

International Institute for Justice and Development



International Conference on the State of Affairs of Africa (ICSAA)

October 26th, 27th, and 28th of 2006

Assessing Liberia's Post War Recovery Within the Theoretical Framework of the Phoenix Factor

by

John Fobanjong, Ph.D.
University of Massachusetts Dartmouth
North Dartmouth, MA 02747
508-999-9177 (phone)
jfobanjong@umassd.edu (email)

Abstract

Social Scientists have discovered that after wars, defeated parties are able to eventually catch up with winners, with the social order returning to the status quo *antebellum* in a relatively short time – usually 15 to 20 years. International relations scholars refer to this condition as the Phoenix factor, and it is a phenomenon that has so far been empirically proven in many inter-state wars. In this paper, I will attempt to apply the concept to the study of postwar recovery in Liberia.

Introduction

The study of war has a rich and extensive literature. Much of this literature focuses largely on the causes of war and on alliance configurations that are formed to execute and/or deter wars. Little attention is paid to how parties that suffer devastating defeats in wars recover from such loss. Recently, however, an increasing number of scholars have begun focusing on the study of how worn torn societies recover from their losses. Among them are A.F. K. Organski and Jacek Kugler. In a publication entitled “*The Cost of Major Wars: The Phoenix Factor*,” Organski and Kugler studied shifts of power among winners, losers and neutrals; and discovered that while winners and neutrals are marginally hurt by war, the power and resources of losers is at first eroded, but in the long run, however, the effect of the loss disappears, and losers accelerate their recovery and soon resume their antebellum status. The authors refer to the phenomenon as the *Phoenix factor*.ⁱ

Students of war do not exactly know why the phenomenon occurs. In their attempt to explain why it occurs, Organski and Kugler indicate that structural and attitudinal factors do play a role. Favorable occupational distributions can help accelerate the rate of recovery, as could the destruction of old and inefficient industrial plants. A defeated but economically dynamic population living in the midst of ruins will recall its prewar standard of living and would rebuild to get back to that standard. More importantly, a defeated population would more likely exert a greater effort to recover than the population of a victorious country. The latter is more likely to be focused on relishing the spoils of victory. The motivation for work and sacrifice is common to the populations of a defeated society. There were, for example, relatively fewer strikes in Germany and Italy at the end of the Second World War than in England and France.

Strongly refuted by international relations scholars is the assumption that losers rise from the ashes because winners provide them with foreign aid. If this were the case, critics argue, then losers would never be able to rise up and catch up with winners. Using data on U.S. foreign aid in the years immediately following the end of World War II, Organski and Kugler attempt to compare aid amounts given by the United States with the growth rates of the aid recipient nations. Amazingly, they find that foreign aid and growth rates are independent of each other. If at all there is any relationship between the two, the relationship is likely to be negative. The countries that received the most aid for the longest period appeared to perform worst. For example, Britain received much more aid than France; France received much more than Italy; and Germany much more than Japan. ⁱⁱ Yet, it was Japan, the most devastated nation in World War II, which enjoyed the fastest rate of postwar recovery, followed by Germany, Italy, and France. Britain was last. This tells us that there is either little or no

positive link between foreign aid and economic growth.ⁱⁱⁱ As an engine for sustainable growth, foreign aid appears to be ineffective. What is effective are the internal resources, particularly, the human capital and the level of development that existed prior to the outbreak of war. In other words, previous patterns of performance are far more significant in setting the pace of postwar recovery than foreign aid.^{iv}

That a party that has been defeated in war can in a comparatively short period of time recover and catch up with the winner sounds rather incredulous, if not surreal. Yet it is a phenomenon that has held true cross-nationally over time. While international relations scholars cannot fully explain the phenomenon, they have gathered enough empirical evidence – as many as 32 cases in all – to support their claims.^v The time required for the impact of the loss to dissipate and for the defeated party to regain its prewar status is usually estimated at 15 to 20 years. For some countries, it is even much shorter. As early as 1992, Kuwait, whose economy was devastated by the 1990 Iraqi invasion, was already back to its prewar level of economic performance. Signs of the Iraqi invasion had disappeared.^{vi} And by the mid-1960s, the German economy that was completely destroyed by allied forces in 1945 had recovered to become an economic powerhouse in Europe. Despite the variation, fifteen to Twenty years remain the norm. Thus, anyone interested in knowing how a country whose economy has been devastated by war is going to perform in the future should look at the rate at which the economy was performing prior to the onset of the war.

