7

THE TASK OF REBUILDING LIBERIA

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Introduction

Liberia degenerated into civil war in late 1989 and became protracted until consolidated efforts of the international community resulted in the signing of a Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) between the warring factions in August 2003. In 2014–2015, the Ebola Virus Disease (EVD) threatened Liberia and its neighbours and created new challenges for the road to recovery of the nation.

The task of rebuilding Liberia, a deeply divided and impoverished country even before the war and EVD epidemic, continues to be a daunting one. Following two years of a transitional administration after the war the country held its first free and fair elections in late 2005, which brought in Africa's first elected female President, Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf, to power. President Johnson-Sirleaf was re-elected in 2011 and as such held power for two terms, January 2006 to January 2018. The country held its third post-war election between October and December 2017, in which the opposition party, Collation for Democratic Change (CDC), led by renowned Football Star and 1996 FIFA World Best Player of the Year, Mr George Manneh Weah, won the presidency. Mr Weah was installed as the 25th President of Liberia for a six-year term on 22nd January 2018. He defeated the ex-ruling Party's candidate and Vice President under Mrs Johnson-Sirleaf, Ambassador Joseph N. Boakai.

The issues that arose during and after the EVD crisis (poor health infrastructure, prevalence of the death of health workers, inadequate

logistics, etc.) compounded the problems of war to peace transition in Liberia, as well as the challenges of post-war reconstruction and peacebuilding. The EVD epidemic was made more serious due to the slow and challenging recovery from the 14 years of civil war. For this reason, this chapter contribution focuses mainly on some of the key unresolved causes of Liberian civil war and the aftermath of the war.

Some challenges that Liberia faces

Some of Liberia's challenges are the vast dimensions of her status over the recent past. The country has been at the apex of its image among other nations, but equally the state has fallen to its lowest ebb and acquired the label "the eye of the storm." Along that path, Liberia has ranked first on many issues in the West African region. For instance, the country was the first to collapse after the end of the Cold War; the first in the post-Cold war era whose civil war had reverberating effects on neighbouring states; the first to have a regional institution intervene in a peacekeeping mission; the first to have an interim President; the first where the UN and a regional organization came together in a peacekeeping initiative; the first to have its ex-President standing trial at an international court, and last but not least, the first to have an elected female President.

World Bank's 2016 Liberia report indicates that the economy contracted by 0.5% in 2016 following 0% growth in 2015. This was largely a result of the continued slump in global commodity prices and a negligible recovery in private capital inflows in the post-Ebola era. Additionally, the prices of iron ore and rubber, which constitute about 85% of total exports, declined sharply by an average of 50% since the beginning of 2014, contributing significantly to the slowdown in the country's economic activities.

The same report indicates that inflation picked up from 7.7% in 2015 to 8.7% in 2016 as a result of the depreciation of the Liberian dollar against the US dollar, and the related rising cost of imported food items. As a result, poverty in Liberia remains widespread. More than half of the population (54.1%) was living in poverty at the time of the last household survey in 2014. This translates into more than 2.4 million Liberians that were unable to meet their basic food and non-food needs. Poverty is more prevalent in rural areas than in urban areas, with the poverty headcount being 70% and 43%

respectively, and was overall lower in Monrovia than in the rest of the country.

A high degree of socio-economic inequality exists, which is especially pronounced in the divide between the capital Monrovia and the rest of the country. For instance, the level of illiteracy outside the capital is almost three times as much as that in Monrovia itself due in part to the scarcity and poor quality of educational facilities in the rural areas (UNICEF 2013). This report indicates that women constitute a large percentage of the illiterate population (76%) and are also most likely to be among the poorest in their communities. Health, education, employment and primary needs of food, shelter and clothing are priorities to these grassroots communities over and above the essentials of infrastructure, technology and other developmental concerns

This small fragile state of less than three million people at the time of the outbreak of the civil war in 1989 had more than half of its population dislocated as refugees in countries far and near. Militarized communities are still kept fragmented by deep psychosocial trauma, mistrust and a persistent "survival mentality" (Hoffman 2011). The institutions and norms that were the guarantee for social order and provided the glue for bonding and bridging – as complements to the state – experienced total collapse along with the state. Consequently, Liberia's social capital (both at local and national levels) remain at an all-time low. Additionally, very limited efforts have been seen or invested into reforms of structures and human capacity development.

