

**THE FALLEN WHIG: THE DURIBILITY OF DOMINANT PARTY RULE IN
LIBERIA**

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[YAKASAH OTIS WEHYEE]

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DAVID SAMUELS

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Never in a thousand years did I think that I would arrive at this point in my life. When I made the decision to leave a decent job at the YMCA to pursue my Ph.D. I knew it was going to be challenging, but I could never anticipate just how challenging it would have been. After seven full years and a failed marriage, I am so excited to submit this damn thing and tell all my friends to address me by my new fancy title, Dr. Yakasah (it certainly has ring to it)! Of course, none of this would have been possible without the guidance of my patient, and sometimes not so patient advisor David Samuels. David, thank you for your wise counsel, and your diligence and thoughtfulness in reading every word of the countless drafts of this project and for always asking the tough questions. To my committee members, Teri Caraway, Josef Woldense, and Mark Bell, thank you for all your individual feedback which helped me develop the present project to be both grounded and cross cutting.

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Dedication

I dedicate this work to my father, Captain Wilmot Dahn Doegolia, former president of the Bo and Quilla District of Nimba County Liberia (1982-1990). Thank you for instilling in me the self-confidence to stand amongst giants and the bravery to charter new paths. To my mother, Mary Pilla Wehyee, for giving me the gift of life and a name that encapsulates your greatest hopes and dreams for me. To my mom (aunt) Vicky Wehyee for bringing me to the U.S. as a child and raising me to be as tough as the North Minneapolis neighborhood in which I grew. To my adopted dad Randall Tye and my mother Crystal Tye for giving me the tender love and protection that I needed to discover my interests and realize my potential. To my brothers and sisters who were denied the opportunity to pursue their own goals, who since young, have carried me on their backs (both literally and metaphorically), never failing to remind me of my purpose. To my old Wild Catz (WC) crew, thank you for helping make my childhood worth remembering. To the hundreds of thousands of Liberians, including my own relatives, whose lives were lost or destroyed by the Liberian Civil war, may this work contribute to our collective understanding of why that tragedy occurred to never be repeated. And to my son Esra, thank you for giving me the motivation to see this project through. I look forward to celebrating all of your great future accomplishments.

Abstract

How did a dominant party regime run by manumitted slaves from the USA emerge in Liberia at the height of the 19th century “Scramble for Africa,” nearly 40 years before the Bolshevik Revolution established a supposed template for durable one-party systems? What tools did the members of Liberia’s ruling True Whig Party use to create the world’s longest-lived dominant party regime? Although scholars of authoritarianism have long sought to explain the durability of dominant party regimes such as the Soviet Union and the People’s Republic of China, Liberia’s TWP has eluded all previous efforts. My research contributes to this literature by positing a novel explanation for Liberia’s dominant party regime’s durability. Using Gershewski’s *Three Pillars of Authoritarianism* (legitimation, co-optation, and repression), I argue that the 19th century colonial environment created conditions that pressured Liberia’s various settler factions to construct a dominant party regime, the TWP, to avoid state death. Once created, the regime survived by leveraging legitimation, co-optation, and repression to secure elite and mass level cooperation as well as international acceptance. Rather than centering my analysis on a single element of the three pillars of authoritarian stability as has been the convention in the literature, my research offers the first glimpse of a dominant party’s strategic application of all three pillars, thereby enriching our understanding of how these regimes work.

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List of Abbreviations

ACS.....	American Colonization Society
CCP.....	Chinese Communist Party
CPSU.....	Communist Party of the Soviet Union
D.C.....	District Commissioner
Frelimo.....	Mozambique's Front for the Liberation of Mozambique
GDR	German Democratic Republic
MPRP.....	Mongolian People's Revolutionary Party
PAP.....	People Action Party
PCC.....	Communist Party of Cuba
PRI.....	Partido Revolucionario Institucional
RP.....	Republican Party
TBMP.....	True Black Man's Party
TWP.....	True Whig Party
WP.....	Whig Party

Chapter 1. What We Know About Dominant Party Regimes

Why do political regimes rise and fall? What allows some autocracies to endure over several decades while others quickly collapse into instability and violence? Political scientists have long been concerned with these questions because they are essential to understanding the conditions under which people live. Considering that in autocracies means other than free and fair elections determine who holds power in decision-making bodies such as the national legislature and executive branch, a preponderance of autocracies equates to a less free and fair world. Yet not all autocracies are alike. In light of this fact scholars have asked whether different types of autocratic regimes are more or less stable. To gauge this question the literature has produced several typologies.¹

The most influential regime typology of the last decade has undoubtedly been Geddes et al.'s² classification. In their seminal article Geddes and her co-authors identify several regime types, including dominant-parties, military, and personalist regimes. Since the end of the Cold War, dominant party regimes have become the world's predominant form of non-democratic government, representing over 60 percent

¹ Barbara Geddes, Joseph Wright, and Erica Frantz, "Autocratic Breakdown and Regime Transitions: A New Data Set," *Perspectives on Politics*, (2014); Matthijs Bogaards, "Counting Parties and Identifying Dominant Party Systems in Africa," *European Journal of Political Research*, (2004); Michael Miller, "The Autocratic Ruling Parties Dataset: Origins, Durability, and Death," *Journal of Conflict Resolution* (2020); Ruth Collier, *Regimes in Tropical Africa: Changing Forms of Supremacy, 1945-1975*, (University of California Press, 1982); Steffen Kailitz, "Classifying Political Regimes Revisited: Legitimation and Durability," *Democratization: Unpacking Autocracies: Explaining Similarity and Difference*, (2013).

² *Ibdi*.

of all autocratic regimes.³ Singapore's People Action Party (PAP) and the Communist Party of Cuba (PCC) are two current examples of dominant party regimes. Sub-Saharan Africa houses the largest concentration – accounting for 24.7% of the world's dominant party regimes.

Dominant-party systems are characterized by a ruling party that elites use to exercise control over political life. Although the centralized party is the most prominent manifestation of the regime, elites also use other formal and informal institutions such as the legislature, elections, and patronage networks to remain in power. While opposition parties may exist, elections are often rigged, relegating them to a façade.⁴ In terms of stability and durability, scholars tend to agree that on average, dominant-party systems, especially those with revolutionary roots, last longer than most other autocracies. This consensus has drawn scholars to focus on dominant parties that emerge from revolutions to explain dominant party durability. Kailitz and Stockemer found that among all autocracies surveyed from 1946 to 2009, an autocratic regime's average duration was 13.7 years. Monarchies and dominant party regimes lasted on average 21.6 and 20.3 years, military regimes 8.4 years; and personalist regimes 12.4 years.⁵

Dominant party regimes may be among the most enduring regime types, but many do end up collapsing. Their disintegration is typically attributed to several factors.

³ Beatriz Magaloni, "Credible Power-Sharing and the Longevity of Authoritarian Rule." *Comparative Political Studies*, (2008).

⁴ Beatriz Magaloni, *Voting for Autocracy: Hegemonic Party Survival and Its Demise in Mexico*, (Cambridge University Press, 2006); Steven Levitsky and Lucan Way, "The Rise of Competitive Authoritarianism," *Journal of Democracy*, (2002).

⁵ Steffen Kailitz and Daniel Stockemer, "Regime Legitimation, Elite Cohesion and the Durability of Autocratic Regime Types," *International Political Science Review*, (2017).

Among these are the failure to co-opt key societal groups, economic crisis, or the lack of an external patron.⁶ Although scholars emphasize these mechanisms to varying degrees, in reality they are inextricably connected. For instance, resource scarcity induces regime insecurity by limiting a dictator's capital, which in turn restricts the regime's ability to satiate coalition members and societal groups. This leaves the regime vulnerable to internal fragmentation as well as threats from within society. Such vulnerability can embolden opposition groups to usurp power against an obviously weak ruling party. Some coalition elites might align with the opposition in anticipation of the regime's inevitable doom to secure a better payout.

Autocracies that are endowed with vast natural resources can typically withstand economic setbacks and international pressures better than those that are resource scarce. In moments of fiscal stress for example, resource-rich autocracies can tap into their natural reserves to help the regime weather the shock. Dominant parties with revolutionary origins can also endure well in the face of economic crisis and global pressures by drawing on a strong legitimization ideology.

Although these insights have expanded our knowledge of why some dominant parties are more susceptible to collapse than others, they suffer from a critical deficiency. A common assumption found in the literature is the belief that autocratic parties and the countries they rule possess the material capabilities to mobilize their

⁶ Geddes, et. al, 2014; Herschel Grossman, "Kleptocracy and Revolutions," *Oxford Economic Papers*, (1999); Ellen Lust, "Divided They Rule: The Management and Manipulation of Political Opposition," *Comparative Politics*, (2004); Steven Levitsky and Lucan Way, *Competitive Authoritarianism: Hybrid Regimes after the Cold War*, (Cambridge University Press, 2010); Stephan Haggard and Robert Kaufman, "Inequality and Regime Change: Democratic Transitions and the Stability of Democratic Rule." *American Political Science Review*, (2012).

masses or legitimate themselves through sound governance. This assumption must be reconsidered given that the longest-lived dominant party regime lacked an organized military and did not possess the infrastructure to reap the benefits of its natural resources for much of its history. Thus, the present work is motivated by the question, how might a weak, resource-poor dominant party regime maintain power? More specifically, how did Liberia's dominant party, the True Whig Party (TWP), survive for over a century through the inauspicious colonial period of great power politics?

Given their predominance in the global arena and their longevity, it is natural that political scientists have taken a great interest in trying to better understand dominant party regimes. Yet with all the interest in accounting for the world's long-lasting dominant parties, political scientists have remained conspicuously silent on the most durable party of all; Liberia's TWP, which governed uninterrupted from 1878-1980, a period of 102 years. In her seminal book, *Voting for Autocracy* for instance, Magaloni⁷ gives merely a passing nod to Liberia as the longest-lived hegemonic party regime. In her *BJPS* article on the strength of authoritarian ruling parties, Meng⁸ also briefly notes that Liberia's TWP was the longest-lived party regime in history. However, both ignore the TWP in their empirical analyses of the world's longest lasting dominant parties. As a point of comparison, the second longest-lived dominant party regime, the Mongolian People's Revolutionary Party (MPRP), which ruled from 1924-2010, persisted for 86 years. What's even more remarkable is that the TWP, which was comprised principally

⁷ Beatriz Magaloni, *Voting for Autocracy: Hegemonic Party Survival and Its Demise in Mexico*, (New York, N.Y: Cambridge University Press, 2006).

⁸ Anne Meng, "Ruling Parties in Authoritarian Regimes: Rethinking Institutional Strength." *British Journal of Political Science*, (2021).

of decedents of freed and manumitted slaves from the U.S., emerged in Liberia at the height of the 19th Century “Scramble for Africa,” 30 years before the Bolshevik Revolution established a supposed template for durable one-party systems 1917.

One may argue that Liberia has been left out of previous works on dominant party regimes because it does not fit the definition of a dominant party. Yet there seems to be a consensus among experts that the TWP possesses the requisite characteristics of a dominant party. Indeed, many of the prominent scholars of dominant party regimes recognize Liberia’s TWP as such.⁹ After winning the presidential election of 1878, the party’s candidate won every subsequent election by huge margins until the 1980 military coup. Like other dominant parties, the TWP controlled access to Liberia’s political advancement through a network of formal and informal channels.¹⁰ It utilized all available tools to thwart internal and external threats to its authority and used nominally democratic institutions such as the legislature, elections, and the party infrastructure to co-opt key societal groups and actors. Additionally, the party repressed its opposition and free media and regularly engaged in fraudulent electoral practices such as ballot-box stuffing.

Despite being the most successful dominant party regime in world history, existing works on the world’s dominant parties continue to overlook the Liberian case. Therefore, the present work attempts to fill a massive gap in the dominant party regimes literature by positing an original theory on the rise and durability of Liberia’s TWP.

⁹ Magaloni, 2006; Meng, 2019; Miller, 2020.

¹⁰ Gus Liebenow, *Liberia: The Evolution of Privilege*, (Cornell University Press, 1969).

1.1 The Three Pillars of Autocratic Stability

1.1.1 Legitimation

In the last two decades comparativists have taken greater interest in understanding the micro-foundations of regime durability. These works have expanded our knowledge of the precise mechanisms dictatorships use to sustain themselves. Three distinct mechanisms have been identified as essential for authoritarian survival. These include legitimation, co-optation, and repression.¹¹ Of all the instruments in a dictator's toolkit, legitimation has one of the longest histories. The study of legitimation goes as far back as the 1930s with Friedrich and Brzezinski's (1965) survey of totalitarian governments. Early studies involving totalitarian state's use of legitimation emphasized the government's use of terror and ideology to indoctrinate its citizenry. However, as non-democracies became less reliant upon terror to rule in the Post WWII period, Political scientists such as Linz, O'Donnell, and Lipset replaced totalitarianism with the concept of authoritarianism. The new concept de-emphasized the weaponization of ideology and mass terror.¹² Although some modern scholars such as Kailitz and Stockemer have attempted to revive the study of legitimation in comparative politics, few have taken up legitimation as a research project. Hence, legitimation remains rather understudied in comparative politics.

