

Crafting a Secure Peace

– Evaluating Liberia’s Comprehensive
Peace Agreement 2003

This report evaluates Liberia’s Comprehensive Peace Agreement signed in 2003, and presents lessons learned that can be of importance when creating future peace accords. In particular, this study focuses on how the peace accord addressed the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration of ex-combatants, as well as the restructuring of the army and police forces.

Significant lessons from this case are highlighted. For instance, the Liberian experience shows that it can be valuable to bring in additional stakeholders such as political parties and civil society actors to the peace negotiations. Moreover, a principal conclusion is that in post-conflict situations, such as Liberia, it is pivotal to ensure that international peace-keeping forces are deployed to help sustain the peace and provide the environment for the necessary security reforms. Another lesson learned is to create mechanisms for dealing with difficulties that may arise in the implementation phase. In Liberia it proved beneficial that it was a key regional player that had been involved in the negotiation phase that assisted in resolving disagreements among the parties. Since no agreement will be perfect, it is crucial that such mechanisms are created to help sustain the peace process beyond the signing of the peace accord.

Desirée Nilsson

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Acronyms

AFL – Armed Forces of Liberia
 ATU – Anti Terrorist Unit
 CDDRR – Cantonment, Disarmament, Demobilization, Rehabilitation and Reintegration
 DDDR – Disarmament, Demobilization, Rehabilitation and Reintegration
 CPA – Comprehensive Peace Agreement
 ECOWAS – Economic Community of West African States
 ECOMOG – Economic Community of West African States Monitoring Group
 GEMAP – Governance and Economic Management Assistance Program
 GOL – Government of Liberia
 ICGL – International Contact Group on Liberia
 INPFL – Independent National Patriotic Front of Liberia
 IRCL – Inter-Religious Council for Liberia
 LNP – Liberia National Police
 LURD – Liberians United for Reconciliation and Democracy
 MARWOPNET – Mano River Women Peace Network
 MODEL – Movement for Democracy in Liberia
 NPFL – National Patriotic Front of Liberia
 NPP – National Patriotic Party
 NSSRL – National Security Strategy of the Republic of Liberia
 NTLA – National Transitional Legislative Assembly
 NTGL – National Transitional Government of Liberia
 PRS – Poverty Reduction Strategy
 SOD – Special Operation Division
 SSS – Special Security Service
 TRC – Truth and Reconciliation Commission
 UNCIVPOL – United Nations Civil Police
 UNMIL – United Nations Mission in Liberia

Executive Summary

This study evaluates Liberia's Comprehensive Peace Agreement signed on August 18, 2003, in Accra, Ghana. In particular, this report focuses on how the peace accord dealt with the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration of ex-combatants, as well as the restructuring of the army and police forces. The purpose is to examine if there are any aspects of this process that could serve as lessons learned, and then be used in the creation of future peace accords. The study is primarily based on a review of relevant academic and policy literature, and interviews held with a wide range of actors, including representatives of the former warring parties, political parties, civil society actors and the United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL). Most interviews were conducted in Monrovia in April and May, 2009. In addition, phone interviews have been carried out with actors who have insight into the peace negotiations or the implementation phase.

The key lessons learned from this report are as follows. First, the Liberian case shows the value of bringing various stakeholders such as political parties and civil society actors into the peace negotiations, and, whenever possible, space should also be created for such actors in the implementation phase. Moreover, the report highlights a central dilemma that needs to be considered when crafting agreements, namely the amount of detail in the peace accord versus the degree of flexibility in the agreement. The report further emphasizes the dilemma of creating a transitional period that allows sufficient time to implement certain aspects of the peace accord, without leaving the transitional government in power too long. Another principal conclusion is that in post-conflict situations, such as Liberia, it is pivotal to ensure that peacekeeping forces are deployed to help sustain the peace and make it possible to carry out the necessary security reforms. The Liberian case also points to the need for applying a long-term perspective, especially concerning the security sector, and to seek to involve local stakeholders at

an early stage of the process. One more lesson learned is the need to avoid creating a gap between the disarmament and demobilization of ex-combatants, and the reintegration that is supposed to follow. Finally, the Liberian case shows the importance of creating mechanisms for dealing with difficulties that may arise in the implementation phase. In Liberia it proved beneficial that it was a key regional player that had been involved in the negotiation phase that assisted in resolving disagreements among the parties. Since no agreement will be perfect, it is crucial that such mechanisms are created to help sustain the peace process beyond the signing of the peace accord.

I. Introduction

In a post-conflict situation, one of the immediate challenges facing the government is how to provide security for its population and create conditions for a sustainable peace. The disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR) of ex-combatants, along with a restructured army and police are of critical importance in this context.

Several scholars attest to the significance of successfully disarming and demobilizing government and opposition forces in order to create institutions that can sustain peace.¹ According to Joanna Spear (2002), a leading researcher on DDR, the disarmament and demobilization of ex-combatants can provide for the security that is needed in order to be able to implement a peace accord.² The reintegration of ex-combatants into their previous communities is also often highlighted as an important component in a sustainable peacebuilding process. There seems to be a consensus in the DDR literature that disarmament, demobilization and reintegration are of importance for creating durable peace, but there is limited knowledge on how best to construct these processes.³

In most post-conflict situations, the army and police forces are in need of some type of restructuring effort. Within the literature on Security Sector Reform (SSR), it is often emphasized that

¹ Anders Nilsson, *Dangerous Liaisons. Why Ex-Combatants Return to Violence. Cases from the Republic of Congo and Sierra Leone* (Uppsala: Department of Peace and Conflict Research, Uppsala University, 2008), 21.

² Joanna Spear, "Disarmament and Demobilization," in *Ending Civil Wars: The Implementation of Peace Agreements*, ed. John Stephen Stedman, Donald Rothchild, and Elizabeth M. Cousens (Boulder & London: Lynne Rienner Publisher, 2002), 141.

³ Nilsson, *Dangerous Liaisons. Why Ex-Combatants Return to Violence. Cases from the Republic of Congo and Sierra Leone*, Mats Berdal and David H. Ucko, eds., *Reintegrating Armed Groups after Conflict: Politics, Violence and Transition* (London & New York: Routledge, 2009), Alpaslan Özerdem, *Post-War Recovery: Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration* (London & New York: I.B. Tauris, 2009), Morten Bøås and Anne Hatløy, "Getting in, Getting Out": Militia Membership and Prospects for Re-Integration in Post-War," *Journal of Modern African Studies* 46, no. 1 (2008), Kathleen M. Jennings, "Unclear Ends, Unclear Means: Reintegration in Postwar Societies – the Case of Liberia," *Global Governance* 14, no. 3 (2008).

when reforming the security institutions, it is important to have a functioning and legitimate state that has civilian oversight of those security institutions. Call & Stanley (2003) make a distinction between two different models that have been used in recent years when reforming the security sector. The first model, 'demilitarization and police reform', entails a reduction in the size of the military in combination with a strengthened police force, whereas the second model, 'military mergers', seeks to integrate former warring parties into one single army. According to Call & Stanley, the first model may only be viable when there is a low risk of conflict but they suggest that this model has advantages over the option of integrating the military forces. At the same time, they stress that no single model should be followed, as it is necessary to take into account local conditions on the ground.⁴ A military merger can be seen as a form of power-sharing approach where each side is guaranteed military power. Some studies have found that peace agreements that include military power-sharing provisions are more likely to be followed by peace. Others, however, have provided a more skeptical view of military power sharing, showing that a military merger is not a very successful strategy.⁵ Thus, researchers have reached different conclusions regarding what might be most effective.

Ultimately, what might work in one post-conflict situation does not necessarily apply in another context. But without a successful DDR process there is always a risk that disgruntled and marginalized ex-combatants may again resort to violence. Moreover, if the security institutions are not being reformed, there is a danger that

⁴ Charles T. Call and William Stanley, "Military and Police Reform after Civil Wars" in *Contemporary Peace Making: Conflict, Violence, and Peace Processes*, ed. John Darby and Roger Mac Ginty (Basingstoke: Macmillan Press Ltd., 2003), 212–13.

