



Liberian Multi-party Democracy: Multi-ethnic Governance Experience in Historical Perspective

Leeway Dave Karngbeae

INTRODUCTION AND GLIMPSE AT LIBERIA'S INDIGENOUS PERIOD

Present day Liberia at pre-colonial era, was peopled originally by many indigenous, ethnic groups comprising the Bassa, Belle, Dan (Gio), Dei, Gbandi, Gola, Grebo, Kissi (Gizzi), Kpelle, Krahn, Kru, Lorma, Mah (Mano), Mandingo, Mende, and Vai, with the Gbi and Sapo tribes omitted from historical records for reasons not specified. These tribes had their own unique cultural conventions that kept them together. For example, music and dance had key roles in "uncontaminated" African Society, as they were ever present at birth, initiation, marriage, and death as well as appearing at the time of recreation (Rodney, 2005).

These indigenous groups were joined by the freed slaves and their descendants ---the Americo-Liberians in 1822, and later by the "Congoes" or "Recaptured" Africans who were subsequently resettled in what is known as "Congo Town" in Monrovia. The Congoes and the Americo-Liberians were two distinct ethnic groups between whom existed social or rather "racial" barriers. The "recaptives" settlers fit poorly into the Liberian colonial society. Unlike the American free blacks and emancipated slaves, they spoke no English, and their own origin varied widely, thus drifting them to the bottom of the colonial social order (though they were still above the indigenous population) (Woah-Tee, 2007).

New groups consisting of the Fulani, Guinian Kpelle, Guinian Mandingo, Nigerians, Ghanaians, Ivoirians, etc. are flocking into Liberia ---documented or undocumented. One thing is certain: The founders of Modern Liberia, the freed slave settlers, that is, overstated that "Liberia was the Beacon of Hope for All Africans who seek a Home Freedom," something that has made the country vulnerable to illegal and uncontrolled immigration. According to Dirke Hoarder however, "the history of human is the history of migration."

Among the Indigenous Ethnic Groups, power was centered on an agnatic family group with the male sibling, usually an elderly male emerging as the "Chief" whose selection was dictated by tradition (UNDESA/UNDP, 2000). This paternal kinsman (the chief), a subconscious democrat, exercised unautocratic authority because his decisions were consultative, participatory, and collaborative. His authority and decisions were balanced by acquiescence of the Council of Elders, made up of powerful "poro and sande zoes, bodios, or high priests," who presided over the "Right of Passage" in adherence to protocols and served as advisors in reaching major decisions concerning the clan and chieftaincy.

To this end, Article 5 of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples states that the people have the right to maintain and strengthen their distinct political, legal, economic, social, and cultural institutions, while retaining their right to participate fully, if they so choose, in the political, social, and cultural life of the State.

With the dominance of Western (American) Civilization and its subsequent contamination of African culture, the social and political conventions became subordinated. This meant that

Liberian colonial, commonwealth, and independence constitutions dating from 1825 to 1980 would exclude the indigenous population from their respective provisions---disenfranchisement, that is. As Guannu (1987), put it, the "Rock Town Boys and the Political Machine" controlled three fourth of Liberian economy. The "Rock Town Boys," the Free Black Immigrants known as Americo-Liberians—generators of political ethnicity in Liberia.

A SYNOPTIC FOCUS ON THE INTRODUCTION OF ETHNICITY IN THE GOVERNANCE OF LIBERIA

The concept and practice of multiparty democracy has yet to be understood and given space in the political life of nations and countries referring to themselves as democracies—Liberia being no exception. Conceptualizing it as the parent of the varying systems of government that one may perceive, Isaac D 'Israeli, reflected in Trembly et al. (2004), defines "politics" as the art of governing mankind by deceiving them. Hence, many politicians, leaders and nations are pretentious and pseudo democrats and democracies, bent towards ethnicities, nepotism, interpersonal relationships, loyalties, favoritism, religions, among others.

Ethnic sentiments and collaborations are therefore generally at the heart of African politics, thus making it challenging for many nations across the continent to attain national reconciliation and unification. This has led to the mushrooming of political parties with similar or identical manifestos which crosscut. Why become fragmented if a political party comprises individuals and groups who share the same view on how government should be structured and operated? However, Downs, in his book "Economic Theory of Democracy, reflected in Trembly et al. (2004), defines political party as a team of individuals who are united for the purpose of capturing political power.

The ethnic dominance in Liberian politics is structural or endemic and dates remotely to the founding of the state when the "BENEVOLENT ARISTOCRATES" in Southern United States through the American Colonization Society introduced in 1822 a governance practice which placed the MULLATOS above other freed slaves who were resettled in what would later become Liberia. Of course, this was part of the social legacy of the South which maintained that anything close to the "Master Class" both in spirit and appearance would be more preferred than the one that was not (Johnson & Roak, 1982), reflected in Beyan (1989),

The legacy of ethnic politics was soon to be implanted into the Colony of Liberia from 1822 to 1839; the Commonwealth of Liberia from 1839 to 1847; Independent Liberia from 1847 to 1980, from whence Ethnic Politics continues to date with Indigenous Liberians in charge of the "Political Machine." In the Liberian Colony, the "Mulattoes" or light-skinned settler Liberians were given preferential consideration by the American Colonization Society (ACS) over the dark-skinned settler Liberians and were second to the white ruling class in the social status in the colony (Beyan, 1999). By the same token, the dark-skinned settlers were superior to the "Congoes" or "recaptured" Africans to whom the "Indigenous" people were subordinate.

