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What is the Best Timing for Post-Conflict Elections?  
The Cases of the First and Second Liberian Civil War

By

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A minor dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the award  
of the degree of Master of Social Science in International Relations

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**Compulsory Declaration:**

This work has not been previously submitted in whole, or in part, for the award of any degree. It is my own work. Each significant contribution to, and quotation in, this dissertation from the work, or works, of other people has been attributed, and has been cited and referenced.

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## **Abstract**

The timing of post-conflict elections is a critical element that requires careful consideration to minimize the risk of producing adverse results. Through examining the literature and studying Liberia's 1997 and 2005 elections, this work seeks to identify the best timing practices for post-conflict elections. The theoretical basis, which is inspired by the works of Roland Paris and Terrence Lyons, is that if the circumstances are to permit the long-term goal of democratization, then post-conflict elections should follow a protracted transition period prior to holding the election. The transition period is utilized to develop favorable conditions for long-term stability, such as operational state institutions, adequate security, and a liberal political climate. Holding elections under such conditions may increase the likelihood for sustainable peace by not only ending the war, but also advancing democratization. However, when a long transition period is not possible, then elections can serve the limited goal of war termination. Elections which achieve the limited goal of war termination but fail to deliver a fully democratic regime may increase the risk of future civil conflict but can still be considered a partial success.

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## Acronyms

ALCOP.....	All Liberia Coalition Party
APP.....	Alliance of Political Parties
AU.....	African Union
CPA.....	Comprehensive Peace Agreement
DDRR.....	Disarmament Demobilization Rehabilitation and Reintegration
ECOMOG.....	Economic Community of West African States Monitoring Group
ECOWAS.....	Economic Community of West African States
EU.....	European Union
GEMAP.....	Governance and Economic Management Assistance Program
ICGL.....	International Contact Group on Liberia
IECOM.....	Independent Electoral Commission
IFES.....	International Foundation for Electoral Systems
IO.....	International Organization
LNP.....	Liberia National Police
LPC.....	Liberia Peace Council (rebel group)
LURD.....	Liberians United for Reconciliation and Democracy (rebel group)
MODEL.....	Movement for Democracy in Liberia (rebel group)
NDI.....	National Democratic Institute for International Affairs
NDPL.....	National Democratic Party of Liberia
NEC.....	National Election Commission
NGO.....	Non-Governmental Organization
NPFL.....	National Patriotic Front for Liberia
NPP.....	National Patriotic Party
NTGL.....	National Transitional Government of Liberia
OAU.....	Organization of African Unity
SADC.....	Southern African Development Community
ULIMO.....	United Liberation Movement of Liberia for Democracy (rebel group)
UN.....	United Nations
UNDP.....	United Nations Development Programme
UNEF.....	United Nations Emergency Force
UNMIL.....	United Nations Mission in Liberia
UNOMIL.....	United Nations Observer Mission in Liberia
UNSC.....	United Nations Security Council
US.....	United States of America
USAID.....	United States Agency for International Development
WFP.....	United Nations World Food Programme

# Map of Liberia



Map No. 3775 Rev. 6 UNITED NATIONS  
January 2004

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Cartographic Section

## **Chapter One: Introduction**

Civil wars are increasingly settled through negotiations and peace agreements. A central component of almost all post-civil war peace agreements drafted after the conclusion of the Cold War is the promotion of democracy through holding post-conflict elections. Democratization has become an integral part of the road to peace. It is widely believed that liberal democracies are more stable, provide greater liberty and quality of life, and are less prone to internal violent conflict than non-democratic states. This work does not question the merits of democracy, but explores the challenges of post-conflict elections, which are the cornerstones of post-conflict democratization efforts. However, the post-conflict environment is generally not conducive to elections. Roy Licklider (2008:316) bluntly posed the following question: “How do groups of people who have been killing each other with considerable enthusiasm and success come together to form a common government?”

While the prospect of democracy is desirable, the promotion of elections in fragile, war-torn states has unwelcome side effects which have the potential to jeopardize peace agreements and reignite violent conflict. Herein lies a dilemma, as stated best by Roland Paris (2001:774): “The dilemma is to figure out how to set war-shattered states on the path toward liberal democracy in the long term, while avoiding the destabilizing effects of political liberalization in the short run.”

This work examines the significance of timing of post-civil war elections and questions whether rapid democratization with arbitrary election dates, that are not based on conditions on the ground, are prudent, or whether certain conditions should be present before election dates are set. This work’s theoretical basis holds that if the circumstances are to permit the long-term goal of democratization, then post-conflict elections should follow a protracted transition period prior to holding the election.

The transition period is utilized to develop favorable conditions for long-term stability, such as adequate security, operational state institutions, and a liberal political climate. Holding elections under such conditions may increase the likelihood for sustainable peace by not only ending the war but also advancing democratization. However, when a long transition period is not possible, elections can serve the limited goal of war termination.

Foreign actors involved in post-conflict recovery often advocate the holding of early elections for three main reasons. First, elections establish legitimate leaders to whom power will be quickly transferred. Through the transfer of power, the influence of international actors is less likely to be perceived as a foreign invasion or occupation. Secondly, international actors can more easily justify their actions by supporting an elected regime than a non-democratic government. Lastly, early elections lift some of the post-conflict recovery burden from foreign actors by sharing responsibility with the newly elected government. For these and other reasons, there has been a push for rapid democratization through holding early elections.

In opposition to this paradigm is a growing amount of criticism, mostly in academia, of promoting early post-conflict elections. The basis for this argument is that elections have adverse effects on recovery if the conditions are not suitable. Relevant conditions include security, polarization of society, development of political parties, and stability of state institutions. Utilizing the experiences of Liberia, this work adds to the ongoing debate on democracy promotion and the timing of elections in civil war-torn states.

The work provides a theoretical framework and relevant background on the issue of timing of post-conflict elections and subsequently examines two West African cases. The two central arguments of this paper are: (1) conditions

surrounding and preceding the elections affect the success of the election and (2) timing of post-conflict elections is best when it is contingent upon conditions under which the elections are to be held.

### 1.1 Overview of Paper

The paper contains three sections and five chapters. The first section covers theoretical background on post-conflict elections and democracy promotion. The second section is comprised of two case studies: the 1997 and 2005 elections in Liberia. The final section summarizes the findings of the case studies.

Chapter 1 introduces the topic and gives an overview of the paper. This chapter lays out the key objectives and gives a brief review of relevant literature. The paper exposes the dichotomy regarding timing of post-conflict elections between recommendations in contemporary academic literature and common practice in international peace operations.

Chapter 2 lays out the theoretical framework for the paper, which is derived from academic literature. This chapter provides the background and emergence of democracy promotion in peace operations. The multiple, and often conflicting, goals of post-conflict elections are examined. Then, the chapter covers the negative side effects of post-conflict elections and the relevance of conditions to prevent or manage the side effects. Finally, chapter two summarizes the risks and tradeoffs of promoting elections too soon after the peace agreement.

Chapters 3 and 4 examine Liberia's 1997 and 2005 elections. Putting the elections in context, each chapter provides a brief review of the respective preceding civil war. In detail, the chapters examine timing of the elections and conditions relating to Liberia's security, institutional strength, and political parties prior to elections. The analyses examine the intended goal of each election, whether the

conditions surrounding the elections were suitable to meet the goals, and whether the timing was appropriate and effective.

Chapter 5 summarizes the finding of the case studies and draws conclusions from those findings to determine the best timing for post-conflict elections. The paper acknowledges that the best available option is not necessarily the ideal option and therefore the best timing often differs from the ideal timing.

## 1.2 Methodology

This work utilizes a combination of a theory-based, qualitative literature study and empirical support through a comparative study of the 1997 and 2005 post-conflict election in Liberia. The qualitative literature study provides a deeper understanding of the issue and lays the foundation on which to analyze the case studies.

Because there are too few relevant cases for quantitative statistical analysis of how timing and conditions prior to post-conflict elections determine success and outcome, an in-depth study of two cases is conducted. The phenomenon being studied is complex and requires detailed examination of each individual case. This study examines causal relations more thoroughly, and therefore is more meaningful, than purely statistical analysis. By focusing on conflict cases that are similar in many regards, but differ in processes, the study aims to find reasons for each outcome.

To eliminate non-relevant factors that could influence the outcome of the study, two cases were chosen that lent themselves well for comparison. The elections following the First Liberian Civil War and the Second Liberian Civil war are examples of post-war elections following similarly protracted intrastate conflict with varied approaches to the timing of elections which resulted in varied outcomes.

Following the First Liberian Civil War (1989 to 1996), the international community promoted rushed presidential and national assembly elections in 1997,

less than one year after heavy fighting ended. Charles Taylor won a landslide victory on the hopes that violence would end, but violent conflict continued to flare up regularly and the country returned to civil war after only two years of relative peace.

The Second Liberian Civil War began in 1999 and officially ended in 2003 after President Taylor resigned and fled into exile. Following the peace agreement, the international community supported a two-year period of transitional government rule and significant rebuilding efforts, before holding elections in late 2005.

The main objectives of the case studies are to: (1) explore the processes and contributing factors that led to the timing of elections in the chosen cases; (2) analyze the conditions preceding the elections; (3) and examine the impact of conditions and timing on the success of said elections.

In order to remain focused and consistent in both cases, a standard set of questions is addressed in the analysis of each case. The central research question is whether post-conflict elections should be held early or should be delayed until the country is in a better position to manage the impacts of the elections. Here we can differentiate between two distinct categories: the first category is where post-conflict elections were successful, the second is where the elections were not successful. The reason for making this distinction is simple. If elections did not achieve the desired outcome, then the following questions must be addressed: What role did the timing of elections play in the failure of the elections? (i.e. Was the security situation inadequate for holding elections? Were the institutions capable of dealing with the added challenges brought out by the campaigns and elections? Was there sufficient time for the development of political parties?) If elections achieved the desired outcome, then the following questions must be addressed: Did the timing of the

elections play a role in the success of the elections? Did the timing of the elections allow for favorable conditions surrounding the elections?

This work does not address issues of sequencing of elections. There is a long-running debate among election experts on whether presidential, parliamentary, and local elections following armed conflict should be held simultaneously, or whether they should be sequenced. While this important issue is closely related to the issues that are addressed by this work, the issue of sequencing falls outside of the scope of this study.

### 1.3 Literature Survey

Since the 1990s there has been a growing body of research and literature on post-civil conflict recovery and on post-conflict elections. Democratic elections now play an integral role in peacebuilding and recovery. The international community heavily influences the holding and promotion of post-conflict elections, as foreign actors provide much of the resources and experience required to hold elections.

While the importance of holding post-conflict elections is established, the issue of timing has not been settled. There are two dominant schools of thought. The first is that elections should be held early so that the war-torn country can begin rebuilding under legitimate leadership. Promoting early elections has been the preferred practice for international actors and has several benefits. As noted above, early elections expedite the establishment of legitimate leadership and enable the transfer of power. Also, early elections expedite the sharing of recovery burden and allow international actors to begin removing themselves from the effort. This view is underpinned by a prominent 2005 USAID commissioned review of 14 post-conflict elections. The review found that early post-conflict elections had moderately positive impacts on reconciliation and state building through increases in international

assistance and thus reported favorably on the promotion of early elections (USAID 2005).

Furthermore, post-conflict elections serve multiple purposes. Terrence Lyons (2002) states that rushed post-conflict elections may be preferred if the prime intended purpose is war termination. Lyons explains that war termination may necessitate rapid planning and holding of elections in order to gain consent from belligerents and to keep momentum following a cease-fire. Delays in these processes can jeopardize the peace process and result in a return to war. Lyons concludes that post-conflict elections may need to be rushed to promote the limited but essential goal of war termination, because war termination is a prerequisite for democratization and other long-term goals. Therefore, according to Lyons, in certain cases promoting rushed and tenably flawed elections may be more beneficial than delaying until the conditions are suitable to conduct “free and fair” elections.

The second school of thought is critical of unconditional timing and holds that premature post-conflict elections can destabilize the host country and be counterproductive. Several notable scholars including Roland Paris, Benjamin Reilly, and Edward Newman support this view. A common criticism of rushed elections is that they primarily serve foreign actors and are not in the best interest of war-torn states (Reilly, 2004). Elections naturally polarize societies and add tension to already fragile situations (Newman & Rich, 2004). Therefore, the holding of elections in insecure environments and without the necessary capability to manage the added challenges brought on by elections poses dangers to security and stability (Reilly, 2002). According to Chester Crocker (2001:9), “if societies do not meet the predetermined criteria for democratization, then elections should be deferred during the peacebuilding phase to minimize the risks of polarizing and weakening societies.”