⁵ Katherine Glassmyer and Nicholas Sambanis, "Rebel Military Integration and Civil War Termination," *Journal of Peace Research* 45, no. 3 (2008), Matthew Hoddie and Caroline A. Hartzell, "Civil War Settlements and the Implementation of Military Power-Sharing Arrangements," *Journal of Peace Research* 40, no. 3 (2003), Anna Jarstad and Desirée Nilsson, "From Words to Deeds: The Implementation of Power-Sharing Pacts in Peace Accords," *Conflict Management and Peace Science* 25, no. 3 (2008).

these may be turned against the population and sow the seeds for further conflict. In civil wars that are ended through negotiations, the parties often address these security aspects in the final peace agreement, which becomes an important document that serves to guide the peace process. For this reason it is pivotal to get it 'right' from the start, thereby avoiding some of the potential pitfalls of the peace process. Learning from previous experiences, should make it possible to gain some insights into this dynamic.

This study will investigate the latest peace process in Liberia that led up to the signing of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) on August 18, 2003, in Accra, Ghana. In particular, this report will focus on how the peace accord dealt with the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration of ex-combatants, as well as the restructuring of the army and police forces.⁶ The purpose is to examine if there are any aspects of this process that could serve as lessons learned, and then be applied in the creation of future peace accords.

⁶ It should be noted that this report focuses on the reform of the army and the police, and as such, does not cover the full range of activities within Security Sector Reform (SSR). This does not mean that other aspects of SSR are not important, but these lie outside the scope of this study. On this topic, see for example, Charles T. Call, ed., *Constructing Justice and Security after War* (Washington D.C.: United States Institute of Peace Press, 2007), Clem McCartney, Martina Fischer, and Oliver Wils, "Security Sector Reform: Potentials and Challenges for Conflict Transformation," Berghof Research Center for Constructive Conflict Management, http://www.berghof-handbook.net/uploads/download/dialogue2_ssr_complete.pdf.

2. Conflict History

Liberia has seen repeated cycles of violence. The first cycle of civil war lasted from 1989 to 1996, followed by a few years of fragile peace, until Liberia once again was caught in civil war that came to last from 1999 to 2003. The Liberian conflict first began when Charles Taylor and his forces crossed into Liberia from Ivory Coast on December 24, 1989. Taylor and his National Patriotic Front of Liberia (NPFL) sought to overthrow the regime of General Samuel Doe. In 1980, Doe had himself staged a coup that overthrew the American-Liberian oligarchy, which had ruled Liberia for more than a century; his regime quickly developed into a brutal military dictatorship, Doe favored his own ethnic Krahn group when appointing leading political and military positions in the government and he filled the military ranks with men from his ethnic group. Many of Taylor's fighters were of the ethnic groups Gio and Mano who had suffered a lot under Doe's regime, and they wanted to see a change in the political leadership.⁷

An ECOMOG (Economic Community of West African States Monitoring Group) force entered the conflict in August 1990 with a peacekeeping mandate but after having suffered casualties after attacks from NPFL, they soon shifted into an enforcement mission. The fighting continued and Doe was soon captured at the ECOMOG headquarters, and later killed by Prince Johnson, leader of the Independent National Patriotic Front of Liberia (INPFL) – a splinter group from Taylor's NPFL. There were several interim governments installed during the war but these failed to establish

⁷ Adekeye Adebajo, *Building Peace in West Africa: Liberia, Sierra Leone, and Guinea-Bissau*, International Peace Academy Occasional Paper Series (Boulder/London: Lynne Rienner Publishers, Inc., 2002), Stephen Ellis, *The Mask of Anarchy: The Destruction of Liberia and the Religious Dimension of an African Civil War* (London: Hurst & Company, 2002), Stephen P. Riley, "Liberia and Sierra Leone: Anarchy or Peace in West Africa," (London: The Research Institute for the Study of Conflict and Terrorism, 1996), Desirée Nilsson and Mimmi Söderberg Kovacs, "Breaking the Cycle of Violence? Promises and Pitfalls of the Liberian Peace Process," *Civil Wars* 7, no. 4 (2005), Abiodun Alao, John Mackinlay, and Funmi Olonisakin, *Peacekeepers, Politicians, and Warlords: The Liberian Peace Process* (Tokyo/New York/Paris: United Nations University Press, 1999).

control over the territory, and Taylor set up an alternative government in Gbanga in Bong County from where he made every effort to enrich himself. During the conflict many other rebel groups emerged, which led to a further intensification of the conflict.⁸

Despite efforts by ECOWAS and other organizations to end the insurgency and bring an end to the armed conflict, the parties quickly resumed hostilities after every peace agreement that was reached. It was not until the Abuja II peace agreement was signed in 1996 that the conflict finally ended, with elections to be held within only nine months. The agreement paved the way for Taylor's victory in the 1997 elections, where he received 75 percent of the votes. Among the presidential candidates on the losing side was Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf, who eight years later again would put forward her candidacy for president. According to most observers, one reason for Taylor's landslide victory was that people were fearful that Taylor would go back to war if he were to lose the elections, and he was also one of the few with a well-functioning campaign machinery in place. While there were reports of violations in the elections, international observers deemed the elections as basically free and fair.⁹

According to the Abuja II agreement, ECOMOG was tasked to restructure the security sector. However, due to lack of resources and short time the restructuring was never implemented and this task was instead left to the new President of Liberia, Charles Taylor. But he sidelined the issue by expelling ECOMOG and claiming that it was his constitutional right to decide over the future of the army.¹⁰ The Armed Forces of Liberia (AFL) were largely

⁸ Jeremy Levitt, *The Evolution of Deadly Conflict in Liberia: From 'Paternalitarianism' to State Collapse* (Durham: Carolina Academic Press, 2005), Alao, Mackinlay, and Olonisakin, *Peacekeepers, Politicians, and Warlords: The Liberian Peace Process*, Adebajo, *Building Peace in West Africa: Liberia, Sierra Leone, and Guinea-Bissau*.

⁹ Alao, Mackinlay, and Olonisakin, *Peacekeepers, Politicians, and Warlords: The Liberian Peace Process*, Nilsson and Söderberg Kovacs, "Breaking the Cycle of Violence? Promises and Pitfalls of the Liberian Peace Process."

¹⁰ Augustine Toure, "The Role of Civil Society in National Reconciliation and Peacebuilding in Liberia," (New York: International Peace Academy, 2002), 21, Alao, Mackinlay, and Olonisakin, *Peacekeepers, Politicians, and Warlords: The Liberian Peace Process*, 107–09, 26.

Krahn-based and Taylor moved to retire many of the soldiers and instead created security forces that were loyal only to him. Among Taylor's own armed units were the Anti-Terrorist Unit (ATU), Special Security Services (SSS), and the Special Operations Division (SOD). Taylor used the security forces to intimidate the population and further his own interest.¹¹ This personalization of the security forces was not new, and had also been prevalent under previous regimes, although the situation deteriorated under the regimes of Doe and Taylor.¹²

In the period from 1997 to 1999 that followed the elections, the Taylor government targeted the opposition and committed gross human-rights violations. In September, 1998, a major clash took place when Taylor decided to go after the opposition. Many were either murdered or arrested and those that managed to escape had no choice but to go into exile. Taylor's opponents would, in 1999, stage an armed incursion from Guinea, with one of their main objectives being to oust Taylor from power. The rebel group Liberians United for Reconciliation and Democracy (LURD) was formally founded at a meeting in Freetown in 2000, but it was in Guinea that the movement came to have its main base under the leadership of Sekoh Conneh. His wife Ayesha had strong ties with President Lansana Conté and this was one of the reasons that LURD could rely on the support of Guinea. It would take some time before the other rebel faction, the Movement for Democracy in Liberia (MODEL), entered the scene with support from neighboring Ivory Coast. Whereas LURD consisted of many from the ethnic group Mandingo, MODEL was largely Krahn-based. From early 2003, Taylor was fighting a civil war on two fronts. In the spring of 2003 the conflict escalated and the humanitarian situation deteriorated further; while there were a number of peace initiatives, none

¹¹ International Crisis Group ICG, "Liberia: The Key to Ending Regional Stability," in *Africa Report*, No. 43 (Freetown/Brussels: 2002), 13–14.