Established by the American Colonization Society, Colonial Liberia was administered by successive agents who were granted exclusive authority by the Colonial Constitution of 1825 and assisted by a Colonial Council. With this exclusive authority, the agents punished colonists and indigenous populations who violated the ordinances and regulations of the colony. In founding Liberia, the ACS was the advocate, the fundraiser, and the "overseas mission," while the US Government was the principal source of funding, the protector, and the legitimizer of the

enterprise (Dunn, 2009). Hence, all influences and impulses regarding the administration of the colony were generated from and by the United States of America.

As it was, the Colonial Constitution neither made mention of nor permitted the indigenous inhabitants who shared the colony with the settlers to participate in the decision-making and governance thereof. The exclusion of the indigenes and nonparticipation by the settlers in the governance of the colony were characteristic of the colonial period which ushered in the nation's governance problems (UNDESA/UNDP, 2000).

Succeeding the Colonial Period was the Commonwealth of Liberia in which a few modifications or adjustments obtained when the ACS appointed a governor and accorded the settlers the privilege to elect a deputy governor. Eventually in 1840, the settlers were allotted seats on the Commonwealth Council and at the same time granted the right to elect the governor of the Commonwealth, while the indigenes continued to be disenfranchised, something which extended into the independence period beginning 1847. In the view of Aristotle, politics arise in organized states which recognize themselves to be an aggregate of many members, not a single tribe, religion, interest, or tradition (Tremblay et al., 2004). This Aristotelian doctrine was neglected by the ACS, or the exclusionary tendency was structural and therefore deliberate.

In July 1847, the Commonwealth became an independent republic with a constitution which provided for three branches of government ---Legislature, Executive and Judiciary, and advocated a responsive democracy that would shoulder the interests and aspirations of the entire population of Liberia to the extent of transparency and accountability. This ultimately, required good governance that would take preeminence over every other thing else. By "governance" is meant a system of values, politics, and institutions by which a society manages its economic, political, and social affairs through interaction within and among the state, civil society, and private sector (Olowu & Sako, 2002).

However, the Declaration of Independence again excluded the indigenous people of Liberia as its preamble read in part: "We, the people of the Republic of Liberia were originally inhabitants of the United States of America. We contributed to the resources of a nation that gave us no protection." They proudly adopted the declaration that "The Love of Liberty Brought Us Here" as Liberia's national motto (Woah-Tee, 2007), which had sparked controversy and debate ever since among indigenous academics, scholars, thinkers, and researchers. The independence document did not only fail to include the natives who had never been inhabitants of the United States but called them "barbarians" (Johnson, 1991).

The worst was yet to come supervening independence of the young republic: The lack of educated, industrious, and enterprising leadership qualities, coupled with the apathy of the republic's young generation of citizens, influenced the quality of life and social order which resulted in limitations that were detrimental to the attainment of a common national purpose and mission for the welfare of all Liberians (National Concept Paper, 1999).

Prominent among these were young Americo-Liberians eager for public sector employment because of the opportunities for illegal enrichment at the expense of national interest (UNDESA/UNDP, 2000). Still, the appointment of unqualified public officials, coupled with the tendency of local and national politicians using money, vis-a-vis "cash violence" and influence to be elected or appointed to public office have contributed to the nightmare which haunts Liberia's

political, economic, and social spheres to date. Worst though, the monies used to execute these ambitions are for the most part extorted from government, institutional or organizational coffers, grounded by impunity.

Such legacy was inherent among the indigenous population that took over from the descendants of the freed slaves in the bloody coup d'état staged by 17 enlisted men of the Armed Forces of Liberia headed by Master Sergeant Samuel K. Doe on April 12, 1980. This coup toppled the one and a half-century old True Whig Party (TWP) government presided over by William Richard Tolbert, Jr. who was executed along with 13 of his officials.

But the inadequacies and contradictions which are endemic of military regimes soon engulfed the Liberian political and governance environment with the Master Sergeant promoting himself to the rank of "Five-Star General." He eliminated his rival junta partners and elevated his ethnic group along with his allies--- a new elite group which rapidly consolidated power and adopted the identical exclusionary tendencies characteristic of the preceding "True Whig Party (TWP) administration (Carbah, 1998). And yet when Master Sergeant Doe transformed himself and his government to civilian, or rather "mili-civilian" (military-civilian) rule, he became the political leader of the National Democratic Party of Liberia (NDPL).

As a mockery to "democracy" General Samuel K. Doe rigged the October 1985, Presidential Election between him and his surname's sake, Professor Jackson F. Doe of Nimba County. The general elections of 1985 were held, and Doe was announced winner though his former political Advisor Hon. Jackson F. Doe was said to be the acclaimed winner (Johnson, 1991). With this, it is safe to say that the term democracy is used loosely by many dictators and tyrants across the globe.

Tyrants are ambitious men who come to power through rebellions, while dictators are leaders who have absolute power to make laws and command the army (Littell, 1997). In both cases, General Doe qualified because he ascended to the presidency through the violent overthrow of the Tolbert regime, and ruled by decree, while at the same time commanding the army during General Thomas Quiwonkpa Invasion of 1985, and the Charles Taylor Revolution of 1989 and 1990 respectively. That President Taylor also qualified both as tyrant and dictator cannot be over-emphasized.