¹¹ Erica, Frantz, *Authoritarianism: What Everyone Needs to Know*, (New York, N.Y: Oxford University Press, 2018); Johannes. Gerschewski, "The Three Pillars of Stability: Legitimation, Repression, and Co-Optation in Autocratic Regimes." *Democratization* 20, no. 1 (2013): 13–38. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13510347.2013.738860>.

¹² Carl J Friedrich, *Totalitarian Dictatorship and Autocracy*, 2d ed., rev. By Carl J. Friedrich, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1965); Gerschewski, 2013.

I define legitimation as the process by which elites attempt to gain the support of those over whom they rule. Legitimacy is what determines which actors can rightfully exercise power and the conditions under which power is justifiably dispensed.¹³ As Lipset¹⁴ explains, legitimacy is the idea that members of a political community believe that the existing political institutions that govern their society are the most "appropriate or proper" for them. Dominant Party regime scholarship emphasizing legitimation as a source of regime durability have tended to focus their analysis on dominant party systems that form out of sustained ideological and violent anti-colonial or revolutionary struggles.¹⁵ The development of these revolutionary parties often entails transforming state structures and existing social orders.

The literature argues that revolutionary ruling parties instrumentalize what Gerschewski calls a "legitimacy-belief," which is a story that ruling elites propagate to justify their authority and right to exist.¹⁶ Elites legitimate their control by claiming they have either a God-given, natural, or historical right to rule. By accepting this belief elites bind their political destinies to other devotees because their individual preferences become indistinguishable from the group. This process produces an ideologically unified ruling elite who in turn are committed to sharing power among themselves.¹⁷ Because

¹³ Ibdj; Steffen Kailitz, 2013.

¹⁴ Seymour Martin Lipset, "Some Social Requisites of Democracy: Economic Development and Political Legitimacy," *The American Political Science Review* 53, no. 1 (1959): 69–105. <https://doi.org/10.2307/1951731>.

¹⁵ Huntington, 1968; Rachel Riedl, *Authoritarian Origins of Democratic Party Systems in Africa*, (Cambridge University Press, 2014); Steven Levitsky and Lucan Way, "The Durability of Revolutionary Regimes," *Journal of Democracy*, (2013).

¹⁶ Gerschewski, 2013.

¹⁷ Erica Frantz and Andrea Kendall-Taylor, "A Dictator's Toolkit," *Journal of Peace Research* (2014); Kailitz, Steffen and Daniel Stockemer, "Regime Legitimation, Elite Cohesion and the Durability of Autocratic Regime Types," *International Political Science Review*, (2017); Levitsky and Way, 2013.

the ruling party is perceived as the manifestation of the ruling elite's interests, to become a member of the ruling party is to bind one's political fate to the regime itself. To the extent that society buys into the ideology and the party enjoys public approval, the ruling elites remain safe to rule. On the other hand, when society no longer accepts the belief and the party faces broad public disapproval, elites become vulnerable to overthrow. The fall of the German Democratic Republic (GDR), for example, is often attributed to the discrepancy that grew between the regime's official ideological claims and the country's social reality.¹⁸

In countries where governments rely heavily on ideological propaganda, a prerequisite of becoming a member of the elite is to accept the system's legitimization belief. The ruling party expects citizens and party members to demonstrate a strong commitment to the party's legitimacy ideology to remain in the party's good grace.¹⁹ Citizens that fail to do this risk being punished through varied coercive tactics ranging from physical violence to the withholding of public resources. The Chinese Communist Party's (CCP) crackdown on peaceful pro-democratic protestors at Tiananmen Square in 1989 is a prominent example of this.²⁰ The consequences for elites that fail to accept the regime's ideology range from being demoted, jailed, disappeared, or barred from gainful patronage networks. These tactics were deployed in Stalin's consolidation of power in the USSR.²¹ In this way, elites, and the public alike face tremendous pressure to remain loyal to the party and its legitimacy ideology.

¹⁸ Gerschewski, 2013.

¹⁹ Gerschewski, 2013; Kailitz and Stockemer, 2017.

²⁰ Bruce Dickson, *The Dictator's Dilemma: The Chinese Communist Party's Strategy for Survival*, (Oxford University Press, 2016).

²¹ Milan Svolik, *The Politics of Authoritarian Rule*, (University Press, 2012).

Notwithstanding the preceding discussion, no consensus exists in the literature regarding whether average citizens actually believe the ideological propaganda of the ruling elites. While Gerschewski, Kailitz and Stockemer insist that legitimacy is defined by the active consent of the governed, implying that citizens believe and accept their governments right to rule, Wedeen's work on Syria's dominant party regime shows the opposite to be true. Her in-depth case study of Syria has revealed that most Syrians do not actually believe the regime's legitimization propaganda. Rather than internalizing the regime's legitimacy beliefs, Syrians "act as if" they believe the regime's propaganda publicly. Privately however, Syrians ridicule and even mock the leadership as incompetent and phony. Rather than legitimacy per se, Wedeen argues that the most important factor sustaining elite rule in Syria is "domination through compliance."²² Yet, despite, not resonating with the public, the Assad regime invests vast resources to construct and propagate a cult of personality punctuated by the image and narrative that the regime wishes for the public to believe. Although the data at my disposal does not allow me to confirm nor reject whether most Liberians – particularly the native tribes people – believed in the settler elite's legitimacy ideology, I do find strong evidence that the elites believed in their legitimacy ideology.

Whether targeted at elites, the masses, or both, legitimacy beliefs are an essential feature of every regime. However, scholars tend to accept that legitimacy beliefs are more critical in autocracies than democracies. This is because democracies, by definition, provide opportunities for a broad segment of a country's population to

²² Lisa Wedeen, *Ambiguities of Domination: Politics, Rhetoric, and Symbols in Contemporary Syria*, (University of Chicago Press, 2015).

influence decisions. Under these conditions policies that benefit a vast portion of society, what scholars refer to as non-exclusive or public goods, are thought to be more salient legitimation devices than legitimacy beliefs per se. Examples of public goods include free press, political associations, quality education, and good economic performance.²³ There is less incentive in dominant party systems to invest in non-exclusive public goods because a small fragment of society controls the government. Moreover, autocracies generally have greater inequality levels and higher degrees of oppression and corruption than democracies.²⁴ As such, legitimation beliefs help convince the public that the conditions under which they live are vastly better than before the regime's founding or what might be expected with the regimes collapse.

Nevertheless, legitimation can also manifest through performance outcomes. Implied in the concept of legitimacy is the conviction that those exercising power can deliver certain material benefits to society. The party's success is inextricably tied to its ability to deliver on its policy promises because citizens expect their lives to improve under it. Economic measures such as jobs and social indicators such as public order allow citizens to judge the ruling party's performance. To the extent that the party retains the citizens' approval, the ruling party faces no serious threat to its authority.²⁵ Still, scholars have long established a strong correlation between economic crisis and social upheavals, which can be detrimental to autocratic regime survival.

²³ Robert Deacon, "Public Good Provision Under Dictatorship and Democracy," *Public Choice*, (2009); Seymour Lipset, "Some Social Requisites of Democracy: Economic Development and Political Legitimacy," *The American Political Science Review*, (1959).

²⁴ Deacon, 2009; Eric Chang and Miriam A. Golden, "Sources of Corruption in Authoritarian Regimes," *Social Science Quarterly* 91, no. 1 (March 2010).

²⁵ Deacon, 2009; Gerschewski, 2013; Kailitz, 2013; Lipset, 1959.

Although legitimation arguments centered on revolutionary party regimes have dominated the dominant party regime literature, we have no reason to restrict the explanatory power of legitimation to revolutionary dominant parties. Non-revolutionary dominant parties also use legitimation to survive. In some cases, they are even more effective than those with revolutionary origins. Many of the same challenges and conditions found in revolutionary dominant party regimes also exist in non-revolutionary autocracies. Indeed, a key point I make is that legitimation efforts were crucial in helping Liberia's TWP survive despite their non-revolutionary nature.

By analyzing revolutionary party regimes almost exclusively, the literature has been selecting on the independent variable, which allows scholars to conclude that parties with a strong ideology succeed in setting up durable authoritarian regimes. This presents a potential problem for affirming the validity of the proposition that ideology is a key or even necessary ingredient for party regime durability. Given that ideology did play a central role in the TWP's stability despite its non-revolutionary origin, Liberia's dominant party can broaden our understanding of how legitimation efforts can generate regime durability.

1.1.2 Co-optation

Given some of the ambiguities regarding the effectiveness of legitimation, autocrats also invest considerable effort in co-opting political challengers. The literature's emphasis on co-optation is relatively recent, brought to the fore by institutionalist scholars such as Geddes and Gandhi, who emphasize the role

institutions play in sustaining autocracies.²⁶ The high cost of repression (which I consider below), and the alleged low level of legitimacy required to maintain a dictatorship motivates the neo-institutionalist turn to co-optation as the key to autocratic survival. Gerschewski provides a useful definition of co-optation, which he defines as "the capacity to tie strategically relevant actors (or groups) to the regime."²⁷ Autocrats attempt to co-opt actors to persuade them against obstructing the rulers exercise of power. Co-optation provides material benefits to societal groups to remain loyal to the regime.²⁸

Although they differ in fundamental ways, two assumptions underlie neo-institutionalist scholarship. The first is the insight that autocracies are constituted by uncertainty. Because the cost of not knowing the intentions or capabilities of adversaries is generally high in autocracies, actors face great pressures to decrease uncertainty. Second, autocrats are faced with the imperative to subvert rebellion from within the ruling party and mass society. Dictators construct and utilize formal and informal institutions to co-opt a vast swath of the public to reduce uncertainty and prevent both a coup from below and from within the elites' ruling circle. Neo-institutionalist approaches underscore three co-optation mechanisms used by autocrats. These include elections, parties, and legislatures.²⁹

²⁶ Thomas Pepinsky, "The Institutional Turn in Comparative Authoritarianism," *British Journal of Political Science* (2014).

²⁷ Gerschewski, 2013, 22.

²⁸ Carles Boix and Milan Svolik, "The Foundations of Limited Authoritarian Government: Institutions, Commitment, and Power-Sharing in Dictatorships," *The Journal of Politics*, (2013); Jennifer Gandhi, *Political Institutions Under Dictatorship*, (Cambridge University Press, 2008); Erica Frantz, 2018. Susan Stokes, "Perverse Accountability: A Formal Model of Machine Politics with Evidence from Argentina," *The American Political Science Review*, (2005).

²⁹ Gandhi, 2008; Svolik, 2012; Wright and Escribà-Folch, 2012.

One explanation for how elections help dominant parties maintain power is that elections provide a neutral platform for coalition and opposition members to compete. Elections are viewed as impartial and legitimate because they often draw international attention and put the regime on notice for electoral malpractices. Leaders that either come to power or hold on to it through an illegitimate electoral contest risk being isolated in the global arena. International isolation can have a material impact on a regime and threaten its stability by curbing the financial flows it requires to satiate society. Opposing elites support elections because they often lack the material resources to challenge the regime through a more aggressive strategy. Because the cost of challenging the current order through means other than the existing electoral game is greater than the benefits of challenging it through elections, elites are disinclined to subvert the existing system.³⁰

Other explanations emphasize the incumbent's ability to use elections to punish challengers and reward supporters. According to this school of thought, because of their public nature, elections can serve as a signal of the ruling party's support within society. When support for the party remains, high incumbents are likely to reward their supporters with certain benefits such as the loosening of public or private surveillance. Loyalists may also be rewarded with high-level appointments or other economic or political benefits. However, a decline in the regime's support as indicated by low vote totals may trigger the regime to punish individuals or groups it views as a threat.³¹ In her

³⁰ Andreas Schedler, "Elections Without Democracy: The Menu of Manipulation," *Journal of Democracy*, (2002); Larry Diamond, "Thinking About Hybrid Regimes," *Journal of Democracy*, (2002).

³¹ Jennifer Gandhi and Ellen Lust-Okar, "Elections Under Authoritarianism," *Annual Review of Political Science*, (2009); Jennifer Gandhi and Adam Przeworski, "Cooptation, and Rebellion Under Dictatorships,"

seminal work on Mexico's long-lasting dominant party, the *Partido Revolucionario Institucional (PRI)*,³² Magaloni illustrates how the PRI consistently increased government spending around election times. This strategy encouraged huge electoral turnouts, which created an image of invisibility to drive potential detractors out of the electoral competition.³³

Another co-optation mechanism utilized by autocrats is the dominant party itself. This literature's critical insight is that the dominant party serves as a power-sharing tool for the ruling elite.³⁴ Given that autocrats and members of their coalition operate in uncertain environments, the party serves as a credible signal of the elite's commitment to the existing political order. Ruling elites indicate their willingness to resolve their differences through an official and ostensibly neutral channel by delegating power to the party rather than monopolizing power for themselves. The party's perceived neutrality gives it legitimacy among the ruling elites to remain united in their trust in the political process. Brownlee³⁵ attributes Iran's unstable autocratic spell since 1989 to Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei's failure to insulate himself from opposition by creating a robust party machine to co-opt opposition elites.

Economics and Politics, (2006); Kenneth Greene, *Why Dominant Parties Lose: Mexico's Democratization in Comparative Perspective*, (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007); Susan Stokes, (2005).