Consolidating Peace and Democratic Reforms in Liberia

Before we determine if the *Phoenix factor* can be applied to understanding postwar reconstruction in Liberia, we must begin by looking at what prewar conditions in Liberia were before the outbreak of the civil war, and if postwar conditions in Liberia today are stable enough to enable the country's economy to rebuild from the ashes of the civil war. Has Liberia done enough to consolidate its hard-won peace? The end of a civil war and the staging of democratic elections are not sufficient conditions for rebuilding Liberia. Winning an election is not enough to allay the fears and concerns of the major stakeholders in the Liberian state. The political environment under which peace was negotiated has a greater bearing on stability and lasting peace than any postwar efforts directed at adopting democratic reforms. Has Liberia taken adequate measures to consolidate its democratic reforms? In "Stabilizing the Peace after Civil War," Hartzell, Hoddie and Rothchild have identified the key variables of a settlement environment that are conducive to lasting peace. These key variables focus on three different levels of analysis: They include the international system, characteristics of the countries experiencing civil conflict and characteristics of the conflict itself.^{vii}

At the level of the international system, Hartzell et. al. argue that during the Cold War years the superpowers competed in supplying weapons to factions involved in civil wars. With the Cold War now over, civil war adversaries are aware that they are unlikely to receive superpower support should they back out of a negotiated settlement. On the basis of this new reality, Hartzell and her colleagues hypothesize that "civil war settlements negotiated during the post-Cold War period are more likely to prove stable than those negotiated during the Cold War."^{viii}

On the basis of the political conditions of countries, Hartzell and her colleagues contend that the one key factor that may influence the willingness of factions in a civil

war to act to stabilize the peace is the previous experiences they have had with democratic governance. Actors in countries that were democratic or semi-democratic prior to the civil war are more likely to conclude lasting peace than actors in countries that have had no prior experience with democracy. A history of participation or inclusion in the political process can help ease suspicion and fear among civil war enemies, and provide them reassurance of a return to the democratic traditions to which they were accustomed to prior to the outbreak of the civil war.

With regards to the characteristics of the conflict itself, there is general agreement among political scientists that civil wars that break out because of identity conflict – that is, wars involving ethnic, religious, racial and linguistic conflicts – are more intense and therefore harder to settle than wars involving ideological and socioeconomic differences. As a result, Hartzell et. al. postulate that the probability of a lasting settlement is greater in ideological and socioeconomic conflicts than in identity conflicts.^{ix}

With respect to the duration of civil wars, Hartzell and his colleagues contend that the longer the duration of the war, the greater the probability that the negotiated settlement would prove stable. As civil wars become longer, it becomes increasingly clear to the various factions that victory cannot be won on the battlefield. As a result, the various factions would likely see a proposed alternative such as peaceful settlement more attractive.^x

With regards to the impact that territorial autonomy would have on negotiated settlements in civil wars, it is argued that settlements that include provisions for territorial autonomy are more likely to be stable than those that do not. In this regard, territorial autonomy would serve to limit authority at the political center by shifting decision-making power to sub-units within the state. By transferring influence and decision-making power from the national level to the local level, groups are reassured that they have control of their political lives. This is especially so if autonomy for lower levels of government includes the autonomy to control their police and judicial institutions, and all other institutions that reinforce a group's sense of autonomy.^{xi}

The role of third party enforcement of a negotiated peace settlement is also raised. Here, Hartzell and her colleagues hypothesize that negotiated settlements are more likely to prove stable if they include provisions for third-party enforcement. Their definition of third-party includes such multilateral organizations as the United Nations, the African Union, NEPAD and the Economic Community of West African States.^{xii}

Hartzell and her colleagues use statistical test data (proportional hazards mode 1) to determine which of the above hypotheses were most likely to influence the durability of negotiated civil war settlements. They find out that the most lasting peace settlements are likely to be those that (1) concern states in which the previous stable regime was a democracy; (2) conclude civil conflicts of low intensity that lasted for extended periods of time; (3) include settlement provisions for the territorial autonomy of threatened groups; (4) have security assurances offered to the former combatants by a third-party. The overall conclusion here is that any attempts at resolving a high intensity civil war in societies with no prior experience with democracy are unlikely to succeed.^{xiii}

The implications here for the Liberian civil war are all too evident. Beginning with the first finding, we would need to ask ourselves if pre-civil war Liberia was an

inclusive democracy. If it were, then this should remind the various warring factions which fought in the Liberian civil war that the democratic processes they were all so very well accustomed to in the prewar era, provides a non-belligerent alternative to achieving their political objectives than continuous warfare. No group would want to resort to the use of bullets in achieving political objectives that can be achieved through the ballot box. But if a democratic culture was not in place prior to the civil war, then the chances for a lasting peace settlement in Liberia will remain evasive.

With regards to the second finding, there is no denying that the Liberian Civil War was a war of high intensity. It was a war that devastated the entire social fabric of the nation. From education to healthcare to food production, all of the major economic infrastructures were destroyed. Several generations of the Liberian population were permanently displaced, as hundreds of thousands of people fled the country to seek refuge elsewhere. Virtually, all foreign businesses pulled out of the country. Many young Liberians in their teens and twenties have known nothing but war. Deprived of education, health and of the means of earning a living, their chances of ever living normal lives are remote. When time would come for passing on the reins of government to the current generation, it will be difficult to find enough talented leaders.