POLITICAL AND GOVERNANCE BEHAVIORS OF AFRICAN "RULERS" AND POLITICIANS

Inversely, regarding the mentality and behaviors of African "rulers" and politicians, there is need for selflessness and the demonstration of an understanding of what democracy really is. Truth holds that democracy does not merely mean the existence of more than one political party. Democracy entails the creation of an environment of freedom, peace, security, liberty, tolerance, and trust, in which individuals can debate and discuss issues, exchange views and opinions, and engage themselves in various creative and productive activities of their choice in pursuit of their personal interests or in the promotion of the public good (UNDESA/UNDESA, 2000).

Majority of African "rulers" are politicians or demagogues who are bent on power greed and therefore neglect pluralistic participation in decision-making, DE concentration of authority, and shared responsibilities. Their orientations are driven by tribal, ethnic, or sectional affiliation and loyalties. For once they assume power, the next step is to control and mismanage national resources to the benefit of their kins, friends, associates, confidants, tribal, ethnic, and regional

folks. "It is Our Turn to Eat" (Wrong, 2009), they may say. Democracy requires institutions that can make policies that are transparent, accountable, predictable, and participative, ie, efficient and effective from the society's point of view (Schiavo-Campo & Sundaram, 1999), reflected in Olowu and Sako (2002).

Because of the parochial mindset and behavior of most of our (African) "rulers," aggrieved populations are usually demonized, dehumanized, demoralized, denigrated, and marginalized. These politicians are not necessarily "leaders" as they claim; they are "rulers" because leaders lead by good examples worth emulating, while rulers' rule with iron fists and discrimination.

The power-hungry African rulers portray others as evil, worthy of contempt or blame. For example, during the years that followed the assassination of President Tolbert, Head of State Samuel K. Doe gradually eliminated members of the People's Redemption Council (PRC) in the struggle for power and control, and his security agents' nonchalant attitude towards Nimba County citizens (Johnson, 1991). Ruthless African rulers vilify oppositions and subject their perceived enemies to degrading, inhumane, treatments, thus depriving them of their human qualities, personality, and dignity, all of which are tantamount to bad governance and inimical to good governance.

Governance, according to the World Bank (1994) and the United Nations (1997), reflected in Olowu and Sako (2002), is defined respectively as: "The manner in which power is exercised in the management of a country's economic and social development." With "emphasis on leadership, governance is defined as the manner in which political (state) leaders manage, use, or misuse power—to promote social and economic development or to pursue agenda that undermine such goals,"

Contrary to the doctrine of good governance, some African rulers cause people to turn aside from what is good or morally right and adopt corrupt Morales, thereby upsetting or destroying the normal functioning of society and throwing truth, honesty, and integrity into disorder. Finally, Sub-Saharan African rulers attack, assassinate, and defame the reputations of people of different political ideologies, tribal, ethnic, regional, or religious backgrounds. Not only that; the power mongering politicians deny, neglect, and belittle the importance and validity of oppositions.

Consequently, dissatisfaction and discontentment creep and spread among those who feel dispossessed and marginalized and the ultimate repercussions translate into social unrest, political instability, and violent confrontations because of ethnic dominance and concentration in the Civil Service. According to the UNDP (2000), the Civil Service in Africa is characterized with bureaucratic impunity and ignorance, perceiving as "nuisances" or "spies" any citizen who approaches them seeking information or requesting services to which they are entitled as citizens. For this situation, the UN agency asserts as reasons among which are: low level of education; poor pay, working conditions and career prospects; lack of work and professional ethics; commitment to the "big man" in the system rather than to abstract concepts such as 'the public interest', 'rule of law', or the 'citizen'. The 'factionalization' of the civil service with successive transitional governments in Liberia is a prime example, the UN agency concluded.

SEXUAL HARASSMENT IN WORK AND OTHER PLACES: A BRIEF GENDER PERSPECTIVE

Besides, the civil service is also plagued with malpractices among which "Sexual Harassment" plays leading role in relationship to males and their female counterparts in workplaces, schools

and other public institutions, the private and religious sectors not being exceptions. Sexual Harassment is thus one instance of "Sexual Coercion" which entails an illegal sexual contact that usually involves force upon a person without consent or is inflicted upon a person who is incapable of giving consent because of age, physical or mental incapacity, or who places the assailant or rapist in the position of trust or authority (Hyde & DeLamater, 1997).

Sexual Harassment at work may take several different forms. An employer or a prospective employer may make it clear that sexual activity is a prerequisite to being hired. Once on the job, sexual activity may be made a condition for retention, promotion, increment, or other benefits.

In all the instances of sexual harassment, there is a situation of unequal power in which the more powerful person, i.e. The employer, professor, psychotherapist, physician imposes sexual activity on the less powerful person – i.e. The employee, student, client, or patient. This situation is particularly serious because clients in psychotherapy and patients in hospitals and clinics have opened themselves up emotionally and are therefore extremely vulnerable emotionally; while at the same time, the acquisition of education is the student's ardent hope for the future; and for the employee, the job determines his or her survival and social security (Hyde & DeLamater, 1997). Finally, in Political Science, we call this "FATE CONTROL" because the fate of the less powerful person lies in the hands of the more powerful person. And in legal jargon, we refer to this as "QUID PRO QUO" meaning "I will do something for you if you do something for me" or "nothing for nothing."

For instance, Chairman Mulbah Morlu of the ruling Coalition for Democratic Change (CDC) was on record as saying (paraphrased), "Whenever President Weah makes foreign trips and is given money for the country, he returns and deposits same in his personal account. And in addition, he claimed that before the President appoints any female to positions in government, he must sleep with her." When journalists pressed to ascertain the authenticity of the Chairman's claim, he was alleged to have said that he made the remark under the influence of alcohol.