¹² Adedeji Ebo, "The Challenges and Opportunities of Security Sector Reform in Post-Conflict Liberia," in *Occasional Paper*, No. 9 (Geneva: Geneva Centre for the Democratic Control of Armed Forces (DCAF), 2005), 4.

of these were very successful. But it would not take long before the peace talks would begin.¹³

¹³ Levitt, *The Evolution of Deadly Conflict in Liberia: From 'Paternalitarianism' to State Collapse*, William S. Reno, "Liberia: The LURDs of the New Church," in *African Guerrillas: Raging against the Machine* ed. Morten Bøås (Boulder & London: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2007), Mike McGovern, "Liberia: The Risk of Rebuilding a Shadow State," in *Building States to Build Peace*, ed. Charles T. Call (Boulder & London: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2008), Nilsson and Söderberg Kovacs, "Breaking the Cycle of Violence? Promises and Pitfalls of the Liberian Peace Process."

3. The Comprehensive Peace Agreement

3.1 Process of Getting to the Agreement

ECOWAS and the International Contact Group on Liberia (ICGL) – which included key actors such as the African Union, European Union, ECOWAS, France, Morocco, the UN, the UK and the US – invited the warring parties to participate in the peace negotiations to be held in early June 2003. Former Nigerian President General Abdulsalami Abubakar was appointed to act as chief mediator, and ECOWAS would take the lead role in the peace process.¹⁴ However, just as the peace talks were about to begin, the Special Court in Sierra Leone issued an indictment against Taylor for his involvement in the Sierra Leonean conflict. This meant that the host country Ghana was faced with the predicament of whether or not to hand over Taylor – a Head of State – to the Special Court. Ghana had promised to ensure the security of all participants at the negotiations, including Taylor, and had no intention of arresting him. Later the same day Taylor left the negotiations and went back to Liberia.¹⁵ The negotiations proceeded without him, but Taylor could still influence what happened in Accra as the representatives of the Government of Liberia (GOL) were in close contact with him during the peace talks.¹⁶

Meanwhile, LURD and MODEL were advancing closer to the capital Monrovia, and the Liberian government was under increasing pressure to sign a deal. Two weeks into the negotiations, on June 17, 2003, the parties signed a ceasefire agreement. But not

¹⁴ The International Contact Group on Liberia (ICGL) was established in 2002 in order to try to bring the parties together for peace negotiations. International Crisis Group ICG, "Tackling Liberia, the Eye of the Regional Storm," in *Africa Report*, No. 62 (Freetown/Brussels: 2003), 29. Phone interview, member of the ECOWAS mediation team, September 2009.

¹⁵ Nilsson and Söderberg Kovacs, "Breaking the Cycle of Violence? Promises and Pitfalls of the Liberian Peace Process," *Africa Research Bulletin*, "Liberia UN Resolution," 40, no. 5 (2003), Priscilla Hayner, "Negotiating Peace in Liberia: Preserving the Possibility for Justice," (Geneva: Henry Dunant Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue and the International Center for Transitional Justice, 2007).

¹⁶ Interview, former GOL delegate, Monrovia, April 28, 2009.

long after the ceasefire agreement had been reached, the parties were again engaged in heavy fighting in Monrovia.¹⁷ While the conflict was raging in the capital and its surroundings, the peace negotiations in Accra continued.

The three warring parties had been involved in negotiating the ceasefire, but other segments of society later came to participate in the peace talks.¹⁸ The peace negotiations included the three warring parties – GOL, LURD and MODEL – as well as political parties and civil society actors and interest groups, such as the Mano River Women Peace Network (MARWOPNET), the Liberian Bar Association and the Inter-Religious Council for Liberia (IRCL). The negotiations came to last for more than two months.¹⁹ During the negotiations, Mediator Abubakar is said to have listened to the concerns of the parties without pushing the parties to come to an agreement.²⁰ But especially the women's organizations were very vocal in their concern to get the warring parties to agree on a peace deal. MARWOPNET's previous involvement in the peace process had rendered them an invitation by Mediator Abubakar to participate in the talks. But in addition to the women that had been granted a seat at the table, women gathered on the outside from women's organizations such as WIPNET (Women in Peacebuilding Program) and from a refugee camp nearby. As the participants were entering and leaving the venue, the women tried to convince the participants to reach a peace deal. At one point in the negotiations when the women felt that the process was moving slowly, while the fighting in Liberia intensified, the women decided that something more drastic had to be done. They surrounded the meeting room where the negotiations were held, blocked the ex-

¹⁷ Nilsson and Söderberg Kovacs, "Breaking the Cycle of Violence? Promises and Pitfalls of the Liberian Peace Process," 401.

¹⁸ Hayner, "Negotiating Peace in Liberia: Preserving the Possibility for Justice."

¹⁹ CPA, "Comprehensive Peace Agreement between the Government of Liberia and the Liberians United for Reconciliation and Democracy (Lurd) and the Movement for Democracy in Liberia (Model) and Political Parties Accra 18th August, 2003," http://www.usip.org/library/pa/liberia/liberia_08182003_cpa.html.

²⁰ Hayner, "Negotiating Peace in Liberia: Preserving the Possibility for Justice," 11.

its, and refused to let the participants out until some progress was made.²¹ Many of the participants later recalled this event and commended the women for the role they had played in pushing the negotiations further.²²

One major obstacle to the peace talks was that Taylor refused to step down from power. The removal of Taylor from the political scene was one of the key aims of both LURD and MODEL, and they insisted that with Taylor still in power, there could be no peace in Liberia.²³ But when Taylor came under increasing international pressure to step down and became weakened militarily, he finally agreed to hand over power to Vice-President Moses Blah, and went into exile in Nigeria on August 11, 2003. Taylor's exit was very important for the progress of the peace negotiations. Also contributing to the momentum was the unbearable situation in Monrovia, and the fact that there was almost no funding left for the peace talks.²⁴ A political party delegate explained that Mediator Abubakar and the representatives from the international community were exhausted with the parties' struggles over who would get what, and wanted an agreement to be reached. The final text of the agreement was presented to the parties shortly before they were expected to sign the peace agreement. This meant that although the parties had negotiated the agreement over several months, towards the very end they had little possibility of making any alterations to the document.²⁵ The time had come to bring the peace talks to a close. Finally, on August 18, 2003, the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) was signed.

²¹ Interview, representative of MARWOPNET, Monrovia, May 4, 2009. See also Ibid.

²² Interviews, former representatives of the warring parties and the political parties, April and May, Monrovia, 2009.

²³ Phone interview, member of the ECOWAS mediation team, September 2009.

²⁴ Hayner, "Negotiating Peace in Liberia: Preserving the Possibility for Justice," Levitt, *The Evolution of Deadly Conflict in Liberia: From 'Paternalitarianism' to State Collapse*, Nilsson and Söderberg Kovacs, "Breaking the Cycle of Violence? Promises and Pitfalls of the Liberian Peace Process."

²⁵ Interview, former political party delegate, Monrovia, April 30, 2009; Hayner, "Negotiating Peace in Liberia: Preserving the Possibility for Justice," 12.

3.2 Character and Content of the Agreement

The CPA was a document covering some 20 pages with four annexes that specified additional issues, one laying out the time schedule for the implementation of the accord. The timeline specified when the implementation of the various provisions was to begin but gave only a few deadlines regarding the implementation. Moreover, the CPA was characterized by a high degree of inclusiveness as the peace talks involved all three warring parties as well as political parties and civil society representatives. The peace agreement was comprehensive not only in terms of the wide range of actors involved, but also with regard to the many issues covered.