³² Partido Revolucionario Institucional translates to Institutional Revolutionary Party.

³³ Magaloni 2006.

³⁴ Magaloni, 2008; John Reuter, *The Origins of Dominant Parties: Building Authoritarian Institutions in Post-Soviet Russia*, (Cambridge University Press, 2017); John Reuter and Thomas Remington, "Dominant Party Regimes and the Commitment Problem," *Comparative Political Studies*, (2009).

³⁵ Jason, Brownlee *Authoritarianism in an Age of Democratization*. New York, N.Y: Cambridge University Press, 2007.

The third co-optation device scholars highlight is the legislature. Autocratic legislatures are thought to neutralize threats from groups outside of the ruling party by incorporating them into the regime's governance structure. Because they are viewed outwardly as democratic institutions, legislatures facilitate policy compromises between members of the ruling party and partisan opposition. By competing with the ruling party's associates through the legislature, opposition forces communicate their acceptance of the existing political rules. They are encouraged to remain loyal to the system by the prospect of advancing their political careers by partaking in the current political game. In this way, the legislature pacifies potential opponents from challenging the regime in a manner that would delegitimize and threaten the whole system. The ruling party is happy to compete with political rivals through the legislature because they often face no real threat due to the power asymmetry.³⁶

Because opposition members, like agents of the ruling party, operate in an environment of uncertainty, legislatures also help reduce the shadow of doubt in dominant party autocracies. They provide a stable environment with predictable rules and procedures to lawfully challenge the ruling party. Autocrats also benefit from legislatures for the same reason. The public nature of these institutions makes them the ideal place for incumbents to gather information about their opponents and monitor their behavior. Legislative elections can also reveal information about the ruling party's public support and help identify coalition members and actors in the mass public that do not support the ruling party. Moreover, legislatures also co-opt citizens by providing an

³⁶ Gandhi, 2008; Gandhi and Przeworski, 2006; Magaloni, 2008; Wright and Escribà-Folch, 2012.

avenue for them to participate, at least nominally, in the political process. Because of the vast benefits autocrats receive from this feigned democratic institution, Escribà-Folch and Wright have found that 92 percent of dominant party regimes from 1946-2002 possessed a legislature.³⁷ Liberia's TWP leveraged political inducements to co-opt settler and native elites.

1.1.3 Repression

Scholars also highlight a regime's repressive capacity as a key to its durability.³⁸ In recent history, the repression project has centered on explaining three related phenomena. These include the type of activity authorities use to repress dissent, the frequency of repression, and the magnitude and scope of its application. I understand repression to mean the threat or actual use of physical force against an individual or organization posing a threat to the existing government.³⁹ State repression is typically targeted at three discrete types of rights. These include what Davenport calls "First Amendment Rights," due process rights, and personal integrity rights. First Amendment rights include freedom of speech and freedom of assembly without fear of government reprisal. He defines transgressions against due process as violations of accepted standards of police, judicial and administrative behavior in dealing with accused transgressors. Personal integrity rights are the set of laws dealing with individual

³⁷ Wright and Escribà-Folch, 2012.

³⁸ Abel Escribà-Folch, "Repression, Political Threats, and Survival Under Autocracy," *International Political Science Review*, (2013); Christian Davenport, "State Repression and Political Order." *Annual Review of Political Science*, (2007); Pablo Policzer, *The Rise and Fall of Repression in Chile*, (University of Notre Dame Press, 2009).

³⁹ *Ibdi*, 2.

survival and security, such as "freedom from torture, disappearance, [wrongful] imprisonment, and extrajudicial execution in the enforcement and adjudication of law."⁴⁰

From the 1950s-1970s, scholars of repression centered their analysis on structural factors. This early wave of scholarship attributed state repression to specific political-economic systems. They held that under certain conditions such as economic backwardness, authoritarianism, overpopulation, or war, states used repression to ensure social and political order. In this way a state's use of coercion was viewed as a course of action thrust upon political leaders because of a system error. According to this view, repression was used by those unable or unwilling to govern their countries by other means. Autocracies have been the central unit of analysis for repression scholars for generations because they are generally believed to be unresponsive to their citizen's demands. This lack of institutionalized accountability mechanisms that characterize autocracies gives them considerable impetus to use repression to protect themselves from internal and external threats.⁴¹

Starting around the 1970s and continuing to the present, researchers began developing analytical frameworks that placed decision-makers at the center of their analysis.⁴² These rationalist models attribute the use of repression to the deliberate calculations of political leaders. According to this view, when faced with danger, leaders weigh their policy options and decide upon an appropriate response. They choose from a menu of policy choices, including coercive actions such as the imprisonment of

⁴⁰ *Ibdi.*

⁴¹ Davenport, 2007; Escribà-Folch, 2013; Gerschewski, 2013; Policzer, 2009.

⁴² Davenport, 2007.

opposition or alternative measures such as expanding civil liberties in response to perceived threats. On the one hand, when leaders determine that repression benefits are greater than the costs, alternative mechanisms are viewed unfavorably. On the other hand, when the cost exceeds the benefit of repression, and the probability of success is low, leaders are unlikely to repress.⁴³

Scholars often distinguish between high and low repression levels.⁴⁴ High-intensity repression consists of overt acts aimed at prominent actors or organizations such as opposition leaders or critical news agencies. It manifests in the violent repression of mass demonstrations, violent campaigns against societal groups, and attempted assassination or opposition leaders' imprisonment. The Great Purges under Stalin, which led to millions of civilian deaths, has ensconced the CPSU as one of the most repressive regimes in history. Low-intensity repression is more covert and targets groups of minor importance. Examples of this form of repression include harassment and intimidation, surveillance of opponents, and the denial of civil liberties and career opportunities.⁴⁵ Most of the world's current autocracies, such as Mozambique's Front for the Liberation of Mozambique (Frelimo), rely on low repression levels for control.

To assess varying degrees of repression within a given system, scholars typically use newspaper accounts, nongovernmental organization (NGO) reports, and or surveys and interviews of individuals and groups that have been the targets of coercion.

Scholars have found that different intensities of repression can yield varying levels of

⁴³ Gandhi, 2008; Grossman, 1999; Ellen Lust-Okar, "Divided They Rule: The Management and Manipulation of Political Opposition." *Comparative Politics* 36, no. 2 (January 2004); Bruce de Mesquita and Smith 2009; Svolik, 2012.

⁴⁴ Davenport, 2007; Levitsky and Way 2013; Policzer, 2009.

⁴⁵ Davenport, 2007; Levitsky and Way, 2013.

success.⁴⁶ Escribà-Folch found that violent, terror-inducing repression effectively quells organized groups, while low-level repression prevents collective action among diffused actors. Notably, he confirmed that political terror only decreases the likelihood of non-violent and regular leadership exits, while restrictions on civil liberties deter both violent and non-violent exits.⁴⁷ Overall, scholars generally agree that of the control methods available to autocrats, repression is the costliest because it can backfire against those who wield it. This is because the repressive apparatus used to target disloyal actors can also be captured and used against the autocrat's coalition members or him. Moreover, Policzer also reveals that too much repression can cause the government to lose societal support.⁴⁸ As I highlight in greater detail in chapter 6, the repression of hinterland tribes was integral to the TWP's survival.

1.2 Looking Forward

In this chapter, I have attempted to frame the present research project in the literature on dominant party regimes. In Chapter 2, I posit an original framework for understanding how a dominant party regime got established in Liberia and how it endured for over a century. Chapter 3 provides the first set of empirical support for my theoretical claims, establishing a causal link between international factors and domestic processes – specifically, the durability of the TWP regime.

Chapters 4-5 provide a systematic assessment of my argument tracing how the three mechanisms discussed above also contributed to both the creation and survival of

⁴⁶ Escribà-Folch, 2013; Levitsky and Way, 2013.

⁴⁷ Escribà-Folch, 2013.

⁴⁸ Policzer, 2009.

the TWP. Chapter 4, on legitimation, highlights the first of the three pillars of authoritarianism which I argue helped the TWP's ascendancy and durability. The chapter documents how the TWP manipulated internationally existing civilizational tropes to construct a national myth which allowed it to legitimate itself domestically and internationally.

Chapter 5 then focuses on cooptation to detail the party's strategy for controlling and monitoring its coalition members as well as the vast and often hostile native population of the hinterlands. Specifically, I highlight how the TWP used political rewards to buy the support of its supporters and potential rivals in order to maintain their loyalty. The chapter also highlights how the regime instituted indirect rule in the hinterlands to control its native population to help protect itself from foreign intrigue. Finally, Chapter 6 centers on the third and final pillar of authoritarian stability; repression. It underscores how the TWP's outsourcing of its coercive regime helped it to pacify and control its native population on the cheap.

Chapter 2. Analytic Framework

Fear and freedom have long been used to structure social theories across the humanities and social sciences. Anthropologists for instance, have explained human evolutionary survival instincts based on fear. These explanations have emphasized the fight or flight response that condition our natural reaction to fear. Historians, sociologists, economists, and political scientists alike have all used fear to construct powerful theories to help us understand the world around us. Freedom, or at least the

want thereof, also belies many of our most celebrated social theories. Some historians have long structured their accounts of world events around the theme of freedom and unfreedom. Sociologists and political scientists utilize the desire for freedom or certain actors' commitment to restricting freedom to explain social movements.

Given these facts, it is no exaggeration to assert that fear and freedom are among the most utilized motifs of social theories. Indeed, most international relations theories are based on how states react to the fear inducing anarchic international arena which resembles the proverbial state of nature. The desire to maintain their sovereignty and avoid state death is thought to motivate state behavior.⁴⁹ Comparativists have also explained important phenomena such as coup proofing or government's dispensation of repression to the fear of mass or elite level threats.⁵⁰ Indeed, the central distinguishing feature of international relations and comparative politics revolves around the source to which each subfield attributes the fear that motivates politics, with international relations crediting the global arena and comparative politics highlighting the domestic realm. Although there are sound reasons for provincializing these distinct subfields, there are some questions which are of interest to each. Given the material consequences of the distribution of regime types on political outcomes, why have dominant parties become the governing system of choice for dictatorships? What explains their creation and durability and what roles do fear and freedom have in their maintenance?

⁴⁹ Kenneth Waltz, *Man, the State and War, A Theoretical Analysis*, (Columbia University Press, 1964).

⁵⁰ Lust-Okar, 2004; Frantz and Kendall-Taylor, 2014.

As important as these questions are for both subfields, the international relations subfield has been mostly silent on them. Comparative politics on the other hand has fully embraced this research project and as a result comparativists have produced some of the most influential theories in political science to explain this phenomenon. However, as useful as these theories are in helping us understand the internal dynamics that characterize authoritarian states, particularly dominant party regimes, existing theories only provide half the picture. This is because most comparative theories of dominant party survival and transition relegate fear and freedom almost exclusively to the domestic arena. The well-established maxim that dictatorships are confronted with the twin challenge of thwarting revolt from within their coalition and from within society is indicative of this tendency. As important as state level factors are, comparativists often forget that states exist in a big and often scary world of uncertainty and perpetual threats. By focusing almost exclusively on domestic level processes to explain authoritarianism, comparativist overlook what I find to be the most important source for the fear and desire for freedom that drive state behavior, the international arena.

The tendency to isolate the causal effect of fear to the domestic arena has made it impossible for existing accounts of the rise and durability of dominant parties to explain the creation and survival of Liberia's dominant party, the TWP. To fully understand why a dominant party regime formed in Liberia some thirty years before any such system existed anywhere in the world, and how it survived for over a century, one must appreciate the role that both fear and freedom played in the structuring of Liberian politics. How did elites in such a weak and vulnerable country as Liberia succeed in constructing the most enduring dominant party regime in world history?

The answer to this question has eluded political scientists interested in dominant party systems. Existing theories have not been able to explain the Liberian case because they have not paid proper attention to the unique way in which fear, and freedom facilitated the founding and maintenance of a dominant party regime in Liberia. The reason for this is that existing accounts fail to perform the dual work of illustrating how autocracies concurrently utilize the three pillars of authoritarian stability domestically while also situating their analyses within the broader structures of global affairs. I attempt to mend this deficiency by positing an analytical framework explaining dominant party rule in Liberia which emphasizes international factors along with the three pillars of authoritarian stability at the domestic level: legitimization, cooptation, and repression.

To explain the longevity of dominant party hegemony in Liberia, I present two arguments. First, I argue that in the face of the threat of state death from the voracious great powers at all corners of its frontier and hostile native tribes within its borders, Liberia's settler elites - which comprised three distinct socio-ethnic groups - were compelled to unite and construct a durable dominant party regime to protect themselves. Second, I argue that in the process of consolidating its hegemony, the TWP – like all authoritarian regimes – leveraged legitimization, co-optation, and repression at the domestic level to secure elite cooperation as well as international acceptance.

Despite being common survival strategies among autocracies, the application of these mechanisms varies across cases. From expert accounts, one can reasonably surmise for instance, that the CPSU used high levels of repression and ideological

legitimation and moderate to high levels of co-optation to rule.⁵¹ On the other hand, the PRI's survival strategy depended on a high degree of co-optation and legitimation and low repression levels.⁵² The survival of Liberia's TWP most closely resembles that of the PRI as the party relied more heavily upon legitimation and co-optation than repression. While the TWP was considerably less violent than the CPSU, it was more repressive than the PRI, a government described by Mario Vargas Llosa as the "perfect dictatorship" for imposing itself without being noticed by the public.⁵³ Although the TWP became more coercive toward its political opposition and citizenry in the latter decades of its existence, historically, it mainly targeted coercion towards the Liberian native population, which it did not subdue until the mid-20th Century.