A brief history of Liberia and the outbreak of civil war

Like most African states, Liberia is a multi-ethnic country. There are officially sixteen ethnic groups in Liberia. The sixteen ethnic groups in Liberia consist of Bassa, Belle, Dei, Gbandi, Gio, Gola, Grebo, Kpelle, Krahn, Kru, Lorma, Mandingo, Mano, Vai and Americo-Liberians are by construct grouped into the Kwa and Mande groups (Nations Encyclopedia, n.d.). Ethnic politics or the politicization of ethnicity is a fundamental challenge in Liberia, which among other factors played a part in the country's civil war.

The main causes of the Liberian civil war are many but might be summarized as follows. Americo-Liberians (freed-returnee slaves from the American continent) denigrated the members of the various indigenous groups who had lived in the country for many centuries and in the 1847 constitution deprived them of full citizenship. Americo-Liberians considered the indigenes as "inferior" but were required to pay taxes and to perform all kinds of civic functions for the state. This meant that the Americo-Liberians arrogated state powers to themselves through authoritarian rule to the exclusion of the over 90% of the populace. Bad governance and economic pillaging led to social exclusion, promoted by the ruling minority elite and their American allies who helped them in founding and instituting the modern Liberian state. Traditional elders and men arrogated authority to themselves, excluding youth and women, in a patriarchal style of domination. Additionally, the youth, having tasted power along with women, have made their presence felt in the public space, thanks to the bitter first round of the civil war that brought down some of these walls of exclusion.

Americo-Liberians governed Liberia as a one-party state for 133 years, from 1847–1980. Their rule heavily influenced the development of Liberia, among other ways by introducing English as a national language and a Western political and social structure.

It is also true that, compared to the years of civil conflict, under the Americo-Liberian leadership the country experienced relative stability, though this may have been largely achieved through an elaborate patronage system. The slaves recaptured after the abolition of the slave trade from ships crossing the Atlantic to the New World were known as Congos and many of them were resettled in Liberia. The Congos sought desperately to satisfy all the ethnic groups by rewarding their leaders in return for loyalty and their assistance in collecting taxes from the indigenes.

During this colonial period, the economy was a great challenge as Liberians found it extremely difficult to gain entry into markets dominated by the colonial powers. This situation, however, changed with the support of American foreign investment, especially in the 1920s when the Firestone Tire Company entered into Liberia, creating the world's largest rubber plantation (DuBois 1933). This opened the door for other plantation developments and provided the Americo-Liberians with the necessary cash resources to administer the state.

Liberia has had a history of bad governance and economic pillage, social exclusion and other egregious economic malpractices promoted by the ruling minority elite and their American allies. As a result, the country has remained poor despite the considerable amount of natural resource endowments, including timber, gold, diamonds and rubber. Reliance on foreign imports and government subsidies had an impact on both consumer and producer. Moreover, the use of the US dollar as the Republic's basic monetary unit and medium of exchange deprived the government of the possibility of independent fiscal action in coping with external economic forces. The result was a deepening depression in a society that had placed too much confidence in its modern economic sector at the expense of improvement and support for the local sector, especially agriculture. This scenario has been blamed squarely on the negative attitude of the settlers to farming which they associated very strongly with their former life of slavery in the United States.

The country in its inception operated under an "apartheid-like" system (Akpan 1973). For over 130 years this arrangement operated on a system of control that made use of the politics of exclusion and fear, effectively establishing the ruling class who, though products of the social conditions and mentality of slavery, saw themselves as the privileged class and ambassadors for the civilizing mission of 19th century colonial expansion. Structures such as the constitution, dual and mutually contradictory structures of governance ("customary" and so-called "western-styles of governance"), a repressive security doctrine and practices, the exploitation of public goods and the lack of public values, age and gender-based social exclusion, the total lack of national identity and shared vision, characterized the control mechanism of the Americo-Liberian ruling class. These negative tendencies today need to be engaged and eventually transformed through public dialogue and other transformative processes that will lead to new ways of thinking, being and doing things in Liberia.