Hartzell's third condition for a lasting negotiated peace settlement calls for territorial autonomy. Unfortunately, the peace settlement that ended the Liberian Civil War did not provide for territorial autonomy. Territorial autonomy would have meant instituting a federal governance structure in Liberia. That is, a federation in which the various factions and sub-regions within Liberia are going to have subgovernmental sovereignty over their political lives. Such a settlement would have meant endorsing and legitimizing the factional warlords who controlled various territorial enclaves inside Liberia during the civil war. Traditionally, federations are created through a democratic process and not by warlordism. With an estimated population of only 3 million people, it is uncertain that the political division of power between national and sub-national governments would have contributed to stability and lasting peace in Liberia. Besides, the ultimate objective of many of the warlords was national power, and not regional power. For example, when Charles Taylor established a sham state in his "capital city" Gbarnga in 1992, he referred to it as "Greater Liberia." He went on to appoint a governing cabinet that was charged with carrying out the functions of the national government.^{xiv}

While it may be true that a negotiated peace settlement that is guaranteed by a third-party is conducive to lasting peace, member-states of ECOMOG - the West African Peace-Keeping force that monitored the transition to democracy in Liberia - were themselves faced with their own problems of democratic instability. To charge a group of countries that are not democratic to monitor and preside over negotiations that would lead to the institution of democracy was a self-defeating mission. The democratic culture remains alien to many of the member states of ECOMOG - many of which were either military or civilian dictatorships. Meanwhile, from the outset, not only was there polarization between French speaking and English speaking members of ECOMOG, there were perceptions by Charles Taylor and by francophone member-states in the mid-1990s that the Nigerian-led peace keeping force was biased and out to back the Doe government. These perceptions were behind the armed attacks that were

occasionally directed against the peacekeeping forces by Charles Taylor's forces in the early days of the peacekeeping mission.^{xv}

On the other hand, for a society that cannot find political stability as a unitary state, it may well be worth experimenting with a federal structure. Ultimately, democracy is about self-determination. We are informed by the classical philosopher, Aristotle that government is at its best, when it is closest to the people. Liberia's population notwithstanding, a properly conceived federal or multi-level governing structure is a prescription that is worth considering. As we are going to see further below, a political arrangement that grants regional or local governing autonomy can go a long way in helping appease former warlords and their armies of supporters.

From the above discussion, it does appear that the primary conditions for reconstruction in Liberia do seem to be in place. In the sections that follow, we are going to examine current political and economic trends in the country, to see how the careful marshalling of these resources can trigger the phoenix factor and launch Liberia's recovery from the ashes of its war devastated economy.

Current Political and Economic Trends in Liberia

Politically, Liberia has gone from anarchy to a pariah state to a democratic trailblazer in less than two decades. The onset of anarchy in Liberia dates back to October 1985 when national elections in which the incumbent, Samuel Doe was given victory, were allegedly tainted by widespread fraud. Ethnic tensions ensued. A failed coup by General Thomas Quiwonkpa was followed by reprisals and widespread human rights abuses. Four years later, on December 24, 1989, the National Patriotic Front, a rebel movement led by Samuel Doe's former cabinet official, Charles Taylor, began an insurgency that plunged the country into a fratricidal war that cost some 200,000 lives. The war spilled over into neighboring states, and foreign intervention, regional peacekeeping efforts, and international mediation have failed to put a quick end to fighting. Democratic processes that culminated in national elections in 1997 did little to put to rest the old antagonisms that were responsible for the insurgency. It was during this period that Liberia, under the rule of Charles Taylor, earned its reputation as a pariah state. Resources that should have gone into postwar reconstruction were invested in internal and cross-border counter-insurgencies. In the face of persistent uncertainty, businesses closed down and substantial capital and expertise fled the country.

Among specific uncertainties that beclouded Liberia's chances for postwar recovery after the 1997 elections was the continuous unrest created by insurgencies from all fronts. Amongst them were "Liberians United for Reconciliation and Democracy" (LURD), and the Movement for Democracy in Liberia (MODEL). LURD was backed by Guinea, the movement frequently attacked from Liberia's northern front. The insurgency caused the displacement of some 10,000 Liberians, many of whom escaped by moving further south to safer grounds close to Monrovia.^{xvi}

With Guinea's support for LURD, there was looming potential for the civil war to escalate to an interstate war between Liberia and Guinea. Guinea was a founding member of a group of regional states that formed an interventionary force to stop the invasion of Liberia by Charles Taylor and his troops in the early stages of the conflict. It would later provide refuge to some 500,000 Liberians who were fleeing the war. The

refugees soon became fodder to an armed movement, the ULIMO-K, which began recruiting them for cross-border counter-insurgency attacks against Taylor's regime. Over the years, cross-border hit-and-raids between the two countries provoked accusations and counter-accusations between the Guinean President, Lansana Conte and the Liberia's Charles Taylor. Guinea accused Taylor of providing a training base for a Guinean rebel group – the *Rassemblement des Forces Democratiques de Guinee*, which was based in Liberia. Led by Gbago Zoumanigui, the group had carried out an unsuccessful coup against the Guinean government in 1996. Charles Taylor in turn accused Guinea for providing refuge and training grounds for rebels that were seeking to topple his regime.