To begin with, the peace agreement reconfirmed the ceasefire agreement the parties had signed on June 17, 2003, and the parties requested ECOWAS to immediately deploy a force to secure the ceasefire and separate the parties. Other central provisions concerned the establishment of the National Transitional Government of Liberia (NTGL) and the creation of the National Transitional Legislative Assembly (NTLA). The transitional government was to be headed by a chairman and a vice-chairman from the political parties or the civil society, whereas the 21 ministries were to be divided between the warring factions, political parties and civil society. The three warring factions each got five ministries, and the remaining six were left to political parties and civil society. According to some observers the former rebel factions came to dominate both the NTGL and the NTLA, who also had made sure that they held key ministerial and legislative posts.²⁶ The distribution of which warring faction that should get a certain ministry had been decided during the negotiations and was specified in one of the annexes to the agreement. Moreover, the inclusiveness that had characterized the peace talks in Accra was reflected in the distribution of the 76 seats in the national assembly. The three warring parties – GOL,

²⁶ International Crisis Group ICG, "Rebuilding Liberia: Prospects and Perils," in *Africa Report*, No. 75 (Freetown/Brussels: 2004).

LURD and MODEL – were each given 12 seats, political parties were allocated 18 seats, civil society and interest groups were given 7 seats, and each of Liberia's 15 counties was assigned one seat.

The agreement also called for national elections to be held no later than October, 2005, with the elected government to assume office in January, 2006. One of the most important features of the peace accord was that the parties requested a United Nations Chapter VII force to assist in the implementation of the agreement and secure the peace in Liberia. Moreover, the accord stated that a Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) was to be established, and the NTGL was to give consideration to a recommendation for a general amnesty. The peace agreement also touched upon other important aspects such as electoral reform, the establishment of a Governance Reform Commission, the return and repatriation of refugees, human rights issues and humanitarian relief.

3.3 Key Provisions

Disarmament, Demobilization, Rehabilitation and Reintegration (DDRR)

Like many other peace agreements, the CPA called for a DDR process.²⁷ This was the focus of Article VI. The parties committed themselves to the implementation of a process of Cantonment, Disarmament, Demobilization, Rehabilitation and Reintegration (CDDRR). The agreement stipulated that the international force should conduct the disarmament of all combatants, including those from paramilitary forces. The agreement also provided for a National Commission for Disarmament, Demobilization, Rehabilitation and Reintegration (NCDDRR) with the purpose of overseeing and coordinating DDRR activities. This national commission

²⁷ When discussing this on a general level, I refer to DDR, while in the Liberian case I use the term DDRR since the CPA also included rehabilitation as part of the program.

included representatives from relevant NTGL agencies, the warring parties, the United Nations, ECOWAS, the African Union and other partners. Moreover, assistance in financial and technical resources needed for the implementation of this program was to be requested from the International Community by the Transitional Government. The timeline in the CPA stipulated that the DDR process was to commence within two months of the installment of the NTLG.²⁸

The Army

Part four of the CPA lays out the provisions for the reform of the security sector, which includes the restructuring of the army, the police and other security services. Article VII deals specifically with the reform and restructuring of the Liberian army. The agreement calls for the disbandment of all irregular forces without specifying this further, and states that the AFL is to be restructured with a new command structure. Regarding the composition of AFL, it is declared that forces "...may be drawn from the ranks of the present GOL forces, the LURD and the MODEL, as well as from civilians with appropriate background and experience."²⁹ Hence, in contrast to many other peace agreements no guarantees were made to any of the factions concerning their inclusion into the armed forces. The agreement thus did not provide for a military merger whereby the rebel groups would be integrated into the armed forces. While the end result very well could have been a new force composed of former fighters from each of the three warring factions, there was nothing in the agreement that guaranteed such an outcome.

Furthermore, the agreement put forward principles for the construction of the Liberian Armed Forces which state that all person-

²⁸ CPA, "Comprehensive Peace Agreement between the Government of Liberia and the Liberians United for Reconciliation and Democracy (Lurd) and the Movement for Democracy in Liberia (Model) and Political Parties Accra 18th August, 2003." Article VI.

²⁹ Ibid. Article VII.

nel are to be "...screened with respect to educational, professional, medical and fitness qualifications as well as prior history with regard to human rights abuses", and the force shall take into account the country's national balance.³⁰ Thus, the agreement was quite specific with regard to the principles of the vetting procedure. The agreement also specified the mandate of the restructured army. According to the CPA, the army should serve to defend the national sovereignty and, when necessary, respond to natural disasters.

Another key issue dealt with in the CPA, concerned the responsibility for the restructuring of the army. According to the CPA, the parties wanted the ECOWAS, the UN, the AU, and the ICGL to provide advisory staff, equipment, logistics and trainers, and requested that "...the United States of America play a lead role in organising this restructuring program."³¹ Thus, while the agreement called for the involvement of several different actors in the restructuring effort, the United States was assigned the main responsibility.

The Police

The restructuring of the Liberia National Police (LNP) and other security services is the focus of article VIII of the CPA. The agreement called for the immediate restructuring of the national police force as well as security forces such as the Special Security Services (SSS). These entities were to adopt a professional orientation with an emphasis on democratic values, respect for human rights and non-corrupt practices, but no further guidelines were given regarding the vetting process of the forces. Moreover, the Special Security Units such as the Anti Terrorist Unit (ATU) and the Special Operations Divisions (SOD) of the Liberian National Police Force were to be disarmed and restructured. These forces had

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Ibid.

been directly operated by Taylor and were notorious for the human-rights abuses they committed under his regime.³² Moreover, the agreement stated that an interim police force was to be responsible for maintaining law and order until the new police force had been deployed. The parties requested United Nations Civil Police (UNCIVPOL) to monitor the interim police force and assist in the training of the new police force.

3.4 Current Status of the Agreement

Liberia now appears to be moving away from violence.³³ How much of this success that can be attributed to the CPA can be discussed, but it remains a fact that since the CPA was signed, Liberia has enjoyed relative stability. Looking at the provisions in the peace accord, it can be noted that many of these have been successfully implemented. The ECOMOG force quickly came on the ground and stayed for the first two months during the fragile period following the signing of the CPA. The UN Security Council Resolution 1509 paved the way for the deployment of the UNMIL force in October 2003, which later came to reach a strength of about 15,000 peacekeepers.³⁴ The presence of the UNMIL force throughout the implementation phase of the CPA is arguably one of the main reasons why Liberia has not relapsed into civil war. Many attest to the fact that the deployment of peacekeeping forces throughout the country has been important for the stability in the country. On some occasions, violence has erupted and UNMIL has then responded by demonstrating their force and showed that they are there to stay.³⁵ Moreover, according to a public opinion survey conducted in 2006, many Liberians perceive that their secu-

³² ICG, "Liberia: The Key to Ending Regional Stability."

³³ UCDP, "The Uppsala Conflict Data Program," <http://www.ucdp.uu.se>.

³⁴ United Nations, "Liberia – UNMIL – Background," <http://www.un.org/Depts/dpko/missions/unmil/background.html>.

³⁵ Nilsson and Söderberg Kovacs, "Breaking the Cycle of Violence? Promises and Pitfalls of the Liberian Peace Process."

rity situation has improved under the presence of the peacekeeping force.³⁶

In addition, the transitional government and the assembly were installed in a timely fashion on October 14, 2003. In accordance with the CPA, Moses Blah, who had served as president for two months after Taylor had left, turned over power to Chairman Gyude Bryant to head the transitional government. While these provisions of the CPA were implemented as agreed, during the transitional period there have been divisions and suspicions among the warring factions, struggle for jobs, and widespread corruption within the government, which has impeded on its efficiency and cohesion.³⁷ In this context it is relevant to mention the Governance and Economic Management Assistance Program (GEMAP), which was initiated in September 2005 in an effort to gain oversight over economic functions and thereby reduce corruption and increase transparency and accountability.³⁸ Moreover, a major achievement was when national elections were held in late 2005. After the second round of elections it became clear that Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf had won over former soccer star George Weah, and in January 2006, Johnson-Sirleaf assumed office as President of Liberia.³⁹ Moreover, in 2005 the NTLA established the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) and in June, 2009, the commission released the final report.⁴⁰

With regard to the security provisions, there has also been some progress made. Before analyzing in more depth some challenges and options regarding these provisions, I will briefly mention a few

³⁶ Jean Krasno, *Public Opinion Survey of UNMIL's Work in Liberia* (United Nations Peacekeeping Best Practices Section, 2006).

³⁷ McGovern, "Liberia: The Risk of Rebuilding a Shadow State," Ebo, "The Challenges and Opportunities of Security Sector Reform in Post-Conflict Liberia."