CENTRAL CONSTITUENTS OF GOOD GOVERNANCE

To emphasize the importance of good governance, the indented text infra is excerpted from Karngbese and Kennedy (2022), on the "Operational Structures of Governance" which include Political Governance, Administrative Governance, Economic Governance and Systemic Governance that are sine qua non to all governments.

Political Governance is about the participation of individuals in decision-making processes that affect and are affected by their lives. Any attempt to prevent or exclude people based on party, religious, gender or ethnic line engenders discontents, dissatisfaction, disunity and above all hatred.

These political decisions relate to the issues of democracy, representation and inclusion, power-sharing, and the relationships between and among institutions of governance. "Note that when people feel under-represented and dissatisfied with political governance, they will group to discuss their dissatisfaction; and when they do group, you can predict the outcomes of these groupings" (Dwanyen, 1985).

The key driver of Political Governance is Administrative Governance, without which any government is rendered a vacuum; for it is the personnel who run the system! Here comes in

Administrative Governance which is concerned with the implementation of decisions and policies. It involves the institutional framework which utilizes the knowledge, skills, expertise, and experiences of the personnel involved and the resources needed to ensure the effective and efficient execution of public policies; the supplies of public services and the way they are delivered.

Lewinski (2001), observes that economy is a system of building, using, and distributing wealth and resources. In this accord, Economic Governance entails the decision-making processes related to the allocation of resources to promote national growth, the creation of wealth, equity, and sustainable human capacity.

This requires an enabling environment within which such decisions are reached, hoping to promote collaboration and partnership between stakeholders—ie. Government, Private Sector, and relevant organizations in the Civil Society. Thus, contravening these conventions might spill down to the local populations, whose grievances will lead them to cut off ties with existing political sub-units and become autonomous, and in some cases adamant or unresponsive to government calls and regulations. There is a Spanish Colonial Latin American slogan which says, “Obedesco pero no complo—I will obey your authority but will not execute your orders” (Skidmore and Peter, 1992).

Consequently, to promote good governance that supports peaceful coexistence among Liberians, there must be an efficient and effective Systemic Governance System which brings together the government, private sector, and civil society in making meaningful decisions that will positively impact the lives of the people. Beware that the needs, demands, wants, wishes and aspirations of citizens and residents alike are many, varied and diverse.

Thus, a glance at the term transparency tells us about the availability of information on all matters related to governance processes –i.e., Duties and responsibilities of public officials and the way they are performed or delivered are known or knowable to the public or those interested. This implies that the public officials are themselves aware or should be aware of the rules that describe and prescribe their performance.

In essence, transparency represents the availability of the quality of information. For instance, the way in which they are availed or disseminated and those responsible for certain aspects of governance matter. In this case, openness and predictability characterized by the willingness of officials to engage in debates on public issues is a big score for any administration. This is because there is tolerance for public scrutiny and questioning on economic, social, and political spheres. That transparency facilitates trust, growth and confidence and enhances cooperation cannot be over-emphasized.

Accountability, a close accomplice of transparency, represents a reciprocal relationship between those who govern and the governed. Here lie expectations and their executions or fulfillments. Simply put, accountability obliges officials and entrusted individuals to conduct themselves in an open fashion according to laws, rules and regulations or face disciplinary measures for their actions or inactions.

RESPONSES TO UNDEMOCRATIC PRACTICES

In a sense, Sub-Saharan African rulers and politicians continue to grapple with the definitions of the term's 'opposition' and 'enemy;' They understand these concepts to be interchangeable which of course, is not the case. By connotation, the term 'opposition' suggests ideological, philosophical, or opinionated positions, propositions, or reasoning, whereas the concept 'enemy' refers to bitterness, belligerence, antagonism, violence, hostility, inhospitality, bloodthirstiness, ethnic cleansing among others.

Earlier in the 1960s to the 1990s these misrules were terminated or rather replaced by military leaders who themselves made no difference when they tasted power, as in the case of Samuel Doe of Liberia who played the game of ethnic dominance and elimination of fellow coup makers. According to the imperative that brought the People's Redemption Council to power, the True Whig Party (TWP) was charged with "Rampant Corruption" and the "Abuse of Human Rights." This can be said of former President Kibaki of Kenya when he asserted during his inauguration in which he dismissed Moi's legacy as worthless, saying, "I am inheriting a country that had been badly ravaged by years of misrule and ineptitude" (Wrong, 2009).

Same could be said of Charles Taylor who eliminated prominent indigenous Liberians like Jackson F. Doe, Stephen Daniels, David Gborboe Dwanyen, Stephen M. Yekerson, Cllr. Alfred Flomo among others, but rescued Ambassador Ernest Eastman, Samuel D. Hills, D. Musuleng Cooper, his kinfolk, and took them to his headquarters in Gbarnga, Central Liberia. Besides, during his presidency, Mr. Taylor's residence, the "White Flower" in Congo Town housed the Liberia Ministry of Finance---Conflict of Interest, that is. I am afraid, but those whom Taylor eliminated were indigenous Liberians, while those he rescued were descendants of freed slaves or Americo-Liberians, his kind or kins. That Taylor terminated most of his Special Forces and fighters (all indigenes) cannot be overemphasized.

