INTERNAL DISPLACEMENT AND POST-CONFLICT PEACE-BUILDING IN LIBERIA

George Klay Kieh Jr., PhD

Abstract

One of the major challenges of the post-conflict peace-building project that is in progress in Liberia is addressing the plight of internally displaced persons (IDPS)—those who have returned to their original places of residence; those who have settled in other parts of the country; and those who are still displaced. This entails that the Liberian state would need to address issues that are specific to these IDPS. Broadly, in order to forestall the reoccurrence of civil war and its associated vagaries, including displacement, the Liberian state would need to address the cultural, economic, political, security and social roots of the civil conflict. In this vein, the Liberian state has taken steps to address the IDP specific issues. Under the overarching liberal peace-building project that was set into motion, various measures are also been employed to ostensibly deal with the undercurrents of the broader civil conflict. In contradistinction, the central argument of this article is that the steps that the state has taken to address IDP specific issues are inadequate. At the macro-level, the article posits that the social democratic framework, if adopted, would be the best pathway to durable peace.

Keywords: internal displacement, post-conflict, peace-building, Liberia

Author's Affiliation

George Klay Kieh Jr. is the Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences at the University of West Georgia, United States of America.

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Introduction

Since the 1990s, internal displacement has become an important issue in the design and implementation of post-conflict peace-building projects in the various countries that are recovering from civil wars in Africa, Asia, Europe and Latin America. The rationale, as Walter Kalin, the Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General on the Human Rights of Internally Displaced Persons, asserts is that "In fact, getting to peace in a country or region affected by armed conflict and finding durable solutions for displaced populations are closely intertwined"(Kalin, 2010:1). In other words, the *sine qua non* for the establishment of durable peace is that the post-conflict peace-building project should seek to address the specifics of the internal displacement conundrum with regards to the returnees and the remaining internally displaced persons (IDPs), and the broader root causes of the civil conflict that engendered the phenomenon.

In the case of Liberia, the country is currently faced with the aforementioned issues, as it endeavors to implement its post-conflict peace-building project. At the micro-level, there are issues that are specific to the IDPs, who have returned to their original places of habitation after the end of its second civil war(1999-2003), and the subsequent conclusion of the processes of the disarmament and demobilization of the various warlordist militias, including the government's forces, as well as the unsettled IDPs. Broadly, there are enduring multidimensional crises of underdevelopment—cultural, economic, environmental, political, security and social—that have bedeviled the country since it gained "flag independence" in 1847.

Against this background, the central argument of this article is that durable peace, stability, development and democracy cannot be established in Liberia under the country's current liberal peace-building project. This is because it cannot adequately address the issues confronting the returnees, who were previously IDPs, as well as those who are still IDPs, and the broader crises of underdevelopment and the resultant conflict that caused the two civil wars. In order to explicate the thesis, the article is divided into five parts. The first part focuses on a review of the literature. The purpose is to locate the study within the broader context of the scholarly literature on internal displacement and post-conflict peace-building. The next section provides the conceptual framework for the study. Third, the nature and dynamics of the internal displacement conundrum and the crises of underdevelopment are mapped out. This is followed by an assessment of the state's response. The final section offers some suggestions for addressing the post-conflict peace-building and *problematique*, including the internal displacement challenges.

Theoretical Issues
The Literature Review: Background
The review of the literature covers two genres. First, it surveys some of the scholarly works that have been done on addressing the internal displacement conundrum. Second, it examines a sample of studies that have been done on post-conflict peace-building. As has been discussed, the purpose is to locate the study on the Liberian case within the broader crucible of the literature in the two areas.

The Internal Displacement Conundrum
In her study of the nature and dynamics of the internal displacement phenomenon occasioned by the civil war in Mexico between the government and the Zapatista insurgents in the country's Chiapas region, Archarya (2009) argues that the resolution of the conflict should include addressing the issues that are specific to internally displaced persons. These include the violation of human rights by the Mexican Army (Archarya, 2009:161), property issues, including the vexing problem of land, forced labor, mass insecurity, and the trafficking of women.

Koser's (2009) overarching thesis is that displacement and peace are inextricably linked (Koser, 2009:5). On the one hand, displacement is a consequence, and at times an intended outcome of most armed conflicts, and often is reinforced or renewed when peace talks break down (Koser, 2009:5). On the other hand, the return of refugees and durable solutions for internally displaced persons (IDPs) are hard to achieve where there is a lack of security, the rule of law is not re-established, property is not restored, and conditions for sustainable solutions are not in place(Koser, 2009:5).

Mooney and Hussain (2009) examine the persistent challenges facing IDPs in Bosnia and Herzegovina. One of the central issues is the ubiquity of ethnic polarization, and its resultant negative effects of discrimination based on ethnicity. In other words, IDPs from particular ethnic groups, who have settled in areas where they are minorities, are facing discrimination in various spheres. The related problem is the limitation of "livelihood opportunities" (Mooney and Hussain, 2009:22). Also, there are enduring security problems, against the backdrop that several warlords have still not been brought to justice.

Using Guatemala as a case study, DiGeorgio-Lutz and Hale (2004), postulate that the major obstacle to addressing issues specific to IDPs, who have returned to their places of residence, is the Guatemalan government's position that there are no IDP specific-issues that need to be addressed. One of the major resultant effects is that the indigenous Mayans, who constitute the majority of the country's population, and who had the largest number of IDPS, remain politically, economically, and socially marginalized (DiGeorgio-Lutz and Hale, 2004:3). They constitute the vast majority of the Guatemalan poor, its landless peasants, urban shanty dwellers, and IDPs, who were not included in the resettlement program (DiGeorgio-Lutz and Hale, 2004: 3).