All these experiences point to the truth that Liberia has a distinct past. The country in its inception operated under an "apartheid-like system," with members of the various indigenous groups denied citizenship by its constitution of 1847, and considered "inferior," though required to pay taxes and to perform all kinds of civic works for the state. Their rule heavily

influenced the development of Liberia, by introducing English as a national language and a Western political and social structure.

While the country struggled to build its economy since independence, in the post-World War II period, Liberia had its most prosperous years under President Tubman (1944–1971). In the 1970s, after most of the world had been decolonized, frustration with the repressive state structure began to grow among Americo-Liberians and newly educated indigenous Liberians. An excuse in the turbulent political arrangement of that period happened to be the issue of rice and rising food prices, which led to violent demonstrations and the corresponding heavy-handed crackdown by the successor to Tubman, the Tolbert government. This constituted the basis for a coup d'état by an indigenous sergeant in the army, Samuel K. Doe, culminating to the assassination of President Tolbert and the execution of thirteen members of his cabinet.

It must be noted that during the protracted rule of Americo-Liberians, infrastructure, education and other services barely reached the so-called "hinterland" of inland Liberia until well into the 20th century. Liberia was seen through the lens of the Americo-Liberians. For over a century, people thought that Liberian history began with the coming of freed Negroes in the region and their eventual inability to lead, causing Liberia's demise. In the entire history of the dominance of the Americo-Liberians, there were only about twenty families that made up the core of the Liberian 'colony,' a despicable colony that created a narrative of Liberian history that deliberately excluded the history and ancestry of most of the indigenous people whose lives, work, culture, sociology and mission made Liberia a respectable state. In fact, indigenous Liberians had been on this land for nearly two thousand years before the arrival of the Americo-Liberians.

Patriarchy and the place of the youth in Liberia

Patriarchy is a contentious issue in many societies, including in Liberia. The Liberian community has been traditionally patriarchal in nature, with social and political decision-making roles heavily dominated by men. This has relegated women to the household, with little or no access to formal governance structures. Instead, their lives have been governed by traditional and religious activities that often discriminate against them and marginalize

them. Traditional elders and men abrogated authority to themselves, excluding youth and women in this patriarchy dominated order.

This masculinity-inclined nature of the society is not only found in its structure, but also in its cultural constructs. Many spheres of this society are set up to give men a dominance both in leadership and privileges. Women are also conditioned to accept and actively support this scenario. For instance, in the family setting, boys are trained to be strong, vibrant and brave meeting the greater challenges and heading the activities – taking the lead. Girls, on the other hand, are molded to be calm, supportive followers who stay at home. It is very common for women to make statements like, "this girl/woman exercises strength like a man" not as a commendation, but to indicate that the female in question is going beyond the expected limits of her role.

In discussions, women are often asked if they can contribute anything to what the men have already said, not necessarily giving any original ideas, but to say if they have any points of departure from what the men ("authorities") have contributed. This seems to suggest that the men have said it all and the women are asked to be passive endorsers. Interestingly, even in communities where a female holds leadership (civic or otherwise), she is generally expected to exercise that role under the influence of a man. This expectation is even stronger among some female members of the community.

Despite patriarchal traditions, women have managed to make their presence felt in the public space and have no intention of turning back (Theobald 2014). While some consider these developments as 'benefits' attributed to the war, the place of women and their role in the public arena is under constant discussion about how this can be improved and increased.

Youth, on the other hand, are seen today as propagating violence (Joyce 1979). There are many reasons for this including, but not limited to, the effect on them of the war years, lack of adequate parental care, poor or negative examples set by their elders and other similar factors. Hence, preventing youth violence requires the support and contributions of many partners assisting in a variety of ways, including collecting data about violence, learning about risk factors, developing strategies for its prevention and ensuring that these effective prevention approaches reach those in need.

