

At least until 1915, the U.S. assisted the Liberian rulers in putting down rebellions and uprisings of indigenous tribes. Between 1882 and 1919, whenever Britain and France annexed or threatened to annex, parts of Liberian territory, U.S. naval assistance was helpful in preserving Liberian independence.

War involvement

In World War II, Liberia signed a Defense Pact with the U.S. in 1942, and assured the Americans and their allies of all the supply of natural rubber (a strategic commodity in wartime) that they needed. It also allowed the U.S. to use its territory for military bases, and as a bridgehead for American transports of soldiers and war supplies. U.S. subsidized the construction of airports (Roberts Field), the Freeport of Monrovia, and roads into the interior of Liberia.



Two World Wars

Between 1910 and 1943 Germany was Liberia's major trading partner. In World War I, Liberia nevertheless tended to support the Allies, partly because it was French and British colonial territories that surrounded Liberia but also because Allied control of the Atlantic sea lanes made continued trade with Germany unviable. As a result Germany withdrew business from Liberia, causing Liberian

customs revenue to decrease significantly.

In the 1930s Dutch, Danish, German and Polish investors signed agreements for economic activities. In the Second World War, the U.S. pressured Liberia to side with the Allies, and to expel all German citizens and business representatives in 1944. This would have again significantly disturbed the Liberian economy, but America had already in 1942 begun investing substantially in Liberia, in projects related to America's war effort.



Large scale investments

Between 1945 and 1980, the posture of Western European states towards Liberia was largely that of the U.S. Americo-Liberian rulers received hundreds of millions of dollars in unrestricted foreign investment, mainly from the U.S., but also from Western Europe. Many Western politicians courted President Tubman.

Liberian rulers also built up ties with the Soviet bloc and other powers, striving for an independent position in world politics, as far as their strong bonds with the Western world allowed them to.

Samuel Doe and the People's Redemption Council (1980–1989)

After a bloody overthrow of the Americo-Liberian régime by indigenous Liberians in 1980, a 'Redemption Council' took control of Liberia. Internal unrest, opposition to the new military regime, and governmental repression steadily grew, until in 1989 Liberia sank into outright tribal and civil war.

Coup d'état; relations with U.S.

Samuel Kanyon Doe (1951–1990) was a member of the small ethnic group of the Krahn, a master sergeant in the Liberian army, and trained by U.S. Army Special Forces.



On April 12, 1980, Doe led a bloody coup d'état against president Tolbert, in which Tolbert and twenty-six of his supporters were murdered; ten days later thirteen of Tolbert's Cabinet members were publicly executed. Thus ended 133 years of Americo-Liberian political domination over Liberia. Doe established a military regime called the People's Redemption Council (PRC). Many people

welcomed Doe's takeover as a shift favoring the majority of the population that had been excluded from power. Immediately following the coup, the PRC tolerated a relatively free press.

Doe quickly established good relations with the United States, especially after U.S. President Ronald Reagan took office in 1981. Reagan increased financial aid for Liberia, from the \$20 million it had been in 1979, to \$75 million, and later \$95 million per year. Liberia became again an important Cold War ally of the U.S., Liberia served to protect important U.S. facilities and investments, and to counter the perceived spread of Soviet influence in Africa. Doe closed the Libyan mission in Monrovia and even severed diplomatic relations with the Soviet Union. He agreed to a modification of the mutual defense pact with the U.S. granting staging rights on 24-hour notice at Liberia's sea- and

airports for the U.S. Rapid Deployment Forces. Under Doe, Liberian ports were opened to American, Canadian, and European ships, which brought in considerable foreign investment from shipping firms and earned Liberia a reputation as a tax haven.