Commonly identified conditions are a stable security environment, adequate state institutions, and development of appropriate political parties.

Yet, other scholars argue that democratization is a lengthy process and the international community must commit the necessary resources to allow enough time for transformation to take place (Cook & Call, 2003). This may mean deferring elections until the conditions are appropriate. The standard time to schedule elections is two years after the signing of the peace agreement. Cook and Call suggest that, depending on the circumstances, a longer period of five or six years may be necessary. However, increasing the length of the operation increases the costs and necessary commitment from the international community.

As shown through this admittedly brief survey of relevant literature, there are differences in opinions and ongoing dialogue about the issue of post-conflict election timing. While no single approach is applicable to all cases, the vast majority of the academic literature expresses a dissenting opinion on the current practice to promote elections soon after the signing of a peace agreement.

## **Chapter Two: Background and Theory**

### **2.1 The Road to Democracy Promotion**

The push by international actors for rushed elections following peace agreements is a relatively new phenomenon, which is best understood in its historical context. The political liberalization of post-conflict states is now an integral part of international peacebuilding efforts. Peacebuilding, which has become a catchword in the lexicon of peace studies, only emerged after the end of the Cold War. While in recent decades other international organizations have become active in peacekeeping (i.e. ECOWAS, AU, SADC, etc.), the United Nations remains the most significant non-governmental actor today, and monopolized the field during the Cold War. Therefore, the expansion of involvement from peacekeeping to multidimensional peace operations, including peacebuilding and democracy promotion, is best viewed by examining the evolution of UN peace missions.

Prior to the 1990s, the UN's principal peace missions were limited to peacekeeping, which generally consisted of observing ceasefires and controlling neutral territories, which served to separate warring parties (Paris, 2004:14). UN peace operations began with the United Nations Emergency Force's (UNEF) engagement in Egypt in 1956 after the invasion of Egypt by Britain, France, and Israel. Having secured consent from all warring parties, UNEF monitored the withdrawal of invading troops and secured the Egypt-Israeli border. UNEF was mandated to only use force in self-defense and abstained from meddling in political issues (Paris, 2004:15). UNEF's authorization outlined that the operation was not to interfere with domestic political issues and not affect the political situation (UN 1956). It was considered vital to peacekeeping operations that peacekeepers not interfere with or become involved in domestic and local political issues of the

operation's host nation. The rules that determined the UN's involvement in Egypt set the precedent for international peacekeeping missions carried out by the UN until the end of the Cold War (Paris,2004:15).

Roland Paris lays out four primary reasons why peacekeepers did not meddle in domestic politics during the Cold War.

1. Legally, UN involvement was limited by specific restrictions and terms. Article 2 of the United Nations Charter denied the right of the organization to intervene in domestic issues falling under local jurisdiction.

2. Warring parties that allowed UN peacekeeping tolerated only limited roles, mostly the monitoring of cease-fires and enforcement of neutral areas. Increasing the role of international organizations would require deeper involvement of foreign actors and was generally not tolerated by the warring parties.

3. The two competing superpowers prevented outside involvement in the domestic affairs of their allies and strategic interests. In order to preserve their respective statuses and control over allies, neither the Soviet Union nor the US wanted interference from international organizations. As permanent members of the UN Security Council, the superpowers held veto power and could block any substantive Council resolution, irrespective of the resolution's level of support in the Council. Therefore, UN Security Council resolutions that mandated the new peace operations were likely to pass only if US and Soviet interests were not affected. The US and Soviets generally directly handled operations that could affect strategic interests.

4. Because of fundamental disputes between the US and Soviets, the UN could not promote any specific type of government during its peace operations. Therefore, interference in local politics of a host state was not possible, even if that state was not directly of strategic value to the superpowers. As a result, international

peacekeeping operations refrained from involvement in controversial ideological, governance, and political issues.

The end of the Cold War resulted in significant modifications of the restricting circumstances which had limited conflict, and post-conflict, UN security operations. Both the Soviet Union and the US decreased financial support and military involvement in places that no longer held strategic significance. This shift of support in the international system led to the conclusion of several ongoing conflicts while also destabilizing other regimes and leading to the outbreak of several new conflicts. Many conflicts that were prolonged through the involvement of the US and the Soviet Union and served as proxy battlegrounds came to an end, as the warring parties no longer received the financial and military support necessary to carry on fighting. Because the US and Soviets sought to decrease their foreign involvement, space opened up for involvement of international organizations (Paris 2004: 16).

New conflicts, primarily civil, intrastate conflicts, erupted as foreign aid diminished and left state regimes weakened and vulnerable to rebel uprising. Many regimes, especially in the developing world, were plagued with corruption and achieved loyalty among supporters through neopatrimonialism. These corrupt systems of loyalty rely on public resources, often derived through foreign aid, that are distributed as rewards for regime support. Without the influx of foreign support, many of the corrupt and inefficient regimes formerly propped up by Soviet or American aid became unstable and thus vulnerable to rebel uprising (Snyder, 2000:225). This increase in civil conflicts created additional needs for assistance from the UN and other IOs (Paris, 2004:17).

The conclusion of old conflicts, emergence of new conflicts, and change in circumstances previously limiting UN involvement, created additional opportunities

and need for outside intervention. According to a calculation by Roland Paris (2004:17) the decade following the Cold War (1989 to 1999) saw the deployment of 33 new UN peace operations. Throughout the four decades of the Cold War, the UN only deployed 15 peace operations in total. While the number of operations increased, so did the scope of operations. Post-Cold War operations often included disarmament of former fighters, monitoring of police conduct, preparations for democratic elections, and assistance in drafting of new constitutions.

Peacekeeping became only one aspect under the umbrella of peace operations conducted by the UN. Secretary-General Boutros-Ghali introduced the term “peacebuilding” in 1992 and made the distinction between peace, enforcement, peacekeeping and peacebuilding. His definition of peacebuilding included disarming former fighters, repatriating and resettling refugees, protecting human rights, strengthening governmental institutions, and promoting and monitoring democratic elections (Boutros-Ghali, 1992:11-12).

While Cold War peacekeeping efforts were almost entirely carried out by the UN, peacebuilding was not governed by any central authority efforts and involved a plethora of IOs, national development agencies, and NGOs. Even though peacebuilding missions were individually managed and not required to follow any specific formula, they all promoted democratization and popular elections to enable sustainable peace in post-conflict states (Paris. 2004:19). Another significant commonality of peacebuilding missions is the encouragement of immediate democratization, where election dates are set with little regard to conditions on the ground and are only significantly postponed under extremely unfavorable conditions. Since the end of the Cold War, almost all post-civil war peace agreements have included a plan for elections. Roland Paris (2004: 19) notes that all peacebuilding

operations resulted in elections being held within three years of the start of each respective mission, except in rare instances where continued conflict forced postponement or cancellation.

## 2.2 What Constitutes a Successful Election?

Terrence Lyons (2002) asserts that post-conflict elections serve multiple purposes, which can sometimes be contradictory and therefore may require prioritization. To determine the best timing for post-conflict elections, it must first be established what the intended outcome of a post-conflict election is and what achievements are sought through the promotion of an election. Only in consideration of the intended outcome can success or failure of an election be determined.

The foremost purpose of holding elections is to legitimately determine leadership of a state's government. Democratic elections are widely regarded as the only legitimate way of establishing leadership. If the primary goal of a post-conflict election is to establish leadership that is democratically chosen by the people, then of most importance is that the elections are deemed free and fair and that the outcome reflects the will of the people. If free and fair elections are the primary goal, then elections can be held as soon as the conditions allow free and fair elections. Therefore, it could be concluded that holding elections early is favorable, as it expedites the establishment of legitimate, indigenous and democratically elected leaders.

However, the international community promotes post-conflict elections as part of the peacebuilding process. Therefore, the results of elections must be considered in the greater context of peacebuilding. As part of peacebuilding, the desired accomplishments of elections must be expanded beyond merely the ability to produce legitimate leadership. Secretary-General Boutros-Ghali (1992: ¶ 21) explained in *An*

*Agenda for Peace* that peacebuilding efforts intend to “support structures that will tend to strengthen and support peace in order to avoid relapse into conflict.” Holding elections plays a significant role in creating those conditions. Viewed in the context of peacebuilding, elections continue to seek the creation of legitimate and indigenous leadership, but the overarching goal shifts to creating conditions for sustainable peace. Even elections that are deemed free and fair polarize the people and have the potential to encourage hateful speech during campaign season, encourage violence, increase tension, encourage formation of allegiances based on wartime loyalties, etc. Thus, even if international assistance provides the resources to manage free and fair post-conflict elections, proper institutions and mechanisms must also be in place to prevent campaigning and elections from being counterproductive to the peacebuilding effort. Therefore, while rushed elections held in unfavorable conditions, which are often facilitated with assistance of the international community, may produce legitimate leadership, such elections have the potential to adversely affect domestic peace. In light of this, Roland Paris (2004:155) questions whether “internationally sponsored democratization efforts [have] helped to create the conditions for stable and lasting peace, which is the stated goal of peacebuilding.”

Under the banner of peacebuilding, post-conflict elections are intended to advance potentially conflicting objectives regarding war termination and democratization (Lyons, 2002:216; Shaw, 2006:26). Because the objectives favor different timing and different circumstances, strategies can clash and may require prioritization of objectives (Lyons, 2002).

The success of a post-conflict election in regard to war termination depends on its effect on ending violent conflict and sustaining peace (Lyons, 2002). Elections have a mixed record in this regard. Elections in Mozambique, Namibia and

Zimbabwe helped end war. Elections in Liberia may have helped immediate war termination, but failed to sustain peace. The 1992 elections in Angola directly contributed to the country's relapse into a state of violent conflict.

Judging the success of a post-conflict election in regard to democratization is more complex. Multiple cycles of elections are required to definitively determine the effectiveness of the democratization efforts (Lyons, 2002:217). Post-conflict elections only signify the onset of potential democratic governance. The holding of elections only marks the beginning of an often protracted and difficult course of democratic consolidation. Furthermore, holding elections can legitimize autocratic leaders who rule and cling to power through intimidation and compulsion, often to the detriment of the constituents (Lyons, 2002:217).

In conclusion, due to the multiple goals of post-conflict elections, accomplishments must be judged on multiple levels. The international community promotes elections as part of the peacebuilding process; therefore, the broader impact of elections with regard to their effect on creating conditions for stable and lasting peace must be taken into consideration. Not only must the success of post-conflict elections be judged on whether the elections were free and fair and produced legitimate leadership, but the elections must also be judged on whether they contributed to ending conflict and whether they advanced democratization.

### 2.3 Post-Conflict Elections: Enabling Peace while Encouraging Conflict

Through the collapse of the Soviet Union and the end of the Cold War, western liberal democracy with popular elections and civil/political rights emerged as the best available form of government. The perceived triumph of western liberal democracy influenced the design of peacebuilding operations and led to the promotion of popular elections following civil war. After the fall of the Berlin Wall,

Francis Fukuyama (1989:4) famously declared “the universalization of western liberal democracy as the final form of human government.”

An underlying theory for the promotion of post-conflict elections is the democratic peace theory, which holds that democracies rarely go to war with each other. The issues of democratic peace have been among the most widely studied and debated issues in political science over the last 20 years. Furthermore, offshoots of the theory expand beyond the limits of interstate wars. While the majority of work is based on interstate conflict, various studies on intrastate conflict have found that democratic states are less prone to civil conflict than non-democratic states (Paris, 2004:42). Democratization and the promotion of post-conflict elections have emerged as preferred methods for creating conditions for sustainable peace and stability in civil war-torn states.

UN Secretaries General Boutros-Ghali and Kofi Anan, as well as several US Presidents have spoken in support of democratization as a means of enabling peace. Although only formally institutionalized by President George W. Bush, democracy promotion as a means to encourage peace dates back to the First World War. President Woodrow Wilson believed that, because democratic governments are based on consent of the governed, force and coercion served only as a last resort (Paris, 2004:40). President Wilson held that world peace, interstate and intrastate, could only be possible through political liberty and required democratic governance as its foundation (Paris, 2004:41). More recently, President Clinton’s agenda included “democratic enlargement” which sought to globally promote market democracies and to “counter the aggression and support the liberalization of states hostile to democracy” (Brinkley, 1997:116). Promoting democracy was a central foreign policy issue for President George W. Bush. President Bush promoted what became known

as the “freedom agenda” which focused on imposing western style democracy abroad to combat perceived threats, most notably terrorist organizations in the Middle East (Carothers, 2006).