The problem with the projection of this positive outcome for Liberia's youth is the fact that some youth tasted real power during the war years when

they served as commanders and other high-ranking officers in the various militias. That period seriously challenged the status quo of parental control so that the youth determined and decided the future and state of the communities which they controlled.

Many negatives have been attributed to that period. Youths who experienced early life in armed groups have come a long way since then having extricated themselves from this other wartime world. It is not easy for parents, teachers and social workers to have the necessarily intimate sense of how the fighters' world functioned. However, it is common knowledge that such a perspective is required if they are to understand the reasons why the youth today are so disturbed and hence how they can be helped.

Children and youth played many different roles in their associations with fighting forces: porter, sex slave, cook, bush wife, fighter, spy, ammunition carrier, commander and general, to mention only a few. Some of these youths may be classified both as victims and perpetrators of violence. Observations show that whether enrolled by force or by volunteering, youth engagement with fighting forces meant in principle that they were in some sense "owned" by their respective factions. They therefore had to abandon their previous community identity. The extent to which they retained their initial community bonds varied considerably according to the children's previous experience. However, it is certain that during the period of their actual involvement in the fighting forces, it was impossible for these youths to simultaneously maintain a sense of belonging both to the community and to the fighting faction. Reintegration of former young fighters is therefore not just a matter of returning these youth to their former communities, but also most importantly rebuilding the social bonds that had previously existed.

Human security in Liberia

Following the war, all facets of the state and people's lives were damaged or destroyed. The challenges of post conflict reconstruction include the establishment of a legitimate and effective government, reform of the security and justice sectors and economic and social revitalization. In this way, human security will be enhanced.

At a minimum, human security means freedom from violence and the fear of violence, and this was largely absent in Liberia during the civil war. The war

was fought between various warlords who forced people to divide themselves along ethnic lines (Bøas 2010). A major task for Liberians is, therefore, to rebuild trust between all sections of society and promote ways in which people can live together peacefully.

What is needed is a full scale social, economic and political transformation of Liberia. For his part, John Paul Lederach defines transformation as a deep and long-term structural, cultural and relational change (Lederach 1995). Transformation is to focus on the total overhauling and/or the creation of new institutions, and social relations. It deals with the structures of society, its patterns of relationship as well as processes for engaging in conflicts. (Lederach 1989). Dr Amos Sawyer, Chairman of the Governance Commission in Liberia, calls for a total replacement of Liberia's current structures of governance. He argues that the unitary, overly centralized state established in Liberia is antithetical to the historical, sociological and geographical realities of Liberia (Sawyer 2005). Many debates have revolved around his analysis and will continue to do so. However, the key point that is noteworthy is the general agreement that Liberia needs transformation not reconstitution of the old system. This transformation will encompass structures found in documents such as the constitution, dual and mutually contradictory structures of governance.

Clearly, the historical account of Liberia has to be seen as bigger and deeper than the story of how blacks liberated or freed from enslavement successfully settled on the African Grain Coast amidst much unwanted co-existent neighborliness that was later to be the basis for their slogan "one people, one nation, one destiny." The turbulence that characterize that period in Liberia's history and was to punctuate much of its future to date may likely overshadow the positive attributes of the daunting task of building a nation. Much of this can be explained by the limitation that facilitated the cultural non-alliance or merger between the settlers and their hosts.

That is why we turn to the thought of John Paul Lederach, who conceptualizes reconciliation as a social space that requires relationships, encounters and a discourse that reflects a shift in paradigm from the state level focus traditionally found in political science. He views this space as representing the confluence of four elements: truth, mercy, justice and peace and suggests that interventions at multiple levels of leadership and within multiple systems are critical to achieving reconciliation.

In practical terms, Lederach might insist that the way that Liberia was founded and its attending complexities should not be the sole basis for its forward journey. The question that stretches logical minds today seeks to address the extent to which these sources of conflict still remain and are part of the Liberian society, and even more importantly to what extent have the root causes of these conflict been addressed.