Fear of counter-coup; repression

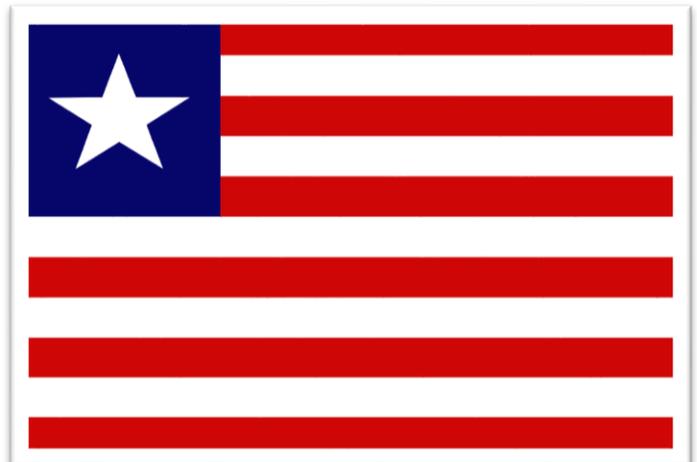
Doe overcame seven coup attempts between 1981 and 1985. In August 1981 he had Thomas Weh Syen



and four other PRC members arrested and executed for allegedly conspiring against him. Then Doe's government declared an amnesty for all political prisoners and exiles, and released sixty political prisoners. Soon there were more internal rifts in the PRC. Doe became paranoid about the possibility of a counter-coup, and his government grew increasingly corrupt and repressive, banning political opposition, shutting down newspapers and jailing reporters. He began to systematically eliminate PRC members who challenged his authority, and to place people of his own ethnic Krahn background in key positions, which intensified popular anger. Meanwhile, the economy deteriorated precipitously. Popular support for Doe's government evaporated.

1985 presidential election

A draft constitution providing for a multiparty republic had been issued in 1983 and was approved by referendum in 1984. After the referendum, Doe staged a presidential election on October 15, 1985. Nine political parties sought to challenge Doe's National Democratic Party of Liberia (NDPL), but only three were allowed to take part. Prior to the election, more than fifty of Doe's opponents were murdered. Doe was 'elected' with 51% of the vote, but the election was heavily rigged. Foreign observers declared the elections fraudulent, and most of the elected opposition candidates refused to take their seats. U.S. Assistant Secretary of State for Africa Chester Crocker testified before Congress that the election was imperfect but that at least it was a step toward democracy. He



further justified his support for the election results with the claim that, in any case, all African elections were known to be rigged at that time.

Repression escalates into tribal warfare

In November 1985 Thomas Quiwonkpa, Doe's former second-in-command, with an estimated 500 to 600 people, failed in an attempt to seize power; all were killed. Doe was sworn in as President on January 6, 1986. Doe then initiated crackdowns against certain tribes, such as the Gio (or Dan) and Mano, in the north, where most of the coup plotters came from. This government's mistreatment of certain ethnic groups resulted in divisions and violence among indigenous populations, who until then had coexisted relatively peacefully. In the late 1980s, as fiscal austerity took hold in the United States and the perceived threat of Communism declined with the waning of the Cold War, the U.S. became disenchanted with Doe's government and began cutting off critical foreign aid to Liberia. This, together with the popular opposition, made Doe's position precarious. Nonetheless, the Krahn tribe of president Doe attacked tribes in Nimba County in the north; some northerners fled to bordering Côte d'Ivoire (Ivory Coast). In the late 1980s, Charles Taylor assembled rebels from Gio and Mano tribes in Ivory Coast into a militia, invaded Nimba County in 1989, and by 1990 a full-blown tribal war was taking place.