In June 2003, peace-sponsored talks organized in Ghana by the Economic Community for West African States (ECOWAS) failed in bringing an end to the civil conflict. Two months later, on August 11, 2003, Charles Taylor was forced to resign under intense international pressure. The leaders of the various insurgent movements finally came together in August 18, 2003 and signed a comprehensive peace agreement that provided for the establishment of a two-year National Transition Government. The transition government was head Gyude Bryant and interim security was provided by a 15,000 strong UN/ECOWAS force.

New national elections were scheduled for October 11, 2005. No candidate won an absolute majority in the first round. In the November 8, 2005 runoff, Ellen Johnson Sirleaf won 59.4 percent and her challenger, George Weah 40.6 percent. In electing the continent's first female head of state, Liberia earned its reputation a democratic trailblazer. It further made history by becoming the second country in the world, after South Africa, to put together a Truth and Reconciliation Commission. Jerome Verdier would be the Commission's first Chairman.

Economically, Liberia remains an oasis of natural resources. With a total land surface of 96,320 sq. km and a 2006 population of 3.5 million, its soil is rich and fertile. Farming and food production were largely disrupted during the civil war. Today, however, with the right investment, agricultural production in Liberia can potentially feed all of West Africa. Major natural resources include rubber, coffee, cocoa, iron ore, timber, diamonds, gold, hydropower. Food crops include rice, cassava, palm oil, bananas, sugarcane, sheep, goats, and fish. Iron ore production was disrupted by the civil war, and up until the 2005 national elections, UN sanctions prevented Liberia from earning foreign revenues from diamond and timber export. In 1999, its major export partners were Belgium (53%), Switzerland (9%), the U.S. (6%), and France (4). Its import partners include South Korea (30%), Italy (24%), Japan (15%), and Germany (9%). With an external debt burden of \$3.5 billion and an inflation rate of 5%, it is by contemporary African standards considered low. In the area of communications technology, Liberia remains under-exploited. It has less than 8,000 telephone lines nationwide, two television stations, one Internet Service Provider, no cell phones as of 1995, and under 300 Internet users (2000 figures).^{xvii} In the area of communications technology therefore, Liberia represents a tremendous investment opportunity. If the recent transition to democracy is sustained, investors are certainly going to see Liberia as attractive investment opportunity.

Despite a quarter century of domestic instability, Liberia remains the second largest maritime registrar in the world. About \$14 million are generated from the more

than 1,800 ships and tankers that registered under its flag. With sustained stability, this is a revenue source that is poised to grow. Recently discovered offshore oil deposit will provide an important revenue source once exploitation begins.

Regionally, Liberia belongs to the Economic Community of West Africa. Prior to the civil war, it partnered with Guinea and Sierra Leone to form the Mano River Union (MRU) – a launching path to closely integrating the economies of the three countries. As with other prewar development initiatives, MRU was disrupted by the civil war. It is an initiative that is certainly going to be revived as the new democratically elected government works to rebuild Liberia. An existing government agency – the Governance and Economic Management Program (GEMAP), founded in 2003, – is already working on identifying development initiatives and on promoting efficiency and transparency in government.

Assessing the Applicability of the Phoenix Factor in post-Civil War Liberia

While the *Phoenix factor* has been successfully used to explain postwar economic recovery in nations defeated in interstate wars, it has never been used to study nations whose economies were devastated by civil war. Our challenge here is to determine the applicability of this concept to a society whose economic infrastructure has been destroyed by civil war. Although the various insurgent movements in the Liberian civil war had some direct and indirect support from foreign states, there is no doubt that the conflict was essentially a civil war. The *Phoenix factor* looks at the rate at which an economy will recover at the end of a war. With the 2005 democratic elections in Liberia, it is obvious that the civil war has ended. Resources that would otherwise go into guarding and fending off domestic and cross-border insurgencies are now going to be directed at reconstruction and development.

The *Phoenix factor* is predicated on the premises that in the aftermath of a devastating war, there are certain psychological factors that allow nations to rise back up from the ashes of the devastation in 15 to 20 years to re-acquire the status or level of development they had before the outbreak of war. The physical and psychological indicators of a nation that has suffered from a devastating by war are all present in Liberia. The literature on the *Phoenix factor* further points out that a defeated but economically dynamic population living in the midst of ruins will recall their prewar standard of living and will be inspired by that nostalgia to rebuild back to those standards. Most adult Liberians know what Liberia looked like before the war. The motivation for work and sacrifice that are usually present in countries that have been devastated by warfare should be present in Liberia. With such motivation, Liberia's recovery should bring her back to the level of development it had in the prewar era. This should happen within the fifteen to twenty year time-span that is projected by this theory. For this to happen, Liberia will need to make substantial investments in the development of human capital. Today, even with the war over, Liberia remains a country that is replete with natural resources but deplete of human and technological know-how. With a high percentage of its entrepreneurial class now living abroad, there are very few Liberians left behind that have the know-how that is needed to transform Liberia's natural wealth into prosperity and improved standards of living for its citizens. In the instability and uncertainty that is characteristic of the postwar era,

attracting such know-how can be rather difficult. So what should Liberia do? We are going to try to address this in the next section.