The acknowledgement among leaders that democratic states are less likely to fight each other, and less likely to experience civil war, has led to the promotion of democracy and popular elections. However, transitions to democracy, and in particular elections, inherently create competition and tension that can further polarize the population and lead to conflict (Paris, 2004:156). In fact, political tension and mild conflict is normal in democracies. It is a sign of a functioning system (Dahl, 1986:14). Tension and conflict enable leaders with contending points of view to find practicable solutions by means of nonviolent negotiation and mutual concession. By channeling the political differences through a system of dialogue and compromise, differences that could otherwise lead to violent conflict are settled through negotiation. Thus, democratization and elections increase tension and conflict in order to prevent future conflict, often under already volatile circumstances with fragile peace. Because democracy depends on contention to confine the severity of the conflict, Roland Paris (2004:157) refers to this issue as the “fundamental paradox with the workings of democracy.”

Popular elections are the cornerstone of democracy, but elections are also the prime cause of increased tension and polarization during the democracy promotion process. Popular elections rely on competition, contestation, and effective use of tension and conflict. Even though the promotion of elections aims to provide a nonviolent alternative to manage political and ideological differences, popular elections require active contestation and contention between politicians and their

respective political parties (Paris, 158). Therefore, post-conflict elections play a contradictory role on the road to peace.

Post-conflict states are especially vulnerable to the negative effects associated with democratic elections. Not only do post-conflict states suffer from unstable security situations, but they also typically lack functioning government institutions and suffer from deep societal cleavages with severe polarization (Paris, 2004). Elections are by definition polarizing and can further divide societies already torn apart by violent civil conflict. Chester Crocker (2001) asserts that post-conflict states not ready to hold elections become increasingly fragile by the polarizing of society. Therefore, Crocker (2001) advocates deferring post-conflict elections until societies have stabilized.

Strongly polarized states tend to be less suited to manage the increased tension and polarization linked with elections. In severely polarized societies, adversaries may be so devoted to their cause that they prefer to harm, or eliminate, their opposition than seek peaceful resolution to overcome their differences; therefore, internal fighting and forceful clashes are more likely to erupt in severely polarized states than in other states (Paris, 2004:168). Generally, states that have recently emerged from civil war continue to have acute societal polarization and severe tension among the citizenry. Consequently, such states are especially vulnerable to recidivism of violent civil conflict (Paris, 2004:168). Encouraging further polarization and tension can have severe repercussions, especially when campaigning skews negative and exploits social cleavages.

Violent conflict invariably strengthens social identities and polarizes societies (Kaufmann, 1996; Paris, 2004). At the outbreak of intrastate conflicts, people who identify with several groups are often forced by social pressures or blatant force to

pledge their allegiance to only one group. Social divisions usually form around religion, ethnicity, or geographical lines (Reilly, 2008). In the aftermath of civil war, public support for political parties generally falls along societal divisions formed through the onset of war and therefore strengthens these structures (Reilly, 2008). Naturally, states that do not suffer from severe societal polarization are in a better position to absorb the added tension brought on by elections (Paris, 2004).

Post-conflict societies generally do not have a culture of peaceful dispute resolution (Paris, 2004:169). Societies with mechanisms for peaceful dispute resolutions are accustomed to seeking out these mechanisms to prevent differences of opinion from evolving into violent conflict. However, post-conflict states are generally not well equipped to manage the turbulent effects of post-conflict elections until they have developed methods of peaceful dispute resolutions.

Considering the vulnerable condition of post-conflict states, the promotion of elections can result in a recurrence of violence and end up doing more harm than good (Paris, 2004:175). In order to prevent the inherent added conflict associated with elections to escalate into acts of violence and threaten peace, the timing of elections and conditions under which campaigning and elections are conducted is significant. Scholars and practitioners commonly identify issues including security, strength of state institutions, and development of political parties as relevant to the feasibility of post-conflict elections.

**Security:** A stable security environment is the foundation on which any democratization effort is built. If the security challenges of ending civil war and the threats of parties dissatisfied with the peace agreement are not dealt with, democratization efforts and elections will have little chance of success (Stedman & Rothchild, 2002). Any peace agreement must foremost end violent conflict and

enable security, thus allowing for the “preconditions for democratization” (Lyons, 2002:226). If the intense security challenges and threats by groups opposing the peace agreement cannot be managed after civil war, then efforts to implement the agreement and hold elections will likely be futile (Lyons, 2002). Scholars and practitioners generally agree that in order to maintain a secure environment, warring parties must be disarmed. Stedman and Rothchild (2002:226) assert that demobilizing and disarming warring parties “can both contribute to reducing the threat of insecurity and increase the prospect for democratization.” The United Nations Department of Peacekeeping Operations (2000:16) states that “in the short term, the failure to disarm and demobilize former combatants effectively may contribute to an immediate relapse into war.”

Furthermore, how security operations are managed can have significant impacts on the probability of peaceful elections (Stedman & Rothchild, 2002; Lyons, 2002). The practices and procedures carried out to enforce security conditions following a peace agreement can affect how the government will operate and how authority will be exercised after the elections stipulated in the peace agreement (Lyons, 2002). If the restructuring of armed forces creates systems and procedures which aid democratic governance after the elections, then that process may increase security and further the possibility for democratization (Lyons, 2002). Disarming and demobilizing fighters decreases the ability to pursue civil war and thus decreases the likelihood that the war will renew (Lyons, 2002:227). In addition, demobilization and disarmament of fighters provides the perceptions of security and lays the foundation to develop peaceful political systems and procedures. (Lyons, 2002).

**State Institutions:** Strong state institutions (i.e. constitution, law enforcement, judiciary, executive bureaucracy, etc.) are necessary to manage the challenges that

come with elections and provide a secure environment. Institutional stability is fundamental to the sustainability of the state and its ability to manage conflict. Roland Paris (2001; 2004) challenges the assumption that rushed elections and rapid political liberalization in states that are suffering, or have suffered, from civil violence will promote domestic peace. Because democratization can exacerbate societal conflicts, Paris (2001:767) argues that “peace builders should delay liberalization until they have constructed political [...] institutions that are capable of managing the societal tensions that naturally arise from the process of democratization.” Democratic governance relies on a system of institutions to settle disagreements and impose rules and regulations to orderly and peacefully manage competition (Paris, 2004:159). Adding contention through promoting elections before the necessary institutional framework is in place can lead to violent conflict if contention exceeds the capabilities of state institutions to peacefully manage political conflict (Paris, 2004: 159).

The strength of institutions is reflected on the likelihood of successful post-civil war elections and democratization (Barnes, 2001). Institutions must be strong enough to resist becoming corrupt and being used as institutional tools of political leaders, as is a frequent occurrence in young governments (Barnes, 2001). Jack Snyder (2007:7), also in favor of strengthening state institutions before holding national elections, states that “democratizing in the wrong sequence not only risks bloodshed in the short term, but also the mobilization of durable illiberal forces with the capacity to block democratic consolidation over the long term.”

States that lack institutional strength and stability tend to be unable to efficiently enforce state policies and govern effectively. Weak states may fail to protect some societal groups, therefore leaving them to fend for themselves and

consequently take up arms in self-defense (Paris, 2004:173). This can lead adversarial groups to also take up arms and can eventually trigger fighting.

In addition to protecting its citizens from threat, state institutions must also function to resolve contending societal disputes (Paris, 2004). In cases where state institutions are unable to resolve societal disputes peacefully, the involved parties may try to advance their cause by circumventing state institutions and may resort to acts of violence (Paris 2004). The state's ability to manage contending demands is of particular importance during tumultuous times, such as around election time. In support of this position, research by Juan Linz and Alfred Stepan (1996) has found that emerging democracies are less likely to remain democratic if the new regime lacks functioning state institutions, as are required to regulate the state, collect taxes, and legally settle disputed.

Post-conflict states generally come out of conflict with ineffective governmental institutions or entirely without operational governmental institutions (Paris, 2004). Generally, government institutions are either rendered nonfunctioning through war, or serve a limited function and are used as a political tool of a belligerent party. Lacking functional governmental institutions, post-conflict states must endure the negative side-effects that accompany elections without having built the necessary strength to control the added tension and conflict brought on by elections (Paris, 2004). Therefore, the need for strong institutions is sometimes greater than the need for democratic governance, as capable institutions are a necessity for successful democratization (Paris, 2004).

**Political Party Development:** In order for election to be meaningful, voters must have sufficient choices between political parties and candidates. Typically, the early political leaders who emerge after a peace agreement are the current, or former,

generals and militia leaders. Just because militia leaders now present themselves as politicians does not make them statesmen. Militia leaders often do not represent the will of the people and, given legitimate competition, might not garner the voters' support. Longer periods between the peace agreement and election allow for the development of new political parties and the emergence of new candidates, who do not benefit from war-time power networks. Such local leaders, often emerging from civil society, tend to be more familiar with the communities' needs, and thus may better represent the will of the people. Leaders who emerge from civil society also benefit from a history of peaceful dispute resolution and are thus less prone to resolve issues through the use of force. While it is unreasonable to definitively state that civil leaders make better political candidates than do militia leaders, it is clear that the emergence of civil leaders gives voters more choices on election day.

In sum, while democratization of post-conflict states is intended to enable long term peace and stability, rapid post-conflict elections have destabilizing effects and may even trigger outbreaks of violence. Therefore, the timing of elections is significant as the conditions surrounding the elections can have serious implications on the short- and long-term success of the elections. Several contributing factors make holding elections soon after reaching a civil war peace agreement particularly troublesome. First, the security situation in war shattered states tends to be fragile, as animosity is often rampant and fighters are not yet disarmed or demobilized. Second, post-conflict states generally come out of conflict with ineffective governmental institutions or entirely without operational institutions, which would otherwise serve to peacefully resolve the added tension and conflict brought on through elections (Paris, 2004:168). Third, it takes time for civil leaders to mobilize their political

organizations and become viable candidates, as is necessary to give voters sufficient choices on election day.

While expectations of post-civil war elections are usually high, the conditions are often unfavorable (Reilly, 2004:114). Post-war states often lack the desired level of security, institutional strength, political climate, and societal cohesion needed to hold elections that can end the war, further democratization, and enable sustainable peace. While post-conflict elections are powerful tools for peace building and democratization, poorly timed and hastily implemented elections can produce the opposite outcome (Reilly, 2004:115).

#### 2.4 The Dangers of Poorly Timed Elections

As addressed in previous sections of this paper, the conditions on the ground surrounding elections are significant to the success of the elections and therefore the timing of post-conflict elections is significant. Post-civil war elections that are held too early can increase the risks of a return to violence and recidivism of war, enable “power grabbing” by local elites, evoke extreme reactions from citizens, and hinder the development of political parties and civil society.

Adequate security to control violence and prevent recidivism to war is an absolute necessity before the start of campaigning and elections. In addition to security, elections require functioning state institutions capable to allow free and fair voting to take place. If the sufficient level of security and institutions capable of the task are not present, then no effective democratization process can take place (Neuman & Rich, 2004). Promoting early elections that will likely destabilize peace is reckless and counterproductive as outbreaks of violence hinder progress on war termination and democratization (Lyons, 2002:219). A longer period of transition may be necessary to create a sufficient level of security and functioning state

institutions and allow for the development of political and civil structures prior to voting (Kumar, 1998; Lyons, 2002).

Post-conflict elections that are scheduled too early and are held with weak political institutions and insufficient guidance and oversight can counteract the long-term objective of creating a sustainable democracy (Reilly, 2002:121). Elections held under such conditions tend to bring about political candidates that are primarily seeking to gain power for their own benefit, which is generally not in the interest of the population as a whole (Reilly, 2002). Post-conflict elections often legitimize leaders who are partially responsible for the outbreak of war in the first place and remain committed to exclusionary visions for the state (Reilly, 2002). In other words, post-conflict political parties are sometimes only political manifestations of the warring parties that were involved in the original conflict.

Also, if elections are held early and little time has passed since the cessation of violence, the state may remain deeply polarized while mental and physical scars remain fresh. Without allowing time for forgiveness and reconciliation, rushed elections generally evoke more extreme reactions from citizens than elections scheduled following rebuilding and reconciliation efforts (Reilly, 2002).

Furthermore, post-conflict elections that are held too early can hinder the development of inclusive, moderate political parties and consequently subvert the emerging democratic order. Several scholars (Reilly, 2002; Paris, 2004; Snyder & Mansfield, 2007, et al.) agree that this issue has been a central problem related to timing of UN-managed elections. The political parties that emerge immediately after civil war are often based on exclusionary and narrowly focused visions of a hyped leader, and therefore often do not offer moderate policies, inclusive campaigning and widely acceptable ideological platforms. Lyons (2002:217) cautions that “the

international community should not cynically accept meaningless ‘demonstration elections’ that legitimize authoritarian regimes and provide little scope for voter choice.”