First Liberian Civil War (1989–1996)

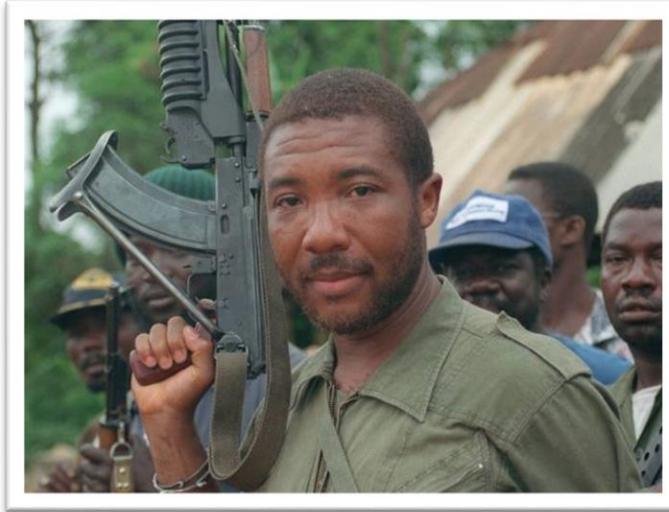
In the late 1980s opposition from abroad to Doe's regime led to economic collapse. Doe had already been repressing and crushing internal opposition for some time, when in November 1985 another coup attempt against him failed. Doe retaliated against tribes such as the Gio (or Dan) and Mano in the north, where most of the coup plotters had come from. Perhaps as a sequel to these governmental retaliations, perhaps as another circumscription of these same events: Doe's tribe began attacking



other tribes, particularly in Nimba County in the northeast of Liberia, bordering on Côte d'Ivoire (Ivory Coast) and on Guinea. Some Liberian northerners fled brutal treatment from the Liberian army into the Ivory Coast.

Charles Taylor and the NPFL 1980-89

Charles Taylor, born 1948, is son to a Gola mother and either an Americo-Liberian or an Afro-



Trinidadian father. Taylor was a student at Bentley College in Waltham, Massachusetts, U.S.A., from 1972 to 1977, earning a degree in economics. After the 1980 coup d'état he served some time in Doe's government until he was sacked in 1983 on accusation of embezzling government funds. He fled Liberia, was arrested in 1984 in Massachusetts on a Liberian warrant for extradition, and jailed in Massachusetts; escaped from jail in 1985, and probably fled to Libya. Sometime later, while in the Ivory Coast, Taylor assembled a group of rebels into the

National Patriotic Front of Liberia (NPFL), mostly from the Gio and Mano tribes.

December 1989, NPFL invaded Nimba County in Liberia. Thousands of Gio and Mano joined them, Liberians of other ethnic background as well. The Liberian army (AFL) counterattacked, and retaliated against the whole population of the region. Mid 1990, a war was raging between Krahn on one side, and Gio and Mano on the other. On both sides, thousands of civilians were massacred.

1990-1991: By the middle of 1990, Taylor controlled much of the country, and by June laid siege to Monrovia. In July, Yormie Johnson split off from NPFL and formed the Independent National Patriotic Front of Liberia (INPFL), based on the Gio tribe. Both NPFL and INPFL continued siege on Monrovia. Bloodshed was all over. In August 1990, Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), an organization of West African states, created a military intervention force called Economic Community of West African States Monitoring Group (ECOMOG) of 4,000 troops, to restore order. President Doe and Yormie Johnson (INPFL) agreed to this intervention, Taylor didn't. On 9 September, President Doe paid a visit to the barely established headquarters of ECOMOG in the Free Port of Monrovia, was at the ECOMOG headquarters attacked by INPFL, taken to the INPFL's Caldwell base, tortured and killed. November 1990, ECOWAS agreed with some principal Liberian players but without Charles Taylor, on an Interim Government (IGNU)[expand acronym] under President Dr. Amos Sawyer. Sawyer established his authority over most of Monrovia, with the help of a paramilitary police force, the 'Black Berets,' under Brownie Samukai, while the rest of the country was in the hands of the various warring factions. June 1991, former AFL[expand acronym] fighters

formed rebel group United Liberation Movement of Liberia for Democracy (ULIMO), entered western Liberia in September '91, and gained territories from the NPFL.