Despite having long identified each of the three pillars of authoritarian stability as vital to regime survival, to the best of my knowledge, no existing work has systematically traced how autocracies leverage each of them to perpetuate their rule. The tendency in the authoritarian regime literature is to isolate one or two of these mechanisms as the primary explanatory factor. Kailitz and Stockemer's article on elite cohesion and autocratic durability for instance exclusively concerns how autocracies leverage legitimation ideologies to sustain themselves.⁵⁴ Magaloni's groundbreaking work on the longevity of Mexico's dominant party is almost exclusively a story about co-

⁵¹ Gershenson and Grossman, 2001; Greene, 2007.

⁵² Magaloni, 2006; 2008.

⁵³ Ibid, 2006, 11.

⁵⁴ Kailitz, and Stockemer, 2017.

optation.⁵⁵ And Policzer's intriguing work on Chile's dominant party concentrated singularly on the regime's use of repression.⁵⁶

Although there are important methodological as well as theoretical reasons for scholars to isolate just a fraction of the of the tools available to dictatorships to explain their survival, this tendency does not reflect how regimes behave in real life. In the game of survival, authoritarian regimes utilize every tool in their toolkit to preserve themselves, albeit to varying degrees and in different fashions. By tracing the TWP's strategic employment of all three pillars of authoritarian stability, I will provide the first empirical evidence of how legitimation, co-optation, and repression were used concurrently to sustain the world's longest lived dominant party regime.

This work supports the small but important literature on symbolism as an important explanatory factor in the longevity of dominant party regimes. I show that of all the tools in a dictator's tool kit, symbolic legitimation in the form of Liberia's national narrative – as difficult as it is methodological to test – was the most important determinant of Liberia's dominant party's survival. I draw this inference from the fact that like international pressure, the TWP's legitimation ideology permeated every aspect of Liberian politics and was the primary tool used to establish Liberia as a legitimate player in the fearful 19th and 20th Century colonial epoch. The ideology was also used to unite Liberia's disparate settler groups to protect themselves against domestic and international threats.

⁵⁵ Magaloni, 2006, 11.

⁵⁶ Policzer, 2009.

2.1 International Factors & Dominant Party Survival in Liberia

To fully appreciate the role that both fear and freedom played in the TWP's survival, one must understand how the global environment in which the party existed impacted its development. The 19th and early 20th Century global arena were a very scary place for Liberia. This was a period of great Western imperial expansion legitimated by the white supremacist notion captured in Rudyard Kipling's emblematic metaphor of "the white man's burden" to civilize the so-called backwards people of the world. Liberia's Black settlers had been victims of this racist white supremacist ideology, which justified the enslavement of Blacks from the African continent. Indeed, they were either former slaves themselves, children of slaves in the Americas, or captured and liberated people from illegal slave trading vessels. The desire to maintain their newfound freedom coupled with the fear of being returned to bondage both literally and symbolically permeated Liberian culture and framed their world view.

As the only autonomous Black republic on a continent overrun by foreign powers, Liberia's Black settlers were literally surrounded by the period's most powerful imperial states. With Great Britain to its North-Eastern frontier, and France to its South-Western frontier – each of whom relative to Liberia possessed immeasurable military and economic resources and an insatiable appetite for aggrandizement, Liberia was extremely vulnerable. Liberia's weak economic, military, and diplomatic influence in global affairs left it very vulnerable to international pressures. To make matters worse, settlers in Liberia were besieged by a vast hostile native population who held divergent world views and who on many occasions attempted to destroy their settlement. As I show in the next chapter, Liberia's Black settlers could not rely on an external patron to

protect them from these numerous external threats. Therefore, they existed in a state of perpetual fear and insecurity. The settlers' experience with slavery in the Americas and their desire to maintain their freedom served as a powerful motivating force for them to eventually set their political differences aside to unite under the TWP, just as the European Scramble for Africa intensified in the late 19th century.

The intensification of foreign intrigue into Liberian territory and the threat of state death was another powerful international compellent for the TWP's stability and survival. As I discuss in greater detail in the Chapter 5, the heightened European conquest of Africa was catalyzed by the Berlin Conference of 1884-5 where the European imperial powers met to determine how to divide the African continent amongst themselves without risking a war between each other. Following the conference, the European powers swiftly moved to expand their respective empires in Africa. As the European powers expanded and consolidated their imperial foothold, particularly in West Africa, the continent's first Black republic became an easy target of their territorial intrigue.

Motivated by the rising threats of imperial conquest emanating from the international arena, Liberia's various settler factions were eager to preserve their sovereignty and decided to remain united under a dominant party. The decision to remain loyal to the TWP was attractive because by the time of the Berlin Conference, the pure-Black settlers had already gained the numerical advantage to win all subsequent elections due to the earlier wave of immigration. The former mulatto rulers opted to join the TWP because the party offered them the ability share power rather than being relegated to the political periphery.

Therefore, besides the vulnerability to the vices of the international arena, immigration is another international factor I underscore to explain the TWP's ascendancy and preservation. To appreciate how immigration helped the TWP's rise to power one must understand the central political cleavage in early Liberian society. The most salient cleavage that structured early Liberian society was the color and ethnic divide. Within early Americo-Liberian society for example, there existed a socio-political hierarchy in which the lighter skinned mulatto settlers exercised greater degree of power and enjoyed more privileges compared to their darker-skinned brethren.⁵⁷ To swing the pendulum of political power in their favor, the TWP's pure Black leadership required a greater number of the pure Black stock to participate in the electoral process.

Transnational immigration provided the party sufficient bodies to wrestle power away from their political foe, the Republican Party (RP), and establish TWP hegemony over Liberian politics. The groundswell of emigration and the incorporation of the Congo settlers provided the TWP enough supporters to overthrow the RP at the ballot box.

The final international factor I highlight to explain the TWP's dominance is the changing norms that structured international relations in the late 19th and early 20th Centuries, particularly the *Doctrine of Effective Control*. The *Doctrine of Effective Control*, which came out of the Brussels Act of 1890, stipulated that imperial powers must exercise de facto control of their imperial claims or risk being annexed by their competitors. As a recognized member of the international community of states, Liberia felt compelled to abide by this norm to both protect its territorial integrity and to preserve

⁵⁷ Merran Fraenkel, *Tribe and Class in Monrovia*, (Oxford University Press, 1964); Robert Smith, *Deeds Not Words: A History of the True Whig Party*, (Monrovia, Liberia, N.A, 1970).

its autonomy as a sovereign state. To demonstrate their commitment to the principle of *Effective Control*, successive TWP administrations implemented the specific recommendations that came out of the Brussels conference such as the stationing of guards in certain interior communities. Although Liberia did lose a large portion of its original territory to Great Britain and France throughout the colonial period, its decision to implement the recommendations of the *Brussels Act* proved effective at preserving its sovereignty and perpetuating the party's rule.

Even though Liberia experienced considerable internal challenges, international factors, namely immigration, territorial intrigue, and the doctrine of *Effective Control* gave the TWP the basis to construct a durable dominant party in the absence of a popular revolution. The common threat of total annihilation arising from the global arena forced Liberia's settler elites to ultimately overcome their differences for the sake of self-preservation. By emphasizing international factors over domestic processes to explain the creation and survival of Liberia's durable dominant party, I deviate from much of the dominant party regimes literature which tends to credit the creation and survival of these systems to domestic level processes. In focusing on international factors, I contribute to the authoritarian regimes scholarship by bridging the gap between international relations and comparative politics, showing how international factors interact with domestic processes to produce political outcomes.

In making this argument, I do not claim to upend existing theories of authoritarian construction and survival. My aim is to offer a theory that can more accurately explain the rise and longevity of Liberia's dominant party, a case that has proven to be enigmatic to comparativists interested in the world's most durable dominant party

systems. If convincing, scholars of authoritarianism should abstract the propositions of the present theory to test it in other cases.

The core proposition of the present argument is that when faced with grave external threat for a prolonged period, weak states should form robust dominant party systems in their effort to withstand the external threat. Although this claim may appear intuitive, to the best of my knowledge, existing accounts of dominant party creation and durability have not integrated this insight into their theories. To the extent that international factors have been emphasized within the literature, they have stressed either the existence of an external patron in propping up the regime or domestic actors' commitment to eject an occupying force.⁵⁸ The argument that I'm making here does not necessitate either of these factors for the existence of a dominant party system. Instead, my emphasis is on how security threats emanating from a hostile global arena pressure weak states to form durable dominant party regimes.

In what follows I outline how the TWP employed each of three pillars of authoritarian stability to conquer its rivals and establish its supremacy over Liberian politics for over a century. I start first with legitimation, then cooptation, and conclude with repression. I then discuss my research design and highlight some of the challenges I faced conducting this research and how I've tried to mitigate them.

2.2 Legitimation in Liberia

Perhaps more than any other tool in the authoritarian toolkit, Liberia's dominant party regime relied on legitimation for its survival. Although governments establish and

⁵⁸ Levitsky and Way, 2010; Huntington, 1968, 32-59.

manage their legitimacy through symbolic or performance means, Liberia's decrepit economic foundation left symbolic legitimation as the only viable source of legitimation for the TWP. For performance legitimation to take root, governments must be able to deliver certain material rewards to society. This can take the form of a peace of mind, through the suppression of crime and violence, improved economic performance, the expansion of human rights, or greater investment in education and healthcare to name a few. To the extent that the ruling party can be viewed as delivering on some public goods, particularly those to which it has tied its identity, the party is likely to retain its legitimacy among its population. However, because Liberia could not deliver any such public goods for much of its history, the TWP had to legitimate itself through symbolic means.

Symbolic legitimacy can take several forms. One way is through performative acts displayed by citizens and subjects to convey their support for the regime. It can also manifest as the national stories or myths countries tell of themselves to glorify their history and justify the status quo. Elites often help craft these narratives or appropriate them to suit their needs. While scholars of Liberian history have long observed the Americo-Liberian propensity for pomp and ritualistic displays, I focus my analysis on their use of a national myth as the primary instrument to legitimate the TWP's rule to its domestic and international audience. The TWP's application of its national myth was instrumental in expanding the TWP tent to allow the party to incorporate a broader segment of the settler population to overthrow its political rival.

Understanding how Liberia's national myth facilitated the TWP's ascendance and domination requires a closer look at the political schism in early Liberian society. As I

discuss in greater detail in chapter 4, four groups made up Liberia's early social divide. The first group consisted of the mixed-race or mulatto settlers who took over the government's reins from the American Colonization Society (Henceforth ACS) upon independence in 1847. Besides running the government, this group of lighter-hued settlers also monopolized the Liberian economy as merchant capitalists. After gaining independence, the mulatto merchants formed the RP to advance their political and economic interests until being supplanted by the TWP. The second group that structured early Liberian society was the darker-skinned, pure negro settlers. Although this second group, like the mulattos, immigrated from the Americas as former slaves or freemen, they enjoyed fewer privileges than their mulatto counterparts. They made their living through agricultural husbandry and found representation in the TWP after independence. Collectively, these two groups came to be known as Americo-Liberians.⁵⁹

The third group comprised the Congo People, descendants of Africans from various parts of the continent that had been illegally captured and released into the territory currently known as Liberia. They occupied a precarious position in early Liberian society. Their dubious state was due to the fact that they were neither Americo-Liberian nor native to the country. The Congo People were often shunned by both the Americo-Liberian and native communities because of their social obscurity.

The native African majority made up the fourth social stratum of Liberian society. Sixteen recognized autochthonous tribes occupied some part of the country before the

⁵⁹ Stephen Hlophe, *Class, Ethnicity, and Politics in Liberia: A Class Analysis of Power Struggles in the Tubman and Tolbert Administrations, from 1944-1975*, (University Press of America, 1979).

arrival of the American Black settlers. Before the coming of the settlers Liberia's indigenous groups had long-established autonomous socio-political organizations. They depended on traditional economic activities such as agriculture, slavery, and bartering.⁶⁰

Liberia's color caste system was based on the belief that those thought to be closer to white civilization were civilized or politically mature. Because the mulatto settlers resembled white Euro-Americans more closely due to their mixed ancestry, they generally enjoyed the most privilege in early Liberian society.⁶¹ This caste system allowed the TWP to administer Liberia as a quasi-imperial state until the revolution of 1980.

Liberia's colored caste system played a significant role in the TWP's founding and continuance because the desire to upend this system drove the darker-skin settler population to align themselves with the Congo settlers. Seeing that the Congo people were also marginalized by their mulatto brethren, the darker skinned Americo-Liberian founders of the TWP sought to incorporate the Congos into their newly formed party. They succeeded in doing so by espousing a commitment to a more equal and just society, a message that resonated with the poor uneducated Congo immigrants. Rather than dismantling the racial caste system, however, the pure Negro Americo-Liberians utilized it as the central element of their legitimacy belief, of which the *civilizational myth* is the manifestation. I call it a myth because it is a belief unfounded in any objective fact but propagated and internalized as if it were.