In his study on post-conflict recovery in Sierra Leone, Mama (2003) examines the plight of IDPs, who have returned. At the crux of the challenges is the basic human needs deficit. That is, there is the inadequacy of employment opportunities, and the limitation of

access to education, health services, and housing. The resultant impoverishment has contributed to the development of a sense of insecurity among the returnees, despite the end of the country's civil war (Mama, 2003:63). Exasperated by the emergent failure of the state to address the basic needs deficit, Mama posits that the IDPs, who have returned, have developed what he calls "coping mechanisms," including political, economic and solidarity ones as part of their strategy of "self-help" (Mama, 2009:64-65).

Post-Conflict Peace-building
Newman et al (2009) posit that the overarching purpose of peace-building in both conflict-prone and post-conflict countries is to prevent the resumption or escalation of violent conflict and establish a durable and self-sustaining peace (Newman et al, 2009:3). Importantly, the peace-building project, they argue, should be a multidimensional one that encompasses a broad array of sectors, including economic, political and security. In terms of the general thrust of peace-building during the post-Cold War era, Newman et al observe that it is designed to create liberal democratic states with market economies in post-conflict societies.

Treading along a similar path, Schirch (2005) notes that one of the major overarching purposes of post-conflict peace-building is to address the underlying causes of the conflict that occasioned the violent conflict. According to her, this entails undertaking a complex and long-term process. In order to ensure the success of the process, Schirch suggests the use of what she calls a "strategic approach" to peace-building (Schirch, 2005:3). Specifically, this would entail an arrangement under which various domestic and international actors, divergent approaches and resources are prudently managed and coordinated for the ostensible purpose of addressing the broad array of issues with which post-conflict peace-building is ultimately concerned.

Morris (2000) concords with Newman et al (2009) and Schirch's (2005) characterization of the foci of peace-building. In addition, she postulates that the building of various institutions of governance—legal, political, etc.—should be a centerpiece of the peace-building project. Similarly, she draws attention to the importance of designing various mechanisms for peacefully resolving conflicts. Ultimately, Morris argues, the success of a peace-building project should be evaluated based on the following metrics: systematic and participatory planning, coordination among various domestic and international actors and sustained commitment.

Samuels (2006) focuses on the design of constitution and constitution-making as foundational issues in the development of the governance architecture for a post-conflict state. By a constitution, Samuels notes that he is "referring to a system which establishes the fundamental rules and principles by which a state is governed" (Samuels, 2006: 2). In terms of building long-term peace and stability and legitimacy, he suggests the development of a participatory democratic governance framework that involves all of the major stakeholders in a post-conflict society.

In his seminal article "Building a Republican Peace," Barnett (2006) stresses the centrality of sequencing in post-conflict peace-building. His rationale is that in order for

durable peace to be constructed, there is the need to develop the requisite institutions and processes. Against this background, he insists that peace-building should begin with the development of liberal democratic institutions as integral parts of a liberal democratic political culture—what he calls "republican peace-building" (Barnett, 2006:87).

The Theoretical Framework
Drawing from the literature, the liberal theory is the hegemonic framework for explaining and rationalizing the design of the various peace-building projects that are taking place in various post-conflict states across the globe. Briefly, the liberal peace-building theory is premised on the overarching assertion that the construction of a liberal state in a post-conflict society would lead to the creation of propitious conditions for addressing the underlying causes of the civil conflict that occasioned the war that in turn led to the internal displacement conundrum. The derivatives are the establishment of a liberal democracy replete with institutions and processes, as well as an emphasis on the promotion of political human rights such as the freedoms of speech, of the press, of thought, and movement; the establishment of a market economy (capitalist economic system); and the establishment of stability through transitional justice mechanisms, such as truth and reconciliation commissions, as well as the undertaking of security sector reform.

In terms of this study on Liberia, it rejects the liberal peace-building theoretical framework as its analytical prism for proffering ways in which the internal displacement conundrum and the broader crises of underdevelopment that undergirded the country's two civil wars can be addressed. The rationale is twofold. First, liberal peace-building does not seek to alter and transform power relationships and to address deeper issues of class, gender and political inequities and inequalities. Second, there is a dialectical tension between the liberal peace-building model's advocacy of legal and political equality, on the one hand, and the inequities and inequalities that are inherent in the capitalist system, especially the peripheral variant, on the other.

Alternatively, I suggest the social democratic peace-building model as the theoretical framework that would help shape the post-conflict peace-building project currently underway in Liberia, so that it can address the issues that are specific to IDPs, as well as the macro-level crises of underdevelopment that underpinned the civil conflict that occasioned the country's two civil war. The social democratic peace-building model is anchored on several pillars. The pathway should revolve around the holding of a national conference involving the representatives of all of the major stakeholders of the country. The central purpose should be to discuss and design a new national pact that delineates the substantive contents of a new state construct. This should be followed by ongoing discussions at various levels and between and among various groups.