Postwar Reconstruction – Propositions for an Enabling Environment

From the discussions above, it is obvious that rebuilding Liberia in the aftermath of the civil war is going to be a daunting but achievable task. What remains uncertain, however, is the question that, can the task be achieved within the 15 to 20 year time span that is postulated by the phoenix factor? Certainly, it is not going to be an easy task. However, if it is going to be done, it is first of all going to require an enabling environment. In this section, we are going to attempt to develop and discuss some of the conditions that are likely going to be conducive to such an environment. Ultimately, every effort that is directed at long term stability and democratic consolidation in Africa impacts on post-conflict reconstruction.

Going Beyond National Reconciliation

War, and especially civil war, is an embittering enterprise. It is an enterprise in which emotional and psychological wounds persist for years after the physical fight is over and the physical wounds are healed. Forced to continue to share the same territory, and living side by side, losers are unlikely to forgive winners, and winners are unlikely to make conciliatory concessions to losers. People who have lost friends and families in wars are seldom psychologically ready to forgive and forget. While it may be true that a national reconciliation conference was convened at the end of the Liberian Civil War, the conference did not go far enough in building or reestablishing trust among the various warring factions. Nothing did more harm to Liberia's first attempt at national reconciliation than the first democratic elections that came immediately after the reconciliation. It is true that there was no clear winner in the war. But victory in the elections that were conducted immediately following the national reconciliation conference gave the winning party the self-conceited impression that it had won the both on the battlefield as well as at the ballot box. This was why the tolerant and compromising climate that resulted from the national reconciliation was, immediately after the democratic elections, replaced by an uncompromising sense of arrogance, intolerance and invincibility on the part of the elected party. As victory in the democratic elections gave Charles Taylor recognition as Liberia's national leader, it left a sense of indignation in the minds of the other leaders who felt they would never have lost to Taylor had they not put down the arms to participate in the elections. Thus, while the elections may have legitimized Charles Taylor as Liberia's head of state, it alienated the other warlords, who until the forced intervention of the international community, felt that they had as equal a chance at winning at the battlefield.

It is true that prior to the onset of the negotiated peace settlement, the war was in a stalemate. In other words, the various warring factions were virtual equals in the battlefield, with none of the warlords in a position to win decisive victory. This is why many remained convinced that victory was stolen away from them in the democratic process – victory that could never have been achieved at the battlefield. It is this sense of indignation that contributed, in large part, to a re-launching of hostilities in Liberia.

The above climate does not augur well for the lasting peace. And without the perception of an enduring peace, any hopes of postwar reconstruction will continue to

remain unrealistic. Apparently, the interval between the convening of the national reconciliation conference and the staging of the elections was not long enough to allow for the consolidation of peace, trust and mutual respect. After an embittered civil war, an interim or cooling off period is needed before the implementation of democratic reforms. Today, with the help of hindsight, it is evident that immediate multiparty elections are not a political panacea for peace and post-war domestic harmony. It is important to go beyond the efforts of national reconciliation and democratic elections to look for various other conditions that can contribute to sustainable peace.

Foremost is an offer that should have been made to all of the warlords or factional leaders to retire from politics completely. It is an offer that should disqualify all warlords or former factional leaders from running for public office. It is inconceivable that any individual who has successfully led an army that forced a civil war to a stalemate is going to be willing to concede defeat in a democratic election. In other words, it is unthinkable that anyone who was determined to achieve power by the barrel of the gun is going to be willing to concede defeat at the ballot box. For these reasons, therefore, the proper policy position should be the exclusion of all former warlords from participating in the postwar democratic elections.

There is no doubt that such an idea would have been strongly opposed by the various warlords in the Liberian civil war. All postwar political rearrangements fall within the realm of high stakes politics. To be successful, negotiated strategies in such high stakes politics require the use of the "carrot and the stick" approach. The "carrot" gives the subject an incentive or enticement to accept a proposed offer, while the "stick" lets the subject know that if they do not accept that offer, they will receive a specified penalty.

In the case of the Liberian Civil War, the carrot would have been an attractive retirement package to the warlords. The offer would give the warlords the option to retire and live either in Liberia or migrate to any foreign country of their choice. Excluded from the offer would be the option to retire to any of the neighboring countries around Liberia. For those that decide to retire in Liberia, the offer would be sweetened with an internationally guaranteed loan that would allow them to go into business for themselves in the private sector. Presumably, warlords are individuals with misdirected entrepreneurial ambitions. Their vision and dynamism can be cultivated and redirected at meaningful entrepreneurial contributions to national development. There is no better way to develop the private sector in a country than to lure and direct the talents of its most ambitious and dynamic citizens to invest in it. Instead of investing their time and energies in the uncertain and wasteful pursuit of warlordism, they will direct it to promoting the growth and development of their country. In a rather curious paradox, it would be an arrangement that could help transform Liberia's warlords from merchants of destruction to merchants of construction. Instead of leading troops that are contributing to the destruction of Liberia, they will be leading a labor force that is contributing to the development of Liberia.