Meanwhile, other civilized African populations may express their anger, dissatisfaction, frustration, and opposition through democratic means---i.e. "The Ballot Box," as in the case of the Senatorial Bye Election between opposition Liberty Party's Darius Dillon and ruling Coalition for Democratic Change challenger Thomas Fallah, when the latter was massively defeated by the former, backed by aggrieved electorates of Montserrado County. Same is expected to happen between opposition Unity Party's presidential contender Joseph Nyumah Boakai and incumbent Coalition for Democratic Change George Manneh Weah.

Still, others become complacent and apathetic, expressing that electing another group to replace the current system will make no difference. They accordingly resort to voter apathy or incuriosity---come what may, that is. In such case, the incumbent is likely to win because they will use state resources to their disposal to play on light-minded people through "cash violence" coupled with the use of government media---print and electronic as propaganda machines... In addition, 'when the going gets tough, and the tough gets going,' state police or military and para-military apparatus are used to intimidate or eliminate opposition or perceived enemies.

WHAT IS "DEMOCRACY" IF CRITICAL VIEWS, VOICES, AND ACTIONS ARE DEMONIZED AND SILENCED?

According to the Merriam-Webster Dictionary (Since 1828), democracy is defined as a government in which the supreme power is vested in the people and exercised by them directly or indirectly through a system of representation usually involving periodically held free elections.

Correspondingly, Trembly et al. (2004), have dissected the concept “democracy,” reflecting the world’s various territorial governance systems to indicate into category (ies) we find ourselves as individual nations:

1. Consensus Democracy: A type of democracy that emphasizes the dispersal of political power.
2. Consociational Democracy: A special type of democracy characterized by grand coalition, proportional representation, mutual veto, and segmental autonomy.
3. Cosmopolitan Democracy: A transitional governance regime comprising international institutions, democratic states, and civil societies committed to protecting human rights and democratic public law both within national borders and at the regional and international levels.
4. Delegative Democracy: A type of democracy in which those elected to office enjoy unconstrained abilities to govern without regard to their electoral promises or popular needs and demands.
5. Deliberative Democracy: An ideal type of democracy in which collectively rational outcomes emerge as the consensus of free, independent, and self-enforcing exchange of ideas among rational individuals.
6. Direct Democracy: A type of democracy in which political decisions are made by direct participation of the people.
7. Liberal Democracy: The type of democracy that emphasizes the protection and unhindered practice of political and civil rights and liberties of individual citizens.
8. Representative Democracy: Also called indirect democracy, is one in which the political will of the people is exercised through the decisions and choices of the agents whom they select to represent them.
9. Procedural Democracy: The view according to which the establishment of particular institutions is sufficient for a regime to be classified as a democracy. At minimum, these institutions are multiparty competition, universal franchise and constitutional guarantees of social and political rights and liberties.
10. Social Democracy: The type of democracy that emphasizes the importance of collective as opposed to individual rights and development.

Not understanding their respective status in the type of democracy they institute; Sub-Saharan African rulers perceive their oppositions as potential enemies to be reckoned with, thereby turning the sub-continent into a theatre of instability and violence. Africa, once peaceful, has turned into a state of chaos and bloodbath unleashed by non-state militant movements, an untold terror the continent has ever witnessed.

To this effect, the author has selected what he calls “Moderate-party Democracy” to be adapted by African politicians and rulers, if they should attain the title “leaders.” By Moderate-party Democracy is meant the system of government in which the number of political parties by legislation, is very minimal, less quantitative, or numerical, fixed, and constitutionally binding, void of reflection or semblance of tribal, ethnic, religious or gender influence. A fixed number of political parties that is void of extreme, exaggerated, plethoric latitude, not more than three or less than two, that is.

Based on the behaviors and practices of contemporary African rulers, some disenchanted populations have taken the “Mack Bolan” Approach. According to Allan Dole’s novel, “The Executioner” (1970s), Mack Bolan, an American soldier fighting in Vietnam, said to himself: First I

believed in “Three Fs---i.e., Family, Friends, and Freedom. But because the Mafia had eaten up everything that I loved back home, I am now changing my Three Fs to Three Bs---i.e., Bomb, Bullet and Blood” and returning to Washington to deal with the Mafiosos”

Summarized, the story went that Mack Bolan, serving as a United States soldier in Vietnam, received a communication on the frontline that his only sister had been forced into prostitution by the Mafia, because of which his father, disgusted, shot, and killed her. With this, the American serviceman said to himself “I think I am fighting the wrong enemies here in Vietnam, while everything I loved had been eaten up by the Mafia, my real enemy; I must return to Washington now and face the Mafiosos.”

While the author is not a devil’s advocate, he believes that the instability in Sub-Saharan Africa is root- caused by the strong desires of “rulers” and leading politicians to dominate, demonize, dehumanize, demoralize, and denigrate oppositions and minority groups or populations whom they perceive as potential threats, enemies, or successors, if you wish. And when their existence, interests, concerns, choices, and aspirations are doomed, they may resort to the “non-ballot” approach as is sporadic in Sub-Saharan Africa.

The debate in point is that democracy features unity of national purpose, integration, diversity in human culture and thoughts, tolerance, justice, freedom, equality, peace, participation, accountability, transparency, and devolution of power from central to local authorities. Democracy looks at humanity as its ‘central nerve’ and single-most common denominator for instituting governments the world over. Accordingly, politics, a parent of democracy, arises from accepting the fact of simultaneous existence of different groups, hence different interests, and different traditions within a territorial unit under a common rule (Tremblay, 2004).