Another element is the imperative of deconstructing the authoritarian peripheral state in terms of its portrait—nature, character, mission and political economy. In terms of the nature, the purpose is to make it reflective of the historical-cultural experiences of all of the citizens of the state, rather than the hitherto practice of privileging one ethnic stock over the others. With regards to the character, the focus would be to strip the state of its authoritarian core and the associated vagaries of suppression, repression, exclusion,

exploitation, neglect and marginalization. As well, the state's central mission of creating propitious conditions for the private accumulation of capital by the members of the ruling class would be changed. Also, the political economy would be expunged of its negative characteristics, including predation, inequities, inequalities, and injustice.

Importantly, the various transitional issues would need to be tackled, including justice. In the latter case, this would involve addressing the specific needs of internally displaced persons and refugees, and the promotion of national reconciliation based on social justice. In terms of national reconciliation, the issue of transitional justice (Sriram, 2007) for example, needs to be addressed.

Yet still, a new social democratic state portrait needs to be constructed. The nature of the new state would reflect the historical and cultural experiences of all of the state's various ethnic groups. In terms of the state's character, it should be strong, democratic and pro-people, so that it would provide the basic needs of the people, respect and defend their fundamental individual and group rights, promote gender equality, champion peaceful coexistence between and among the various ethnic groups and religions, and defend the citizens from the exploitation and vagaries of international finance capital (Agbese and Kieh, 2007: xii). Similarly, the new domestic political economy and its various spheres—cultural, economic, environmental, gender, religious, security, and social—should be anchored on the principles of social justice, equality, peaceful co-existence, and investment in the material well-being of all of the citizens.

Finally, the desired outcome of social democratic peace-building is the establishment of durable peace and stability, the promotion of people-centered national development, and the establishment of what Ake (1996:232) calls "real democracy." That is, a democracy in which people have some real decision-making power over and above the formal consent of electoral choice (Ake, 1996: 232). One that places emphasis on concrete political, social and economic rights as opposed to liberal democracy that emphasizes abstract political rights (Ake, 1996: 232). Similarly, such a democracy would invest heavily in the improvement of people's health, education, and capacity so they can participate effectively (Ake, 1996: 232).

The Conceptual Framework
The study's conceptual framework consists of two major terms: internal displacement and post-conflict peace-building. Drawing from the United Nations' "Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement," the phenomenon is defined as a situation in which "persons or groups who have been forced or obliged to flee or leave their homes or places of habitual residence, in particular, as a result of or in order to avoid the effects of armed conflict, circumstances of generalized violence, violations of human rights, or natural or human-made disasters, and who have not crossed an internationally recognized state border"(United Nations, 1998).

Post-conflict peace-building is conceptualized as a process that consists of a "wide range of activities associated with capacity building, reconciliation, and social transformation. It is a long-term process that occurs after   violent conflict has slowed down or come to a halt.

Thus, it is the phase of the peace process that takes place after peacemaking and peacekeeping" (Ghali, 1995:1).

The Nature and Dynamics of the Internal Displacement Conundrum and the Crises of Underdevelopment in Liberia

Background

The post-conflict peace-building project currently underway in Liberia is faced with two major sets of interrelated issues. One set relates to what the Brookings-Bern Project on Internal Displacement aptly refers to as "displacement relevant and displacement-specific issues" (Brookings-Bern Project, 2007:14). The other and broader one concerns the crises of underdevelopment that engendered the civil conflict and war that caused internal displacement.

Resolving these issues within the context of the post-peace-building project is indispensable to the establishment of sustainable peace in Liberia. This is because, on the one hand, unresolved problems of displacement may cause instability, and thus threaten the peace-building efforts (Kalin, 2007:2). On the other hand, durable solutions, particularly return, cannot be achieved for internally displaced persons as long as there is a lack of security; property is not restored; and the conditions for sustainable solutions, including reconciliation, post-conflict reconstruction and the establishment of democratic governance (Kalin, 2007).

The Internal Displacement Conundrum

The Internal displacement conundrum in Liberia consists of three major dimensions: the challenges facing IDPs, who have returned to their original places of residence, those who have resettled in other parts of the country, and individuals who are still internally displaced. In this section, each of these dimensions will be discussed.

- *The Returnees to their original places of residence*

IDPs, who have returned to their original places of residence, since the closure of the camps by the Liberian government in 2006, are faced with several specific problems that are adversely affecting their abilities to reintegrate into their respective communities. Clearly, it is not possible to explicate these problems exhaustively. Accordingly, some of the major ones would be examined. At the vortex of the challenges is the lack of housing. This problem is twofold. First, many of the returnees are homeless, because their abodes were destroyed during the two civil wars. Second, those returnees whose homes were not destroyed are having problems recovering them from the occupants. To make matters worse, given the ineffectiveness of the Liberian judiciary (Banks, 2007), these returnees virtually have no legal recourse. One of the resultant dangers is the emergence of conflicts, at times deadly, between the homeowners, on the one hand, and the new occupants, on the other.

A related problem concerns the broader issue of land conflicts. One major dimension pits returnees, who are endeavoring to re-assert ownership over their land, against contenders, who are claiming to be the owners of the land. In some cases, the conflicts over land have resulted in violence in which people have been killed and wounded, and the already limited amount of physical properties have been destroyed. At the core of these land conflicts is the fact that, as Corriveau-Bourque (2010:1) observes, "multiple waves of

displacement and (re)settlement have significantly altered the many institutions that regulated access to land and land-based resources prior to the war. This has resulted in a range of tenure systems that are struggling to (re) establish themselves at a variety of scales." Significantly, these conflicts are symptomatic of a wave of land-based disputes that have plagued the country, since the end of the second civil war in 2003, with the signing of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement or the Accra Peace Accord.

