

Liberia

Rice

In the 1919-1945 period, Liberia has been classified in several sources as a single-party state under the control of the True Whig Party (TWP), a party run by the so-called Americo-Liberians (or, Liberians who were descendants of the original American emigrants who founded the country). Though the TWP differs from other ruling single-parties in that it “does not pretend to formulate or represent an expression of national consensus on an issue...and it has not attempted to run all the nation’s diverse interest groups”, the TWP was the sole party that had a presence in Liberian politics, and was “a ‘cadre’ party” which controlled all patronage (Lowenkopf 1976, 124). The President was seen to be the “standard-bearer” of the TWP (Lowenkopf 1976, 124). For these reasons, Liberia’s leaders are coded based on the single-party state criterion.

In 1919 the President of Liberia was Daniel Howard, who had been in office since 1912. In 1920, Charles Dunbar King, also of the TWP, was elected President (no SOLS change). In 1930, following a scandal in which King was implicated in selling indigenous contract labor as slaves, King resigned from the Presidency. He was replaced in office by his Foreign Minister (his Vice President was also implicated in the scandal and forced to resign), Edwin Barclay (no SOLS change). Barclay was ‘elected’ in his own right in 1931, and served as President until 1944, when he retired and was replaced by William Tubman. Geddes classifies Tubman’s regime as being a single-party/personalist hybrid, therefore I code the transition between Barclay and Tubman as a minor SOLS change.

Tubman was in power until his death in 1971. He was then replaced by his Vice President (and also a member of the TWP), William Tolbert (no SOLS change). Tolbert was in power until he was overthrown in a coup in 1980. The coup was led by indigenous military leader Master Sergeant Samuel Doe, who executed many members of the old government and created the People’s Redemption Council to govern the country (SOLS change). Geddes classifies Doe’s government as also being personalist.

In 1989, a band of rebels led by Charles Taylor (Doe’s former procurement chief) invaded Liberia from the Cote d’Ivoire. The rebels became popular among the civilian population, and reached the outskirts of the capital quickly. The situation quickly deteriorated into civil war. Doe was killed by a breakaway rebel group on September 9, 1990. GWF code the year 1990-1997 as warlord. Correspondingly, worldstatesmen lists four individuals who each claimed to represent the new government of Liberia. In 1991, a provisional government was formed in Gambia under Dr. Amos C. Sawyer. As Sawyer was in power for longer than an 18-month period, his time in office (when he technically represented the Liberian People’s Party, or LPP) is coded as a SOLS change. Taylor and the other rebel groups refused to work with the interim government, and the fighting continued. As the peace process reached an agreement, the Liberian governmental structure was changed to make the Chairman of the Council of State, not the President, the head of government. In 1994, therefore, Sawyer stepped down and a five-man transitional government (with a representative from each of the warring factions) took over. The first Chairman of this government was David Kpormakor (no SOLS change, Kpormakor was non-partisan), who took office in 1994. Kpormakor was replaced by Wilton Sankawulo in September 1995 (no SOLS change). In September 1996, Sankawulo was replaced by Ruth Sando Perry. The peace negotiations were concluded under Perry, and elections were held in

August 1997. None of these are SOLS changes since this period is coded as warlordism. We also do not code them as interim.

Elections resulted in Charles Taylor, the rebel leader, being elected President. Taylor was a member of the National Patriotic Party (NPP) (SOLS change). Taylor's government is classified as personalist by Geddes. His government did little to better conditions in Liberia, and armed conflict again began to break out across the country by 2003. At the same time, Taylor was indicted for atrocities committed in Sierra Leone since 1996. A ceasefire agreement between the warring factions was ignored by all sides and the situation quickly became a humanitarian crisis. In August 2003, under international pressure, Taylor resigned and went into exile. He was initially replaced by his Vice President, Moses Zeh Blah (no SOLS change). The Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) stepped in during October 2003 and created a two-year transitional government under businessman Charles Gyude Bryant, a member of the Liberian Action Party (LAP) (SOLS change). Bryant guided the country (which was heavily occupied by UN Security Forces) to free, fair, and peaceful elections held in October 2005. The winner of these elections, Elena Johnson-Sirleaf, was a member of the Unity Party (UP, SOLS change).

Johnson-Sirleaf remains in power in the present day. The political situation in Liberia has remained stable, peaceful and democratic since her election.

Sources

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