³⁸ McGovern, "Liberia: The Risk of Rebuilding a Shadow State," ICG, International Crisis Group. "Liberia's Elections: Necessary but Not Sufficient." In Africa Report No. 98. Dakar/Brussels, 2005.

³⁹ Nilsson and Söderberg Kovacs, "Breaking the Cycle of Violence? Promises and Pitfalls of the Liberian Peace Process."

⁴⁰ The Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Liberia (TRC), <https://www.trcofliberia.org/> (accessed August 2009)

aspects about these stipulations. To begin with, the DDRR program set forth in the peace accord can be seen as having been implemented, although this process has involved some problems. In short, more than 103,000 ex-combatants have been disarmed and demobilized, and after some serious delays with the rehabilitation and reintegration component due to shortages in funding, most of the ex-combatants have entered into reintegration programs.⁴¹

Moreover, the restructuring of the army has been slow. The first new recruits did not enter training until August 2006 – three years after the signing of the CPA. The US took responsibility for the restructuring of the army, but hired a private company DynCorp to carry out the training of the new force, and another private company Pacific Architects and Engineers (PAE) to renovate the military base, Camp Scheffelin, and conduct officer training.⁴² The approach has been to start from ‘a clean slate’, which means that all those that had served with the AFL were discharged, causing a lot of resentment and protests.⁴³ Many hold that the agreement never intended the disbandment of all forces, but merely a reconstruction of the army. Thus, there are those that contend that at least some of the former AFL soldiers should have continued their service in a restructured force. Others view this differently and state that the CPA did intend the army to be completely restructured.⁴⁴ Furthermore, the size of the new force is now expected to comprise about 2,000 soldiers. The resources to train a larger army have been lacking, and it has also been said that Liberia cannot afford to have a larger force than this. The vetting procedure that has been carried out is overall seen as successful, but the new army is still not opera-

⁴¹ United Nations Security Council, “Special Report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Mission in Liberia,” (United Nations, 2009), International Crisis Group ICG, “Liberia: Uneven Progress in Security Sector Reform,” in *Africa Report, No. 148* (Dakar/Brussels: 2009).

⁴² ICG, “Liberia: Uneven Progress in Security Sector Reform,” ii, 9.

⁴³ Elizabeth Blunt, “Liberia Recruits a New Army,” *BBC News, Monrovia*, 26 January 2006.

⁴⁴ Thomas Jaye, “Parliamentary Oversight and Lessons Learned from Internationalized Security Sector Reform,” (2009), http://www.cic.nyu.edu/peacebuilding/docs/Liberia_SSR.pdf. Interviews, former representatives of the warring parties, the political parties and civil society actors, April and May, Monrovia, 2009.

tional so it is too early to judge its effectiveness.⁴⁵

The process of reforming the Liberia National Police has not seen the same delays as the new army. UNCIVPOL has assisted in the restructuring of the Liberia National Police (LNP), and about 3,500 officers have been through training at the Police Academy. The vetting procedure for the police force is one of the components that have received heavy criticism, and the LNP is broadly seen as ineffective and corrupt.⁴⁶ The salaries are low and they have been lacking basic equipment. Moreover, Liberia’s judicial system suffers from serious deficiencies, which naturally impacts on the effectiveness of the police force.⁴⁷

⁴⁵ ICG, “Liberia: Uneven Progress in Security Sector Reform.”

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, ii, 17.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 20.

4. Challenges and Options

4.1 DDRR

The DDRR process in Liberia is widely seen as having been rushed. The program began on December 7, 2003, only about two months after the transitional government had been installed. The CPA had stipulated that the program should be initiated within two months after installing the transitional government. When the program was about to be launched, several actors expressed concerns that the timing was not ripe and that the start of the program might be premature. A number of actors believed that UNMIL and other actors were not logistically and operationally ready and according to some observers the fighters did not seem prepared for being disarmed. Amidst the concerns, UNMIL decided to push ahead with the DDRR program.⁴⁸ The first to enter the program were ex-GOL fighters at Camp Scheffelin, but UNMIL was not well prepared and many more than anticipated showed up to enter the program. When the fighters found that they would not be in position to immediately receive their money, it did not take long before the DDRR process was met by riots and several people died. The program was postponed until April, 2004, when UNMIL was expected to reach full strength.⁴⁹ The decision to push ahead with the DDRR program needs to be seen in light of the political situation in Liberia at the time. The peace was fragile with thousands of combatants with potential to disrupt the process at any time. However, ideally, the launch of the program should have been better planned.

⁴⁸ Interview, civil society representative, Monrovia, May 4, 2009. ICG, "Rebuilding Liberia: Prospects and Perils."

⁴⁹ Ryan Nichols, "Disarming Liberia: Progress and Pitfalls," in *Armed and Aimless: Armed Groups, Guns and Human Security in the ECOWAS Region, Small Arms Survey*, ed. Nicholas Florquin and Eric Berman (Geneva, 2005), IRIN, "Liberia: UN Hints at Further Delay to Start of Disarmament," UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, <http://www.irinnews.org>. ICG, "Rebuilding Liberia: Prospects and Perils," Wolf-Christian Paes, "The Challenges of Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration in Liberia," *International Peacekeeping* 12, no. 2 (2005).

When the DDRR program was resumed in April, 2004, UNMIL was better prepared. For example, they had now undertaken a public awareness campaign about the goals of the program. Still, the DDRR process was complicated by the fact that the warring parties had failed to deliver comprehensive lists of combatants who were designated to take part in the process. This caused delays, and also made it very difficult to know how many that could be expected to participate. Early estimates by UNMIL suggested that 38,000 combatants were going to participate in the program, but there were also higher estimates made by International Crisis Group, suggesting that there in fact could be as many as 48-58,000 combatants. Initially, the ex-combatants were required to hand in one firearm per person, but this was lowered to only 150 rounds of ammunition. Women and children could enter without turning over a weapon or ammunition. The ex-combatants were first paid \$150 and after a period of three months another \$150. In the end, more than 103,000 ex-combatants entered the program. UNMIL had underestimated how many were to participate, and the screening process was weak, which meant that many non-combatants were allowed into the program. The system was open to abuse and many sought ways of benefiting from the situation. For example, some commanders provided weapons to combatants who in return had to give up part of their cash payments, and many non-combatants cheated their way into the program. Another problem was that only about 27,000 weapons had been handed in, leaving the ratio between number of ex-combatants and weapons remarkably low. In October, 2004, a ceremony was held in Monrovia to highlight the completion of the DD part of the program.⁵⁰

While the high number of combatants that entered the program has been mentioned as a success, the wide criteria and inadequate screening process in identifying ex-combatants became very prob-

⁵⁰ Nichols, "Disarming Liberia: Progress and Pitfalls," Kathleen M. Jennings, "The Struggle to Satisfy: DDR through the Eyes of Ex-Combatants in Liberia," *International Peacekeeping* 14, no. 2 (2007), ICG, "Liberia: Uneven Progress in Security Sector Reform," Paes, "The Challenges of Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration in Liberia."

lematic. The fact that so many more than anticipated had showed up for disarmament meant that all the money that was supposed to go to the rehabilitation and reintegration, already had been spent on disarmament and demobilization, thus, creating severe delays regarding the rehabilitation and reintegration.⁵¹ This generated an unnecessary security risk as the ex-combatants were left waiting without any training or employment. The funding for these programs was eventually provided, but some had to wait for months or years before they could enter the reintegration program.⁵² While the peacekeepers have been present to guarantee the peace, it is difficult to know what could have happened in their absence. The Liberian case demonstrates the need to look down the road and make plans for the reintegration of the ex-combatants. One way of doing so, would have been to create a separate budget reserved for the reintegration program.⁵³ On a more general level, there is need to have a more comprehensive approach to the DDR programs than what turned out to be the case in Liberia.