In some cases, Sub-Saharan African rulers who form cliques and marginalize others, experience internal rivalries or wranglings either for money, power or resources, and implosions become inevitable. Resultantly, internal marginalization, lies, false accusations, imprisonment, and extrajudicial killings, are used as tools to silence perceived dissidents, mutineers, conspirators, renegades, or desperados. One reason for these actions is simple: In political history, “dictators are always afraid of those who brought them to power because they have the capacity to dethrone or withdraw their support for the dictator” (Anonymous author 1970c). This was evident in the case of Master Sergeant Samuel K. Doe who in the 1980s eliminated majority of his fellow coup makers for alleged coup plots, treason, or attempted coups. Same could be said of Southern Sudan which has witnessed perpetual instability before and after independence.

From all indications, in developed countries, the proponents of multiparty democratic systems like the United States of America, United Kingdom, France, Germany, Italy, etc. all field at most three political parties during elections as opposed to Sub-Saharan Africa, with Liberia as a case in point, which is fielding twenty political parties for the 2023 Presidential and Legislative Elections. She Interestingly, when presenting their platforms or manifestos, during rallies, through the electronic or print media, programs to be perused are the same or identical. For instance, the twenty political parties vying for the Liberian Presidency during the 2023 Elections have all respectively mentioned education, health, agriculture, security, road connectivity, youth, and women empowerment as their respective programs to be pursued when victorious.

Multi-party Democracy does not entail multi-ethnic factionalism; it aims generally at encouraging inclusion, participation, power sharing, and pluralism in governance at all levels –ie. Political, economic, administrative, and systemic. It encourages equitable distribution of national wealth based on population, needs, and necessity; not mere land mass, geopolitical nomenclature or the wishes of the power that be. Here is where the locals elicit their own interests, aspirations, priorities and unanimously decide their choices.

As it is, contemporary Liberian democracy has embraced, like other Sub-Saharan African democracies, divisive party systems –i.e., Ethnic, tribal, or sectional alliances as modes of winning votes and governance mechanisms. For instance, it can be recalled that following the April 12, 1980, bloody revolution that brought Master Sergeant Samuel K. Doe to power, a multi-party democratic model was actualized with the Master Sergeant as the Standard bearer of the National Democratic Party of Liberia. Other political included the True Whig Party (oldest and ousted), Liberia Action Party, Liberia People’s Party, Grand Coalition Party, Liberia Unification Party, to name a few.

Prior to and during the electioneering period, Master Sergeant Doe who had earlier heavily populated the Armed Forces of Liberia with his ethnic kinfolk, also made it mandatory that if you were working in government, you should acquire membership in his National Democratic Party or risk dismissal. Similarly, membership in the NDPL was mostly drawn from Southeastern Liberia, the region of his origin.

When the Doe regime became tyrannical and deadly, abusing human rights and eliminating oppositions and perceived enemies, Archbishop Michael Kpala Francis spoke against these ills for which he was warned by President in these following words: “Archbishop Francis, stop preaching politics.” In response the archbishop asserted: “President Doe, you are meddling in matters that fall beyond the authority of the Executive Mansion. I have the pulpit as my official command base; and just as you speak from the Executive Mansion, I speak from my pulpit” (THE POINT, 2006).

The archbishop also had a taste of another Liberian tyrant Charles McArthur Taylor, whom he (Archbishop) referred to as the “single most formidable obstacle to peace in Liberia during the civil crises of the 1990s in the following manner: “It is my considered opinion that the principal obstacle to peace is Charles McArthur and the National Patriotic Front of Liberia (NPFL). He has done all he can to abort the achievement of genuine peace; he has brought to this country destruction: physical, psychological, spiritual, social, and economic” (THE POINT, 2006). Surely, this statement earned him the fiercest hatred from Mr. Taylor during the time of peace negotiations through the latter’s ascension to the presidency following the 1997 Elections.

With this, Mr. Taylor through his surrogates, prominent among whom was Sando Johnson, the Archbishop’s kinsman, exploited every situation or opportunity to make slanderous, defaming, abusive, vilifying, and malignant utterances against the Catholic Prelate in so far Taylor was in power.

Undeterred, Archbishop Frances issued a joint statement on January 4, 2004, when Liberia at last shook free from the shackles of the tyrant, reflecting “HOPE and CHALLENGES” facing Liberia, as captured in THE POINT MAGAZINE (2006) infra:

"All Liberians have co-responsibility to build a vibrant society, a society in which we stand for our rights, a society in which we no longer play passive role, a society in which we are part and parcel of the drama of justice and equality for all. We must always shout at the top of our voices, Never Again! Never Again!" We must stand up against tyranny and the associated tyrants and dictators. We must take the destiny of our people and nation into our own hands. Yes, we must be brave and stand up to evil incarnate in the few who are determined to decide our future with us having no part in this decision and leading us into hell. No more should we accept "Liberators." For the so-called "liberators" have become our tormentors, our death squads, and our hells. We do hope the New Liberia in which we are entering will be one in which we love our neighbors as ourselves. As we have the trials and tribulations of the last two and a half decades, as we look to the future with optimism, as we sing the song, "We shall overcome," and utter the words of Martin Luther King "Free at Last," we must as a people and nation never, ever forget what has happened to us and the perpetrators of the eighties, nineties and the new millennium and must be made accountable. We must forgive, certainly but we cannot ever forget. If we forget, we will return to similar situations in which we found ourselves the last 23 years."