⁶⁰ Hlophe, 1979.

⁶¹ James Ciment, *Another America: The Story of Liberia and the Former Slaves Who Ruled It*, (Hill and Wang, New York. 2013), Ch., 3; David Reese, *America's African Stepchild*, (CreateSpace Independent Publishing Platform, 2018), loc 1234-1270.

Elites used this *civilizational myth*, which predates the party's founding, as a national narrative justifying the TWP's apparent natural right to rule over Liberia and its natives. It maintained that native Africans were backward, childlike, and inherently uncivilized people requiring the benevolent Euro-American Black settlers' assistance to modernize. This ideology, which was once the mulatto and pure Black settlers' domain, was eventually expanded by the Black Americo-Liberians to include the Congo settlers and to help rationalize their new prominence in Liberian society.

Reese and Fanon offer important clues as to why Liberia's Black settlers might have embraced this seemingly self-denigrating ideology. Reese posits that the issue that former enslaved Blacks had with the American system was not the system and its ideology per se, but that they were the victims of this racist ideology.⁶² Rather than desiring to dismantle the racist regime altogether, Liberia's repatriated Blacks sought to appropriate it to serve their interests. To do this, they had to embrace and model themselves after the very culture that oppressed them. Fanon captures this phenomenon in his conception of the inferiority complex. He contended that in colonial relations, the oppressor so completely subdues a colonized people that they internalize the dominant culture's beliefs and values. Rather than asserting their humanity on their own terms, the colonized seek to do so by appropriating and reproducing the very ideas and practices used by the oppressor to justify their subjugation. In their attempt to free themselves from systemic oppression's vicious grip, they become more like their

⁶² Reese, 2018.

oppressor. This is because the oppressed believe that to be seen and respected as equals to their oppressors, they must demonstrate that they can act as the oppressor.⁶³

As former slaves and free men of the Americas, the Liberian settlers had been predisposed and indoctrinated into believing this civilizational dogma. Apparently, the indoctrination was so complete that even when they gained their independence from the ACS in 1847, they continued to embrace this ideology at least until the post WWII era. They internalized it perhaps because they fundamentally saw themselves – despite their status as descendants of Africans sold into slavery – as members of the so-called civilized states, imbued with the responsibility of carrying “the white man’s burden” of civilizing the backward people of the world. The *civilizational myth* helped the Americo-Liberians succeed in bringing the Congo settlers into the orbit of Western civilization symbolically. They extended the privileged status as the vanguard of civilization to the Congo settlers through education, Christianity, and inter-marriage. In so doing, the Congo people could enjoy the privileges of civilized life, including the right to citizenship and membership to the ruling party.

The TWP’s appropriation and expansion of the civilizational myth resonated well with sympathetic Congo people. Once the Congo people became incorporated into the Black Americo-Liberian political tent, the TWP had the necessary number of supporters to establish its reign over Liberian politics. The *civilizational myth* helped facilitate the absorption of the once distinct settler groups into an indistinguishable united settler oligarchy under the TWP banner from 1878 when it came into power for the second and

⁶³ Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, (New York: Grove Press), 1967.

final time until it's fall 102 years later in 1989. It justified the settler elites' bifurcation of the Liberian state between the "civilized" settlers who enjoyed all the privileges of full citizenship and the "uncivilized" tribes' people who were relegated to mere subjects of the state, apparently worthy of nothing more than raw exploitation.

Besides serving as the central ideology unifying the settler populations, it appears that the *civilizational myth* might have also been used to legitimate the Liberian state to the international community as well. This external signaling of legitimacy is severely underexplored in the literature. As Gerschewski asserts, legitimation is typically seen as operating between elites and the mass public, not elite to elite or elite to international actors.⁶⁴ Although the available data is limited, from what I can ascertain, it appears that the *civilizational myth* found resonance at the domestic level and also appealed to a seemingly receptive international community. Although it is hard to say for certain, it is difficult to imagine how the fledgling Black settler regime in the perilous milieu of 19th and 20th Centuries survived if their external legitimation signals did not resonate with the great powers at their frontiers. It is possible that the ideology appealed to international sympathies because the civilizational trope was so ubiquitously used by colonial powers to justify colonial expansion in the 19th Century that they saw themselves reflected in the Black settler's use of this ideology.

By embracing and deploying this civilizing narrative, the TWP presented Liberia to the community of sovereign states as "one of them." The myth justified the TWP's own quasi-imperialist project in Liberia's interior because it signaled that Liberia's

⁶⁴ Gerschewski, 2013.

government behaved and communicated just as other “legitimate” imperialist powers did. Through this process, the regime added a layer of protection from other imperialist powers that were themselves committed to the doctrine of state sovereignty. Although it is beyond the scope of the present project, I do find suggestive evidence that TWP leaders embraced this rationale.

2.3 Co-optation in Liberia

The burgeoning institutionalist literature on authoritarian survival strategies has offered a wealth of knowledge on how dictatorships co-opt political rivals to secure their rule. From these works we know that autocracies typically use seemingly democratic institutions such as parties, elections, and legislatures to subsume their political adversaries to prolong their survival.⁶⁵ Gandhi’s work for instance, shows how institutions such as parties and legislators provide relatively safe and predictable channels for members of the ruling party as well as potential opposition members to make credible policy commitments and monitor one and other.⁶⁶ Magaloni likewise shows how Mexico’s dominant party divided rents in the form of political offices among its coalition members to sustain its rule.⁶⁷ I understand co-optation to mean elites’ strategic efforts to bind relevant political actors or groups to the regime. Although the existing evidence at my disposal is limited, when combined with what past experts of Liberian politics have long observed, I can confidently assert that the TWP was an essential co-optation tool used by Liberia’s Americo elites to co-opt potential rivals.

⁶⁵ David Art, What Do We Know About Authoritarianism After Ten Years?” *Comparative Politics* 44, no. 3 (2012): 351–73. <https://doi.org/10.5129/001041512800078977>, 351-373; Pepinsky, 2013.

⁶⁶ Gandhi, 2008.

⁶⁷ Magaloni, 2006.

The TWP's predecessor was the "True Black Man Party," whose core membership consisted of the pure-Black element of the Americo-Liberian settlers. By contrast, the membership of the RP consisted mostly of mulatto merchants, and this party dominated early Liberian politics. This gave the TWP's pure-negro leadership a reason to incorporate the Congo settlers into their ranks, to supplant RP domination. Once the TWP developed a message that resonated with most of the Black settlers,⁶⁸ particularly the pure-Black Americo-Liberians and Congo people, it now had to offer some benefits to its members to maintain their support. As the party's prominence became further entrenched throughout the decades, RP adherents left the former dominant party to join the TWP. But joining the TWP did not always resolve long-standing animosities between former RP members and TWP loyalists. This animus often manifested in contentious policy debates in the legislature in the late 19th and early 20th Century but generally never lead to any significant fissure. The TWP nevertheless had to satisfy its core constituency and assuage potential political rivals within its ranks.

As I show in greater detail in chapter 5, the most effective apparatus for managing the party's rancorous coalition was through political inducements. As is true for other autocracies, the TWP was used to distribute government's key offices and provided an avenue for partisans to elevate their political careers. Being a member of the TWP was a prerequisite for political advancement under TWP rule. Indeed, Liebenow argues that Liberia's backward economy and lack of a viable private sector

⁶⁸ Here I am referring to the more expansive reinterpretation of the *civilizational myth* discussed in the legitimation section.

left politics as the primary mode of social advancement.⁶⁹ As the dominant actor in the political arena, the TWP was the best, and for many, the only avenue for socio-economic mobility in Liberian society. Once the TWP's hegemony was complete, everyone exercising any considerable degree of power in Liberia did so only through the party. Nearly all official office holders from court justices, members of the legislature, and even local district officials were required to be a member of the party to hold office.

The appointment or "election" to the country's various political institutions was the primary mode of patronage distribution under the TWP. Holding an official post in the Liberia government allowed individuals to enjoy the spoils of the office such as side payments and rents. As I show in chapter 5 for example, it was commonplace for district commissioners to arbitrarily extract rents from the natives of their assigned territories for their personal gain and for members of the legislature to pass policies that benefitted their personal coffers. With an underdeveloped economy and limited means of economic and social mobility, the business of politics provided ambitious elites desiring career opportunities considerable incentives to remain loyal to the party. As such, being castigated by the party was a proposition that most elites could not tolerate.

Friends of the party were not the only ones that were co-opted by political inducements. To inculcate its political rivals the party gave them government posts as well. For the party, this was a low-cost way to monitor its rivals because their actions were now performed in a public forum where they could be observed. Being a member of the legislature, for example, provided a backdrop in which members could monitor

⁶⁹ Liebenow, 1969.

one another's actions and policy proposals. The party could also monitor political rivals appointed to any cabinet or local office by requiring them to submit official reports to the government and subjecting them to internal audits. Moreover, the party vis-vis the national standard bearer (the president), held the power to dismiss anyone appointed to any office. This of course gave the party considerable leverage over its would-be competitors.

For a poor country lacking a robust security apparatus, these methods were quite effective in preempting opposition rebellion. Yet, opposition members also enjoyed similar benefits as partisans appointed to any government post. For example, they could enjoy the spoils of their office and could operate under a predictable set of rules without the fear of government reprisal.

Another benefit of remaining loyal to the party was the ability to select the country's leadership and co-govern under a relatively stable set of rules. The party's bi-annual nominating convention provided an opportunity for partisans from all levels of government, from the district to national level, to cast a vote for not only the party's leadership, but also the country's president. Because one had to be a member in good standing to participate in the various party functions such as the nominating convention, opposition members were barred from participation. This provided an additional incentive to remain loyal to the party because the results of these votes were highly significant. The ticket receiving the most votes was guaranteed to be victorious at the ballot box. To ensure that partisans supported the party's sleight of candidates, the legislature could at any time request that the Secretary of State avail it the ballot boxes of recent elections.

The absence of a secret ballot allowed the TWP to hold individuals accountable to the party. Therefore, it was nearly impossible for an opposition member to infiltrate and influence the party from within. Rather than infiltrating the party, opposition members occasionally broke off from the TWP to create an independent party to challenge the TWP. However, because of the TWP's grip on Liberia's body politic, these efforts were frivolous.

The party's efficiency in managing its coalition was due to the rather small number of players it had to monitor and satisfy. As I discuss in greater detail in chapter 4 & 5, Liberia's settler elites made up a tiny fraction of the country's total population at any given time. Indigenous Liberians made up most of the country's population. However, because the Americo-Liberians granted citizenship only to property owning males they deemed civilized, Liberia was left with a tiny and rather manageable electorate and ruling coalition. This condition persisted until after WWII when the government finally granted universal suffrage to its native population as well as women. Therefore, the challenges of managing a large ruling coalition such as the nomenklatura in Soviet Russia were less pronounced in Liberia. In addition to easing the TWP's coalition management, Liberia's miniature electorate disincentivized the party from investing in broader public goods initiatives for much of the country's history. This lack of public investment also contributed to making politics the primary mode of socio-economic advancement under the TWP which in turn enhanced the party's hold on Liberian society.

Despite not creating Liberia's truncated electorate, the TWP actively utilized it to divide society in a manner almost indistinguishable from that observed in British settler

colonies such as Natal, the Cape Colony, and Nigeria.⁷⁰ This bifurcation served two critical purposes in preserving the party. Firstly, it carved out a small group of elites which it could readily monitor to eliminate the possibility of a threat arising from within its ranks. Liberia's elites were incentivized to remain committed to the party because it allowed them to enjoy a disproportionate amount of wealth and political power in an otherwise weak and poor state. Secondly, Liberia's bifurcated social structure helped to distinguish between the Americo-Liberian elites, and the vast native population. By being able to clearly separate natives from settlers, the party could construct a system of indirect rule to co-opt native elites throughout its hinterlands without upsetting the settler minority.

The TWP's process of co-opting native elites mirrored that of the British model. Like the British, the TWP either manufactured or exploited long standing rifts among the native tribes through the process of divide and conquer. It also administered a system of indirect rule which elevated certain friendly tribes above more hostile ones to secure their loyalty. Native elites that cooperated with the government stood to gain access to a vast patronage network and greater prestige and influence. The strategy of indirect rule proved quite effective, for the Liberian government could enlist members of these coopted friendly tribes to fight and suppress insurrectionist movements emerging from hostile native tribes.

⁷⁰ Mahmood Mamdani, *Citizen and Subject: Contemporary Africa and the Legacy of Late Colonialism*, (Princeton University Press, 1996).

2.4 Repression in Liberia

After the deposition and subsequent death of the first TWP president Edward J. Roye in 1872 (an episode which I consider in greater detail in the following chapter), the TWP became incredibly wary of political violence among the settlers.⁷¹ Upon the party's consolidation of power beginning in 1878, Liberia's politics functioned with the same regularity and banality as the PRI. It held regular elections for renewable two-year terms until the legislature voted in 1934 to extend the presidential term limit to two successive eight-year terms. Liberian politics became more authoritarian under President William V.S. Tubman, who succeeded in turning the TWP into an instrument of personal rule. Under him, congress once again amended the constitution to remove presidential term limits. Before his death in 1971, Tubman would serve seven terms for a total of 27 years as Liberian president and TWP standard-bearer.⁷² Therefore, before this critical period of Liberian history, the TWP's biggest domestic threat was its vast native population.