Most ex-combatants have now gone through some kind of reintegration program. While the DDRR program thus can be seen as implemented, several of the interviewees expressed concern regarding the quality and content of the reintegration programs.⁵⁴ The benefits and problems with the DDRR process have been debated. A survey conducted by Pugel (2006) shows that ex-combatants who have participated in the DDRR program are better off than those that never registered with the program, whereas other studies provide a more skeptical view.⁵⁵ According to Jennings (2007: 214), "...the reintegration programming is geared towards preparing ex-combatants for jobs that do not exist." McGovern (2005) further warns against reintegration programs where the ex-com-

⁵¹ Paes, "The Challenges of Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration in Liberia," 258.

⁵² Jennings, "The Struggle to Satisfy: DDR through the Eyes of Ex-Combatants in Liberia."

⁵³ ICG, "Liberia: Uneven Progress in Security Sector Reform."

⁵⁴ Interviews, UNMIL representatives, Monrovia, April/May 2009.

⁵⁵ James Pugel, "What the Fighters Say: A Survey of Ex-Combatants in Liberia, February-March 2006," Joint Implementation Unit (JIU), United Nations Development Programme, <http://www.lu.undp.org/UNDPwhatFightersSayLiberia-2006.pdf>.

batants are given expectations about their livelihoods that are unrealistic, which can result in ex-combatants becoming frustrated when they perceive these promises to be broken. While Liberia has been at peace since the CPA was signed and most ex-combatants have now been through the program, there is thus still reason for concern. Moreover, many of the delegates at the peace talks highlighted the need for the rehabilitation of ex-combatants, and although this was mentioned in the CPA, not much rehabilitation appears to have taken place.⁵⁶

Besides the timeline specified in the CPA, the document did not provide much detail regarding how the DDRR program should be implemented. Mr. Geoffrey Rudd, who participated in the drafting of the peace agreement, suggested that some of the problems later experienced during implementation might have been avoided if the peace agreement had been more specific on certain issues. He also mentioned that during the peace negotiations there had been annexes produced that further outlined the implementation of the provisions in the CPA, but these annexes were not made part of the final peace accord. One of the reasons was that the parties were unwilling to accept a very detailed document as they wanted the peace accord to allow room for further negotiations, as the situations presented themselves, during the period of the interim administration. Moreover, Mediator Abubakar is said to have preferred a peace accord that did not specify the process too much, believing that room for compromise was the best option for success. Mr. Rudd further stressed that the amount of detail in such a document is generally a function of the resources that are available and, in particular, the amount of time available to negotiate issues.⁵⁷ In Liberia, time was running out. The funding for the talks was coming to an end and the fighting was intensifying in Monrovia and surroundings.⁵⁸ Thus, the humanitarian situation

⁵⁶ Interviews, civil society representatives, Monrovia, April 28 and May 4, 2009. See also McGovern, "Liberia: The Risk of Rebuilding a Shadow State."

⁵⁷ Phone interview, Mr. Geoffrey Rudd, European Commission, September 2009.

⁵⁸ Hayner, "Negotiating Peace in Liberia: Preserving the Possibility for Justice."

emphasized the need for an urgent agreement to stop the suffering of the population.

4.2 The Army

While the agreement dealt with the central aspects concerning the army, there has been debate concerning some of the provisions. As mentioned, there has been some disagreement concerning the issue of whether the army should be completely dissolved. Since the agreement stipulated that all *irregular* forces should be disbanded, some observers have argued that it is implicit that the *regular* forces should not have been disbanded. Others contend that the intention all along had been to create a new force, for example, since the agreement specifically states that the army is to be restructured and the forces may be drawn from GOL, LURD, MODEL or civilians.⁵⁹ This suggests that there was a lack of clarity concerning these provisions. While the agreement does include several key aspects concerning the reform and restructuring of the armed forces, it would have been preferable to clarify some of these provisions.

The peace agreement stipulated that the US should take the lead role. This issue does not seem to have been contested by the parties to the negotiations. Generally there seems to be a consensus regarding the decision to have the Americans take the lead role. When asking whether the US was the right actor to restructure the army, many refer back to the historical bonds between the two countries.⁶⁰ While the peace accord did specify that the US should take the lead role for the restructuring of the army, some have suggested that this did not mean that they should take such an exclusive control over this process.⁶¹

⁵⁹ Interviews, former representatives of the warring parties, the political parties and civil society actors, April and May, Monrovia, 2009.

⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁶¹ Alexander Loden, "Civil Society and Security Sector Reform in Post-Conflict Liberia: Painting a Moving Train without Brushes," *The International Journal of Transitional Justice* 1 (2007).

The issue of local ownership is highly relevant in this context, as the process is led by the private US company DynCorp and they report to the US government and not to the Government of Liberia. This has raised concerns about the transparency of the process, as private companies report to the US government, and the Liberian government and others cannot approach these companies directly to receive information.⁶² In a report for the US Army War College, Malan (2008) emphasizes that the Americans on a regular basis share this information with the Liberian Ministry of Defense.⁶³ Furthermore, it has been argued that such private companies should not be responsible for restructuring of the army, in particular, since they lack a long-term commitment to the process.⁶⁴ According to Loden (2007), two areas where civil society actors could have become involved were, for example, in the vetting of the police force, and in the decision to let DynCorp be responsible for the restructuring of the army.⁶⁵ There appears to be a concern about lack of local ownership both with regard to the Liberian government having enough insight, and concerning civil society actors in Liberia.

Some of the challenges that the Americans have encountered in the restructuring process have been to demobilize the former AFL and the Liberian Ministry of Defense and arranging payments for them. Moreover, since the army was to be built from scratch, it has also proved challenging to fill positions for senior commanders and it is likely to take some time before new commanders will have been trained.⁶⁶ Thus, we still do not know how well the new army will be able to function.

⁶² Ebo, "The Challenges and Opportunities of Security Sector Reform in Post-Conflict Liberia."

⁶³ Mark Malan, "Security Sector Reform in Liberia: Mixed Results from Humble Beginnings," <http://www.StrategicStudiesInstitute.army.mil>.

⁶⁴ Ebo, "The Challenges and Opportunities of Security Sector Reform in Post-Conflict Liberia," 3.

⁶⁵ Loden, "Civil Society and Security Sector Reform in Post-Conflict Liberia: Painting a Moving Train without Brushes."

⁶⁶ Malan, "Security Sector Reform in Liberia: Mixed Results from Humble Beginnings."

4.3 The Police

According to the CPA, UNMIL would be in charge of the police reform, something that also is specified further in UN Security Council Resolution 1509.⁶⁷ While the reform of the police force did not see the same delays as the reform of the army, there have still been problems. Several of the interviewees expressed concerns regarding the effectiveness of the police force. There appear to be severe problems with corruption and crime within the force, and also with the management and the leadership of the police force. Many have been critical of the vetting procedure of the police force, while others suggest that the vetting procedure has been thorough. According to Jaye (2009: 16) the inadequate vetting procedure has meant that “people of questionable character and past” has been recruited into the police force. Furthermore, the justice sector has been seen as largely dysfunctional, and without a functioning justice system it is difficult to see how the police should be able to operate effectively.⁶⁸ The justice system is of key importance for the work of the police, thus, it would have been preferable to devote more attention to the reform of the justice system in the peace accord.

UNMIL’s mandate has been to assist the transitional government in monitoring and restructuring the police force of Liberia, and to develop the civilian police-training program.⁶⁹ This has proved to be a difficult task since there have been a lot of problems within the Liberia National Police, and UNCIVPOL has not had any enforcement component within their mandate. According to the Police Commissioner of UNMIL, a stronger mandate would have been preferable in order to be able to play a more effective role.⁷⁰

⁶⁷ United Nations Security Council, “Resolution 1509,” (United Nations, 2003).

⁶⁸ ICG, “Liberia: Uneven Progress in Security Sector Reform.”, Jaye, “Parliamentary Oversight and Lessons Learned from Internationalized Security Sector Reform.”, Ebo, “The Challenges and Opportunities of Security Sector Reform in Post-Conflict Liberia,” 21–22.

⁶⁹ United Nations Security Council, “Resolution 1509.”

⁷⁰ Interview, Police Commissioner, UNMIL, Monrovia, April 29, 2009.

A former government delegate believed that such a solution could have become a problem in the long run following the elections, but might have served to accelerate the process in the short-term.⁷¹ How extensive the mandate should be, is a difficult issue to tackle, but something that needs to be considered carefully as it can come to greatly influence the success of the police reform.