The arguments listed above would suggest that it is universally beneficial to postpone elections until the conditions are most favorable. However, delaying until conditions are favorable may require excessive international resources and commitment, may hinder the development of local political capabilities, and may not be suitable if the primary goal is war termination.

While a prolonged transitional period may be beneficial to the host state, international donors generally are only willing to provide limited aid to such missions (Lyons, 2002:216). Furthermore, election timetables that are dependent on suitability and aptness can result in seemingly open-ended missions; increases in goals, standards, and complexity of the mission increase the chance of severely prolonging the mission (Paris, 2004:208). The international community’s unwillingness to sponsor open-ended commitments often prevents the use of conditional timing aimed at achieving favorable circumstances prior to elections (Paris, 2004:210).

Additionally, a prolonged internationally monitored transitional period can hinder the development of the host state’s political capabilities (Chandler, 2006; Paris, 2004). Long transitional periods limit indigenous involvement in governance and decision-making and consequently limit the roles and development of indigenous political capabilities. Extended international monopolization of governance can inhibit the ability of the state to govern itself after power is restored to local leaders (Chandler, 2006).

Finally, prolonged transitional, or rebuilding, periods prior to elections are not always suitable to the desired outcome of the post-conflict elections. If the primary

goal of the elections is to achieve war termination, then delaying elections until conditions are favorable for long-term democratization may put the peace agreement at risk and result in a return to fighting (Lyons, 2002). To satisfy the warring parties and to hold momentum after the cease-fire, war termination may necessitate rapid planning and holding of elections. Therefore, if an election is primarily intended to achieve the short-term goal of war termination, rather than the longer road of democratization, then expedited timing may be necessary, even if it results in a flawed election.

The timing of post-conflict elections is a critical element that requires careful consideration to minimize the risk of producing adverse results. As stated, preferred timing depends on the utility and desired outcome of the elections. For example, the goals related to democratization require a longer transition time where elections should follow a period of institution building, security provision, political development, etc. If the elections can be delayed to allow sufficient time and security for the transformation of civil society and other groups into political parties, then more inclusive parties that are representative of the people's needs may emerge (Lyons, 2002:216). Such political parties are widely acknowledged to be helpful ingredients for peaceful elections and progress toward democratization. On the other hand, the limited goal of war termination may require rushed elections to maintain consent from belligerents and keep the momentum following the peace agreement (Lyons, 2002:231). In addition, despite the fact that rushed elections pose serious risks in fragile post-conflict environments, limited resources may necessitate shorter time frames.

## **Chapter Three: Liberia's 1997 Election**

### **3.1 Historical Context**

Liberia is a small West African country on the Atlantic coast with nearly 3.5 million citizens (LISGIS, 2009). With US support, freed American slaves founded Liberia in 1847 on land purchased by the American Colonization Society (Adebajo, 2002:45). The freed slaves and their descendents, known as Americo-Liberians, comprised only five percent of the total population, but ruled Liberia for 133 years (Adebajo, 2002:45). The Americo-Liberian leadership created an oligarchy that systematically excluded and oppressed the local population (Adebajo, 2002). The repressive Americo-Liberian government created deep divisions within Liberian society (Adebajo, 2002).

On April 12, 1980, Master Sergeant Samuel Doe and his supporters staged a coup d'état to depose sitting President Tolbert and Liberia's ruling Whig Party (Lyons, 1998). The overwhelming celebration and support among indigenous people for the regime change that toppled the Americo-Liberian rule illustrated the hatred that had been building toward the repressive Americo-Liberian regime (Adebajo, 2002:45).

Doe's regime came to power by using force and proved its viciousness within days through the assassinations of former President Tolbert and thirteen of his senior advisors and cabinet members (Adebajo, 2002). Similar to the Americo-Liberian regime, Doe ruled by force and awarded positions of high rank and trust mostly to members of his ethnic background (Lyons, 1998). Doe did not open political space and even resorted to execution and forced exile to remove potential political rivals or perceived threats to his regime (Adebajo, 2002:45). While Doe proclaimed democracy and held elections in 1985, the elections were undoubtedly manipulated and far from democratic. Doe's autocratic rule did not allow for nonviolent dissent

and led to multiple unsuccessful military-led uprisings against Doe's regime, until Charles Taylor launched his offensive in 1989 (Adebajo, 2002).

### 3.2 The First Liberian Civil War

As a reaction to Doe's progressively despotic rule, Charles Taylor formed an opposition movement, the National Patriotic Front for Liberia (NPFL), with which he led the Christmas Eve invasion in 1989 (Lyons, 1998). Taylor, who formerly served as an official in Doe's regime, was limited by a closed political system and thus could not openly seek peaceful change of leadership. With Taylor's leadership, the NPFL successfully advanced from northern Liberia and wrestled control of towns and villages from the central government. To combat the NPFL's progress, the Liberian military forces under Doe's command carried out scorched earth tactics, razing entire villages and causing great civilian casualties in northern Liberia. Doe's brutal and unwarranted reaction to the NPFL invasion further alienated much of the Liberian population, especially already oppressed ethnic groups such as the Gio and Mano, driving them to support the NPFL insurgency (Lyons, 1998). Taylor's NPFL troops advanced through the hinterlands and reached outlying areas of Liberia's capital, Monrovia, in July 1990. Doe was losing control of Liberia. Taylor controlled much of the hinterlands and Monrovia was falling into a lawless chaos, plagued by ethnic killings and looting (Lyons, 1998). In August 1990, the sub-regional group Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) organized the Nigerian-led ECOWAS Cease-Fire Monitoring Group (ECOMOG) to interfere and restore peace in Liberia (Lyons, 1998).

Taylor viewed ECOMOG's interference as a threat to his operation and believed that ECOMOG would prop up Doe's failing government (Alao, 1998). Without external intervention and given the NPFL's momentum, Taylor believed he

was on the brink of overthrowing Doe's government, thus asserting his rightful place as Liberia's leader (Alao, 1998; Lyons, 1998). Rejecting the foreign peace operation, Taylor ordered attacks on the ECOMOG soldiers and personnel as they entered the capital city, thus requiring ECOMOG to engage in fighting and alter their operation goal to that of to peace enforcement (Alao, 1998; Lyons, 1998).

ECOMOG's Nigerian-led military forces managed to push the NPFL out of the greater Monrovia area within weeks of the start of the operation. By November 1990, ECOMOG managed to negotiate a cease-fire. The cease-fire stipulated that the capital city and its outskirts would be guarded by ECOMOG forces and ruled by an interim administration. Furthermore, the remainder of Liberia, which the government had lost control over, would be governed by the NPFL from their de-facto capital in the northern Liberian city of Gbarnga, approximately 160km inland of Monrovia (Lyons, 1998).

The civil war became more widespread and intensified over the following years (Lyons, 1998). At least twelve individual peace agreements were successfully negotiated, but implementation continued to fail and each agreement consequently collapsed (Paris, 2004). The war became more widespread as new armed factions and warring parties emerged. These new militias partook in the ongoing and chronic looting and sought to secure leverage during negotiations, and power in the forthcoming government, at the conclusion of war (Lyons, 1998). Major players among the new militias included Sierra Leone-backed United Liberation Movement of Liberia for Democracy (ULIMO) and the Liberia Peace Council (LPC). The NPFL as well as ULIMO later separated into several factions each fighting autonomously and with little central guidance. The multitude of militias and their conflicting allegiances often motivated by leaders' personal rivalries or greed added to the

challenges of negotiating peace agreements (Lyons, 1998). Furthermore, it was often not in the best interest of the militia leaders to end conflict, as militias and their leaders gained power, status, resources and wealth from the ongoing conflict (Lyons, 1998).

Taylor was determined to gain rule of Liberia by defeating and overthrowing Doe's regime without entering into any negotiated compromise. ECOMOG therefore deemed Taylor to be the prime obstruction to any peace settlement. As Taylor and the NPFL quickly became the main target, ECOMOG forces allied with the Liberian military forces and rebel militias in order to more effectively fight the increasingly powerful NPFL and Taylor (Lyons, 1998). In early 1990, Doe's forces only controlled the immediate areas around Monrovia, while Taylor's NPFL controlled over 90 percent of the country and operated a functional banking system in addition to trading commodities such as diamonds, gold, rubber, and timber with international trading partners (Lyons, 1998). In September 1990, Doe was captured and killed by rebel militia and an internationally supported interim government took control of Monrovia and its immediate surroundings.

### 3.3 Attempts at Peace

All attempts to form a unified government and end the conflict were futile until June 1995, when Taylor agreed to meet with ECOWAS leaders to work out a strategy to end the ongoing war that had become a stalemate (Lyons, 1998). In September 1995, heads of major militias met in Abuja, Nigeria for another round of talks. The Abuja Accord resulted in a Council of State made up of militia leaders, a civil society leader, a traditional leader and a professor (Lyons, 1998). The agreement gave five months for militias to disarm and scheduled national elections in August 1996, less than one year from the signing of the accord (Lyons, 1998).

While the Abuja Accord was hailed as a successful negotiation and significant progress, implementation of the accord was not carried out. Despite the agreement, militias were hesitant to give up their weapons and the disarmament process was soon after derailed. It became increasingly apparent that the short timetables were unrealistic and hope for success and national elections was lost when militia factions abandoned the peace efforts and attacked ECOMOG personnel in December 1995, only three months after signing the Abuja Accords (Lyons, 1998). The breakdown of peace led to further rounds of fighting with increasing viciousness. The most destructive fighting occurred in April 1996 in Liberia's capital city, Monrovia. During that period of the conflict, almost all aid, UN, government and business offices were looted and most foreign aid workers fled the country (Lyons, 1998).

The failure of the state, and the violent lawlessness that it had become, drove West African neighbors to renew efforts to end the Liberian Civil War (Lyons, 1998). Another round of negotiations in Abuja in August 1996 brought a new accord. Abuja II built on the original Abuja agreements from the 1995, but increased time for disarmament and demobilization and added deterrents against violations of the accord. Deterrents included war crimes tribunals and a ban from participation in future governments (Lyons, 1998). The second Abuja agreement called for disarmament to start in November 1996 and specified elections to take place in May 1997 (Lyons, 1998). Abuja II finally led to national elections in Liberia and returned the state to constitutional rule under elected leadership.

### 3.4 Conditions Prior to elections

#### 3.4.1 Security

Several violent attacks and incidents of fighting were reported, primarily in the months immediately following the peace agreement (UNSC, 1997b). While

ECOWAS had the power to sanction or otherwise punish factions according to the Abuja agreement, no action was taken against factions for violations. Investigations proved difficult and holding groups accountable for cease-fire violations through sanctions or withdrawal of the participation in the upcoming government risked compromising the fragile peace (Lyons, 1998). However, despite isolated incidents, the UN Security Council (1997:4) stated one month prior to elections that “relative peace and stability have continued to prevail throughout Liberia and the country is now considered secure enough for elections to take place nationwide.”

The disarmament period lasted from November 1996 until February 1997. In total, more than 10,000 weapons and over 1.2 million pieces of ammunition were collected (UNSC, 1997:5). As fighters were wary of the new peace agreement and thus hesitant to hand over their weapons, disarmament started slowly but increased throughout the allotted period (Lyons, 1998). The disarmament process was considered satisfactory and the number of illegal weapons was significantly reduced. However, the demobilization of fighters and systematic dismantling of militia factions received less attention and militia networks largely remained intact (Lyons, 1998). Due to the lack of time, organization, and resources, demobilization was rushed and only required fighters to submit any amount of weaponry and add their information to the registry (Lyons, 1998). Critics argue that many hardened fighters, wary of the uncertain peace and future of the country, forwent the demobilization process.

In preparation for the elections, ECOMOG deployed approximately 11,000 troops in 48 locations to enable a peaceful campaign environment and provide security for the elections (UNSC, 2004:5).

#### 3.4.2 Institutional Strength

Liberia was not capable of managing elections or maintaining order in the state without foreign assistance. The temporary Council of State did not have adequate resources and was not efficient in agreeing on how to manage the transitional government or allocate resources that were available (Lyons, 1999). Liberia was essentially a failed state. It lacked a capable policing force, a functional judicial system, adequate medical facilities, a working educational system, and basic infrastructure. The country relied on foreign assistance to provide security, maintain order and alleviate the humanitarian crisis. Various foreign state and non-governmental donors gave support to Liberia and made up for the state's shortcomings to enable the holding of elections under severely challenging conditions. USAID gave money to purchase needed election materials, including ballots; fund the International Foundation for Electoral Systems to provide technical assistance; and retain the services of other organizations to assist in the upcoming elections (Lyons, 1999). Most prominent among those USAID-funded organizations were the Carter Center, the Friends of Liberia, Refugee Policy Group, the Academy for Educational Development, and the National Democratic Institute (Lyons, 1999:53).