1993 – 1996: 1993, ECOWAS brokered a peace agreement in Cotonou, Benin. On 22 September '93, the UN established an observer mission UNOMIL to support ECOMOG in implementing the Cotonou agreement. March 1994, the 'interim government' of Sawyer was succeeded by a Council of



State collective presidency of six members headed by David D. Kpormakpor. May 1994, renewed armed hostilities broke out and held on. Somewhere 1994, ULIMO broke into two militias: ULIMO-J, a Krahn faction led by Roosevelt Johnson and ULIMO-K, a Mandingo-based faction under Alhaji

G.V. Kromah. September '94, factional leaders agreed to the Akosombo peace agreement in Ghana, but to little consequence. October '94, the UN reduced its number of UNOMIL observers to about 90 because of the lack of will of combatants to honor peace agreements. December '94, factions and parties signed the Accra agreement, but fighting continued. August 1995, factions signed an agreement largely brokered by Jerry Rawlings, Ghanaian President; Charles Taylor agreed. September '95, Kpormakpor's Council of State is succeeded by one under civilian Wilton G. S. Sankawulo and with the factional heads Charles Taylor, Alhaji Kromah and George Boley in it. April 1996, followers of Taylor and Kromah assaulted the headquarters of Roosevelt Johnson in Monrovia, and the peace accord collapsed. In August '96, a new ceasefire is reached in Abuja, Nigeria. 3 September 1996, Ruth Perry followed Sankawulo as chairwoman of the Council of State, with the same three militia leaders in it.

Second Liberian Civil War (1997–2003)

Elections 1997: Charles Taylor won the 1997 presidential elections with 75.33 percent of the vote, while the runner-up, Unity Party leader Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, received a mere 9.58 percent of the vote. Accordingly, Taylor's National Patriotic Party gained 21 of a possible 26 seats in the Senate,

and 49 of a possible 64 seats in the House of Representatives.[8] The election was judged free and fair by some observers although it was charged that Taylor had employed widespread intimidation to achieve victory at the polls.

1997-1999: Bloodshed in Liberia did slow considerably, but it did not end. Violence kept flaring up. During his entire reign, Taylor had to fight insurgencies against his government. Suspicions were, Taylor continued to assist rebel forces in neighboring countries, like Sierra Leone, trading weapons for diamonds.

1999 – 2003: Some ULIMO forces reformed themselves as the Liberians United for Reconciliation and Democracy (LURD), backed by the government of neighboring Guinea. In 1999, they emerged in northern Liberia, in April 2000 they started fighting in Lofa County in northernmost Liberia. By the spring of 2001 they were posing a major threat to the Taylor government. Liberia was now engaged in a complex three-way conflict with Sierra Leone and the Guinea Republic.

Meanwhile, the United Nations Security Council in March, 2001 (Resolution 1343)[9] concluded that Liberia and Charles Taylor played roles in the civil war in Sierra Leone, and therefore:

- banned all arms sales to, and diamonds sales from Liberia; and
- banned high Liberian Government members to travel to UN-states.

By the beginning of 2002, Sierra Leone and Guinea were supporting the LURD, while Taylor was supporting opposition factions in both countries. By supporting Sierra Leonean rebels, Taylor also drew the enmity of the British and Americans. Other elements of the former ULIMO-factions formed another new rebel group, the Movement for Democracy in Liberia (MODEL). Early 2003, MODEL emerged in the south of Liberia.

Women of Liberia: Main article: Women of Liberia Mass Action for Peace

In 2002, the women in Liberia were tired of seeing their country torn apart. Organized by social worker Leymah Gbowee, women started gathering and praying in a fish market to protest the violence.

They organized the Women in

Peacebuilding Network (WIPNET), and issued a statement of intent: “In the past we were silent, but after being killed, raped, dehumanized, and infected with diseases, and watching our children and



families destroyed, war has taught us that the future lies in saying NO to violence and YES to peace! We will not relent until peace prevails.”

Joined by Liberian Muslim Women’s Organization,[12] Christian and Muslim women joined forces to create Women of Liberia Mass Action for Peace. They wore white, to symbolize peace. They staged silent nonviolence protests and forced a meeting with President Charles Taylor and extracted a promise from him to attend peace talks in Ghana.