Also, other basic human needs such as job opportunities, healthcare and food are in serious short supply. With a national unemployment rate of more than 85 %(United Nations Development Program, 2006), returnees simply do not have the opportunity to find jobs. Thus, they are joining the ranks of the unemployed and the poverty-stricken. Similarly, the public health care system is virtually non-existent, as evidenced by the severe shortage of medical personnel, including doctors and nurses, equipment and supplies. Moreover, the bulk of the public health care facilities are non-functional. The resultant effect is that returnees have to rely on the already over-burdened and strained humanitarian-based health care system that non-governmental organizations have been operating in the country for almost two decades. Given the stress on system as well as its inadequacy, the health care needs of returnees are not being addressed. Furthermore, unable to find sources of income, returnees are facing the critical challenges of addressing their food needs. That is, in the absence of employment and the opportunity to engage in farming activities, several returnees are finding it difficult to meet their food needs on a daily basis. The problem is even more acute for returnees who have families.

Yet, a major lacuna is insecurity. Having experienced the vagaries of two civil wars, returnees lack a sense of security as they return to their areas of residence, especially given the fact that there is the lack of transitional justice. That is, the various accused perpetrators of war crimes and crimes against humanity have yet to be brought to justice, despite the issuance of the report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, which includes the names of various perpetrators, and the call for the establishment of a special court to try these accused war criminals (Truth and Reconciliation Commission, 2009). Amid this, as Tamang and Parajulee (2010:8) lament, "Returnees could not feel safe when they went back to their old villages and neighborhoods. They witnessed a pervasive 'culture of impunity.'"

In a similar vein, the vulnerability of teenage mothers and young girls to gender-based violence constitutes a related problem. It is quite common for men and boys to perpetrate various acts of sexual violence against women and girls. The problem is made worse by the fact that several ex-fighters, among others, who engaged in acts of sexual violence against women and girls during the two civil wars, and have not yet received counseling and psychological treatment, are among the perpetrators of the current wave of sexual violence. The perpetrators are emboldened by a "culture of impunity" that has historically provided *carte blanche* to them. Broadly, sexual violence against female returnees is symptomatic of the moral bankruptcy of the hegemonic patriarchal system that has dominated the country's landscape since its founding. Additionally, the ineffectiveness of the country's judicial system makes the pursuance of the legal recourse as a route for redress an exercise in futility, even against the backdrop of the new anti-rape law promulgated by the Sirleaf regime.

- *The returnees who have settled in other parts of the country*

For a variety of reasons, including the limited opportunities that are available for earning a livelihood, several returnees have chosen to settle in other parts of the country. However, this has not insulated them from experiencing the various problems that are common to all returnees, including even those, who have returned to their original places of residence. In other words, those returnees, who have made the determination to take up residence in other parts of the country, are experiencing problems, such as inadequate housing, insecurity, gender-based sexual violence, and the lack of other basic human needs, such as jobs, health care and food.

Beyond experiencing the problems that are shared by all returnees, this genre of returnees is confronted with challenges that are specific to their situation. One major problem relates to the serious issue of getting acclimated to a new environment. The derivatives include the tedious process of developing a network of friends and acquaintances, and more broadly becoming accepted members of their respective new communities. Amid limited resources, there is an emerging orientation toward the privileging of the so-called "indigenes" of these communities.

A related problem is the separation from family members. This is also important, because it deprives this group of returnees of a major support base, especially as they endeavor to restart their lives, after more than a decade of warfare and its associated vagaries. Moreover, particularly in rural communities, familial ties are central to determining access to critical community resources, such as land.

- *The current IDPs*

Despite the Liberian government's declaration that the internal displacement crisis is over, the repository of empirical evidence does not support this optimistic claim. This is because thousands of people are still internally displaced around the country. For example, in the urban centers, where many of these IDPs currently "reside," an undetermined number of them are living in often grim conditions in abandoned public or private buildings in Monrovia, and are finding it more difficult to access official assistance (Internal Displacement Monitoring Center, 2007:1). Living in these unfit locations makes these IDPs vulnerable to various health hazards, including weather related ones. For example, their exposure to the rain makes them vulnerable to diseases, such as pneumonia.

Additionally, these IDPs do not have employment opportunities. Hence, they are unable to provide for their daily basic necessities such as food. The confluence of hunger and malnourishment is adversely affecting their health. With the absence of a functioning public health system and the stress on the humanitarian-based health services, these IDPs are at risk of dying from even curable diseases.

The Crises of Underdevelopment: The Roots of the Civil Conflict and Internal Displacement

The internal displacement phenomenon was the by-product of the two civil wars caused by the multifaceted crises of underdevelopment—cultural, economic, political, security and social—engendered by the authoritarian peripheral Liberian state (Kieh, 2008). The

adverse impact of the crises of underdevelopment on the subaltern classes (workers, peasants, the unemployed and the lumpen proletariat) led to the erosion of the legitimacy of the Liberian state and its various regimes. Over time, the mass disaffection made the state irrelevant to the lives of ordinary Liberians. Stripped of its core of legitimacy, the state thus became vulnerable to contestations for power, including the insurgencies led by Charles Taylor through the National Patriotic Front of Liberia that subsequently erupted into the first civil war in 1989(Ero, 1995; Huband, 1998; Adekeye, 2002; Leavitt, 2005; Kieh, 2008), and Sekou Damate Konneh of the Liberians United for Reconciliation and Democracy (LURD) that occasioned the second civil war in 1999(Adekeye, 2003, Leavitt, 2005; Kieh, 2009; Ohanwe, 2009). The resultant civil wars forced thousands of people to flee from their various places of residence in search of safety. Some of them sought refugees in neighboring countries and other states in Africa and around the world. Others became internally displaced at various locations around the country.