The United Nations served several significant roles throughout Liberia's transitional period. UNOMIL was operating under a mixed mandate that, as of 2005, focused primarily on support for ECOWAS and the Liberian transitional government in implementing the peace agreement (UNSC, 1997b). The mandate also included verifying disarmament and demobilization of combatants; giving humanitarian assistance; and observing and verifying the election process, in consultation with the OAU and ECOWAS (UNSC, 1997b). The UNOMIL peacekeeping effort was an experimental approach and the first of its kind where ECOWAS, the local sub-

regional organization, took the lead and the UN provided backup (Lyons, 1999:53).

ECOWAS, which had led the peacekeeping efforts throughout Liberia's civil war, also led the effort in conducting Liberia's election preparation. While much of the funding was provided by non-African donors, bringing peace and democratically elected leadership to Liberia was an African initiative.

While the state of Liberia lacked basic institutions and had little time to rebuild before the elections, significant progress was made when, on April 7, 1997, the reconstituted Supreme Court was installed to adjudicate in electoral disputes (UNSC, 1997b). Furthermore, the Independent Electoral Commission (IECOM) was also installed on April of 1997, consisting of civilian, women's rights, and union representatives. The IECOM faced several challenges, including the screening and employing of election officials, the deployment of county authorities to administer the law, and the high turnover rate for registration and polling station workers (Lyons, 1999:52). Adding to the challenges, vast areas of the country were difficult to reach during the rainy season due to poor infrastructure (Lyons, 1999). In addition, Basic demographic information was unavailable, as most citizens lacked valid documentation showing nationality or age, and many of the polling and registration places required rebuilding (Lyons, 1999). However, the rebuilding of the state and return to order steadily progressed while momentum was maintained as the country approached the election date.

#### 3.4.3 Political Parties and Choices

By early 1997, militia leaders transformed their organizations into political parties in order to participate in the upcoming elections (Lyons, 1998). Most notably, the NPFL, still under the leadership of Charles Taylor, converted to the NPP (National Patriotic Party), ULIMO-K became ALCOP (All Liberian Coalition Party)

and LPC leaders led the late Samuel Doe's NDPL (National Democratic Party of Liberia) (Lyons, 1998). Already established political organizations restructured to form the Alliance of Political Parties (APP) (Lyons, 1998). Most notable among the non-militia parties was the Unity Party led by Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, which briefly joined the APP, but later withdrew to run independently (Lyons, 1998).

Sirleaf's Unity Party rapidly emerged as the most significant threat to frontrunner Charles Taylor (Lyons, 1998). The APP, and several smaller parties, proved ineffective and disbanded after it became apparent that they were unable to garner sufficient support (Lyons, 1998). The remaining parties appeared unlikely to win the election but could draw enough support to prevent either Sirleaf or Taylor from reaching over 50 percent of the votes and thus requiring a runoff election (Lyons, 1999:51).

Although Sirleaf was gaining popular support, Taylor had substantially greater support networks and resources than did other candidates. Most of Taylor's resource and organizational advantages came from networks Taylor had built throughout war-time and resources he controlled through leading the rebellion (Lyons, 1998). While war-torn Liberia as a whole lacked communication and transportation networks, Taylor's NPP operated Liberia's old state-run radio station and had busses, motorbikes, a helicopter, and a fleet of Land Rovers at their disposal (Lyons, 1998). Also, through its networks, Taylor's party handed out food to the people and promised possible government positions to local leaders for their support (Lyons, 1998).

Taylor's campaign tactics and spending arguably violated election law, which limited spending in order to level the playing field among candidates. But, due to limited oversight and undeveloped implementation and control mechanisms, the

bodies responsible of oversight failed to restrict Taylor and thus unfairly permitted him to spend without restraint (UNSC, 1997b). Furthermore, Taylor was not prevented from holding onto and utilizing the resources that he had seized throughout the civil war, regardless of whether they were seized illegally (UNSC, 1997b).

Many Liberian voters did not select candidates based on differences in political platforms but chose based on who they believed could bring peace to the country. The platforms and rhetoric of both leading candidates, Taylor and Sirleaf, were very similar as both candidates focused on rebuilding the country, gaining economic strength and pursuing reconciliation (Lyons, 1998). However, voters feared that unless Taylor was elected as president, he would pick up arms again and reignite the civil war. Because maintaining peace was the prime concern, Taylor was considered safer as president than as a failed candidate, regardless of ECOMOG's presence or his agreement in the Abuja Accord to peacefully accept electoral defeat (Lyons, 1999). Sirleaf's efforts to play on voter's emotions by reminding people of Taylor's war record and the atrocities caused by his militia, thus reopening emotional war wounds, failed and even backfired. Since Sirleaf failed to convince the public that, if elected, she could prevent a defeated Taylor from returning to fighting, her tactics may have scared even more people into voting for Taylor (Lyons, 1999:51).

### 3.5 Timing

The timing for elections was determined through the Abuja Accords and was set for May 30, 1997, allowing only nine months following the peace agreement to prepare the country for such a daunting task. With the help of foreign donors and the efforts of ECOWAS, the UN, and countless NGO's, Liberia's preparedness for elections was steadily progressing. But, as the scheduled election date of May 30, 1997 approached, international observers, as well as most of the political parties,

started to acknowledge insufficient progression toward readying Liberia for elections (Bekoe, 2008:127). The short timetable and subsequent lack of adequate preparation caused a crisis that threatened to destabilize the peace process.

The Elections Commission, as well as UNOMIL, found that insufficient time was available to adequately prepare the country for the elections (UNSC, 1997:2). While the security conditions were considered adequate, delays in preparations meant that it was not technically feasible to conduct elections on May 30, 1997 (UNSC, 1997:3). All political candidates other than Charles Taylor were in favor of postponing the election date until sometime in October (Carter Center, 1997:22-23; Bekoe, 2008:127). Taylor, who was the leading candidate at the time and stood to gain little from a later election date, opposed postponement and demanded to go forward with the elections on the scheduled date (Bekoe, 2008:127). Taylor had created a far-reaching network prior to the peace agreement and consequently enjoyed vast resources and wide-spread name recognition. A rushed election timetable with a short campaign season was in Taylor's favor, as it limited the time for other political candidates to establish political networks, amass resources, and reach out to voters (Paris, 2004).

In response to the demands to postpone elections, Taylor threatened that abandoning the agreed upon election date would violate the peace agreement and he would then not be required to act in accordance with the Abuja agreement (Bekoe, 2008:127). While asserting the right to the final decision, ECOWAS's leadership initially opposed postponement of the elections (Bekoe, 2008:127). In addition, several West African donor countries threatened to withdraw support if the election date was changed (Lyons, 1999:48-49; Bekoe, 2008:127).

The crisis brought on by the rushed election timing led initially to uncertainty but resulted in a compromise. While most political parties and many observers advocated postponement until October, ECOWAS's leadership ruled to push the election date back to July 19, 1997 (Bekoe, 2008:127). Holding the election in July still left a very short time for political candidates to catch up to Taylor's lead and pose a real threat to his winning the election, thus making the postponement acceptable for Taylor and his party (Bekoe, 2008).

### 3.6 Elections

Voter registration was scheduled for June 24 through June 31, 1997 (Lyons, 1999:52). Because of limited time for planning, preparation, and training, the registration process started out inefficient and disorganized (Lyons, 1999:52). However, the IECOM quickly adapted and overcame initial problems with increased efficiency, in addition to extending the voter registration period until July 3, 1997 (Lyons, 1999:52).

ECOMOG, which was considered to be politically neutral, patrolled every registration location and maintained constant presence and security (Lyons, 1999:52). Considering the poor planning, rushed timing, and limited training or previous experience, the workers quickly grasped the registration process and showed great commitment in spite of their poor working environment (Lyons, 1999:52).

Foreign election observers, as well as observers from political parties, monitored the registration sites and challenged registration errors and unqualified prospective voters (Lyons, 1999:52). However, political parties were not evenly represented by observers, as only Taylor's NPP had sufficient resources to widely monitor registration sites (Lyons, 1999:52). Despite the discrepancy in party observer

representation, registration disputes were rare and were mostly limited to not meeting the age requirement or lacking proper identification (Lyons, 1999:52).

Even though registration wasn't flawless and some people weren't able to register after sites ran out of registration forms, such instances were not the norm and most citizens in Liberia who wanted to register were able to do so (Lyons, 1999:52). At around 750,000, registration turnout was less than expected, yet still respectable (Lyons, 1999:52). While there were allegations that registration cards were being sold and traded and allegations that people not old enough to vote were being registered, there were no indications of widespread, organized fraud (Lyons, 1999:52). The fact that areas formerly controlled by, and thus favoring, Taylor had significantly higher than expected registration rates while areas that were not previously held by Taylor, most notably greater Monrovia, had significantly lower than expected registration rates raised suspicions but was not found to be fraudulent (Lyons, 1999:52).

When election day came on July 19, 1997, over 80 percent of registered voters made their way to the polling places and exercised their right to vote (Lyons, 1998). In general, polling places were well stocked with sufficient ballots. The vast majority of polling places opened punctually and had lines of people waiting by the time they opened (Lyons, 1999:56). Virtually all polling places throughout Liberia were secured by African peacekeeping forces (Lyons, 1999:56). Throughout the country, observers from political parties, NGOs, and local officials monitored voting in nearly all polling places and challenged errors and inconsistencies to minimize the risk of fraud (Lyons, 1999:56). In addition to local observers, nearly 500 foreign observers monitored the process (Lyons, 1998).

Overall, the voting process was well organized with no major issues that would impact the outcome of the election, as was the consensus from national and foreign observers (Adebajo, 2002b). Reports by UNOMIL, ECOWAS, the Carter Center, Friends of Liberia and others generally stated that despite some setbacks and difficulties, the elections were generally free and fair and marked a major milestone for Liberia.

The outcome of the election was decisive. Former rebel leader Charles Taylor received over 75 percent of the votes, while his closest competitor Ellen Johnson Sirleaf only received 10 percent of the votes (Lyons, 1998). Taylor's landslide victory, combined with the widespread praise of the process, left little doubt that the outcome represented the will of the people. Regardless, Sirleaf initially alleged widespread fraud and irregularities. She later rescinded her allegations and focused on her party's upcoming role as the primary political opposition to Taylor's regime (Lyons, 1998). Without further challenges, Taylor was officially sworn into office in early August, 1997.

### 3.7 Aftermath

The seemingly successful election was the final step in completing the Abuja peace process and, at least for the time being, terminated the protracted and devastating civil war (Lyons, 1998). Following the election and subsequent swearing in of president-elect Taylor, the UNOMIL and ECOMOG operations were generally deemed to be successes. Soon after, the UN and ECOWAS promptly evacuated the majority of their forces and non-military personnel from Liberia (UNSC, 1997). The weeks following the inauguration were comparatively calm, and hopes among citizens and observers for a new era of long-sought prosperity and peace in Liberia were high (Alao, 1999; Paris, 2004).

Taylor initially vowed to form a government that represented all Liberians, regardless of ethnicity or affiliation. Following through with his promise, President Taylor selected members from rival political parties to join his cabinets and started a commission to deal with human rights violations and one to further reconciliation (Lyons, 1998). Foreign reporters praised Taylor's efforts at incorporating non-NPFL personnel through government appointments, but criticized appointments of some former NPFL loyalists who faced allegations of brutality and acts of cruelty committed during the civil war (Lyons, 1998).

Some of Taylor's choices indicated that his aim was not advancing democracy but entrenching NPFL's hold on power. Initial red flags included harassment of news organizations for critical reporting as well as close monitoring of political opposition and other perceived threats (Lyons, 1998). This practice escalated and, over the following years, Taylor had virtually eliminated both open political opposition and Liberian media reports critical of his actions by continually monitoring, threatening, and arresting media personnel and others who were publicly outspoken against the NPFL (Farah, 2001b; Paris, 2004).

Despite international criticism, Taylor rejected a clause in the Abuja agreement which assigned the rebuilding of Liberia's military to ECOMOG (Lyons, 1998). Under President Taylor, the newly rebuilt national military was in part made up of former NPFL fighters and inclusion in the military was often based on ethnicity (Lyons, 1998). Taylor also established an anti-terrorist military unit, which primarily consisted of his loyal and reliable former NPP rebel fighters. The anti-terrorist unit allegedly engaged in several assaults on Taylor's political opposition leaders and is considered responsible for high-profile killings of leaders that Taylor perceived as a threat to his power (Paris, 2004). In light of the constant threats and closed political

space, many community and political leaders either quieted down or moved out of Liberia (Paris, 2004).

