugurated as the 21st President of Liberia. With his election, Liberians and the international community expected President Taylor to provide the requisite leadership in resolving the conflict that underlie the first civil war and to set into motion the process of peace-building. Central to the conflict resolution and peace-building projects was the restructuring of the military and security forces of Liberia as outlined in the supplement to the Abuja II Peace Accord. However,
characteristically, President Taylor refused to restructure the national military and security forces. Instead, he simply transformed his militia into the new national military and security forces. To make matter worse, the Taylor regime undertook a campaign of harassing, intimidating, imprisoning and exiling its real and imagined adversaries, including the supporters of some of his rival warlords. Additionally, the Taylor regime failed to take the required steps to address the underlying cultural, economic and social conditions that had caused the first civil war. Amidst the growing mass disgust for the sordid performance of the Taylor regime, some of Taylor’s rival warlords and their supporters and former supporters of Taylor organized an armed rebellion against the Taylor regime. Operating under the banner of the Liberians United for Reconstruction and Democracy (LURD), the anti-Taylor forces launched a rebellion in September 1999, thus triggering Liberia’s second civil war. The Taylor regime was able to confine the rebellion to the north and northwest sections of Liberia until early 2003: By February 2003, LURD began to score military victories against Taylor’s forces and to advance rapidly towards Monrovia, the capital city. One month later, another insurgency group, the Movement for Democracy in Liberia (MODEL) emerged. MODEL took control of the southeastern sections of Liberia. Being cognizant of the deteriorating security situation in Liberia, the international community - the United Nations, the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and the International Contact group on Liberia - convened a peace conference on Liberia in Ghana in May 2003. Interestingly, during the opening ceremonies of the peace conference, the Special War Crimes Court in Sierra Leone announced the indictment of President Charles Taylor for crimes committed during the Sierra Leonean civil war. The indictment of Taylor and the escalation of the second civil war, set into motion various peace-making initiatives.

After weeks of intensive diplomatic activities, President Taylor was forced to relinquish the presidency in early August 2003, following the expiration of his six years term of office (Taylor wanted to stay in power until January 2004); he was given political asylum in Nigeria. Taylor’s official departure from the Liberian political scene cleared the way for the establishment of a new transitional government under the Accra Peace Accords. The new transitional government consists of the three warring factions - LURD, MODEL and Taylor’s forces - political parties and civil society organizations. The transitional government will govern Liberia for two years (from October 2003-October 2005) and transfer power to a democratically elected government in January 2006 (following general elections in October 2005). As part of the transitional arrangements, a 15,000 strong United Nations peace-keeping force will be responsible to disarm and demobilize the combatants and to provide overall security in Liberia.

Importantly, the success of the conflict resolution and peace-building efforts in Liberia is contingent upon several factors. First, all of the combatants must be disarmed and demobilized. This is critical because it would minimize the warring factions’ capacity to revert to the use of violence. Second, the transitional government with the assistance of the international community must restructure the military and security forces. Third, the October 2005 national elections must be free and fair. This is important because it would settle the leadership question in Liberia through the electoral process. Fourth, the underlying contingent factors - cultural, economic, political and social - that gave rise to the first civil war and the factors that triggered the second civil war must be addressed, if the larger conflict in Liberia is to be resolved.
9. CONCLUSION

The study has attempted to address three interrelated questions. First, the study examined the causes of the irregular warfare that occurred in Liberia, from 1989-1997. The findings indicate that contrary to the dominant explanation in the scholarly literature, the war was caused by a confluence of factors - historic, political, economic, cultural and social. In other words, one factor is not sufficient to explain the taproots of the irregular war.

Second, the study discussed the forces and dynamics that shaped the irregular warfare. Several forces shaped the war: the regime of Samuel Doe and several militias - the NPFL, INPFL, ULIMO-J, ULIM-K, LPC, Lofa Defense Force and NPFL-CRC. Each warring faction - the insurgents - had a leader, a semblance of an organizational structure, a recruitment pattern and antagonistic relations with the larger society. Also, each insurgency group prosecuted the war without a formal doctrine.

Third, the irregular war accelerated the process of state collapse by introducing violence and anarchy, which the state and its institutions could not effectively counter. Accordingly, state institutions and processes disintegrated as the war advanced from one part if Liberia to another, with the state and its government incapable of containing and stopping the trend. The capture and killing of Doe in September 1990 marked the complete and total disintegration and collapse of the Liberian State.

Fourth, the study examined the circumstances that led to the occurrence of Liberia’s second civil war; the efforts to resolve the war; the establishment of a new transitional government and the prospects for conflict resolution and peace-building in Liberia. Specifically, the study suggests that all of the combatants must be disarmed and demobilized; the military and security forces must be restructured; free and fair elections must be held in October 2005; and the contingent factors - cultural, economic, political and social - that underpinned the first civil war as well as the factors that triggered the second civil war must be addressed.

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*George Klay Kieh. Jr. Chair and Professor of Political Science, Morehouse College, 830 Westview Drive, S.W. Atlanta, Georgia 30314, U.S.A. Tel: 404-215-2622. E-mail: gkieh@morehouse.edu*