The great emphasis on the army and the police to the detriment of the many other security agencies, is something that has been criticized.⁷² Whereas the ATU and the SOD have been demobilized, the reform regarding many of the other security agencies has been slow.⁷³ The overlapping functions of these agencies and the fact that the government lacks the funds to uphold these, was one of the problems identified in the RAND report, which had been entasked with evaluating the Security Sector Reform in Liberia.⁷⁴ The fact that the CPA did not specify who was to be responsible for the restructuring of these other security agencies, has been identified as one reason to the delay.⁷⁵

It has also been argued that the CPA largely has been seen from a technocratic viewpoint and failed to take into account security sector governance. Oversight of the security agencies is highlighted as an aspect that largely has been neglected, and without effective democratic civilian oversight there is a risk that the reformed security institutions once again become used against the population.⁷⁶ In the past, Taylor abused his power and created his own set of

⁷¹ Interview, former GOL delegate, Monrovia, April 28, 2009.

⁷² The security agencies include, for example, organizations such as the Bureau of Customs and Excise, the Bureau of Immigration and Naturalization, the National Security Agency, and the Special Security Services.

⁷³ Loden, “Civil Society and Security Sector Reform in Post-Conflict Liberia: Painting a Moving Train without Brushes,” 300., ICG, “Liberia: Uneven Progress in Security Sector Reform.”

⁷⁴ David C. Gompert et al., *Making Liberia Safe: Transformation of the National Security Sector* (Santa Monica: Rand Corporation, 2007). See also Malan, “Security Sector Reform in Liberia: Mixed Results from Humble Beginnings.”

⁷⁵ ICG, “Liberia: Uneven Progress in Security Sector Reform.”

⁷⁶ Jaye, “Parliamentary Oversight and Lessons Learned from Internationalized Security Sector Reform.”, Ebo, “The Challenges and Opportunities of Security Sector Reform in Post-Conflict Liberia.”

security agencies. Responsible leadership in combination with sufficient civilian oversight of the security sector is thus critical in this context. So far, the Government of Liberia, under the leadership of Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf, has produced important documents such as the Poverty Reduction Strategy (PRS), which is to guide the reconstruction process. The strategy includes four pillars where the area of peace and security is identified as the first, and the substance regarding this is further outlined in the National Security Strategy of the Republic of Liberia (NSSRL).⁷⁷

Finally, it deserves to be pointed out that there is a need to take into account the informal structures in society. Utas (2008) highlights the importance of considering the different informal networks in Liberia, as these networks can involve potential security risks. The various elites – businessmen, former warlords and politicians – that are in control of these networks, may use the same networks to further their various aims. For example, networks used to exploit diamonds or timber can easily be used for military purposes if it serves their interests.⁷⁸ Thus, it is important for all actors, including UNMIL and others, to be aware of these types of informal local networks when reforming the security sector.

⁷⁷ Republic of Liberia, "Poverty Reduction Strategy," <http://www.imf.org/external/pubs/ft/scr/2008/cr08219.pdf>.

⁷⁸ Mats Utas, "Liberia Beyond the Blueprints: Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers, Big Men and Informal Networks," in *Lecture Series on African Security* (The Swedish Defence Agency & The Nordic Africa Institute, 2008).

5. Lessons Learned

This section presents lessons learned, based on an evaluation of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement that was signed in Accra in 2003. It can be valuable to learn from previous negotiation experiences and in this way enhance our capacity for dealing with future negotiation processes. At the same time, it is important to keep in mind that every situation is unique and that there is always a need to take into account the local context. Thus, the lessons learned here should primarily be seen as set of key issues that can be important to consider in future negotiations.

5.1 Process

- *Consider including a wide range of stakeholders in the peace talks*

One important feature of the peace process was that a wide range of actors participated in the peace negotiations in Accra. Many delegates to the talks emphasized the important role played by the civil society actors and political parties. Not only did these actors engage in discussions in the plenary sessions, they also talked to the warring parties directly. By their engagement throughout the process, the actors were able to secure positions both in the national assembly and in the government. Another important aspect is that although most of the ministerial positions were awarded to the warring factions, civil society actors and political party representatives sought to prevent the warring parties from being given the presidency. Indeed, one important outcome of the peace negotiations was that it was decided that the new chairman that was to lead the transitional government should come from the political parties or the civil society. This was unlikely to have happened if only the warring parties had been present at the negotiations. Thus, non-combatants appear to have influenced at least some as-

pects of the negotiations, although their influence on others aspects is likely to have been more limited. However, not everyone was content with involving so many different actors in the peace talks. Some of the warring-party delegates expressed concern that there were too many actors present at the peace negotiations and viewed civil society actors as an unnecessary distraction. Moreover, they suggested that the rules for inclusion in the peace talks should have been made in advance, as more actors had arrived in Accra and insisted on being included in the negotiations.⁷⁹ One should note, however, that ECOWAS is said to have approached Taylor concerning the selection of civil society participants, which meant that Taylor could influence which actors received an invitation. Therefore, those who were publicly opposed to Taylor did not end up getting an invitation, which of course can be seen as problematic.⁸⁰ Thus, while there is room for improvements regarding the process by which actors were included, in general, most of the delegates seemed to agree that it was important that the peace accord was comprehensive in character.⁸¹ In sum, the Liberian experience suggests that it was beneficial for the peace process to involve political parties, civil society actors and other interest groups in the peace negotiations.

5.2 Provisions

- *Consider the delicate dilemma of detail versus flexibility in the agreement*

The amount of detail that should go into a peace agreement versus how much flexibility the agreement should allow for, is usually a difficult dilemma. For Liberia it might, on the one hand, have been preferable to give more detail concerning certain provisions in the CPA so as to possibly avoid later disagreements, for example as

⁷⁹ Interviews, former delegates at the peace talks, Monrovia, April and May, 2009.

⁸⁰ Hayner, "Negotiating Peace in Liberia: Preserving the Possibility for Justice."

⁸¹ Interviews, former delegates at the peace talks, Monrovia, April and May, 2009.

happened with regard to the restructuring of the army. On the other hand, it was perhaps good that the CPA did allow for a certain degree of flexibility, thus leaving room for more compromise in the implementation phase. Due to the situation on the ground in Liberia, there was a sense of urgency to the negotiations, and a more detailed agreement is likely to have required the negotiations to continue for some time in order to be able to negotiate the specifics. Thus, at the time, an agreement with a high degree of flexibility may have been the only realistic option. But even if the negotiations could have continued, possibly resulting in a more detailed peace accord, it is difficult to say if such an agreement would have been preferable; a more detailed document could have resulted in other problems and be perceived as too rigid concerning certain aspects. However, at the very least, there should have been a greater clarity in the formulation of some of the provisions concerning the security sector.

- *Provide for a sufficiently long transitional period*

In post-conflict situations where it is decided to have some kind of transitional period, it becomes important to provide for a sufficiently long transitional period. How long the transitional period should be in Liberia, was debated during the peace negotiations. While some of the political parties preferred to have elections fairly soon and therefore opted for a transitional period of only one year, the representatives from the international community saw this as unrealistic, and it was decided that there should be a transitional period of two years.⁸² According to Reilly (2003), it has become frequent practice for UN peacekeeping operations to hold elections about two years into the mission, once there is some degree of stability and basic infrastructure in place.⁸³ In the Liberian case, the warring parties became very influential in the transitional govern-

⁸² Interview, former GOL delegate, April 28, 2009.

⁸³ Ben Reilly, "Democratic Validation," in *Contemporary Peace Making: Conflict, Violence, and Peace Processes*, ed. John Darby and Roger Mac Ginty (Basingstoke: Macmillan Press Ltd., 2003), 175.

ment, and thereby had the opportunity to enrich themselves during this period. Therefore, it was probably a good decision to hold elections within a two-year period. If an even shorter time period had been considered, it is likely that less progress could have been made concerning other issues. This could have negatively affected the environment in which the elections were to take place. With regards to sequencing, it was probably a good thing to have enough time to be able to complete the disarmament and demobilization before the elections were to be held. It is difficult to say what an appropriate time frame is for a transitional period, as this most certainly depends on local conditions and what other tasks need to be completed before this period is over.