In addition to the co-optation methods described above, to pacify the natives, the TWP also leveraged a repressive regime intended to monitor and stifle native participation in Liberian society. The party's coercive strategies included the discriminatory laws which prohibited native tribes' people from enjoying the rights of citizenship, the installment of the quasi-indirect administrative structure in the hinterlands which limited political participation to only the five coastal counties where Americo-Liberians and Congo people lived, and the enforcement of forced labor. These

⁷¹ Mary Fiske, *History of the True Whig Party 1869-1967*, (NA, NA 1960).

⁷² Tubman was first elected to the Liberian presidency in 1944 and died of health complications in 1971. He is widely considered the greatest TWP president.

practices coupled with the *civilizational myth* might have helped signal the party's right to rule to the international community because they were sanctioned colonial practices recognized by Western Colonial powers.

Of all the party's coercive apparatuses though, the Liberian Frontier Force (LFF), created expressly to subdue the hinterland and extract taxes from native people, epitomized the TWP despotism. Given the cost of constructing a repressive apparatus, namely the danger that the machine might be used against its creator, the party took great pains to insulate itself from the LFF and maintain strict control over it. As I show in greater detail in chapter 6, to protect itself from the LFF while ensuring that it behaved according to the party's desires, the LFF was institutionally structured to maximize the party's control. I emphasize two important ways in which this was achieved: the force's composition and its administrative practice.

Although the bulk of the force comprised indigenous Liberians (and some British subjects native to neighboring Sierra Leone), the party restricted the LFF Officer Corps to Americo-Liberians. These Officers remained fiercely loyal to the party because, as Americo-Liberians, they had been sufficiently co-opted into the mainstream culture, which saw the TWP as the legitimate ruling party. The ideological congruity between the officer corps and the broader Americo-Liberian collective exemplified by the TWP put the LFF in lockstep with the party.

Still, military coups can also be triggered by material reasons and executed by forces outside of the officer rank. Although the LFF personnel were severely underpaid, the effects of their indigence were mitigated by corruption. For example, during a patrol, it was common for enlisted men (and their superiors) to seize the possessions of

residents for themselves or exploit their labor. These practices were exacerbated by the force's policy of stationing native troops in territories far from their ancestral home. Instead, troops would often be assigned to areas populated by tribes historically hostile to their own. This drained the native troops of sympathy for other natives and encouraged abuse. This behavior, which operated in conjunction with the indirect rule system, also made it difficult for tribes to coordinate with one another to execute a sustained challenge to Americo-Liberian rule. The physical distance between the hinterland tribes and the central government served as a buffer between the tribe's people and the central government. It allowed the central government to appear as a paternal agent adjudicating between the corrupt and abusive LFF and the natives.

2.5 Research Design

With the argument thus articulated, I now discuss my research design and the challenges I faced in carrying out this project. My dissertation is structured according to Beach and Pedersen's causal case study research design. The case study design offers a unique opportunity to trace how hypothesized mechanisms interact to produce outcomes.⁷³ It is ideal for achieving the dual objectives of theory building and testing. Seminal works in the authoritarian regime literature, such as Greene's *Why Dominant Parties Lose* and Magaloni's *Voting for Autocracy*, employ a case study design for this reason. A long-standing critique of this approach, however, is that it does not yield generalizable conclusions across cases due to its singular focus.⁷⁴ While this critique is

⁷³ Derek Beach and Rasmus Pedersen, *Causal Case Study Methods: Foundations and Guidelines for Comparing, Matching and Tracing*, (University of Michigan Press, 2016).

⁷⁴ John Gerring, *Case Study Research: Principles and Practices*, (Cambridge University Press, 2007).

well taken, as Art argues, the authoritarian regime research program requires substantial case studies about these often-opaque regimes which predominate the modern world.⁷⁵ Furthermore, the core propositions of this research can be abstracted to be tested in other cases. To reiterate, the core propositions of this work are the following:

- 1) In the face of eminent and prolonged external threat, weak states should form robust dominant party systems to guard themselves against external threats emanating from the global arena.
- 2) Even in the absence of great resources and a revolutionary ideology, weak states can nevertheless construct durable single party institutions by leveraging the fear posed by the global arena and by employing the three pillars of authoritarian stability to suit their needs.

The present research also employs archival methodology involving the close and critical examination of historical documents. Specifically, I draw on secondary and primary archival documents to trace the process that animated the TWP and its survival tactics. I collected this data over a span of four years from 2018-2022. The bulk of the primary data that informs this project come from Indiana University's Liberian Collection, one of the largest repositories of Liberian documents anywhere in the world. Although most of the data from which I draw were obtained from the Liberian Collection's online repository, I spent roughly three and a half months in total at Indiana University in their Liberian Collection, scanning and analyzing documents that are not yet available online. My first visit was in the summer of 2018 from July to early September. I returned to the archives to collect additional documentation in October 2021. The repository consists of

⁷⁵ Art, 2012.

correspondence, reports, records, minutes, personal writings, and other miscellaneous manuscript items from a variety of sources from as early as 1811 to as recent as 2014.

Although the repository contains several collections, I found four of these to be especially germane to my research question. These collections include the *Liberian Government Archives I*, which consists of thousands of either photocopies of items from the Liberian Archives in Monrovia Liberia or typescript copies and notes created by Dr. Svend E. Holsoe from 1828-1911; *Liberian Government Archives II* which contains similar types of articles as the aforementioned collection, but ranges from 1911-1968; the *Svend Holsoe Collection: Edward James Roye Material, 1811-1986*, which consists of Dr. Holsoe's research materials and manuscripts on Edward James Joye, Liberia's first True Whig Party president; and to a much lesser extent, I also pull from the *Svend Holsoe Collection: Vai Materials, 1924-1995* which contains photocopied 19th century documents on the Vai region and people among other things. Together, these collections hold thousands of documents that help us understand the socio-political history of Liberia from its inception all the way up to the modern age. For my part, I am interested in the period between 1870 – when the TWP first came into power – until 1940, when the TWP's hegemony became fully established.

Rather than providing a strict chronology of events, I have structured this project thematically according to the core mechanisms described above. Although the temporal focus of this project spans from 1870-1940, I oscillate between time periods to provide background information when necessary or to justify specific claims in the framing of certain arguments. Because of the practical challenges I encountered, including, the dearth of available data for certain time periods, particularly the decade plus years

between the end of the first TWP administration in 1872 up to the European Scramble for Africa in 1885, my discussion of certain periods is less descriptive. The comparative historical research design has established a strong precedent for this class of work with its intense focus on critical junctures to explain political outcomes rather than providing detailed accounts of how processes unfold in every period.⁷⁶ Although the present work is not exactly a work of historical institutionalism, I do take inspiration from this research design by providing thick descriptions of how my hypothesized mechanisms in particular periods produced certain results.

Although the data used to support the claims that I make throughout this project are among the best available data on Liberian political history, there are important limitations to conducting the sort of history-centric social science research design I employ. The first challenge I faced throughout this process was situating each individual piece of evidence within the broader theoretical framework that I've developed to explain the rise and durability of Liberia's dominant party regime. To overcome this challenge, I leverage a broad selection of secondary manuscripts, remaining attuned to consistencies and inconsistencies in existing accounts of Liberian and TWP history. This process allowed me to interpret the various primary documents within the broader 19th and early 20th century context to draw powerful inferences. It also allowed me to not only glean what the most salient issues were at the time, but it further allowed me to reduce observational bias through the process of triangulation.

⁷⁶ James Mahoney and Dietrich Rueschemeyer, *Comparative Historical Analysis in the Social Sciences* (Cambridge University Press, 2003).

Another challenge I came across was the illegibility of certain documents, particularly the personal journals or handwritten correspondence of prominent individuals within 19th and 20th century Liberia. Many of the existing handwritten materials were either severely damaged or extremely difficult to read. To overcome this challenge, I spent many hours studying as many relevant personal letters as I could. From this I was able to glean how the TWP influenced its members. However, because of the practical constraints of finishing this project, I made the pragmatic decision to focus most of my analysis on typescript documents that were legible and therefore more comprehensible.

Although there are a few exceptions to this, such as my invocation of Wilmot Blyden in the legitimization chapter, much of my data comes from official government correspondence and presidential statements to the legislature. While this provided me with the practical benefit of being able to read the materials, it also presented the disadvantage of overlooking other potentially salient documents that may have strengthened or weakened my argument. Yet, given the time constraint of this project I do believe that I made the best decision by focusing on official documents. Decisions regarding what pieces of evidence to include or exclude from one's research is a long-standing challenge that all archival research designs face. Ultimately each scholar must make what they perceive to be their best judgement call.

Chapter 3. International Pressure and the Rise of Liberia's Dominant Party

The survival of the Liberian polity is a puzzle that has long baffled historians and political scientists. From its founding, Liberia was a militarily weak and resource-scarce country. Apart from the random assortment of volunteer militia members and the marginally better-resourced foreign-supported Liberian Frontier Force - an institution that was constructed relatively late in the country's existence – the Liberian government did not possess the necessary coercive apparatuses required to thwart domestic dangers and protect itself against foreign threats.⁷⁷ Even though it secured the 1926 Firestone rubber contract for an unprecedented period of 99 years, as I show in greater detail in chapter six, the country did not reap any significant benefit from its abundant natural resource possessions which include diamond, timber, and the richest rubber and iron ore deposits in the world for much of its history.

This economic backwardness persisted until the end of WWII with the implementation of the twin structural adjustment programs known as the Open Door and Integration Policies under the William Tubman administration.⁷⁸ As the only sovereign Black republic on a continent overrun by foreign white colonial rule, Liberia existed in a state of insecurity.

Given this precarious situation, how did a dominant party regime run by freed and manumitted slaves from the U.S. emerge in Liberia at the height of the 19th century “Scramble for Africa,” almost 40 years before the Bolshevik Revolution established a

⁷⁷ Christine Whyte, “A State of Underdevelopment: Sovereignty, Nation-Building and Labor in Liberia 1898–1961,” *International Labor and Working Class History* (2017); Jairo Munive, “A Political Economic History of the Liberian State, Forced Labour and Armed Mobilization,” *Journal of Agrarian Change*, (2011).

⁷⁸ F.P.M, Van der Kraaij. *The Open Door Policy of Liberia: An Economic History of Modern Liberia*, (Bremen: Im Selbstverlag des Museums), 1983; Robert, Crowder et al., *Growth Without Development; an Economic Survey of Liberia*, (Northwestern University Press), 1966.

supposed template for durable one-party systems? In this chapter, I present the first element in my answer to this question. I argue that when faced with the threat of state death emanating from the voracious great powers at all corners of its frontier and hostile native tribes within its borders, Liberia's settler elites – which comprised three distinct socio-ethnic groups – were compelled to construct a durable dominant party regime to protect themselves.

Drawing on archival documents and secondary material, I contextualize the international circumstances that conditioned the TWP's rise and persistence. Contrary to much of the extant literature on dominant party creation and survival,⁷⁹ I emphasize international factors as a key element in the regime's rise to power. Due to the dearth of direct data demonstrating how specific factions of the regime's coalition responded to international pressures, my aim in this chapter is to establish the plausibility of my argument by drawing educated inferences based on the extant literature and available archival evidence. On the question of the regime's formation, the plausibility of my argument would hold if I succeeded in demonstrating Liberia's total vulnerability to the forces of the 19th century international arena. Secondly, I will have to rule out other factors underlined by the literature such as a mass revolution or economic crisis as

⁷⁹ Beatriz Magaloni, *Voting for Autocracy: Hegemonic Party Survival and Its Demise in Mexico*, (Cambridge University Press, 2006); Benjamin Smith, "Life of the Party: The Origins of Regime Breakdown and Persistence Under Single-Party Rule," *World Politics* (2005); Ora Reuter, *The Origins of Dominant Parties: Building Authoritarian Institutions in Post-Soviet Russia*. (Cambridge University Press 2017); Ora Reuter, and Thomas F. Remington. "Dominant Party Regimes and the Commitment Problem." *Comparative Political Studies* (2009).

explanations for the party's formation. I present the empirical evidence for the second element of plausibility in the following chapter and offer the first proof in the present.

To establish the plausibility of the second part of my argument which is that international pressures assisted in the TWP's survival, I must demonstrate that the TWP took certain measures in direct response to international pressures to enhance its security and secure its hegemony. Although I provide evidence of this throughout the remainder of this project, the present chapter will provide the most curated examples of these actions. The chapter is divided into 2 sections. In External Intrigue and Dominant Party Formation, I contextualize the global environment which produced the TWP, illustrating Liberia's vulnerability to international pressures. I also provide evidence of how global migration likely aided the TWP's rise to power. This section covers 1870-1872, the period of the TWP's first ascendancy which laid the foundation for future developments. In the International Pressure and Dominant Party Consolidation section, I provide evidence of the TWP responding directly to the various global pressures it faced to secure its sovereignty and maintain its dominance. I conclude the chapter with a brief discussion on the chapter's contribution to the authoritarian regimes' literature.