In 2003, a delegation of Liberian women went to Ghana to continue to apply pressure on the warring factions during the peace process. They staged a sit in outside of the Presidential Palace, blocking all the doors and windows and preventing anyone from leaving the peace talks without a resolution. Women of Liberia Mass Action for Peace became a political force against violence and against their government.[14] Their actions brought about an agreement during the stalled peace talks. As a result, the women were able to achieve peace in Liberia after a 14-year civil war and later helped bring to power the country’s first female head of state, Ellen Johnson Sirleaf.

Another UN embargo, and arrest warrant against Taylor

The Buduburam refugee camp west of Accra, Ghana, was home in 2005 to more than 40,000 refugees from Liberia. On March 7, 2003, the war tribunal Special Court for Sierra Leone (SCSL) decided to summon Charles Taylor and charge him with war crimes and crimes against humanity, but they kept this decision and this charge secret until June that year.

May 6, 2003, the UN Security Council (Resolution 1478) decided to an embargo also on Liberian “round logs and timber products”.

By mid-2003, LURD controlled the northern third of the country and was threatening the capital, MODEL was active in the south, and Taylor’s government controlled only a third of the country: Monrovia and central Liberia.

On June 4, 2003, ECOWAS organized peace talks in Accra, Ghana, among the Government of Liberia, civil society, and the rebel groups LURD and MODEL. On the opening ceremony, in Taylor’s presence, the SCSL revealed their charge against Taylor which they had kept secret since March, and also issued an international arrest warrant for Taylor. The SCSL indicted Taylor for “bearing the greatest responsibility” for atrocities in Sierra Leone since November 1996. The Ghanaian authorities did not attempt to arrest Taylor, declaring they could not round up a president they themselves had invited as a guest for peace talks. The same day, Taylor returned to Liberia.

Pressure of rebels, Presidents, and UN: Taylor resigns

June 2003, LURD began a siege of Monrovia. July 9, the Nigerian President offered Taylor safe exile in his country, if Taylor stayed out of Liberian politics. Also in July, American President Bush stated twice that Taylor “must leave Liberia”. Taylor insisted that he would resign only if American peacekeeping troops were deployed to Liberia. 1 August 2003, the Security Council, (Resolution 1497) decided on a multinational force in Liberia, to be followed-on by a United Nations stabilization force. ECOWAS sent troops under the banner of ‘ECOMIL’ to Liberia.[18] These troops started to arrive in Liberia probably as of 15 August. The U.S. provided logistical support.[19] President Taylor resigned, and flew into exile in Nigeria. Vice-President Moses Blah replaced Taylor as interim-President. A ECOWAS-ECOMIL force of 1000 Nigerian troops was airlifted into Liberia on August 15, to halt the occupation of Monrovia by rebel forces. Meanwhile, U.S. stationed a Marine Expeditionary Unit with 2300 Marines offshore Liberia.



Peace agreement & transitional government (2003–2005)

Charles Gyude Bryant

On August 18, 2003, the Liberian Government, the rebels, political parties, and leaders from civil society signed a peace agreement that laid the framework for a two-year National Transitional Government of Liberia. August 21, they selected businessman Charles Gyude Bryant as Chair of the National Transitional Government of Liberia (NTGL), effective on October 14. These changes paved the way for the ECOWAS peacekeeping mission to expand into a 3,600-strong force, constituted by Benin, Gambia, Ghana, Guinea-Bissau, Mali,

Nigeria, Senegal and Togo.

On October 1, 2003, UNMIL took over the peacekeeping duties from ECOWAS. Some 3,500 West African troops were provisionally “re-hatted” as United Nations peacekeepers. The U.N. Secretary-General commended the African Governments who have contributed to UNMIL, as well as the United States for its support to the regional force. October 14, 2003, Blah handed power to Charles Gyude Bryant.