Some root causes of the conflict

It is inherent in the conflict history of Liberia that the dilemma of land acquisition continues to be contentious. In one of the earliest historical incidents that goes back to December 1821, two American Colonisation Society (ACS) agents, after some difficult bargaining, convinced King Peter and four other local chiefs (Bassa, Gola, Dei and Vai) to cede to the ACS 36 miles of coast land and 40 miles inland, including Cape Mesurado, for a partial payment of $300 worth of rum, beads, weapons and other goods (Guannu 1983). This transaction was fraught with misunderstanding. According to the two agents, the land was permanently transferred to the ownership of the ACS. The chiefs, on the other hand, were convinced that like in the other instances when they dealt with European traders, they were only granting the usufruct right over the land to the ACS. Not surprisingly, when the two agents returned with the settlers in February 1822 to take possession of the land, the chiefs refused to acknowledge the ACS' rights to the land and attempted to return the part payment that had been made under the terms of the treaty (Holsoe 1971), thus sowing the seeds of distrust between the settlers and the indigenous people – one of the major foundational root causes of Liberia's long running conflict.

Other root causes of the Liberian conflict identified by the Liberia Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) report of 1999 include land disputes, corruption, boundary disputes and concession-related tensions. The report maintains that these factors continue to be the main proximate triggers of violence. The lives of many women are particularly insecure due to societal inequalities and sexual and gender-based violence, further weakening social cohesion in communities.

The report further elaborates arbitrary rule, fraudulent electoral systems and economic collapse as some of the root causes of the Liberian Civil

conflict. Paramount in the opening phrases of many post-conflict documents on Liberia, especially the Poverty Reduction Strategy (PRS) paper of 2006, lists root causes of the Liberian conflict to include exclusion and marginalization of a large percentage of the population by the ruling elites since the founding attempts of the nation in the 17th century. Also, Guannu (Guannu 1983) highlights socio-political disparities between settlers and Native Liberians and the historical mutual misconceptions as some of the root causes of the conflict.

Americo-Liberians for 133 years subsequently controlled the republic. They ran their new country like a colony, establishing a feudal structure with all social, economic and political power in their hands. In the name of this Christianizing and civilizing mission, the indigenous population – who outnumbered their colonists by twenty to one – were subjected to a wave of abuse, including forced labour, disenfranchisement and exclusion from the coastal, enclave community, all of which led to their impoverishment and cultural alienation while the ruling class prospered (Deng 2001).

The country is still grappling with its post-conflict context which is riddled with complex challenges. Two different rounds of civil conflict, totaling 14 years in all, in one of Africa's most brutal civil wars severely disrupted all societal institutions, including the basic bonds that sustained communities. In the aftermath of the first civil war and the election of Charles Taylor as President, a second conflict erupted. Liberia should have addressed public security before the 1997 elections which would have avoided the relapse into war in 1999. This truth is a strong lesson: the lack of efficient policies, which constitutes some of the root causes of Liberia's conflict.

Post-war economic efforts and their partial success

The country has been assisted by a massive influx of foreign aid and increased economic activity in the urban areas, which has taken the virtually collapsed economy of the war years to experience steady recovery. Despite their positive contribution to economic growth and recovery, these measures have neither reduced income disparities between urban and rural areas among the previous economically marginalized population nor improved general living standards and job creation opportunities in Liberia. This situation has been exacerbated due to the EVD epidemic in 2014–2015.

Religious and ethnic identity challenges

In the last two decades, Liberia's image in West Africa moved from one extreme to the other. While historically seen as a beacon of hope in its capacity as Africa's first independent nation, the decades of civil conflicts punctured this exalted image. Consequently, the attendant political and economic hardship has removed the country from the list of those to be envied among independent African states. To some extent, an image of hope seems to be returning; thanks to a steady state of reform and renewal measures.

What all the above has clearly underlined is the extent of the complexity of the country. While the diversity along ethnic lines has always been acknowledged, especially as it has been a crucial aspect of the country's civil wars, a neglected identity issue that is now becoming important is religion (Heaner 2008).

Today, the level of religious rights sought by the non-Christian religions is on the rise. There is a widely held view that Liberia is a "Christian" country, largely because of the historical dominance of the largely Christian Americo-Liberians who ruled the country for more than 150 years, but there is now the crucial dimension of Islamic radicalization in the country. While this may not mean much for national security in the short run, there are concerns that it can become crucial to the country's security, especially if it connects to wider sub-regional dimensions of Islamic radicalization.