- *Establish a peacekeeping force that can assist in securing peace*

The fact that a Chapter VII peacekeeping force was deployed in Liberia has been instrumental for the peace process. It is difficult to see how any progress concerning the security sector could have been made if the UN peacekeeping force would not have been there to ensure peace and stability. While this may seem obvious, it is important to recognize that in most post-conflict situations it is necessary to have some kind of stabilization force in the implementation phase. Mr. David Lelliott, former United Kingdom Political Officer in Liberia, stressed that UNMIL through their presence could demonstrate that they were there to guarantee peoples' security, and thus function as an important provider of confidence. Moreover, according to Mr. Lelliott, the peacekeeping forces did not only successfully manage violence that erupted on some occasions, but UNMIL's presence also served as a deterrent to violence as the warring parties in Liberia were in no position to take on the UN by themselves.⁸⁴ Thus, the presence of UNMIL was in several respects vital to the peace process. While the DDR process and the reform of the army and the police have not been without com-

⁸⁴ Phone interview, Mr. David Lelliott, former United Kingdom Political Officer in Liberia, September 11, 2009.

plications, and much work remains to be done, the achievements made so far would not have been possible without peacekeeping forces on the ground. Thus, when mediators are seeking to design a peace agreement it is pivotal that this, when appropriate, is accompanied by commitment from regional or international actors in order to provide the necessary resources to guarantee security in the fragile period after the signing of the peace accord.

- *Apply a long-term perspective, especially concerning the security sector*

One aspect that has been highlighted is the need for long-term solutions, especially concerning the security sector. In Liberia, however, a private security company was given the responsibility for restructuring the army and it has been suggested that this may not be optimal since the force will need both mentoring and support over a long-term period, which a private operator is not likely to commit to. Moreover, several observers have also noted the lack of a comprehensive approach to security sector reform, particularly in the area of oversight and governance, and for a very long time Liberia was lacking a national security policy.⁸⁵

5.3 Implementation

- *Involve local stakeholders at an early stage of the process*

Another issue that has been emphasized is the need for creating local ownership in the reform of the security forces. According to Jaye (2009), the inclusion of civil society actors in the NTLA came to have little direct impact on security sector reform in the beginning of the implementation phase.⁸⁶ While there has been

⁸⁵ Ebo, "The Challenges and Opportunities of Security Sector Reform in Post-Conflict Liberia," McGovern, "Liberia: The Risk of Rebuilding a Shadow State," ICG, "Liberia: Uneven Progress in Security Sector Reform."

⁸⁶ Jaye, "Parliamentary Oversight and Lessons Learned from Internationalized Security Sector Reform."

some improvement over time regarding the local ownership in the security sector reform, several observers have stressed the importance of involving local stakeholders and contend that these actors should have become involved at an even earlier stage of the process.⁸⁷ Since the Liberians, prior to and during the war, have come to completely lose confidence in the security sector it is valuable to build local ownership.⁸⁸ For example, to involve local actors in the vetting of the security forces is one way of benefiting from local knowledge while at the same time enhancing the legitimacy of the process. This does not necessarily have to be regulated in the peace accord, but it is important that concerned actors seek to involve other stakeholders in this process from the very beginning.

- *Seek to avoid a gap between disarmament and demobilization, and the reintegration of ex-combatants*

The Liberian peace process and its aftermath illustrate the need to have a comprehensive approach that avoids creating a gap between disarmament and demobilization, and the reintegration of ex-combatants. The weak screening process and the wide criteria used in identifying ex-combatants resulted in many more ex-combatants than expected registering for the program. The inflated numbers of ex-combatants meant that almost all funding was used for the disarmament and demobilization phase, leaving very little for the reintegration of the ex-combatants. This created unnecessary security risks as many ex-combatants had to wait for months or years, before eventually entering the reintegration program. According to McGovern (2008), one of the key problems with the DDR process in Liberia is the gap between disarmament and reintegration, which resulted in many ex-combatants being left 'aimless, unem-

⁸⁷ Loden, "Civil Society and Security Sector Reform in Post-Conflict Liberia: Painting a Moving Train without Brushes."

⁸⁸ Thomas Jaye, "An Assessment Report on Security Sector Reform in Liberia," (Governance Reform Commission (GRC) of Liberia, 2006), Mats Utas, "Malignant Organisms: Continuities of State-Run Violence in Rural Liberia," in *Crisis of the State: War and Social Upheaval*, ed. Bruce Kapferer and Bjørn Enge Bertelsen (Berghahn Books, 2009).

ployed and angry.' Thus, the Liberian case shows that as long as this type of DDR program tends to be used, it is important to apply a long-term perspective that takes into account the reintegration of the ex-combatants.⁸⁹

- *Create mechanisms to deal with disagreements about the interpretation of the agreement*

An important lesson learned is to have established mechanisms for dealing with issues that may arise in the implementation phase, for example, disagreements regarding the interpretation of the peace agreement. Delegates at the peace talks, as well as people with insight into the implementation process, have highlighted the critical role the ECOWAS team came to play in the implementation phase. Regular meetings were held in Monrovia with the International Contact Group on Liberia where the ECOWAS team assisted in how to carry on with the implementation of the CPA. In addition to these scheduled meetings, the ECOWAS team was also called in on some occasions when problems surfaced. No matter how much detail that has gone into a peace accord, there will always be matters that are unclear and where the primary parties will need guidance on how to resolve these. For this reason, it is instrumental that some type of mechanism exists for how to deal with difficult issues that may arise in the implementation phase. In Liberia, the ECOWAS team had an important role to play in this regard.⁹⁰ It is also likely to have made a difference that it was ECOWAS who was involved since they, and in particular Nigeria, can be seen as an important player in the region. Nigeria has previously been involved in the Liberian conflict, and the Chief Mediator was a former Nigerian President, which can have contributed in pressuring the parties into following the advice of ECOWAS. Related to this, it was probably important that the mediator could

⁸⁹ Other proposed alternatives have been to delink reintegration from disarmament and demobilization, and instead opt for broader employment programs that are not exclusive to ex-combatants. Jennings, "The Struggle to Satisfy: DDR through the Eyes of Ex-Combatants in Liberia."

⁹⁰ Phone interviews, representatives from the international community, September 2009.

continue to facilitate the process also in the implementation phase. Mediator Abubakar visited Liberia on several occasions in the implementation phase. The parties respected him and Abubakar had successfully built trust with the parties throughout the peace negotiations. Thus, in the Liberian case it proved important that ECOWAS and the mediator continued to be involved also in the period following the signing of the agreement.

6. Challenges Today: Outlook for Tomorrow

There is no doubt that Liberia has seen significant advances in the transition from civil war to durable peace. The CPA was indeed a 'good' agreement in that it provided a foundation for many needed changes and helped set the peace process in motion. Meanwhile, there are only so many things that an agreement can accomplish and the CPA was not without its flaws. But most of the stipulations in the peace accord have been implemented and many problems that have arisen throughout this process have been managed in one way or the other.

Liberia has come a long way, but, at the same time, there is also reason for concern. Like many other post-conflict countries Liberia has seen an increase in criminal violence, for example, the rise in the number of armed robberies being carried out.⁹¹ It is thus worrisome that not more progress has been made concerning the police force. Moreover, the new army is still not fully operational and it will take some time before we can see whether it is capable of fulfilling its tasks. According to the special report of the Secretary General, the key security forces are not yet ready to act independently.⁹²

⁹¹ United Nations Security Council, "Special Report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Mission in Liberia."

⁹² Ibid.

The elections to be held in 2011 can be seen as a litmus test of the stability of peace in Liberia. It has been decided that UNMIL will stay over the course of the elections, but at some point the peace-keeping troops will be pulled back and by then Liberia needs to be ready. As one of the parties to the peace negotiations said about the CPA: "We say in Liberia, all is well that ends well".⁹³ Much progress has been made in Liberia, but it remains to be seen whether peace will prevail.

⁹³ Interview, former delegate at the peace talks, April 28, 2009.

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