In the cultural sphere, there is the problem of conflicts between various ethnic groups and stocks. For example, the enduring conflict between the Americo-Liberian stock and the indigenous ethnic groups remains unresolved. Central to this conflict is the maintenance of various national symbols such as the motto "The Love of Liberty Brought us Here," the national seal, the flag, and the country's highest civilian award—"The Most Venerable Order of the Pioneers"—that reflect only the historical-cultural experiences of the Africans who were repatriated from the United States to Liberia beginning in the early 1820s. Another conflict involves the Krahns, on the one hand, and the Gios and Manos, on the other. This dispute has its origins in the instrumentalization of ethnicity by the Doe regime (1980-1990), amid its crisis of legitimacy. Faced with the erosion of mass support, the Doe regime resorted to the use of identity politics embodied in the notion of "us" (the Krahns) against "them" (Gios and Manos). Initially, the conflict commenced with the personal rivalry between Doe (from the Krahn ethnic group) as head of the military junta that ruled the country from 1980-1986 and his one time confidante General Thomas Quiwonkpa (from the Gio and Mano ethnic groups), the Commanding-General of the Armed Forces of Liberia, and the fourth highest ranking member of the ruling People's Redemption Council (PRC).

Economically, there were both inequities and inequalities in the distribution of wealth between the members of the ruling class and the subalterns. For example, in the 1970s, the ruling class accounting for about 4% of the population disproportionately owned about 60% of the national wealth (Movement for Justice in Africa, 1980:3). In the same vein, in 1985, for example, the ruling class, comprising about 6% of the population, cornered about 70% of the wealth (Kieh, 1997:27). In terms of income, in 1980, which marked the end of the reign of the True Whig Party and its government, the ruling class, representing about 4% of the population, controlled about 76.3% of the national income (Ministry of Planning and Economic Affairs, Liberia, 1986). As for unemployment, the rate stood at a staggering 50% in 1980(Ministry of Planning and Economic Affairs, 1986). In 2003, the rate burgeoned to an all-time high of 85% (United Nations Development Program, 2006:1). The cumulative effects of decades of neglect of the subaltern classes by the state found expression in the high rate of poverty, which stood at 76.2% in 2003(United Nations Development Program, 2006:1). Amid the state of economic malaise for the overwhelming

majority of Liberians, the members of the local ruling class, especially the state managers, and their relations engaged in unbridled acts of corruption as the means through which the private accumulation of capital occurred. To paraphrase Fanon (1965), the Liberian state became like a warehouse in which each member of the ruling class collected his or her share of the loot.

As for gender relations, they were regulated by the patriarchal system that privileged males over females in the various spheres. For example, in the rural areas, it was commonplace for boys to have greater access to educational opportunities than girls. Similarly, in terms of employment opportunities, males also comparatively had greater access. Even in some of the cases in which women had access, they were subjected to the vagaries of sexual harassment by their male employers and supervisors (Kieh and Railey, 1993).

Politically, the country had an authoritarian political system, as evidenced by the vitriolic violation of human rights by the various regimes, including the Tubman, Tolbert, Doe and Taylor governments (Freedom House, 2010). For example, these regimes, among others, violated political human rights, such as the freedoms of association, speech and thought. One of the major contributing factors to the authoritarian multiplex was the hegemony of the presidency. The president was given extensive political, economic and security powers by the constitution and statues. One of the major resultant effects was that the presidency got overly powerful to the extent that it could not be checked by both the legislature and the judiciary (Wreh, 1976).

In terms of security, the state posed the greatest threat to the physical wellbeing of its citizens. And this was primarily reflected in the horrendous human rights abuses that were committed by military, security and police personnel (Human Rights Watch, 2003). For example, during the Doe and Taylor regimes, state security agents were involved in the commission of various politically-related murders, including, for example, the gruesome killing of Samuel Dokie, a former confidante of President Taylor, his wife, son and sister (Human Rights Watch, 2003).

Socially, the crises of underdevelopment were reflected in the educational, health and housing sectors. In the educational sphere, there was the perennial problem of inadequate number of public schools, trained personnel, instructional materials, including the textbooks, and equipment. In addition, there was the vexing problem of inequities in the access to education in terms of gender and the urban-rural divide. One of the resultant negative effects was the high rate of illiteracy, which stood at 65% in 1985(United Nations Development Program, 1990:129). Overall, as the United Nations Development Program laments, "the weak state commitment was the main reason for Liberia having one of the weakest public educational systems in Africa" (United Nations Development Program, 2004:2). As for health care, in 1980, for example, only about 35% of the populations had access (Ministry of Planning and Economic Affairs, 1986). In turn, this adversely affected the health of the citizens. For example, in 1989, the infant mortality rate was 157 per 1,000, and the under five rate was 235 per 1,000(United Nations Children Fund, 2006: 1). To make matters worse, by 2003, only about 45% of the population had access to acceptable

sanitation, and a paltry 26% to safe drinking water (United Nations Development Program, 2006:1). Similarly, in the housing sector, in 1988, for example, there were only 500,000 dwellings (Encyclopedia of Nations, 2006). However, the majority of them were not suitable for human habitation, due to, among others, structural problems, and the lack of running water, lavatory facilities and electricity. The limitation of the housing stock led to the proliferation of ghettos and slums in the capital city area, as reflected in the establishment of West Point, Buzzie Quarter, Soniweh, and Slipway.