The survival of the Liberian polity is a puzzle that has long baffled historians and political scientists. From its founding, Liberia was a militarily weak and resource-scarce country. Apart from the random assortment of volunteer militia members and the marginally better-resourced foreign-supported Liberian Frontier Force - an institution that was constructed relatively late in the country's existence – the Liberian government did not possess the necessary coercive apparatuses required to thwart domestic

dangers and protect itself against foreign threats.⁸⁰ Even though it secured the 1926 Firestone rubber contract for an unprecedented period of 99 years, as I show in greater detail in chapter six, the country did not reap any significant benefit from its abundant natural resource possessions which include diamond, timber, and the richest rubber and iron ore deposits in the world for much of its history. This economic backwardness persisted until the end of WWII with the implementation of the twin structural adjustment programs known as the Open Door and Integration Policies under the William Tubman administration.⁸¹ As the only sovereign Black republic on a continent predominated by foreign white colonial rule, Liberia existed in a state of insecurity.

Given this precarious situation, how did Liberia survive? How did a dominant party regime run by freed and manumitted slaves from the U.S. emerge in Liberia at the height of the 19th century “Scramble for Africa,” 40 years before the Bolshevik Revolution established a supposed template for durable one-party systems? In this chapter, I present the first element in my answer to this question. I argue that when faced with the threat of state death emanating from the voracious great powers at all corners of its frontier and hostile native tribes within its borders, Liberia’s settler elites – which comprised three distinct socio-ethnic groups – were compelled to construct a durable dominant party regime to protect themselves.

Drawing on archival documents and secondary material, I contextualize the international circumstances that conditioned the TWP’s rise and persistence. Contrary

⁸⁰ Whyte, 2017; Munive, 2011.

⁸¹ Van der Kraaij, 1983; Crowder et al., 1966.

to much of the extant literature on dominant party creation and survival,⁸² I emphasize international factors as a key element in the regime's rise to power. Due to the dearth of direct data demonstrating how specific factions of the regime's coalition responded to international pressures, my aim in this chapter is to establish the plausibility of my argument by drawing educated inferences based on the extent literature and available archival evidence. On the question of the regime's formation, the plausibility of my argument would hold if I succeeded in demonstrating Liberia's total vulnerability to the forces of the 19th century international arena. Secondly, I will have to rule out other factors underlined by the literature such as a mass revolution or economic crisis as explanations for the party's formation. I present the empirical evidence for the second element of plausibility in the following chapter and offer the first proof in the present.

To establish the plausibility of the second part of my argument which is that international pressures assisted in the TWP's survival, I must demonstrate that the TWP took certain measures in direct response to international pressures to enhance its security and secure its hegemony. Although I provide evidence of this throughout the remainder of this project, the present chapter will provide the most curated examples of these actions. The chapter is divided into 2 sections. In External Intrigue and Dominant Party Formation, I contextualize the global environment which produced the TWP, illustrating Liberia's vulnerability to international pressures. I also provide evidence of how global migration likely aided the TWP's rise to power. This section covers 1870-

⁸² Beatriz Magaloni, *Voting for Autocracy: Hegemonic Party Survival and Its Demise in Mexico*, (Cambridge University Press, 2006); Smith, 2005; Ora Reuter, *The Origins of Dominant Parties: Building Authoritarian Institutions in Post-Soviet Russia*. (Cambridge University Press 2017); Ora Reuter, and Thomas F. Remington. "Dominant Party Regimes and the Commitment Problem." *Comparative Political Studies* (2009).

1872, the period of the TWP's first ascendancy which laid the foundation for future developments. In the International Pressure and Dominant Party Consolidation section, I provide evidence of the TWP responding directly to the various global pressures it faced to secure its sovereignty and maintain its dominance. I conclude the chapter with a brief discussion on the chapter's contribution to the authoritarian regimes literature.

3.1 External Intrigue and Dominant Party Formation

It is generally believed that Black Africa's experience with the West dates to at least the 14th century when a Portuguese sea-captain abducted a man and woman off the coast of Western Sahara in 1441. By the late 17th century, the slave trade had become the central pillar of the global mercantilist economy. The Dutch and Portuguese who earlier had dominated the trade in West Africa were supplanted by the better resourced French and British. After three centuries of intensive trade, the British Parliament moved to abolish the slave trade in 1807 and drove other slaving countries to do the same.⁸³ As the slave trade wined down, the competition to control Africa boomed. Mamdani traces this moment to the aftermath of the American Civil War. As a direct effect of the war, Mamdani argues there grew "an acute shortage of cotton for textile production everywhere," resulting in what he calls a "cotton famine."⁸⁴ Europe not only required cotton but needed the human power to process its cultivation and production on a grander scale. The European powers now turned their attention from trading with Africa to formal conquest.

⁸³ John Iliffe, *Africans: The History of a Continent*, (Cambridge, United Kingdom: Cambridge University Press 2017).

⁸⁴ Mahmood Mamdani, *Citizen and Subject: Contemporary Africa and the Legacy of Late Colonialism*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2018), 17.

Initially, European presence in Africa was mostly restricted to the North and South and a few coastal outposts in the East and West. As the competition for Africa surged in the mid-19th century, European colonial powers pushed further inland, defeating slave-based conquest states such as Jolof, Kongo, and Oyo. In this process, the European colonial powers destroyed and reformed African institutions and customs, consuming African people and land in their pursuit of total conquest.⁸⁵

The fight for control over Africa was a fight amongst giants equipped with the most modern technologies of the industrial revolution such as the Maxim gun which could fire several bullets in a matter of seconds, and medicines such as quinine prophylaxis which could now protect European agents from the tropical diseases of Black Africa.⁸⁶ Standing between the two greatest titans of all, France, and Great Britain, in the epicenter of the colonial battlefield (West Africa), was the fledgling Black settler nation of Liberia, comprised of free and emancipated slaves from the Americas, particularly the United States and the Caribbean. This tiny settler country stood out amongst the imperial powers. Not only was this the only Black independent colonial state, but it was conspicuously weak – lacking both a regular army and a robust formal economy.⁸⁷

The European colonization of Africa was justified to a considerable degree by the 19th Century evangelical movement to civilize the backward nations of the world. As I discuss in greater detail in the following chapter because Liberia's rulers were former

⁸⁵ Illife. *Africans*.

⁸⁶ Ibid; Jeffrey Herbst, *States and Power in Africa: Comparative Lessons in Authority and Control*, (Princeton University Press, 2014).

⁸⁷ Van der Kraaij, 1969); Crowder et. al., 1966.

inhabitants of the U.S., they intimately viewed themselves as part of the greater Western civilization and sought to be accepted among the Western nations as one of them. But even though Liberia wished to be accepted among the Western imperial powers, particularly the U.S. and Great Britain, the adoration was not exactly reciprocated. The lack of fanfare for Liberia among the dominant colonial powers meant that Liberia could not count on the consistent protection of an external patron.

Indeed, Liberia's would-be strongest ally, the U.S. with whom the Republic shared historical ties, was ambivalent at best about offering its full protection to the fledgling country throughout its existence.⁸⁸ Rather than enthusiastically taking up the cause of preserving Liberian sovereignty as some would argue, the U.S. adopted a neutral foreign policy posture toward Liberia in the 19th and 20th Centuries. The U.S.' policy toward Liberia was made plain in the communication between H.W. Erskine, Superintendent of Montserrado County, Liberia, and J. Milton Turner, U.S. Consul General to Liberia on Oct 26, 1871. Fearful that a civil war was looming in the Republic following the forced removal of Liberia's first pure-Black President,⁸⁹ Superintendent Erskine inquired whether, "...his Excellency [will] not receive us [Royer's sympathizers] under his protection at once and then refer the matter to His Government." Erskine continued that his request was "for the sake of humanity and to prevent a civil war" which loomed in the wake of Royer's forced removal. He hoped that the U.S. would come to the government's rescue "on the ground of [their] nativity [they] being most

⁸⁸ Reese, 2018; George Ellis, "Political Institutions in Liberia," *The American Political Science Review*, (1911), 213.

⁸⁹ I consider this event in greater detail in the following chapter.

born in America.”⁹⁰ In response to Superintendent Erskine’s request, U.S. Consul General Turner summarized the U.S.’ position quite succinctly, stating:

Sir, your communication of the 26th inst. is received. In reply I have to say that upon the receipt by me of the official intelligence to wit, that "a revolution now exists in Liberia" I at once proceeded to notify the government of Liberia that the policy of the United States Govt. would be that of strict neutrality.⁹¹

This neutrality remained until WWII the U.S. required Liberia’s raw materials such as rubber and iron ore for its war effort. At which point the U.S. began to take greater interest in Liberia albeit for self-interested reasons.⁹² Moreover, to the extent that the other European competing imperial powers expressed an interest in Liberia, it was with the desire to acquire territory and access to strategic trade routes, not to prop up the TWP government. Although examples of outside intervention do exist, intervening forces only did so when their citizens or subjects were impacted. Therefore, when the Germans stationed a war boat on the Kru Coast in 1915, it was to indemnify the shipwrecked German merchants that had been looted by Liberia’s native tribes in the region, not because they cared about preserving Liberia’s sovereignty.⁹³ This lack of foreign support meant that Liberia could not rely on a patron state for protection.

Although Liberia’s sovereignty had been recognized by most of the world’s independent states by the mid-19th Century, Europe’s appetite for colonial expansion put Liberia in an extremely precarious situation. The lack of a professional military and a weak economic foundation made the Black settler nation vulnerable to external threat.

⁹⁰ Holsoe, Box 56, Roy in the U.S Government Transition undated, Super Intendent H.W. Ersskine to J. Milton Turner, October 26, 1871, 13.

⁹¹ Ibid., Emphasis by Wehyee.

⁹² Van der Kraaij, 1983; Robert Crower et. al., 1966.

⁹³ Holsoe, Box 57, Roye Materials, Temporary Notes, in Benjamin Brawley, A Social History of the America, 197.

The greatest external danger to Liberia was the threat of annexation by its much greater colonial rivals, Germany, France, and Great Britain. While each of these great powers posed considerable existential challenges to Liberia at various periods, the British threat loomed much more eminently in the TWP's infancy than any other. This – as Liberian Secretary of State H.R.W. relayed to his Legislature in his December 21, 1871, report – was due to France and Germany having undermined their abilities to compete in the colonial contest for African lands at the time due to the losses each country accrued during the Franco-German War in the previous year.⁹⁴

On August 17, 1870, Liberian Secretary of State J.N. Lewis wrote to Vice President James S. Smith, who was acting in the President's stead upon his visit to the U.S. In his letter, the Secretary informed the Vice President of his dispatch to the Liberian Counsel General in London informing him of an incident that threaten the country's security. The dispatch explained that the British schooner *Julia Ellen*, which had been wrecked at Cape Palmas in the *Galina* Region of the North-Western territory along the Sierra Leonian and Liberian border, was attacked and robbed by subjects of a native Liberian sovereign, Prince Manna, resulting in a total loss of £1,213.82 - a sum that the Liberian government could not readily repay. Because the British government considered the attacking natives as subjects of the Liberian government, they held Liberia liable for the damages and sought remuneration from the government. The Secretary of State feared that:

The robbery of the property of the wrecked British Schooner 'Julia Ellen' at Cape Palmas will ... be a grave matter for demand for indemnification from us" emphasizing

⁹⁴ H.R.W Johnson, Liberian Gov Archive I, Box 2, *State Department, General Correspondence, 1868-1872*, 116.

that “the friendly relations which have hitherto existed between this, and the British Government are already disturbed.”⁹⁵

He therefore ordered the Secretary of Treasury to arrange an installment program that would allow the government to pay the debt incrementally. To acquire the funds for the repayment of the *Julia Ellen*, the Secretary of State affected a loan in oil with H.C. Criswick, a local British merchant, and called on local officials and merchants at Grand Bassa to help with the government’s financial burden. The decree was given further credence with the legislature’s passage of a law “allowing foreigners to lease lands” to be “hypothecated for the payment of the interest and principal of the loan.”⁹⁶ Even with the installment plan in motion, the government had trouble meeting its obligations, which put it at a tremendous disadvantage in its foreign relations with the British. The Secretary of State lamented that:

If we could meet the second instalment within a short time, we could speak more to the purpose in our correspondence with Her Majesty’s Government which might be of some service to us; but embarrassed as we now are with the second installment unpaid, we are comparatively speaking, tied down hand and foot, and obliged to swallow any remark, however offensive without a contradiction.⁹⁷

Just as the Secretary of State feared, the British Government grew impatient with the Liberian Government and was unwilling to make any additional accommodations after the Liberian government failed to honor the terms of its agreement. The British agent Earl Granville, Governor-in-Chief of Sierra Leone, responded to the Liberian Consulate that he “cannot recommend H.M [Her Majesty’s] government to acquiesce in

⁹⁵ Ibid., 29.

⁹⁶ Moore to Jackson, Liberian Gov Archive 1, Box 2, *State Department, General Correspondence 1873-1877*, 72.