For any warlords that may have found the above offer unappealing and tried to turn it down, there was always the option for the international community to resort to the "stick" approach. It is an approach that would remind warlords who refuse to cooperate with the peace effort that there is going to be a price to pay. The price could

take the form of sanctions that range from denial of legitimacy or recognition for the warlord, to threats of persecution for war crimes, the freezing of personal assets, denial of travel abroad, and the ultimate possibility of house arrest or imprisonment. Obviously, such threats would make the offers in the “carrot” approach appear a lot more enticing.

In the meantime, eligibility to run for elected office will be restricted only to persons with no previous political agenda and no prior leadership affiliation in the civil war. Their primary allegiance will be to the nation of Liberia, and national unity will be at the top of their agenda. It is only when the national interest is placed ahead of personal or factional interest that society’s national resources can be directed at national development. Eliminating warlords and other factional leaders from the electoral process will ultimately eliminate factionalism in Liberia’s postwar politics.

A More Activist Role by Liberians in the Diaspora

Liberians who live in the diaspora do need to be invited to play a more visible role in the post-war reconstruction effort. Up until the 1997 elections, Liberians in the diaspora were not visibly active in campaigning for an end to the civil war. This partly explains why Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf’s performance in the first presidential elections was dismal. Despite her revered status in the international community, Sirleaf, the Unity Party’s candidate for president did not actively publicize her international accomplishments inside Liberia. Even though she came out second, she won a mere 9.5 percent of the votes. Had she and other Liberians in the diaspora stayed active and visible in the peace efforts, her performance in the presidential elections would have been much better.

Outside Liberia, activism would have required the mobilization of Liberians in the diaspora to work in lobbying and in educating policymakers in their various countries of residence about the situation in Liberia. No one understands the internal dynamics of Liberia better than people who claim heritage to Liberia. If a lasting resolution to the Liberia conflict is ever going to be found, it will have to be crafted with input from the Liberian elite which is presently dispersed all over the world. It is therefore imperative that these elite remain actively involved in every stage of the current democratic reform and the postwar reconstruction efforts. To harmonize strategies, they are going to need to develop an international network of Liberian organizations that are in various parts of the world. Such harmonization is going to enable Liberians who live in Canada, Europe and the United States to focus on the same agenda. It is only by doing so that Liberians in the diaspora are going to be a position to effectively lobby the various governmental and non-governmental organizations that are interested in postwar reconstruction in Liberia.

In the economic sector, Liberians in the diaspora can play an even more meaningful role. Just through self-help and other private resources, they are in a position to turn the Liberian economy around without having to wait on international financial institutions for loans or economic aid. In the United States alone, the 1989 per capita income of Liberian immigrants was \$24,705. In his study on “How are Liberians Doing in the United States,” Konia T. Kolllehon estimates that as of 1995, about 16,124 Liberians were living in the United States.^{xviii} If this population is multiplied by the \$24,705 per capita income it receives, it will add up to about \$400 million dollars.^{xix} If

just 10 percent of this amount is invested in Liberia annually, it will pour in a total of \$40 million in investment capital in Liberia each year.

Playing the Americo-Liberian Card

Blacks who returned to Liberia from the United States in the 19th century voluntarily decided to remain affiliated with America. They maintained an identity that continued to link them with their American past. As Liberia works to rebuild from a devastating civil war, these links can now play a positive role. Using their historical ties with the United States, Liberians of American descent are in a position to lobby for greater American involvement in promoting peace and stability in Liberia. No other country outside of the United States pledges greater loyalty to America than Liberia. It is the only nation in the international system whose citizens, albeit a small percentage, can trace their roots back to the United States.

Liberia is the only country outside of the United States whose cities and streets are named after American cities and historical figures. Its capital, Monrovia, is actually named after an American head of state. Nowhere else in the world is an American former head of state given such honor. On the basis of such a tribute alone, Liberia should be able to lobby the United States federal government for assistance. At lower levels of government, Liberia could lobby the various American states, counties, and cities after which most Liberian cities and streets are named, for technical and financial assistance. The same is true with churches. Many of the churches in Liberia today were established by American missionaries. The parent churches are in a position to contribute to the reconstruction of schools, hospitals, orphanages, senior citizen and handicap care centers in postwar Liberia.

For tourism, retirement, and investment, Liberia does need to become the destination of choice for Americans. It can only become so if the quality of service in those cities and counties that are named after American cities and counties is developed to meet the standards that Americans are used to at home. If the quality of hospital or hotel services in Liberia is equal to the quality that Americans in Baltimore, Maryland are used to, there is no doubt that more Americans will be attracted to visit and/or even retire in Liberia.

One approach to developing the ties that could facilitate the flow of resources between local governments in Liberia and the U.S. could be through the all so common "Sister-City" arrangements. The current ties that exist between American and Liberian cities are not being exploited well enough. The American political wheel turns only when it is lobbied. Sister-cities in Liberia have to work on mastering the art of lobbying. Cities and counties that bear the same names should be encouraged to establish sister-city ties between the two countries - in addition, of course, to the ones that already exist. Not only would such ties facilitate educational and cultural exchanges, it will enable them to trade or exchange ideas and experiences on how to solve common problems at the local government level.