While Islamic radicalization could be considered an emerging security threat, other threats, largely ethnic identity-related, have been present for hundreds of years. Many violent conflicts characterized the evolution of the Liberian state between 1822 and 1989. The use of marginalized groups to perpetuate conflict is one of the striking features of the various conflicts in Liberia. Substantial ease was observed in the way military rebels and force commanders in the 1989–2003 civil war generally persuaded members of various ethnic groups who had suffered historically as marginalized groups of the society. These rebel commanders often used the respective tribal affiliation of people as a basis to persuade them to take up arms. This was totally baffling for many people.

Ongoing security risks

In the aftermath of political tensions, national reconciliation has not yet picked up momentum. Consequently, the recommendations of the country's Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) are still a matter of national debate; hence, the many victims of the war have not yet found closure to that unfortunate chapter in their lives. In addition, vestiges of old rebel command structures are still in place in many parts of the country. Given that many former combatants are unemployed and dependent on former commanders for basic livelihoods and guidance, these structures could become fertile recruiting grounds for crime and violence.

In summary, the causes of conflicts in Liberia are many. In 2009, the Liberian TRC report was released which outlined the causes of conflict to include the struggle for power and dominance; political, social and economic marginalization and exclusion; identity crisis and ethnic tension, political repression and human rights abuses, land disputes and property rights, and "social discontent." It is pertinent to add that the role and interference of external actors in local politics as well as regional and sub-regional security situations also have had their effects (Republic of Liberia 2009). There have been several conflicts at the community level, as well as looming ones that might potentially explode. Perennial tension and unresolved conflicts continue to exist between the Lormas and Mandingos in Lofa County; between Gios, Manos and Mandingos in Nimba County; between Kru and Sarpo in Sinoe County, and between Kru, Sarpo and Americo-Liberian descendants in Sinoe County. In the last 25 years, these and many more cascaded into the Liberian civil war. The effects of the war in Liberia were catastrophic. Figures from Peace Direct (2016) indicate that the civil war left about 250,000 people dead and saw a third of the population flee to neighbouring countries.

Security in contemporary Liberia

To address both the security situation and build a positive image for the military and the government, the first post-conflict government decided to disband the entire security forces and rebuild its security architecture from scratch (Global Security 2012). Security analysts have indicated that there are several implications that go with these decisions, namely:

a. The 'dumping' of thousands of vibrant, long-standing security personnel with all kinds of skills and operational tactics into a community with limited capacity to absorb their new members presents many security problems and lingering fear.
b. Seeking to rebuild the confidence of the citizenry by weeding out forces that committed heinous atrocities during the conflict presents its own challenges. Impunity and mob-justice accompany and underline the weak justice system.

Whatever the pros and cons of the arrangement, the observed situation is that there has been a surge in armed robbery attacks on citizens and residents. This undermines effective security. The situation is hard to handle or address within the context of the local security arrangements due to the low capacity and complacent nature of the "new" forces.

The Liberian Interim Poverty Reduction Strategy (IPRS) traces the root causes of Liberia's conflict to the exclusion and marginalization of much of the population and laid out a broad vision and programme, with a timeline from July 2006 to June 2008 in order to facilitate rapid economic growth; create jobs; reduce poverty and make progress toward the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

Citizens' general impression of these lofty desires was seen as only a minimal success since in fact it lacks the following:

1. The existence and therefore the need to address the most critical and pervasive human security threats such as environmental fragility, persistent poverty, conflict, etc. that impedes the interconnected pillars of human security (that is, freedom from fear, freedom from want and freedom to live in dignity).
2. The root causes for these human security threats (global, regional, national, local)) may persist considering the evasive and superficial nature of government remedies.
3. The manifestations of these threats and the capacity gaps in addressing them.

Additionally, the government raised a national army of some 2,000 members, but with very little reform of the police and other security agencies intended

to deal with internal threats. The fear is that the departure of peacekeeping troops will create a serious security vacuum.