The State's Response to the Challenges of Internal Displacement and Post-Conflict Peace-Building
Internal Displacement
The state's response to the plight of IDPs has been threefold. First, the government worked with the United Nations and other international organizations in the creation of resettlement packages for IDPs, who were desirous of either returning to their original places of residence or other parts of the country. Second, the state accepted two bodies of international norms dealing with IDPs. Third, the state made the determination to ignore those IDPs, who were considered unregistered. In 2004, the National Transitional Government of Liberia (NTGL) formulated and began the implementation of the "Community Resettlement and Reintegration Strategy. The overall purpose was to assist IDPs in the return and resettlement processes. In order to assist IDPs to return, the state, under the framework, provided small transportation allowances, which were calculated on the basis of the IDPs' final destinations. In the same vein, the returnees received small resettlement packages that included a little amount of cash and tents (to serve as temporary housing). The process of return and reintegration of IDPs was launched in November 2004, as, on completion of the disarmament and demobilization processes, the counties of return were declared ready to receive returnees (IRIN, 2004: 1). Two years later, with the return of the remaining registered internally displaced persons (IDPs), the Liberian state declared that the internal displacement crisis was considered over (Internal Displacement Monitoring Center, 2007:1). Specifically, after more than 326,000 registered IDPs returned to their areas of origin, the government then closed the 35 camps that hosted them indicating the formal end of a 17 year period during which much of Liberia's population of three million had at some time been internally displaced (Internal Displacement Monitoring Center, 2007:1)

The other aspect of the state's response has revolved around the acceptance of the United Nations" Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement." These norms provide standards for dealing with IDPs ranging from the definition to the treatment of internally displaced persons. Basically, Liberia, by making the "guiding principles" part of the laws of the country, as evidenced by the passage of a law to that effect in 2004, committed itself to abiding by these norms. Similarly, in 2009, Liberia signed the Kampala Convention on Internally Displaced Persons in Africa. By so doing, the country also committed itself to the implementation of the regional norms on IDPs.

With regards to the "forgotten IDPs," the state's response was to leave them behind in various camps across the country based on the claim that they were not officially registered (Wright et al, 2007:7). In other words, hundreds of IDPs were not included in the

return and resettlement processes by the state. This vivid demonstration of neglect by the state led IDPs from seven camps in the Monrovia area to hold demonstrations in 2007, demanding support to return home and claiming that the Liberian government and nongovernmental aid agencies had ignored them (Cohen, 2008:8).

In terms of an assessment of the state's response, while its assistance with the return of the IDPs represented appreciable progress, nonetheless, the state has performed quite poorly in some of the other critical areas. One of the major failures is reflected in the state's unwillingness to formulate and implement the appropriate modalities for dealing with the specific problems facing the returnees—the housing, land, basic human needs, security, and gender-based violence issues. As Tamang and Parajulee (2010:7) aptly note, "The government's inability to handle the problems in the resettlement and reintegration process suggests a considerable gap between Liberia's commitment to and the strategies adopted to implement the necessary measures to resolve the IDP crisis."

Post-Conflict Peace-building
Under the suzerainty of the United Nations, the European Union, the International Monetary Fund, the World Bank, and the United States, the liberal peace-building project in the country was set into motion in late 2003, following the establishment of the National Transitional Government of Liberia (NTGL) under the leadership of Gyude Bryant. Subsequently, the newly elected government of President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf assumed the leadership of the project in January 2006. Characteristically, the project is based on the "template" that has been imposed by these major global actors on other post-conflict states. In this part of the article, some of the major elements of the project will be examined.

In terms of national reconciliation, a non-partisan Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) was established in 2004, and became operational in 2007. After more than two years of work involving the conduct of investigations and the hearing of testimonies, the TRC issued its final report in July 2009. One of the major highlights of the report is a list of accused "war criminals," including the incumbent President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, and other high officials of her government (Truth and Reconciliation Commission, 2009). Additionally, the TRC has called for the establishment of a "special court" to try the accused "war criminals." Interestingly, President Sirleaf has denounced the report, and refused to provide the requisite leadership for the establishment of the "special court." Similarly, the United Nations, the European Union and the United States, which have been quite supportive of the establishment of such courts in other post-conflict states like Sierra Leone, have remained quite silent. Clearly, the failure to implement this critical element of transitional justice would lead to the continuation of the "culture of impunity" in Liberia, thereby putting the country back on the perilous path to state failure and collapse.

In the area of cultural peace-building, the Sirleaf regime has yet to develop and implement a plan that would seek to address the country's various ethnic conflicts—settlers versus indigenes, Krahn versus Gio and Mano, Mandingo versus Gio and Mano, among others. To make matters worse, the Sirleaf regime has retained the various national symbols such as the emblem, motto ("The Love of Liberty Brought us Here") and the flag, and the highest civilian award ("The Most Venerable Order of the Pioneers") that continue

the legacy of settler hegemony and its associated divisiveness. Also, virtually nothing has been done to address the other ethnic conflicts, such as the Krahn versus the Gio and Mano, which were triggering factors for the country's two civil wars.