Just as various states and municipalities in the United States compete in attracting foreign and out-of-state investments, regional and local governments in Liberia ought to be given the autonomy to compete in attracting foreign investments. The role of the national government should be limited to guarantees of stability and the establishment of an environment that is favorable to foreign investment. Regional and

local governments should be allowed to shop around the world for investment and other business arrangements. And instead of exporting natural resources in their raw form to the world market, Liberia does need to invest in transforming these resources into finished or semi-finished goods prior to export. As one of the largest producers of rubber in Africa, Liberia does need to invest in developing the human and technological skills that would enable the transformation of this raw rubber into finished products. Such investment could in the long run make Liberia the largest supplier of auto tires in Africa, and possibly one of the largest to the American and European markets. The same is true with cocoa and other major raw materials that are produced in Liberia.

School districts in countries that have sister-city arrangements with Liberia can enter into agreements that would allow them to buy snacks and beverages from chocolate companies that buy their cocoa bean from Liberia. Agreements could be signed making Liberian coffee the coffee of choice for public personnel within the municipalities that have sister-city arrangements with Liberia.

The unique historical ties that exist between Liberia and the United States should make Liberia the gateway for U.S. companies that are interested in gaining access to the African market. Culturally and linguistically, it has a lot in common with the United States. It is English speaking, and it has been exposed to American culture and society longer than any other country in Africa. Even its currency is named and pecked after the American dollar. For such high-tech investments as land-based radar and satellite facilities that enable inter- and intra-continental communications, Liberia presents an ideal location. By land, air or sea, Liberia has a competitive advantage over other potential offshore locations for the manufacture of consumer goods that are destined for the African, European or American market. In labor costs, Liberia presents an even more attractive investment opportunity. Whereas minimum wage for factory workers in Europe and the United States can range from \$6 an hour to as much as \$15 an hour, in Liberia, it is under a dollar. As the nation with the longest history of free trade in Africa, it has easy distribution links to various parts of the world. Just as *Made in China* products have come to flood the American consumer market, the implementation of any of the above propositions should, in the not too distant future, enable *Made in Liberia* a household phrase in the United States and other parts of the world.

Ethnic Balancing

Africa is a mosaic of multiethnic populations. In almost every case, ethnic affinities are stronger than national identities. The eruption of conflict in any African country has always been defined along ethnic and regional lines. Allegiance to most of the warlords in the Liberian Civil War was determined primarily by ethnic and regional affinities. With the war now presumably over, it is important for any government that wins national elections to be sensitive to this unique national character. Both in parliament and in cabinet appointments, special care should be taken to make sure that all of the major ethnic groups are equitably represented in government. The same is true of the distribution of national resources. In a multiethnic society, there is no greater threat to national unity than the perception of regional or ethnic discrimination or bias in the distribution of national resources.

Besides forming a representative government at the national level, another important mechanism for ethnic balancing is the decentralization of the power of the

national government. Giving local and regional governments the right to make policy decisions on how to manage their resources can help reduce perceptions of ethnic or regional bias.

Capitalizing on Sirleaf Johnson's Political Capital

Africa, like much of the Western world, is a male dominant society. So when Liberia elected its first female head of state in 2005, it made history not just on the continent but worldwide. That her victory was celebrated by progressive groups worldwide, Liberia should be able to translate this milestone into the political capital. Such political capital can be used in lobbying for international assistance for Liberia's postwar reconstruction effort. Progressive groups around the world, including feminist and women's organizations, who take pride in President Johnson's achievement will certainly give a receptive and sympathetic ear when approached for financial assistance. But for this to happen, Sirleaf Johnson will need to work hard in making her presence visible in such international organizations. She will need to begin by registering as a fee-paying member in all major international conferences in which eligibility is open for her.

Her immediate staff should include an office that advises her on upcoming international conferences on women and other progressive events. The staff should endeavor to include in her official schedule, participation in at least four international conferences. When unable to attend, she can arrange to send a written speech, a symbolic gift or an official to represent her at such conferences. Such visibility should translate the political capital that heralded her election into goodwill. More than any form of financial and material support, international goodwill is the one asset that is most going help make economic recovery in postwar Liberia an achievable goal.

Conclusion

We have attempted to apply the *Phoenix factor* to assessing postwar reconstruction efforts in Liberia. In the effort, we have gone beyond assessing the applicability of the concept to Liberia to actually making multifaceted propositions on how Liberia can precipitate its postwar recovery efforts. This approach is in line with the recommendations of an international conference on post conflict reconstruction in Africa. On October 14, 2004, delegates from Africa, Europe and the US met in South Africa to discuss an African Union/New Partnership for Africa's Development (Nepad) framework for post-conflict reconstruction in Africa. There was unanimity among the delegates that postwar reconstruction requires a holistic and integrated framework that goes beyond promoting reconciliation and preventing the reoccurrence of conflict to actually addressing the factors that contributed to the outbreak of conflict, as well as factors that have the potential to reignite the conflict. It is an approach that at implementation, must be multifaceted, incorporating a rebuilding of the social, economic, political and security framework of the country that has emerged from conflict.