There are currently more than twenty political parties registered in Liberia although many others of them did not make it to the ballots in the recent elections. Moreover, it is remarkable that none of the parties seem to be guided by any clear-cut national ideology. Because of their ideological barrenness, politics is pursued based on individual interests and sometimes on ethnic divisions. Political institutions remain grossly weak and the dominant parties give no indications of any willingness to share power.

One obvious weakness in Liberia's political institutions is the elections of "spoilers" – former warlords – to lucrative positions including legislative positions, even with no indications of reforms in these individuals. This situation is difficult to explain considering the mixed sentiments Liberians express against the effects of the war and the perpetrators of the war. . The election and appointment of "spoilers" to public offices give them immunity to prosecution and make Liberia's political culture perpetually weak.

Conclusion: Proposal for a "Peacebuilding–Development Nexus"

Liberia has a liberal market which in the pre-war past attracted significant foreign capital investments. However, due to the war, the security situation caused many investors to flee and that is still responsible for the high unemployment rate and contributes to insecurity in the country through petty crime and sporadic armed robbery attacks. Questions to ask then in the search for a workable "peacebuilding–development nexus" include (but is not limited to): Should employment and poverty alleviation take place before liberalization? Should there be stable institutions first before democracy? Should justice be pursued before reconciliation? This is the sequence of questioning that makes good sense. However, Liberia has not followed this 'good sense' sequence for several reasons, the most paramount being that because the civil war devastated a larger percentage of the populace, immediate survival is so crucial that long-term planning seems to have temporarily become a luxury, albeit still ultimately necessary to reconstruction (Tamagnini & Krafft 2010).

The underlying causes of conflict in Liberia must be addressed so that following United Nation's Mission in Liberia (UNMIL's) withdrawal Liberia can stay clear of the concerns that nascent local capacities to manage endemic societal fractures will be inadequate. Several deep social cleavages and internal threats continue to undermine genuine peace and reconciliation. Some of these include root causes of the civil conflict as identified by the Liberia Truth and Reconciliation Commission. These causes have not been fully addressed and they continue to threaten peace in Liberia. The most serious aspects of these causes are: inter-ethnic and geographic divides; poor socio-economic conditions exacerbated by socio-economic inequality; poor livelihoods and high levels of unemployment, especially among the youth; lack of access to adequate social services; mistrust of the government, measurable by widespread perception of corruption; and inadequate access to justice. This is even more pronounced in the counties and further compounded by the weak security and justice sector institutions.

There are certain benchmarks to determine when long-term planning and assistance should wind down. The first benchmark for reducing international engagement is the level of national capacity. Amid crippling brain drain, and persistent survival mentality, the withdrawal of international engagement is only a recipe for possibly relapsing to conflict. There are still many conflictual issues between local and international aid/development strategies, especially the fact that many of the policy decisions are led by international players. For instance, while the local focus is on the provision of food and basic services, international players are focusing on long-term sustainable policy formulation with little immediate dividend to ensure stability. Accepting the transfer to local ownership is still lacking mainly because of the level of local capacity and the distrust arising from a generalization of locals' "inability." A more convincing effort against corruption and better economic opportunities are needed both to help appease those likely to challenge state authority and to provide a basis for addressing reconciliation, security and electoral reforms.

Public trust and confidence in the security sector is a hallmark of a well-functioning democratic state, where citizens can reasonably expect state security forces to protect them from a range of actual and potential threats – foreign aggressors, terrorists, criminals, their fellow citizens and natural disasters. A functional and legitimate security sector with sufficient civilian

oversight and citizen participation is a key factor in promoting peace, security, democracy and respect for human rights and the rule of law in fragile, post-conflict countries. As threats and countries evolve, governments and citizens have a unique opportunity to transform their security sectors into just, equitable and functional sectors which provide for security for all. In this vein, Liberia is currently reviewing and revising its National Security Strategy of 2008 with the focus on human security concerns to include road networks, health, education, economic activities, human capacity development and other much deeper needs. These constitute concrete steps for rebuilding Liberia.

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