Fighting initially continued in parts of the country, and tensions between the factions did not immediately vanish. But fighters were being disarmed; in June 2004, a program to reintegrate the fighters into society began; the economy recovered somewhat in 2004; by year’s end, the funds for the re-integration program proved inadequate; also by the end of 2004, more than 100,000 Liberian fighters had been disarmed, and the disarmament program was ended. In light of the progress made, President Bryant requested an end to the UN embargo on Liberian diamonds (since March 2001) and

timber (since May 2003), but the Security Council postponed such a move until the peace was more secure. Because of a supposed ‘fundamentally broken system of governance that contributed to 23 years of conflict in Liberia’, and failures of the Transitional Government in curbing corruption, the Liberian government and the International Contact Group on Liberia signed onto the anti-corruption program GEMAP, starting September 2005.

LIBERIAN ELECTIONS: Ellen Johnson Sirleaf elected president (2005)

The transitional government prepared for fair and peaceful democratic elections on October 11, 2005, with UNMIL troops safeguarding the peace. Twenty three candidates stood for the presidential election, with George Weah, internationally famous footballer, UNICEF Goodwill Ambassador and member of the Kru ethnic group, and Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, a former World Bank economist and finance minister, Harvard-trained economist and of mixed Americo-Liberian and indigenous descent. In the first round, no candidate took the required majority, Weah won this round with 28% of the vote. A run-off between the top two vote getters, Weah and Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, was necessary. The second round of elections took place on November 8, 2005. Ellen Johnson Sirleaf won this runoff decisively. Both the general election and runoff were marked by peace and order, with thousands of Liberians waiting patiently in the Liberian heat to cast their ballots. Sirleaf claimed victory of this round, winning 59 per cent of the vote. However, Weah alleged electoral fraud, despite international observers declaring the election to be free and fair. Although Weah was still threatening to take his claims to the Supreme Court if no evidence of fraud was found, Johnson-Sirleaf was declared winner on November 23, 2005, and took office on January 16, 2006.



Recent events (2006–present)

Allegations of labor rights abuses by Firestone

In November 2005, the International Labor Rights Fund filed an Alien Tort Claims Act (ATCA) case against Bridgestone, the parent company of Firestone, alleging “forced labor, the modern equivalent of slavery”, on the Firestone Plantation in Harbel. In May 2006, the United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL) released a report: “Human Rights in Liberia’s Rubber Plantations: Tapping into the

Future” which detailed the results of its investigation into the conditions on the Firestone plantation in Liberia.

Extradition and trial of Charles Taylor, arrest of Bryant



Under international pressure, President Sirleaf requested in March 2006 that Nigeria extradite Charles Taylor, who was then brought before an international tribunal in Sierra Leone to face charges of crimes against humanity, arising from events during the Sierra Leone civil war (his trial was later transferred to The Hague for security purposes). In June, 2006, the United Nations ended its embargo on Liberian timber (effective since May 2003), but continued its

diamond embargo (effective since March 2001) until an effective certificate of origin program was established, a decision that was reaffirmed in October 2006.

In March 2007, former interim president Bryant was arrested and charged with having embezzled government funds while in office. In August 2007, the Supreme Court of Liberia allowed the criminal prosecution for this to proceed in the lower courts. The court ruled that Bryant was not entitled to immunity as the head of state under the Constitution as he was not elected to the position and he was not acting in accordance with law when he allegedly stole USD \$1.3 million in property from the government.

2008-2009: In July 2008, the Legislature reintroduced the death penalty into Liberian law, with President Sirleaf signing the bill into law. The law allowed for executions for convictions of armed robbery, rape, terrorism, and hijacking.

Some parts of the country were declared disaster zones due to a plague of caterpillars. Since that time the UN peace keeping forces have maintained a strong presence within the country.

NGO's and missionary groups have established local offices to help rebuild the war torn country where most of the infrastructure was nearly destroyed. Much good has come to Liberia from these efforts. As a result the NGO- Hands of Hope Foundation Liberia was formed.