Economically, the Sirleaf regime has retained the country's peripheral capitalist system with its associated vagaries of class inequities and inequalities, exploitation and poverty. Without democratically reconstituting the neo-colonial Liberian state, the Sirleaf regime has embarked upon two major projects that are supposedly designed to improve economic conditions. The "anti-corruption campaign" is designed to help ensure that public resources are used to improve the material conditions of Liberians. So far, the campaign represents what McConnell (2006:1) calls "Big Talk and tough rhetoric." This is because corruption is quite pervasive in the Sirleaf regime. In fact, the Auditor-General of Liberia has asserted," The Sirleaf regime is three times more corrupt than previous governments"(Dolo, 2008:1). Moreover, the Sirleaf regime has failed to prosecute several government officials, who have been accused of engaging in corruption (Tall, 2010). As for the "poverty reduction strategy," which has as its central purpose the promotion of "rapid, inclusive, and sustainable development" (Government of Liberia, 2008:9), it will not achieve its objectives for several major reasons. First, poverty will not be reduced, because it is inherent to the peripheral capitalist mode of production. Second and related, in a peripheral capitalist political economy, class inequities and inequalities are central to the private accumulation of capital by the members of the ruling class. For example, about 85% of the population remains unemployed; and the poverty rate is about 76.2%, with about 52% of the population suffering from chronic poverty (United Nations Development Program, 2006:1)

Politically, despite the proliferation of "concept papers" from the Governance Commission (GC) and the recurrent rhetoric about the promotion of democratization, the emergent trends are pointing to the sanitization of the country's perennial authoritarian political system rather than to systemic change. After almost five years in power, the Sirleaf regime has not commenced the critical process of political peace-building. For example, the regime's record on the promotion of political human rights has been mixed (Freedom House, 2010). The regime has embarked upon the process of creating a *de facto* one party state, as it seeks to co-opt opposition political parties and politicians (The Analyst Newspaper, 2010). As well, the Sirleaf regime has taken a major step to expand the ambit of the "hegemonic presidency" through the president's recently acquired authority to appoint the mayors of the various cities (Kennedy, 2006:1). This means that the president now appoints every official of the government with the exception of the members of the legislature.

In the security sector sphere, a new police force has been trained by the United Nations peace-keeping force, while DynCorp, a private American security firm, has trained the new national army. While these are important steps toward security peace-building, however, there are still some major pitfalls that need to be addressed. The core shortcoming is the lack of a "national security strategy" that would provide the roadmap for the security sector. The derivatives are the arbitrary decision to establish 2,000 members national army that fails to take into consideration the military's mission, including the

internal and external threats; and the failure to provide the soldiers with "military occupational specializations"(MOS) in various professional fields beyond the basic training.

Socially, much still needs to be done in various areas. For example, the public health sector remains dysfunctional. Thus, Liberians have become dependent upon the few functioning private health care facilities and the compassion of health-based non-governmental organizations. Accordingly, a large number of people lack access to health services (United Nations Development Program, 2006). Furthermore, about 26% and 45% of the population have access to safe drinking water and sanitation respectively (United Nations Development Program, 2006:1).

Toward Social Democratic Peace-Building in Liberia
Background
As has already been argued, the social democratic peace-building model provides the best roadmap for establishing stability and durable peace, and promoting development and holistic democracy in Liberia. Accordingly, within this framework, the IDP conundrum can be tackled and addressed, and the broader peace-building project can be successfully pursued. Against this background, in this section, I proffer some suggestions for dealing with the issue of internal displacement and its dimensions, and the larger issue of building peace by addressing the roots of the Liberian civil conflict, which occasioned the country's two civil wars.

Tackling the Internal Displacement Conundrum
The state needs to design and implement a new framework for addressing the issues that are specific to IDPs, who have returned to their original places of habitation, and other parts of the country, and those that remain displaced. Operationally, the framework should consist of consultations with, and the inclusion and participation of IDPs, the establishment of a national commission that would focus exclusively on IDP-related issues such as housing, basic human needs, and the settlement of the remaining IDPs, and the development of a coordination mechanism between the IDP Commission and executive and judicial agencies.

In terms of the collaboration between the commission and executive agencies, they would work together on issues such as housing, the provision of other basic human needs, and security for IDPs, who have either returned to their places of original habitation, or to other parts of the country. As well, the commission would collaborate with the relevant executive departments in resettling the remaining IDPs, including addressing, among others, the critical issue of housing. The commission would work with various inter-governmental and non-governmental organizations, including the United Nations System, and the European Union, in harnessing the assistance from the former in helping to address the IDP conundrum.

On the legal front, the IDP Commission would work with the judiciary in formulating and implementing the modalities that would help in the adjudication of various cases, including those covering contestations and conflicts over land between and among IDPs, on the one hand, and IDPs and the occupants of the contested land, on the other, and gender-

based violence against girls and women. One approach could be the establishment of "special courts" to adjudicate IDP-related cases. In order to be cost effective, five regional courts could be established to cover the country's fifteen counties.

Resolving the Crises of Underdevelopment

Broadly, addressing the underlying multifaceted crises of underdevelopment and the resultant civil conflict that have plagued the Liberian state since its founding in 1847 is epicentral to the prevention of civil wars, and another cycle of internal displacement. This would involve undertaking various steps. The overarching measure that is required is the democratic reconstitution of the state. Specifically, this would entail several specific steps. First, the state needs to be stripped of its current nature that is based exclusively on the historical and cultural experiences of the settlers or Americo-Liberians, who returned from slavery in the United States. Alternatively, the new nature of the state should reflect a blending of the multiple historical and cultural experiences of Liberia's various ethnic stocks and groups.