Looking again at multi-ethnic party system in Liberia, during the presidential and legislative elections of 2017, President George drew his primary support from Southeastern Liberia among the Kwa speaking peoples, his natal route. This region comprises the counties of Grand Gedeh, Grand Kru, Maryland, River Cess, River Gee, Sinoe, and GRAND BASSA (I am afraid). Even to date (October 10, 2023, Presidential and Legislative Elections), the Incumbent, President George Weah has drawn his votes among these people. "It seemed as though Kenya's political parties had finally matured, realizing that so long as they allowed tribal differences to dominate with each ethnic group mustering behind its presidential candidate, Moi would win" (Wrong, 2009).

Earlier during the 2017 Elections, Mr. Weah also formed a political alliance with Senator Prince Yormie Johnson who convinced Nimba County to vote for the former. They would fall apart during the 2023 presidential and legislative elections. Only Lofa County took a stance to save its son Joseph Boakai from total political annihilation during the 2017 elections.

A scenario: Crudely, and politically immaturely notwithstanding, Vice President Jewel Howard Taylor of the ruling Coalition for Democratic Change (CDC) went on record as saying: "If you cannot join the CDC, you will not get job." Ingrained with such a notion by national 'rulers.' Political participation and inclusion in decision-making, governance, and equitable distribution of national wealth and social services are faulty, uneven, loyalized, favorized, nepotized, determined by the presidency, the richest and most powerful in the nation.

From empirical evidence and experience, the CDC government in Liberia has been one in which folks seek positions to amass wealth at the detriment of the national economy. For example, the quest for legislative seats can be equated to the "California Gold Rush" during the early days of the formation of the United States of America. The California Gold rush brought wealth to many and brought sorrow to John Sutor (Days of Adventure, 1950c). In the Liberian situation, the population represents John Sutor, while the legislators and other senior and junior government officials symbolize the gold rushers.

Something is nostalgic about the Liberian Constitution of the First Republic: In it was enshrined "PROPERTY CLAUSE" for elected or public officials. But the 1986 Revised Constitution obliterated the "property clause" perhaps because those who framed it themselves did not have

property and were ambitious to occupy elected positions in the future as some of the did. "No Land, No Vote" (Sawyer, 2023). The case in point here is the notion that people work in government to accumulate or amass wealth and fame if I may say. Majority, if not all of those who worked under the Constitution of the First Republic had Real Estates—ie. Land, houses, farms of plantations, businesses etc., though the author does not know how this wealth were accumulated.

Inversely, from the 1980s, which witnessed the indigenious revolution---The People's Redemption Council that is, folks go in government penniless. After few years they become rich people and would use what we call "Cash Violence" to influence votes, instigate instability, inflame relationships, and loot the resources which should benefit the population. In most instances, the system becomes a "Laisser-Faire, corrupt, inept, draconian, and abusive, worshipped by its devotees with harassment, intimidation, and other malpractices as its "Coaches."

Obsessed with power, for example, Montserrado County Electoral District # 8 former Representative Moses Icarus Gray, a close confidant and perhaps a spokesman or defender of President Weah, in Mid-2023 invaded the Capitol Hill Campus of the University of Liberia with his gangsters and brutalized students of the institution. According to him, he went to "have lunch" with the Students Unification Party (SUP), and that he would return the following day to "have more lunch." This of course, did not go without popular condemnations from all spectra of the Liberia Society, although government did not come out with a statement disassociating itself from the act of the honorable man, now reduced to an ordinary citizen because of his failure to rewin the legislative seat.

As regards the worship of the president by his devotees and loyalists, Archbishop Francis prophesized in 1999, what befalls Liberia in years to come in a CERTIFIED COPY infra:

Archbishop Michael Francis' 1999 Report (prophecy) to the Vatican, Rome, Italy "Pope, Archbishops from around the world and other leaders, I bring you greetings from Liberia. The days ahead in the West African nation look rocky but we are hopeful it will get better. Advocacy and social justice as well as freedom of speech have all been doomed, but that's not what is important. A new generation of young people are gearing up for change after Taylor and that's what should worry us more. They will have a leader of their own from their generation who will be the worst the nation will ever see.

Many of them uneducated will come to government and will hail him as a KING, he will never be wrong and politicians of the old order will bow to him...ALL HAIL THE KING, they will say.

He will rule with iron fist and Liberia's economy under him will be the worst the nation ever experienced. Though around the world his celebrity status will swell but home will be a nightmare. The worst is not under Taylor; it is yet to come when mayhem will take the land and a dictator will rise but no one who celebrates him will see by then, they will all be blind and will end up as blind leading the blind."

At the end of that realm an astute statesman will rise, and the nation will prosper forever."

"MERCENARY" VOTERS ACROSS ELECTORAL DISTRICTS, COUNTIES, AND INTERNATIONAL BOUNDARIES

In recent years dating from the inception of the George Weah administration, voters trafficking or trucking across electoral districts, county constituencies, and importation of aliens into Liberia have become an open secret in addition to the formation of ethnic alliances for power. This unethical and unconstitutional practice has engulfed the electoral environment of Liberia and is likely to become a "political culture" if not swiftly checked and ended. Influenced by money or "cash violence," voters are recruited from their true places of residence to undomiciled locals to register and cast their votes.