As a result of Taylor's repressive and paranoid policies, the ruling regime lacked oversight and accountability as well as a political opposition and limits to power through strong and independent legislative or judiciary branches of government (Human Rights Watch, 2002; Paris, 2004). In other words, Taylor took advantage of his authority and sought not to further democracy but to broaden his power; eliminate criticism, oversight, and opposition; and thus reduce the threat of losing future elections while continually declaring Liberia to be a democracy - even if Liberia was a democracy only in name (Lyons, 1999; Paris, 2004).

### 3.8 Analysis

What conclusions can be drawn from this case to address the research question: Should post-conflict elections be held early or should they be delayed until the country is in a better position to manage the impacts of elections?

As this paper has argued, to advance the long-term goals of sustainable peace and development, post-conflict elections should not be held hastily but should follow a period of rebuilding. The transitional period allows for the provision of adequate security, institution building, proper planning and preparation of elections, development of political parties, etc. Furthermore, when the transitional period, mandated by the peace agreement, allows enough time to strengthen institutions, create a secure environment, and develop competing party representation prior to election day, then holding elections is more likely to simultaneously advance war termination as well as democratization (Lyons, 1999:2). The Liberian conflict and the Abuja peace process necessitated expedient elections to take place while impatient leaders still had control over fighters, thereby allowing the basic components of war

to remain unchanged. Under those conditions, it was impossible to successfully promote war termination and, at the same time, promote sustainable democratization (Lyons, 1999:3). Therefore, in light of a compromising solution with no feasible ideal conclusion, ending the war took precedence over delivering sustainable democratization. (Lyons, 1999). Since the long-term approach required for democratization was not possible, the elections were primarily aimed at war termination.

The conditions necessary to promote rushed elections aimed at war termination were in place. First, security was adequate. Reports of violence and fighting during campaigning were minimal, as all major parties were committed to peaceful election. International forces under the leadership of UNOMIL and ECOWAS effectively contained violent outbreaks and maintained peace. On election day, international ECOMOG forces had a far-reaching presence throughout the country with armed officers at nearly every polling station.

Secondly, the momentum and rapid progression following the Abuja II peace agreement kept the vital parties interested in the process and prevented them from returning to violence. A short timeframe for elections and apparent progress helped maintain momentum and keep the necessary parties engaged in the process. The second Abuja peace agreement brought both warring parties and private citizens a renewed sense of hope for a final end to the civil war.

Thirdly, all necessary political parties were participating in the election process and embracing the process with no serious interruptions by potential spoilers. Most notably, Taylor, the former spoiler to the peace process, transformed his military apparatus into an “effective mass-mobilizing political party, replacing guns with patronage and roadblocks with rallies” (Kumar, 1998:192).

Given the short transitional period between the peace agreement and the elections, the conditions were only suitable for the limited goal of war termination. There were several unfavorable conditions at the time of elections that could hinder long-term sustainable peace and democratization. Firstly, inadequate institution building resulted in a weak state devoid of procedural norms, government oversight, checks on executive power, independent judiciary, etc. Although the election returned the virtually lawless country to constitutional rule and legally restricted the power of the President, institutions were too weak and Taylor's power became virtually unchecked. Therefore, the regime under Taylor did not act as a democratic political parity and did not follow constitutional constraints placed on the office of the President.

Secondly, Liberia was incapable of sustaining itself and was effectively dependent on foreign support. The international community, which provided Liberia the necessary financial, technical, security, and humanitarian support to maintain stability prior to the elections, was eager to withdraw after installation of indigenous leadership was complete. Most foreign actors withdrew support and exited Liberia shortly after President Taylor's swearing into office.

Thirdly, the short timeframe for national elections did not allow for proper development of political parties. The limited time was adequate for existing military operations, which benefited from war-time support and resources, to transform into political parties. However, there was not sufficient time for the necessary development of viable opposition that did not have preexisting war-time networks and resources. As a result, the dominant political party was merely a transformation of the leading war-time militia. Furthermore, challenging political parties and a system of open political opposition did not become entrenched and were consequently easily

suppressed after the installment of the new regime. President Taylor's suppression of political opponents and perceived threats effectively reversed any progress toward democracy achieved through the 1997 elections.

In addition to being considered free and fair and hailed as a success, the elections achieved the immediate goal of war termination. In order to accomplish the limited goal of war termination, the rushed timing was appropriate and proved to be effective. However, weak institutions and unchecked power of the newly elected president allowed him to rule Liberia as a democracy only in name. The weak rebuilding effort and subsequently weak institutions, lack of entrenched procedures and guidelines, lack of independence of government branches, lack of oversight, and lack of checks on executive power put in place leadership capable of authoritarian rule and did not further democratization or sustainable peace. As Roland Paris (2004:93) stated, "the holding of a reasonably successful election does not demonstrate that liberalization has fostered the conditions for a stable and lasting peace in Liberia."

### 3.9 Conclusion

The timing of Liberia's 1997 post-conflict election played a significant role in the short term success and long term implications of the election.

The election was successful in achieving war termination. The timing was appropriate to achieve the goal and proved to be effective. It is likely that if the elections had been significantly delayed participants would have boycotted the process and reignited violent conflict.

However, the election was not successful in advancing the objectives of peacebuilding, which are to enable sustainable peace and development, and further long-term democratization. Shortly after being sworn into office, President Taylor

abandoned liberal politics and ruled through coercion, fear, and force. Consequently, fighting resumed only a few years after the election and Liberia returned to a state of civil war. The rushed schedule to hold elections and put indigenous leadership in charge of the state contributed to the failure to produce sustainable peace and development. The short transitional period following the peace agreement prevented adequate institutional stability, including checks on executive power and open opposition. Such shortcomings allowed the President to practice absolute rule and eventually led to violent internal opposition and recidivism of civil war.

## **Chapter Four: Liberia's 2005 Election**

### **4.1 The Second Liberian Civil War**

Interwar peace in Liberia lasted only a short time and could be a misnomer, as it was not necessarily peaceful. The National Democratic Institute (2004:7) describes how “for six years following Liberia's 1997 national election, Taylor's government routinely persecuted opposition figures, human rights activists, the press and members of civil society.” The former rebel leader's style of governing shared many aspects of the previous regime, which Taylor rallied against and fought so vigorously. Also resembling previous leaders, Taylor's government was plagued with corruption, which siphoned public funds to create personal wealth for the President, his patronage, and many other elites (NDI, 2004:7). While political opposition from within Liberia was limited, opposition movements headquartered in neighboring countries were organizing and preparing for action. Furthermore, the international community exerted pressure on President Taylor for his actions regarding illegal diamond exports, weapons trading, and his involvement in the conflict in neighboring Sierra Leone. The international community initially withheld support from the Liberian government and in 2001 imposed sanctions on the non-cooperative state (NDI, 2004:7).

An organized rebellion opposing Taylor's regime and governance, Liberians United for Reconciliation and Democracy (LURD), entered Liberia from their headquarters in neighboring Guinea in 2000 (NDI, 2004). Counteracting LURD's invasion, President Taylor called 15,000 troops to arms (Paris, 2004:95) and ordered them to intercept the rebels, which led to the Second Liberian Civil War (Kieh, 2009).

According to George Kieh, Jr. (2009), the underlying causes that motivated and enabled the rebel opposition and the outbreak of conflict can be grouped into two categories. The first category concerns the failure to properly disarm, demobilize, and re-integrate former fighters (Kieh, 2009). The second category concerns the failure of President Taylor to adequately manage and alleviate the causes that led to civil war in the first place. These causes include “the violation of human rights, economic deprivation and inequities, and social malaise” (Kieh, 2009:10). Compounding these issues were the inconsistencies and overall deficiencies in foreign development aid. Liberia relied on foreign assistance for its reconstruction of government institutions as well as public services programs. Without continued foreign aid Liberia’s rebuilding efforts were delayed and basic social services were not delivered, causing resentment of the Liberian people toward the ruling regime, particularly among Liberia’s rural population.

Following the successful invasion, LURD militias quickly advanced toward Monrovia. The rebel group often threatening to advance into the capital city. LURD’s actions led to a humanitarian crisis, marked by vast numbers of people fleeing their homes in search of refuge (NDI, 2004). Adding to the complexity of the conflict, in 2002 a group of rebels separated from LURD to form an independent rebel militia called the Movement for Democracy in Liberia (MODEL) (NDI, 2004).

Taylor declared Liberia to be in a state of emergency from February to September of 2002, during which period the right to assembly and other civil rights were denied. The rebels quickly gained ground and eventually controlled most of the county outside of Monrovia (ITCJ, 2006), causing roughly 75 percent of the population to flee their homes in search of refuge either within Monrovia or outside of the country (NDI, 2004:7). Reminiscent of the First Liberian Civil War, the country

was plagued with violent crime including murder, mutilation, rape and the use of children as soldiers (NDI, 2004:7).

#### 4.2 Attempts at Peace

President Taylor's term in office was to expire in late 2003 but, as expressed by the International Contact Group on Liberia (ICGL) and United States Ambassador John Blaney, Liberia did not have the necessary conditions to conduct free and fair elections (LH&I, 2003). Blaney further warned that the US would "not recognize the results of any fraudulent election" (LH&I, 2003).

Sierra Leone indicted Liberian President Charles Taylor for war crimes, including crimes against humanity and violations of international humanitarian law, on June 4, 2003, and issued a warrant for Taylor's arrest. Taylor resigned from the presidency and took asylum in Nigeria on August 11, 2003 (NDI, 2004:8). On August 18, 2003, the Liberian government, LURD and MODEL rebel forces, and 18 political parties entered into a Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA).

The CPA provided a plan for the peace process, established the National Transitional Government of Liberia (NTGL), and designated leadership roles within the NTGL (Cook, 2005). Included in the peace process, the CPA elaborated on the organizational structure and scope of the NTGL, which was intended to prepare Liberia for democratic elections in late 2005, allowing for a two-year long transitional period (NDI, 2004:8). The CPA stipulated that the NTGL was to include a legislative assembly comprised of representatives from the formerly ruling NPP, along with LURD, MODEL, and various other political parties and civil society organizations (NDI, 2004:8). The NTGL was officially in control of the state as of 14 October, 2003, with well-known business leader Gyude Bryant serving as Chairman of the transitional governing authority (NDI, 2004:8). The NTGL's primary objectives were

to implement the CPA and prepare Liberia for the October 2005 elections, which included rebuilding state institutions, delivering essential social services, and promoting reconciliation (NDI, 2005:44).

Immediately after the instatement of the CPA, ECOWAS deployed peacekeepers under Nigerian leadership to stabilize Monrovia. Months later, the UN established the United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL) and deployed 15,000 additional peacekeepers to stabilize the rest of Liberia (NDI, 2004:8).

### 4.3 Conditions Prior to Elections

#### 4.3.1 Security

An early UN assessment (UNSC, 2004) of Liberia's situation and needs for rebuilding the state listed establishing security as the most urgent priority. Furthermore, the international community recognized that disarmament and demobilization of combatants was vital to creating a stable environment in which to conduct elections (UNSC, 2004:25). According to the UN (UNSC, 2005:31), over 100,000 combatants were disarmed and demobilized while nearly 30,000 light weapons and 35,000 heavy munitions, in addition to 6.5 million pieces of ammunition were retrieved. Disarmament and demobilization concluded in November of 2004, at which point the organized militias were officially considered to be disbanded (UNSC, 2005:30). Full implementation of the ceasefire agreement was achieved with the completion of disarmament and the disbandment of organized militias (UNSC, 2005:46). The continuous progression in stabilizing the state and readying it for the October 2005 elections brought optimism about successfully implementing the CPA and holding peaceful, democratic elections. To complete the implementation of the CPA, Liberia had to rebuild government institutions, bring stability to the state, hold elections and inaugurate the president.

UNMIL's armed forces supported the Liberian National Police as well as the government's customs and immigration services (UNSC, 2005:23). UNMIL setup checkpoints along Liberia's borders as well as within the state to surveil and control the movement of people and weapons (UNSC, 2005). The UN mission also investigated illegal weapons and diamond trading and carried out search and seizure operations for weapons and ammunition (UNSC, 2005).

To centralize authority, the National Liberian Police and the military were restructured, and the police's reach and presence were extended to all counties throughout Liberia (UNSC, 2005:34). While the restructuring of the police forces made steady progress, the restructuring of the military was hampered by the state's limited budget and inability to pay the retirement payments of current servicemen (UNSC, 2005). While transitional government and foreign actors made continual progress toward security, setbacks in reorganizing the military and reintegrating former fighters into society added to the fragility of peace (UNSC, 2005:47).