Second, the multidimensional anti-people, anti-development and anti-democracy character of the state needs to be expunged. The character of the state that has been described variously as "authoritarian," "exclusionary," "negligent," "prebendal," "criminalized," "exploitative," and "personalized"(Agbese, 2007) needs to be changed. In its stead, a new character that is democratic, inclusive, responsive, meritorious and supportive of the wellbeing of all citizens needs to be developed.

Third, the state's perennial mission of creating propitious conditions for the private accumulation of capital by the members of the ruling class needs to be changed. The new mission should be to promote holistic democracy, including the advancement of political rights and civil liberties, and the social and economic well-being of the citizens. In short, the state should promote cultural, economic, environmental, political, religious, security and social democracy.

Fourth and related, there are several derivatives from the state's new mission. In the cultural sphere, the state should promote ethnic pluralism and peaceful co-existence, and not privilege any particular ethnic stock or group. Economically, the reconstituted state, based on a mixed economic system, should be a democratic developmental one that helps to create jobs, tackles poverty, promote equality and equity and improves the standard of living of all citizens, especially the subalterns. In the environmental domain, the state should develop an effective regime to combat pollution and deforestation. In the political realm, there should be the advancement of human rights, the "rule of law," "checks and balances" and the associated caging of the "hegemonic presidency," accountability, transparency, a vibrant multiparty system, a strong civil society, and the holding of regular, free and fair elections. As for the religious realm, the state should promote pluralism based on mutual respect and tolerance between and among various religious groups. In the security realm, the focus should be on the protection of the physical wellbeing of citizens, and the broader polity rather than the regime in power. Socially, the state should invest in health care, education, housing and public transportation, as well as improvement in sanitation and mass access to clean drinking water. The new state would also tackle the

vexing issues of gender-based violence, and the conflicts over land by, among others, designing and implementing policies that end the "culture of impunity" and establish a fair and transparent land tenure system, including the adjudication and resolution of the current conflicts over land.

Ultimately, the new social democratic state would address the crises of underdevelopment and the resultant conflict, and set into motion the establishment of durable peace and stability based on the tenets of "real democracy"(Ake, 1996). This is a comprehensive genre of democracy that transcends political rights and civil liberties, and seeks to establish equality and equity in class, gender and other types of relations. In short, the new state would make the advancement of the well-being of all citizens the centerpiece of its policies.

The Challenges

The social democratic state reconstitution project will face two major challenges. At the internal level, it would require a new genre of leadership that is not the handmaid of the neo-liberal project and its suzerain—the "Washington Consensus." This new brand of leadership must be committed foremost to the wellbeing of the Liberian people, rather than to international finance capital. Such a leadership should be committed to human-centered and comprehensive democracy that seeks to empower people culturally, environmentally, economically, politically and socially. As well, Liberia would need a politically-conscious and civic-minded citizenry. Also, there is the need for the formation of a broad-based progressive national social movement that would serve as the other major anchor of the social democratic project. This movement would help, among others, to conscientize the citizenry and promote the social democratic agenda. Collectively, these three major domestic actors would be the motor forces that would set into motion the social democratic project through various steps. First, a broad-based national conference needs to be held comprising the representatives of all of the various stakeholders in the country. The conference would discuss the specifics of the project. This would be followed by ongoing discussions at all levels—from the family to the national level. Second, the citizens, the progressive national leadership and the progressive national social movement would need to play major roles in promoting and sustaining the social democratic project. Clearly, the initiation of such a project would have to come at the end of the term of office of the Sirleaf regime, because President Sirleaf is not committed to such a transformation of Liberia. Instead, her agenda is a mixture of the continuation of the perennial authoritarian tradition and some dosages of political and economic liberalization.

The other challenge would be posed by the "Washington Consensus" and its powerful constituent actors. Against this backdrop, two major strategies would be useful. At the domestic level, the new pro-transformation leadership in Liberia would have to manage the country's abundant natural resources well, so that the material conditions of ordinary Liberians can be improved. By so doing, the leadership would b able to mobilize domestic support for its struggle with the "Washington Consensus." Externally, the new Liberian leadership would need to forge a broad coalition with other progressive states in the Third World that would stand as the bulwark against the machinations of the "Washington Consensus."

Conclusion

The central finding of the article is that since the internal displacement conundrum is a by-product of the multidimensional crises of underdevelopment that have been engendered by the authoritarian peripheral Liberian state, the phenomenon therefore cannot be addressed within the context of the state type that Liberia has had since 1847. In other words, to paraphrase Samatar and Samatar (2002:3), since the Liberian state is of the wrong type, it cannot therefore shepherd the process of addressing the undercurrents and issues that are specific to internal displacement. Accordingly, the authoritarian peripheral Liberian state needs to be democratically reconstituted in terms of its nature, character, mission and political economy.

Alternatively, a new social democratic state construct needs to be constructed. Such a social formation would provide the enabling environment in which post-conflict peace-building can successfully take place, including addressing the internal displacement conundrum. For example, the new state would make addressing the IDP specific issues such as housing, the retrieval of land and other properties, security and safety, other basic human needs, gender-based violence and the resettlement of those who are still IDPs priorities. The initiation, sustenance and implementation of such a people-centered state reconstitution project would depend upon a new progressive Liberian leadership, a new broad-based progressive national social movement, and a politically-conscious citizenry.

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