Linguistic or ethnic sentiments and solidarities is the single-most imperative behind this, while we cannot at the same time rule out the fact the majority, ignorant youthful population is enticed by politicians especially in the ruling party which uses the nation's revenue to accomplish this end. The youth, some of them 18 years (legal voting age) and below, referred to as "First-Time Voters" are "conscripted" through cash inducements and trucked into different electoral districts by presidential and legislative aspirants to register and vote a party's or independent candidates (s). Regarding the "Minor," Chapter 8 Article 77 Section B of the Liberian Constitution (1986) reads: "All elections shall be by secret ballot as may be determined by the Elections Commission, and every Liberian citizen not less than 18 years of age, shall have the right to be registered as a voter and to vote in public elections and referenda under the Constitution." These "mercenary" voters, some of them also adults, are not domiciled in the places of registration and polling.

Interestingly for the "First-Time" Voters, their voter registration cards are taken away from them by the aspirant (s) who return (s) same during polling day and pays the second installment after casting votes. Currently, (Electioneering Season----October 10 to November 14, 2023) it is rumored that the ruling Coalition for Democratic Change (CDC), depleting the nation's coffer, has embarked on a vigorous campaign of buying and destroying voter's registration cards belonging to "First-Time" Voters and ordinary "poor" people believed to be supporters of the opposition Unity Part. The rumor furthered that the party is dispatching od disbursing thousands of bags of money across the country to win support for the CDC runner-off campaign. These actions are intended to impotentiate, incapacitate, and reduce the numerical strength of the opposition Unity Party which goes to the runner-off presidential election slated for the 14th of November 2023.

Meanwhile, ethnicity also brings voters across international boundaries. For example, because Liberian's international borders are loose, and unmanned for the most part, presidential and legislative aspirants recruit "mercenary" voters from the neighboring states of Guinea, Ivory Coast, and Sierra Leone. Linguistically, both Liberia and Guinea have Kissi, Mende and Fuli tribes. Similarly, Liberia and Ivory Coast have the Dan (Gio), Grebo, and Krahn tribes. Still, Liberia shares with Guinea the Kissi, Mandingo, Fulani, Mah (Mano), Kpelle. Theses "alien" voters are "mercenaries" or "imposters" who along with their employers –i.e., legislative and presidential aspirants have no regards for International Law.

These international elections "mercenaries" are trucked, bused, taxied, or motorcycled into Liberia to take constitutional decisions for the country of which they are not citizens. Legally, citizenship is gained by being born in a particular country and having parents who are considered citizens of that country, or by naturalization (MOE, 2003; OSIWA, 2017c). Chapter 4, Article 27 Section B of the Liberian Constitution (1986) states: "In order to preserve, foster, and maintain

the positive Liberian culture, values, and character, only persons who are Negroes or of Negro descent shall qualify by birth or by naturalization be citizen of Liberia.”

AUTHOR’S FEAR

With all said, the author harbors the fear of looming catastrophe over Liberia emanating from frequent news of the confiscation of dangerous drugs and guns at air and sea ports including land borders of Liberia. In the author’s mind, the citizenry is not properly informed about these life-threatening substances and firearms. Who keeps or disposes of them, what happens to the smugglers and runners remains a mystery. “In pursuance of this right, there shall be no limitation on the public right to be informed about the government and its functionaries” (Liberian Constitution, 1986, Chapter 3, Article 15 Section C). “Once bitten, we are twice shy.” We had had a bitter experience with firearms during the civil war, and the dangerous drugs are spoiling our youthful population. Gay rights and lesbianism are UnAfrican, UnLiberian, and unacceptable as far as our culture is involved.

SUMMARY

This study commences with a spotlight on Precolonial Liberia, featuring the indigenous peoples who were later joined by the freed black immigrants from the United States and the “Recaptured” Africans or “Congoes” coupled with the assimilation of peoples from other West African countries. Captured also in this discourse are the Colonial, Commonwealth and Independence Epochs which characterized social barriers or discrimination between the freed black immigrants or Americo-Liberians and the indigenous inhabitants, with the former exercising superiority or dominance over the latter who were thrown into constitutional oblivion. There is an African saying that “when spider webs unite, they can catch a lion.”

The ethnic influence in the governance of Liberia coupled with the desire of government desire to amass wealth to the detriment of the citizenry from colonial to independence (1822 to date), is an issue of concern to this work. The multiplicity of political parties also influenced by ethnic affinities which is eating up the tenants of national unification and reconciliation is flagged in the work. The study concludes with election malpractices including importing Mercenary voters from neighboring countries, county constituencies, and electoral districts. Finally, some limitations of African Civil Service featuring impunity, “big” syndrome, sexual harassment in public service, among others are touched.

CONCLUSION

This work clearly shows that the phrase “Multiparty Democracy” in the African or rather Liberian context is loosely, pretentiously, and deceptively used to give unfulfilled hope the citizens. Multiparty Democracy is but “Multi-ethnicities” in the Liberian context which is highly divisive. A Small country with a population of 5 million has 20 registered political parties that went to the polls during the October 10, 2023 presidential and legislative elections.

In such an ethnic-political dispensation, folks who stand on the opposite side of the divide are demonized, dehumanized, demoralized, and denigrated with total disregards to international human rights standards and constitutional provisions. In so doing, the national coffer depletes at the hands of the power that be with impunity, as the monies are used to run for elected positions and personal gratifications. For sure, the race for legislative seats in contemporary Liberia can be equated to the “California Gold Rush” (Days of Adventure, 1950c.) when mining became the single-most economic activity during the early days of the founding of the United States, as other

industries were abandoned. The desire of public officials to control power, accumulate wealth, and exert influence, motivated by greed has diminished the dignity of the ordinary citizens.

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