With national and foreign troops present throughout Liberia, campaigning began in a relatively stable security environment, although some small incidents brought fear about the outbreak of violence (NDI, 2005:38). Such incidents were typically clashes between supporters of opposing political parties and usually limited to verbal assaults and non-lethal street fights (NDI, 2005:38). Though there were cases of violence, violent outbreaks were resolved quickly and remained localized without spreading across Liberia (ICG, 2005:17). To quell such incidents, and deter more from occurring or escalating into widespread fighting, leaders of political parties, the National Election Commission (NEC), and the police force worked together to organize political rallies of supporters and discourage outbreaks of violence (NDI, 2005:38).

Due to combined efforts of the NEC, UNMIL, ECOWAS, the Liberian National Police (LNP) and local officials, the security prior to elections was sufficient to deter major outbreaks of violence (IRI, 2005). Peacekeeping forces worked with the Liberian security forces and established specific plans for providing security and sharing responsibility in order to create a safe environment on election day (UNSC, 2005b:14). The NTGL had over 4,000 police officers patrolling polling stations throughout the country, 1,800 were taught and outfitted by the UN. UN forces were concentrated in key areas and also carried out patrols that reached across Liberia's border to prevent saboteurs from entering the country (UNSC, 2005b:14). While all attempts failed, Taylor loyalists, cabinet members, and legislators who were barred from running for office did try to stir up unrest and sabotage the peace process (UNSC, 2005:38).

The advancements in Liberia's security were real and the state was relatively stable, but the overall level of security was tenuous throughout the period of transitional governance. However, by the time of the elections, over 15,000 peacekeepers were spread throughout Liberia providing a significant deterrent to potential spoilers and agitators in a nation of only a few million citizens (ICG, 2005:17). The initial guarantee of retaining peacekeeping forces was a significant factor in enabling the incoming Liberian regime to reassert the rule of law (ICG, 2005:17).

#### 4.3.2 Institutional Strength

Liberia was governed by a transitional authority from October 2003 until the inauguration of the new leadership in January 2006, as laid out in the CPA. The inclusive CPA was agreed on by all major parties to the war (the government of Liberia, LURD, and MODEL) and garnered much support from political and civil

society leaders. The CPA's major accomplishment was the establishment of the National Transitional Government of Liberia (NTGL), which would govern the country for over two years and prepare Liberia for popular elections in late 2005.

Because the UN recognized the significance of returning power to the government and broadening the government's reach throughout Liberia, UNMIL sent civil affairs officers to work throughout the country in federal agencies and government run businesses (UNSC, 2004:24). Much emphasis was put on reforming the security sector and "re-establishing justice and the rule of law, with ministers of the National Transitional Government identifying training and infrastructure for law enforcement agencies as particular priorities" (UNSC, 2004:24). The civil affairs officers made great impact on restoring state authority throughout the country, where prior to the CPA the state had only tentative control of Monrovia and areas in the capital's immediate vicinity (UNSC, 2005:24).

The mission's Legal and Judicial Support Unit assisted the Liberian Ministry of Justice to return the country to the rule of law (UNSC, 2005:24). The efforts to regenerate the Liberian legal system continued to make "steady progress" (UNSC, 2005b:45). Examples of such progress include appointments of 20 new circuit court and magistrate judges. Also, structures and facilities have been improved or built anew where necessary, including 13 court renovation projects (UNSC, 2005b:45).

In addition to courthouses, the United Nations mission also focused on improving correctional facilities and the conditions for both prison employees and prisoners (UNSC, 2005b:47). The World Food Programme (WFP), ICRC and other organizations aided the correctional facilities with food rations, bedding, and other necessities. The United States and Norway gave further financial support for the rebuilding of prisons and training of prison personnel (UNSC, 2005b:47).

A state-wide census of government employees was taken, which allowed the NTGL to reduce its bloated payroll and eliminate “ghost workers” (UNSC, 2005b:50). To further reduce unnecessary government spending and to fight corruption, the Governance and Economic Management Assistance Programme (GEMAP) was launched with support of UNMIL and UNDP (UNSC 2005b: para 55). GEMAP proved to be an effective program and delivered strong results in making the government function more efficiently and in freeing up assets and resources for the state. GEMAP further enabled the transitional government in beginning the long process to “rebuild the economy, create employment, and deliver education and health services to the people of Liberia” (UNSC, 2005b:57). To curb corruption, theft and embezzlement, government agencies took inventories of state-owned assets in preparation of the newly elected regime (UNSC, 2005b:56).

During the transitional period leading up to the elections, continual advancements were achieved in restoring and solidifying government authority throughout the country, especially in the reformation of government infrastructure (UNSC, 2005b:49). USAID and other foreign organizations supported construction and rehabilitation of government administration buildings throughout the county. Approximately half of the projects were completed by the time of the elections (UNSC, 2005b:49). The various functional administration buildings and improved government infrastructure allowed the NTGL to accommodate and compensate government employees and other civil servants (UNSC, 2005b:45).

Furthermore, the institutional capabilities of the NEC steadily progressed and improved. According to the National Democratic Institute for International Affairs (NDI, 2005:39), “in the short time since its formation, the NEC drafted the electoral legal framework, organized a voter registration effort widely accepted as credible,

created an environment for peaceful campaigning, issued necessary guidelines to supplement the election law, initiated a massive voter education program, planned training for election officials and produced election materials such as ballots.” Further progress was evident in the implementation of a Political Parties’ Code of Conduct and in citizens’ and candidates’ enthusiasm for the political process (NDI, 2005).

However, while the NTGL made great strides during the two-year transitional period leading up to the elections, Liberia was still a post-conflict state in the process of rebuilding and thus lacked sufficient facilities and trained staff to operate effectively (UNSC, 2005b:45). Liberia’s rebuilding efforts were hampered by lost potential revenue, primarily due to economic sanctions placed on Liberian timber and diamonds. While the transitional government lobbied the UN to lift sanctions, civil society leaders urged that sanctions remain in place until a system providing adequate oversight and transparency in lumber and diamond industries was put in place. The UN agreed that the sanctions on timber and diamonds would only be lifted “once the markets had been regulated and Liberia [instituted] a transparent and internationally verifiable diamond certification program” (UNSC, 2005:28).

#### 4.3.3 Political Parties and Choices

The two-year transitional period allowed for a more inclusive development of political parties than the considerably shorter period following the First Liberian Civil War. More than 20 political parties emerged as contenders for the national elections, giving Liberian voters abundant options. Because voters had to choose among such a wide pool of registered candidates and parties, many prospective voters became bewildered about which candidates best represented their interests and what the major differences among the choices were (NDI, 2005:41). However, publicly held local and national debates among candidates for the presidency, as well as the legislature,

allowed the candidates to state their positions and allowed the voters access to the candidates and opportunity to voice questions or concerns (NDI, 2005:41). Also, recordings were broadcast over the radio and transcripts or summaries were available in print to many citizens, even in rural areas.

Party organization was generally centralized within Monrovia and most parties lacked the means to carry out a comprehensive grassroots campaign in all counties (NDI, 2005:41). As was the case in 1997, political parties and the differences between them tended to evolve based on the personalities of the candidates, instead of on the basis of political position, philosophy, opinions or issues (NDI, 2005:41).

Months before the 2005 election, all major participating political candidates committed to the Political Parties' Code of Conduct (NDI, 2005:41). "The code of conduct determined rules of engagement, established the standards of acceptable behavior, and [sought] to promote a peaceful and legitimate electoral process" (NDI, 2005:41). The signing of the code of conduct was voluntary, not mandatory, and was precedent setting for Liberia. The agreeing of the parties and candidates to adhere to the code was an act of good faith and a vote of confidence in the democratic process. The coming together of candidates and parties to agree on the process signaled hope for democratic advancement in Liberia. This development signaled encouragement for successful elections by showing the candidates' commitment to support honest and open campaigns with transparency and oversight and denounce political violence and intimidation tactics.

Finally, campaign finance rules enacted for 2005 election were widely considered "a positive development for the evolution of democratic practices in Liberia" and "among the most comprehensive worldwide" (NDI, 2005:39).

#### 4.4 Timing

The international community recognized the significance of not only holding elections to end the Second Liberian Civil War but also making progress toward democratization and enabling sustainable peace. To make such progress, the developments in preparation for the election were aimed at increasing security and rebuilding the state, in addition to bringing in new leadership. Therefore, the scheduled regular elections following President Taylor's term were cancelled. After President Taylor's departure, the CPA called for a 2-year transitional government to ready the country before national elections would be held in October 2005. Unlike the rushed election in 1997, the two-year transitional period allowed for necessary security improvements, the rebuilding of the state and government institutions, developments of political parties, and the development of conditions favorable for free and fair elections. Foreign actors involved in the rebuilding effort cited concerns about supplying resources and personnel to promote another election in unfavorable conditions that promised only dubious results.

The international community and Liberian participants alike agreed upon the significance of holding transparent elections in favorable conditions that would be regarded as free and fair, and they were committed to doing so by October 2005 (UNSC, 2004:27). The newly established NEC was in charge of preparing the elections. The NEC received technical assistance from the UN. Other support, including election observers, was provided by ECOWAS, the AU, and the EU (UNSC, 2004:27).

The UN acknowledged that, for the NEC to operate effectively, the development of the NEC's fiscal, logistical, and technical capabilities were of great importance (UNSC, 2004:27). According to a UN Security Council report (UNSC, 2004:27) some of the NEC's major challenges included "voter registration and civic

education and strengthening civil society's role in elections, as well as the core tasks of planning the organization and conduct of the elections.”

Throughout the two-year transitional period and with great international assistance, Liberia progressed steadily in several key areas including security, reduction in violence, rebuilding of state institutions, development of political parties, voter education, and general return to a relatively stable life for most Liberians. Given the positive improvement of the country, the timing of elections seemed to be appropriate. Except for a potentially detrimental legal complication raised by the Supreme Court, there were few concerns which could have prompted a postponement or rescheduling of the 2005 elections.

Less than three weeks prior to the election date, Liberia's Supreme Court heard several election related cases and rendered one ruling that resulted in significant changes in voting procedure and nearly required postponement of elections (NDI, 2005). In the ruling, the Supreme Court overruled a standing law by allowing each voter to cast two votes for Senate, as each county had two senatorial seats. As a result, new ballots had to be printed and voters had to be reeducated about the new voting procedure (NDI, 2005). With the CPA requiring that the elections be held by October 2005, changes mandated by the Supreme Court order were implemented quickly and with great efficiency and did not affect the election date (UNSC, 2005b:4).

#### 4.5 Elections

Voter registration was conducted under stable conditions from April 25 to May 21, 2005 (NDI, 2005). The UN (UNSC, 2005:38) stated that “UNMIL's presence throughout Liberia, combined with enhanced security measures in preparation for the organization of elections, has reinforced the stability of the

country.” In relative safety, over 1.3 million citizens registered to vote in a country of only around 1.5 million eligible citizens (NDI, 2005). Distribution between male and female registered voters was roughly even, and over 60,000 internationally displaced persons registered from their displacement camps (NDI, 2005). Overall, Liberia’s 2005 voter registration was described by commentators and international observers as successful.

The national and local elections took place on October 11, 2005, as scheduled (UNSC, 2005b:2). During the campaign and on election day, all 22 political parties, which included 22 candidates for the presidency, 205 candidates for Senate, and 513 candidates for the House of Representatives, remained relatively peaceful and none were found to be in violation of the agreed upon code of conduct (UNSC, 2005b:2).

The conduct at the polling places on election day was reported as “orderly and peaceful,” with approximately 75 percent voter turnout (UNSC, 2005b:5). No major safety concerns or acts of violence were reported. Over 400 foreign election observers were present to report on the elections and find inconsistencies, representing the US, the United Kingdom, the EU, the AU, ECOWAS, the Carter Center, the National Democratic Institute, and several other international organizations (UNSC, 2005b). In addition, tens of thousands of unofficial party representatives, thousands of civil society representatives, and local media organizations all monitored the procedures (UNSC, 2005b:5). The general consensus in the reports written on the elections “characterized the elections as peaceful, orderly, free, fair, transparent and well-administered” (UNSC, 2005b:2).

Because no candidate for Liberia’s presidency received over 50 percent of the votes in the first round of the elections, a second round was held on November 8, 2005. The second round was a runoff election between George Weah and Ellen

Johnson Sirleaf, the two presidential candidates who had received the most votes on October 11.