The assessment of the applicability of the *phoenix factor* to post war reconstruction in Africa has produced mixed findings. On the one hand, we have been brought to the realization that the concept is not quite applicable to explaining postwar recovery in wars that are fought in non-industrialized Third World countries. The

favorable occupational distributions that help accelerate postwar recovery in advanced industrial countries are not present in the Third World. For postwar recovery, therefore, most Third World societies have to depend on external human and material resources. In the case of Liberia, the forced dispersal of its middle class in foreign countries (initially as refugees and now as permanent citizens of those countries) and interruption of Liberia institutions of learning and training during the war years compound this deficiency in occupational distributions.

On the other hand, there are sufficient grounds to convince us that the phoenix factor has applicability in Liberia. Every country – developed or underdeveloped – has a golden era. The golden era is a stimulus for national development. Nations, large and small, will work hard to recapture lost glory. It is certain that prior the outbreak of the Liberian civil war, there was an era when peace and stability reigned in the country. Through memory and through the reading of history, Liberians of all ages long for a return to that era. As they yearn for that era, Liberians will be inspired to work to rebuild their economy back to the level it was operating prior to devastation by the civil war. In this regard, there is reason to expect that, Liberia, like every other country which has experienced the *phoenix factor*, is going to rise from the ashes of war and regain its prewar status in fifteen to twenty years.

As Liberia works on consolidating the negotiated peace settlement, it ought to see the post-Cold War era as an opportunity to restructure its economy as it rebuilds. Rather than continuing to pursue the corporatist model that was characteristic of much of Africa in the era prior to democratic reforms, Liberia would need to pursue a development approach that is along the lines of competitive pluralism. In other words, if Liberia can avoid the mistakes of previous governments by implementing free market economic reforms instead of government directed development, the potential of realizing the *Phoenix factor* would be greatly enhanced.

REFERENCES

-
- ⁱ American Political Science Review, vol. 71, pp. 1347-1366, 1977.
- ⁱⁱ Jacek Kugler, "The Consequences of War" (Ph.d. Dissertation, University of Michigan, 1973), pp.196-202.
- ⁱⁱⁱ Milton Friedman, "Foreign Economic Aid: Means and Objectives," and Charles Wolf, Jr. "Economic Aid Reconsidered," in *the United States and Developing Economies*, ed. Gustave Ranis, rev.ed. (New York: Norton, 1973), pp. 250-278.
- ^{iv} Organski and Kugler, p. 1365.
- ^v Organski and Kugler, pp. 1347-1366
- ^{vi} Far Eastern Economic Review, "Slow Start to Recovery," vol 155, December 1992, p. 42.
- ^{vii} Caroline Hartzell, Matthew Hoddie, and Donald Rothchild, "Stabilizing the Peace After Civil War: An Investigation of Some Key Variables," *International Organization*, 55, 1, Winter 2001, pp. 183-308.
- ^{viii} Ibid, p. 189.
- ^{ix} Ted Robert Gurr, *Ethic Warfare and the Changing Priorities of Global Security*. *Mediterranean Quarterly*, 1999, 1 (1): 82-89. Chaim Kaufmann, *Intervention in Ethnic and Ideological Civil Wars: The Origins and Management of Ethnic Conflict*. 1996, *International Security* 21 (2): pp. 41-75. Roy Licklider, *How Civil Wars End: Questions and Methods*. In *Stopping the Killing: How Civil Wars End*, Edited by Roy Licklker, New York: New York University Press, 1993, pp. 3-19.
- ^x Hartzell et. al.
- ^{xi} Alicia Levine, *Political Accommodation and the Prevention of Secessionist Violence*. In *the International Dimensions of Internal Conflict*, edited by Michael Brown, Cambridge: MIT Press, 1996, pp. 311-340.
- ^{xii} Hartzell, p. 192-193.
- ^{xiii} Hartzell, p. 202.
- ^{xiv} Werner Korte and Robert Kappel, *Crisis and Intervention: How ECOMOG Brought About Peace in Liberia, but Was Still Unable to Guarantee a Democratic New Beginning*, *Liberia Studies Journal*, XXV, 2, 2000, p. 86.

^{xv} Werner Korte and Robert Kappel, Crisis and Intervention: How ECOMOG Brought About Peace in Liberia, but Was Still Unable to Guarantee a Democratic New Beginning, *Liberia Studies Journal*, XXV, 2, 2000, pp. 86-91.

^{xvi} Wysiwyg://41/http://news.bbc.co.uk.../africa/newsid_1780000/1780663.stm

^{xvii} <http://www.odci.gov/cia/pubilcations/factbook/geos/li.html>.

^{xviii} Konia T. Kollehlon, How are Liberians Doing in the United States, *Liberian Studies Journal*, 2002,
p. 44.

^{xix} This figure would be higher if the 2002 income figures were available. But at the time the article was written, the latest U.S. Census figures which contain income data for various ethnic groups in the U.S. was not published. However, given the rate at which personal income in the United States grew between 1989 and 2002, and the rate at which the Liberian population grew during this same period, the total annual income of the Liberians in the United States today could very well range between \$500 million to \$1 billion.