

## **Liberia**

### **Vanderbilt**

Liberia is considered authoritarian from 1920 through 1945. We lack Geddes authoritarian regime type coding for Liberia during this period, but according to the US Dept of State: “the country was a one-party state ruled by the True Whig Party (TWP)” continuously for over 100 years. The first member of TWP to serve as president in 1870 was Edward Roye. Geddes’ coding rules explain that a country could be considered a pure single-party regime (not personalist) if the party existed prior to the leader’s accession. This is the case for each of the leaders in our data.

According to Ellis (1995, 175) the TWP “built up a formidable patronage machine.” Moreover, opposition to the TWP was “unorganized” (Ellis 1911, 220) and could not compete in national elections. The president appointed all government officials “from cabinet ministers down to constables,” yet many remained in office under numerous presidents (Ellis 1911, 216). The National True Whig Convention nominated each new president to compete in the national elections (Ellis 1911, 220). These nominations were “actually made by the ruling elite long before the conventions took place” (Levy 2009, 33). Liberian civil servants “had ‘contributions to the party’ deducted from their salaries” (Levy 2009, 33). The TWP “always had a majority” in the upper and lower houses and “the president was always a member of the party” (Levy 2009, 33). Prior to becoming president, Howard, President in 1919, served as the chairman of the National True Whig Party (Ellis 1911, 222). His successors, Charles King and Edwin Barclay, were not relatives and were chosen by the party, not Howard. According to Geddes, if 1) the leaders were all members of the TWP and could not rule without the party support; 2) there were routine elections, though the TWP always won; 3) the party existed prior to the leaders’ accession; and 4) civil servants were forced to contribute to the party; then the party should be considered a single-party, not a personalist, regime. Accordingly, from 1920 until 1944 we code Liberia as a single-party regime. There are no SOLS changes during this period. In 1944 William Tubman, TWP, became president and served until 1971. With the start of his rule in 1944, the country is considered a single-party-personalist-hybrid regime since he “personalized authority more than any of his predecessors, making the presidency ‘the ultimate source of individual livelihood . . . All incomes were perceived to be derived from President Tubman’” (Ellis 1995, 175). We code a minor SOLS change in 1944 since Liberia transformed from a single-party to a single-party-personalist system.

From 1945 until 2006, Liberia is coded as an autocracy and thereafter as a democracy. From 1945 until 1980 Liberia is coded as a continuous single-party-personalist-hybrid regime. In 1971, William Vacanarat Shadrach Tubman was succeeded by his vice-president William Richard Tolbert, Jr. (Outram 1999, 164) of the same True Whig Party (TWP). This is not a SOLS change since Tolbert is Tubman’s pre-designated successor. During the period that the TWP was in charge, power was monopolized in the hands of the Americo-Liberian elite and native Liberians were largely excluded from political power (U.S. Department of State).

In 1980 there is a military coup and Master Sergeant Samuel Kanyon Doe assumes power, executing the former president William Tolbert, Jr. (Peterson 1996, 149) as well as other members of the Americo-Liberian elite. Doe’s regime from 1980 until 1990 is characterized as purely personalist. In 1984 Doe’s SOLS changes from “Mil” to National Democratic Party of Liberia (NDP) which was a party “composed of ethnic groups and individuals who were dependent on him, such as his own ethnic group [the Krahn] and the Mandingo people” (Global

Security). Generally, during his presidency, Doe promotes members of his ethnic group to high political and military offices which creates ethnic tensions in the country. Ethnic tensions, corruption, and human rights violation lead to his fall in 1989.

In 1989 Charles Taylor headed an opposition that invades the country, commencing a violent civil war. During the first year of the war the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) set up an Interim Government of National Unity (IGNU). Taylor did not recognize its legitimacy. In 1990 Taylor's troops capture Doe and murder him on videotape. Shortly after, ECOWAS installed Amos Claudius Sawyer of the Liberian People's Party (LPP) in power, "a respected academic and longtime opponent of Doe," as interim president (Peterson 1996, 150). The leader transition to Sawyer is difficult to code because, on the one hand, Sawyer truly is an interim leader who is in charge of maintaining the everyday function of the government during the civil war and likely does not have the opportunity for redefining policy. On the other hand, his time in office lasted longer than 18 months and thus exceeds the maximum time in office to be considered an interim leader according to our codebook.<sup>1</sup> Strictly following the coding notes the transition to Sawyer is coded as a SOLS change. Doe's personalist regime clearly ended with Sawyer and Sawyer was not a pre-designated successor, rather an opponent, of Doe's. During Sawyer's time in office the fighting continued. The country was splintered among ethnic and political lines. The many peace accords signed during this period had no effect. Because Taylor refused to cooperate with Sawyer and stick to civil war accords, in 1994 Sawyer "stepped down and a new government was formed" called the Liberia National Transition Government (LNTG), made up of representatives from the many fighting factions (Peterson 1996, 151). Sawyer was only leader throughout the period of 1991 to 1993.

GWF code Liberia from 1991 to 1997 as warlord/foreign occupation. Thus, we do not code SOLS changes with any leadership changes and we code none of the "interim" leaders as formally interim. David Donald Kpormakor, Non-Party, served as the first Chairman of the Council of State, a five-man transitional government, taking over from Sawyer in 1994. This is not a SOLS change. In 1995 another agreement was reached and a new government was formed, LNTG II. In 1995, Wilton G.S. Sankawulo, Non-Party, succeeds Kpormakor as head of the transitional government. This is not a SOLS change. For that six-year period, the country was in continuous civil war. In 1996 the Abuja-II peace agreement was signed, with elections to be held the following year. Shortly thereafter, Ruth Sando Perry of the National Democratic Party of Liberia (NDP), succeeds Sankawulo. This is not a SOLS change since we consider this change to have occurred under the period of warlordism. Soon after her succession, she changes leaves the NDP and becomes independent. This is not a SOLS change.

In the July 1997 elections, Taylor of the National Patriotic Party (NPP) won the presidency in a process that was declared to be free and fair by most international observers (Outram 1999, 169) but is coded as non-democratic in our data. This is a SOLS change as 1997 marks the beginning of a personalist authoritarian regime headed by Charles Taylor and lasting until 2003.

In 2003 the Special Court for Sierra Leone indicted Taylor for war crimes and he was forced into exile in Nigeria. His "vice-president and ally" Moses Zeh Blah, also of the NPP, temporarily took power (Southhall and Melber 2006, 316). This is not a leadership change because Zeh Blah was Taylor's pre-designated successor. Later in 2003, Charles Gyude Bryant

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<sup>1</sup> According to Lentz (1994: 517) "The fighting continued and rebels led by Charles Taylor controlled most of the country outside the capital".

of the Liberian Action Party (LAP) becomes president of the National Transitional Government of Liberia (NTGL) with elections to be held two years hence (Harris 2006, 378). This is a SOLS change. Geddes (1999) does not code a particular type of regime to be in place during Bryant's presidency, but Bryant rules as Chairman of the NTGL until 2006, which by our coding rules does not constitute an interim government (>18 months). In 2005, Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf of the United Party (UP) wins the elections and the country becomes a presidential democracy. This is a SOLS change. Johnson-Sirleaf rules through 2008.

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