The runoff campaigns, much like the campaigns for the first round, were peaceful and without major disruptions. NDI (2005) reported that intimidation tactics, which had been prominent in Liberian politics, were not apparent. However, campaign rhetoric by both candidates was often more negative, with greater focus on the individuals and less attention given to issues and policies, than for the October 11 election (UNSC, 2005b:9). As the runoff election approached, the language used by the candidates became increasingly aggressive, which caused worries about inciting violence (NDI, 2005). In spite of the declining political climate, “political party supporters demonstrated admirable self-control at mass rallies in the final days of campaigning” (NDI, 2005:60) and no significant acts of violence were reported during the campaign or election day on November 8, 2005.

Over 300 foreign election observers from 27 different organizations, in addition to over 3,500 Liberian observers, monitored the runoff election (UNSC, 2005b:10). The general consensus from the observers was that the runoff election was “generally free, fair and transparent” (UNSC, 2005b:10). Nevertheless, after the NEC released unofficial early vote counts on November 9 showing Ms. Johnson Sirleaf in the lead, Mr. Weah’s party claimed that the results were tainted by widespread fraud (UNSC, 2005b:10). The following day Mr. Weah’s party officially filed its grievance with the Supreme Court and the NEC, asking that all vote counting be suspended until further review (UNSC, 2005b:10). This development raised some fear of disenfranchisement in the elections and of outbreaks of violence around the capital city, as Mr. Weah’s supporters marched in the streets and staged demonstrations (UNSC, 2005b:11). Security was on high alert and demonstrations

remained mostly nonviolent. Some outbreaks of violence did occur but were subdued quickly, the largest was an incident on November 11, 2005, where security forces broke up an unruly mob of demonstrators who were throwing stones (UNSC, 2005b:10).

Finding no substantial evidence of Mr. Weah's allegations, the NEC announced on November 23, 2005, that Ms. Johnson Sirleaf had officially won Liberia's 2005 presidential election, receiving 59.4 percent of the votes. Over 60 percent of registered voters cast their ballots in the runoff election (UNSC, 2005b:13). On January 16, 2006, Ellen Johnson Sirleaf was inaugurated as the President of Liberia. She is Africa's first female President.

The success of Liberia's 2005 post-war elections served a critical role in Liberia's long road to peace. The democratic elections and inauguration of the newly elected regime were the final necessary elements in satisfying the conditions for the completion of the transition period, as laid out in the 2003 CPA to end Liberia's Second Civil War.

#### 4.6 Aftermath

After being sworn into office, President Johnson Sirleaf initiated efforts to bring about national reconciliation. She established a program aimed at improving economic governance and sought new policies that would soon deliver much needed goods and services to the people of Liberia (UNSC, 2005b:86). Early efforts also included the implementation of a Truth and Reconciliation Commission that would help Liberia overcome its past by examining and documenting crimes and atrocities that occurred throughout the civil wars.

The UN maintained a presence in Liberia after the inauguration of the new administration. Among UNIMIL's new priorities in working with the new regime

were to help the government devise and implement “a national judicial reform strategy and a funding strategy for critical areas of reform” (UNSC, 2005b:46). To date, UNMIL still has a significant number of personnel stationed in Liberia.

After completing disarmament and demobilization of over 100,000 former fighters and helping reintegrate over 90,000 former fighters, President Johnson Sirleaf ended the DDRR program in July of 2009 (UNSC, 2009:15).

A recent UN report (UNSC, 2009:12) states that “the security situation [in Liberia remains] fragile yet relatively stable” and that “law and order incidents, including rape and armed robbery, are prevalent.” Also, occasional incidents of mob violence are reported, often emanating from tensions between ethnic groups (UNSC, 2009:12). Liberia remains one of the poorest countries in Africa. A country devastated by decades of war, rebuilding Liberia’s economy and bridging the entrenched social divides will take many more years.

#### 4.7 Analysis

What conclusions can be drawn from this case to address whether post-conflict elections should be held early or should be delayed until the country is in a better position to manage the impacts of elections? As this paper has argued, to advance the long-term goals of sustainable peace and development, post-conflict elections should not be rushed, but should follow a period of rebuilding. The transitional period allows for provision of adequate security, institution building, proper planning and preparation of elections, development of political parties, etc. Furthermore, when the transitional period grants sufficient time to strengthen institutions, create a secure environment, and develop competing party representation prior to election day, elections are more likely to simultaneously advance war termination as well as democratization (Lyons, 1999:2). The conditions leading up to

the election play vital roles in determining whether the process is truly democratic (NDI, 2005). The timing and conditions surrounding the elections are key elements for Liberia to break its cycle of violence and move toward democratization and sustainable peace.

When President Taylor resigned his position and fled from Liberia, rebel movements had achieved their primary objective and immediately discontinued all fighting. Subsequently, the threat of immediately returning to war was relatively low. This allowed for an extended transitional period between the peace agreement and the transfer of power through democratic elections. Under these circumstances, the conditions were appropriate for the next round of elections to go beyond the limited goal of war termination and to further democratization and create an environment for sustainable peace.

In the interest of creating conditions for sustainable peace, the CPA scheduled election for late 2005, allowing for a transitional period of over two years to prepare the state for elections. Unlike the rushed timing of the 1997 elections, the two-year transitional period allowed enough time for Liberians and the international community to create a stable and secure environment, strengthen state institutions, develop political parties, and thus create favorable conditions for democratization. The UN peace operation acknowledged the importance of creating a secure environment and the need to build strong state institutions “as necessary foundations for lasting peace and prosperity” (UNSC, 2004:3).

Following so many years of civil war and mismanagement of the state, the challenges of rebuilding before the elections were formidable and required large international commitments. The UN emphasized that “major challenges had to be overcome to establish security in the many lawless parts of the country, disarm ex-

combatants, and restore civil authority throughout a country that has been largely ungoverned for the last 15 years” (UNSC, 2004:8). Therefore, the relatively long period of rebuilding was necessary before holding national elections.

As laid out in this chapter, steady progress was made throughout the transition periods on all main aspects of rebuilding. Although setbacks occurred, none were significant enough to derail the peace process or require rescheduling of elections. Liberia and its international partners made great contributions in achieving the goals of the transitional period. A 2005 UN report (UNSC, 2005b:82) affirms that “the achievements made during the transition period, including the disarmament of a considerable number of combatants, the disbandment of the former armed factions, the establishment of a stable security environment throughout the country, the partial restoration of state authority in the counties, the establishing of GEMAP, have laid a good foundation on which the new government should build upon.” At the time of elections, all violence was contained, security was adequate, institutions were capable, and political parties had developed appropriately.

Not only did the winner of the elections get to govern the state, but she actually had a functioning system and existing institutions through which to govern the state. Through the careful planning and efforts of Liberians and international actors, Liberia was finally on the path of holding free, fair, and transparent elections that would usher in a new era of democratic rule.

In addition to being considered free and fair and hailed as a success, the elections achieved not only the immediate goal of war termination but also ushered in a new era of democratic governance. In order to accomplish the dual goals of war termination and democratization, a longer period of rebuilding was required.

#### 4.8 Conclusion

The timing of Liberia's 2005 post-conflict election played a significant role in the short-term success and had long-term implications for the election.

The election was successful in advancing the dual goals of democratization and war termination. The timing was appropriate to achieve both goals and proved to be effective. Because Taylor had left the country, all major parties were committed to rebuilding the state and establishing democratic governance through meaningful elections that were aimed to promote sustainable peace. Unlike the circumstances surrounding the peace agreement in 1997, it was not necessary to promote rushed elections to prevent a relapse into civil war. The appropriate decision was made to allow sufficient time to rebuild the state before holding elections. This ability to put in place a transitional government, which would oversee the rebuilding of the state and thus create favorable conditions for democratization, made the successful 2005 elections possible. Throughout the two-year transitional period, the transitional government, with help of the international community, was able to address the underlying issues that led to the outbreak of war in the first place. As a result, the elections proved to be successful in promoting democratic governance as well as terminating the war and advancing the stated objectives of peacebuilding, which are to enable sustainable peace and development.

Following the peace agreement and Liberia's violent past, the success of Liberia's 2005 elections was necessary for the country to remain at peace. Even though successful and transparent elections does not automatically deliver good governance or prevent war, the establishment of democratic processes, greater political stability, hope of a brighter economic future, and increased government oversight certainly advances Liberia toward becoming a true democracy (IRI, 2005b).

According to NDI (2005), furthering democratic governance gives a country the best chance of attaining long-term sustained peace and development.

While the security situation in Liberia remains fragile and sustainable peace is not guaranteed, several positive developments of the two-year transitional period deter authoritarian rule and subsequent rebel uprisings. Such developments include institutional stability, checks on executive power, presence of political opposition, and inclusive government.

## **Chapter Five: Conclusions**

This work set out to address the issue of post-conflict election timing. Through examining the literature and studying Liberia's 1997 and 2005 elections, this work has sought to identify the best timing practices for post-conflict elections.

The theoretical basis for the argument is primarily inspired by the theories and works of Roland Paris and Terrence Lyons. Paris (2004) asserts that a protracted period of rebuilding the war-torn state should precede elections. He argues that because elections inherently create tension and pit people against each other, the state should be strengthened before adding challenges brought on through elections.

Lyons (2002) differentiates between the objectives of promoting elections. The differentiation is made between the limited goal of war termination and the long-term goal of democratization. Lyons agrees that when the primary objective is to further democratization then a protracted transition time may be required. However, when time or resources are not available the priority must be shifted to the limited goal of war termination. Achieving war termination may in some cases require rushed elections in order to keep consent from belligerents and maintain momentum following a peace agreement (Lyons, 2002).

Drawing from those theories, this work concludes that if the circumstances permit the long-term goal of democratization, then post-conflict elections should follow a protracted transition period. The timing of the election should be such that the transition period is adequate to provide favorable conditions for post-conflict elections. Through a long transition period, the transitional government and the international community can work toward improving conditions which will increase the likelihood for sustainable peace and development by not only achieving war termination but also advancing democratization. Such conditions include security,

institutional stability, and development of political parties. Thus, a long transition period is ideal.

However, post-war situations are generally not ideal scenarios and may necessitate the acceptance of partial victories. In some cases, the peace agreement may demand a rushed election held in unfavorable conditions, but may serve the limited goal of war termination. If elections achieve the limited goal of war termination but fail to deliver a fully democratic regime, then the elections can still be considered a partial success or at least a move in the right direction. Therefore, it is less important to determine the ideal timing for post-conflict elections than the best timing under the given circumstances.

An examination of two cases was used to demonstrate how different approaches yielded different results. The first case study involved Liberia's 1997 election, which followed the First Liberian Civil War. In this case, the election was held only months after the peace agreement was signed. It is likely that if the elections had been significantly delayed to allow for a longer transition period, then participants would have boycotted the peace process. Therefore, the priority shifted from establishing a true democracy to the limited goal of war termination, which the rushed elections achieved. Thus, the timing was appropriate to end the war but was not successful in enabling sustainable peace or delivering a true democracy. Shortly after taking office, President Taylor abandoned liberal politics and ruled through coercion and force, thus sparking another rebel movement and another war. The short transition time after the peace agreement prevented the development of adequate institutional stability, including checks on executive power and open political opposition. This allowed President Taylor to suppress peaceful opposition and forced

his opponents to turn to violence, thus bringing about the recidivism of civil war. The rushed elections contributed to the failure to produce sustainable peace.

The second case study involved Liberia's 2005 election, which followed the Second Liberian Civil War. Here, the elections followed a long transition period that lasted over two years. The longer transition period was possible because there was no immediate threat of a return to violence after President Taylor fled the country. All major parties were committed to rebuilding the state and establishing democratic governance and sustainable peace through holding elections. The elections were intended not only to end the war but to promote open democratic governance, which would increase the chance of a sustainable peace.

The 2005 elections succeeded in advancing the dual goals of war termination and democratization. The timing was appropriate to achieve both goals and proved to be effective. The protracted transition period allowed sufficient time to rebuild the state before holding elections. The ability to put in place a transitional government, which managed the rebuilding of the state and thus created favorable conditions for democratization, made the successful 2005 elections possible. Throughout the two-year transitional period the transitional government, with help of the international community, was able to address the underlying issues which led to the outbreak of war in the first place.

In sum, the timing of post-conflict elections is a critical element requiring careful consideration to minimize the risk of producing adverse results. As stated, preferred timing depends on the utility and desired outcome of the elections. The goals of democratization require a longer transition time, where elections should follow a period of institution building, security provision, political development, etc. On the other hand, the limited goal of war termination may require rushed elections to

maintain consent from belligerents and keep the momentum following the peace agreement. In addition, despite the fact that rushed elections pose serious risks in fragile post-conflict environments, limited resources may require shorter time frames.

Liberia has made great strides toward democratization. However, the true test of a young democracy - for the incumbent to peacefully hand over power if voted out of office or when term limits are reached - still lies ahead.

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