⁹⁷ J.N Lewis to V.P. Smith, Liberian Gov Archive 1, Box 2, *State Department, General Correspondence, 1868-1872*, 29.

a proposal which will probably result in the liability of the Liberian Government becoming doubled within a few weeks.”⁹⁸ The Governor then ordered a war steamer to collect the outstanding payment owed to his government. In his September 23, 1870, dispatch to the Secretary of state, Liberian Consul General Ralston communicated President Roye’s dismay at the issue:

Mr. Roye writes to me that he is very much distressed at the intelligence I communicated to him about the second visit of the Governor of Sierra Leone to Monrovia in a war steamer to collect the instalment of the pecuniary mulch which the late President engaged to pay. I remonstrated with the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs against the second visit to Monrovia as it would be of no use in collecting the money, whilst it would be of the greatest injury to Liberia, by increasing the mortification and shame already inflicted upon us by the first visit which would still more reduce the prestige which the aborigines had for the Liberians and thus a great many troubles and even insurrections might arise.⁹⁹

Ultimately, the British and Liberian governments agreed to arbitrate the dispute over the sacking of the *Julia Ellen*, but Consul General Ralston would not see this process through. Upon Ralston’s retirement, President Roye appointed David Chinery, a British subject, to the post of Consulate General to Great Britain and Ireland in the hopes that he would help the Liberian government assuage the British.¹⁰⁰ Yet what was at stake was much greater than the indemnity affair. The greater underlying issue at hand concerned the land dispute between the British and Liberian governments in the Sherbro region in the Northwest territory which was enflamed by Prince Manna and his followers.

⁹⁸ Ibid., Kennedy to the Government of Monrovia, 30.

⁹⁹ Ibid., Gerard Ralston to Consulate General of Liberia, 31.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., J.N. Lewis to D. Chinery, 43.

In his February 20, 1871 memo to Arthur Kennedy, Acting Governor of Sierra Leone, Secretary of State J.N. Lewis charged that “Prince Manna has recently captured one of the female citizens of Liberia and keeps her confined, he has also slain thirteen of the Vai chiefs in our territory.”¹⁰¹ Fearing that if left unchecked, Prince Manna’s uprising would incite similar insurrections from other native tribes, the Liberian government endeavored to send a military expedition into the Northwest territory to “check the aggression of the belligerent chieftain.”¹⁰² In his dispatch to Secretary of State J.N. Lewis, dated September 2, 1871, Sidney Garnet Crummell, Acting Secretary of State, captured the spirit of the times exceptionally well, bemoaning that:

I fear for the present moral effect of revolution of any kind for a country so young and feeble – and I do fear for the precedent of lawlessness and sedition if once allowed to run on undisturbed and fear for Liberia so early in its national existence threatened with the insubordination and weakness governmental and nation that may produce total annihilation.¹⁰³

Although the government’s counter-insurgency campaign in the Manna region proved successful, it also dredged up further conflict with the British government. It was alleged by British traders that during its campaign against Prince Manna, the Liberian government “destroyed and plunder[ed]” the property of British merchants. Siegmund A. Stonewehr, a British merchant at Shebro testified to Acting Police Magistrate Pike, that one Jeremiah Rolle, a fellow merchant’s factory, had been “plundered and burnt in the territory of Prince Mannoh.”¹⁰⁴ Peter George Williams, Mr. Rolle’s assistant further

¹⁰¹ J.N. Lewis letter to Arthur Kennedy, Liberian Gov Archive 1, Box 2, *State Department, General Correspondence, 1868-1872.*, 50.

¹⁰² *Ibid.*, 50.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*, Crummell to Lewis, 91.

¹⁰⁴ S.A. Stonewehr letter to Pike, Liberian Gov Archive 1, Box 3, *Foreign Correspondence, 1852-1889*, 12.

testified that he was present when “three vessels under the Liberian flag anchored off the factory and the town which is near the factory.” Upon seeing the vessels anchored, he “hoisted the British flag” hoping that it would deter an assault by the Liberian army, but at “about 7 o’clock... the vessels began to send rockets into the town of Mannah as also into Mr. Rolle’s factory.”¹⁰⁵ These events served to heighten tensions between the two governments and posed a serious challenge to the TWP which managed these affairs.

The British used such examples as evidence that the Sherbero region was not effectively administered by a sovereign nation and that the Liberian government had no right to seize and otherwise hinder trade within that territory.¹⁰⁶ Liberia disputed this claim on the grounds that the territory had been legally purchased from local tribes by the Liberian government and was administered by it. They, therefore, believed that the British government had no claim to the territory and that the Liberian government acted within its rights to seize the goods being illegally traded in the region. In his memo to Consul General Chinery dated January 23, 1871, concerning the Northwest boundary matter, Consul General J.N. Lewis asserted most fervently that “I see no ground whatever for any fear as to any claim upon our Government”¹⁰⁷

In his report to the Legislature on the boundary issue, Secretary of State H.R.W Johnson recalled that “it was not until British traders from Sierra Leone began to spread

¹⁰⁵ Ibid., 13.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid., 16.

¹⁰⁷ J.N. Lewis to D. Chinery, Liberian Gov Archive 1, Box 2, *State Department, General Correspondence, 1868-1872*, 48.

in the disputed territories, that Her Majesty's Government began to oppose"¹⁰⁸ the Liberian government's right to the territory. The Secretary further recounted that:

From the year 1849 when the first territory was bought, to the year 1860, when Her Majesty's war steamer *Torch* forcibly took out of Monrovia harbour the two British Schooners *Phoebe* and *Emily* seized for trading illegally in territories belonging to the Republic, there was no dispute as to the justness" of the Republic's claim.¹⁰⁹

Secretary Johnson further accounted that when President Benson visited Britain in 1862 the British Minister George Hammond affirmed that "the deeds for these [disputed] territories appear to Her Majesty's Government to be bear the character and appearance of valid deeds." Therefore, continued Johnson, at present, Her Majesty's government was "prepared to acknowledge the right of Liberia to the country extending from San Pedro on the east to the Western boundary of the Mutru territory on the west."¹¹⁰ The Liberian government was, hence, optimistic that the U.S. agent selected by both the British and Liberian governments to arbitrate the land dispute would thus offer a verdict favorable to the Republic. This would not bear out in the end. Instead, as I show in the following section land dispute would reemerge as the seminal issue between Liberia and its regional rivals Great Britain and France several decades later providing continuous stimulation for the regime's various factions to unify.

Faced with the dual threats emanating from within their borders by their vast native population, as well as the threat of territorial seizure from the surrounding great colonial powers, particularly Great Britain in the earlier period of the TWP's existence, Liberia's elites were deathly conscience of their insecurity. This insecurity which

¹⁰⁸ Ibid., H.R.W. Johnson to Legislature, 115.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid., 115.

¹¹⁰ Ibid.

punctured through the country, impelled Liberia's elites to unify under a durable dominant party.

With the looming threat of annexation in the background, Liberia's demographic makeup also began to change in the mid-1800s. The reordering of Liberia's settler population provided the TWP. Several seismic currents allowed Johnson and the TWP to succeed in the reordering of the Liberian body politic. The Reconstruction efforts that took place in the U.S. following the Civil War ushered in a new era for Blacks in the American South. With the end of slavery, Black Americans grew hopeful that their circumstances would improve in America. This new heightened optimism translated to a precipitous decline in emigration to Liberia. The low immigration rate and the high death rate among the Mulatto settlers reduced their numbers as well as their political power.¹¹¹

Political advancement for both the Congo and Black Americo-Liberians was not forthcoming, however. This is because both settler classes were confronted with the proverbial color line that structured their society and because the reigning mulatto class under the RP was unwilling to relinquish its power. Yet both groups, dissatisfied with their relatively low political status, sought to wrestle power away from the mulatto adherents of the RP. Before doing so, however, they required greater numbers because, in the early part of the nation's existence, Americo-Liberians vastly outnumbered the Congo. Yet in the years leading up to the TWP's formation and its first electoral victory, Liberia received an exponential increase in black immigration. Huberich reports that "the total number of recaptured Africans repatriated from 1820-

¹¹¹ David Reese, 2018; James Ciment, 2013; Robert Smith, 1970.

1830 was 120,” and “by 1843 it was 304.” This compares to 2,887 Americo-Liberians who immigrated during the same period.¹¹² Yet the total number of recaptured Africans swelled to 5722 by 1867, only two years before the TWP seized the reins of the national government from the RP.¹¹³ As I argue in the following chapter, although the surge in black immigration provided the coalition of black settlers enough bodies to credibly contest the RP at the ballot box, the civilizational myth provided them a shared identity and purpose.

3.2 International Pressure and Dominant Party Consolidation

The battle for Africa fought between the European colonial powers was not a war in the conventional sense with each actor taking up arms against the other. Although the conquest was a bloody affair for the conquered, for the conquerors, it was a battle fought through diplomacy, the rules of which were outlined at the infamous Berlin Conference. Fatigued by past wars fought between them on the European continent, the European powers committed to dividing up Africa between themselves absent armed conflict.¹¹⁴ They convened in Berlin Germany in 1884-5 at the behest of the notorious Belgian King, Leopold II, to work out the logistics.

At the conference, which was attended by all colonial powers at the time, except Liberia, it was decided that to avoid interstate conflict over colonial possessions, each colonizer would respect the other's colonial claim. That is, the claim of each actor would be considered an extension of that country's sovereignty, legally precluding other

¹¹² Ciment, 2013, chapt. 3, Loc 1037.

¹¹³ Charles Huberich, Political and Legislative History of Liberia, Pt. II., Chapt. XXIII, 630.

¹¹⁴ Crawford Young, The Post-Colonial State in Africa: Fifty Years of Independence, 1960-2010. (The University of Wisconsin Press 2012); Herbst, 2014.

powers from transgressing against it. The European powers carved out territorial boundaries on the African map and divided up the continent amongst themselves. However, the powers never specified guidelines for determining the condition under which the territorial claim of an imperial power could legitimately be challenged by another.¹¹⁵ This loophole left weak imperial powers such as Liberia vulnerable to external intrigue.

Of course, the protection which the principle of *effective control* provided the TWP was not absolute. In the decades between the end of the 19th Century and early 20th Century, Liberia's imperial rivals chipped away at roughly two thirds (2/3rds) of its original territory. In 1885, the British agent at Sierra Leone seized possession of a vast tract of land on the coastal region between Sherbro and the Mano River. Fearing that the absence of a formal boundary agreement between itself and Great Britain would leave it vulnerable to British conquest, the Liberian government desperately sought to reach an agreement on the boundary issue with Great Britain.¹¹⁶ Just two years earlier, the issue was already the top priority of President Anthony William Gardiner.

When the President called a special meeting with his cabinet on March 24, 1882, to deliberate on the pressing issues of the day, the Boundary question was the most prominent issue considered. After extensive deliberation, the full cabinet "expressed great regret that circumstances of weakness and poverty as a nation should drive [them] to yield any portion of the territory" to an external power, but appreciating the severity of the circumstances in which they found themselves they, "deemed [it] prudent

¹¹⁵ Illife. *Africans*; Herbst, 2014.

¹¹⁶ Whyte, 2017, 28-32.

to choose the lesser evil and agree to submit” to the British Government’s proposal to “fix the Northwest boundary of Liberia at the Maffa River. The cabinet understood that this was better than the alternative of having the British agent “resort to measures that would subject the country to great distress and humiliation.”¹¹⁷

After losing a portion of its territory to British encroachment in 1885, the Liberian government succeeded in reaching an agreement on November 11 of that year with Great Britain on the delineation of their Northwestern boundary. Although not ratified by the British until 1890, this initial agreement respected much of Liberia’s original territorial claims while relinquishing the portion at that time under British occupation to them. However, as British commercial activities and native disturbances increased over the next few decades, the once amicable relations that existed between the two governments began to sour.¹¹⁸

In 1904, the British Consul at Monrovia complained to the Liberian Government that the Gissies, a native group residing in both Liberia and the British territory of Sierra Leone, were in a civil war against each other. The Ka Furah clan on the Liberian side was accused by the British of carrying out raids against the Fah Bunde clan on the British side and disrupting British trade. In response the British requested and were granted permission by the Liberian government to move their troops into Liberian territory to quell the situation. The British once again seized upon the request which the Liberian government thought to be in “the friendliest neighborly spirit” to expand their

¹¹⁷ Liberian Government Archives I, Box 2, *Cabinet Minutes, July 1879-1884*, 30.

¹¹⁸ Liberian Gov Archives II, Box 11, Great Britain, Anglo-Liberian Boundary Commission 1911-1913, 1-6.

territorial claim in the region, establishing a post “as far as the Mafissa River” some 20 miles into Liberian territory.¹¹⁹

After moving to occupy Liberia’s Northwestern territory in 1904, the British drafted another formal demarcation treaty which they tried to pressure the Liberian government to sign recognizing the new border. For several years the Liberian government resisted signing the treaty on grounds that “if under any pretense, the existing frontier limits were disturbed or in any way altered, the Convention of 1885 would cease to have any value for Liberia.” Moreover, the Liberians believed that if they acquiesced to the British demands, that “these aggressive movements might continue and on other frontiers of Liberia, other powers would require similar compensation and justify themselves by reference to the action of the British Government.”¹²⁰

Unfortunately for the Americo-Liberian settlers, the Liberian government could not resist international pressure for very long because in order for Liberia to absolve itself of the second British Loan which it took out in 1907 to help bolster its economy. Within a few years of receiving the loan, the Liberian government was displeased by the terms of the loan and sought to absolve itself of it. Unfortunately, the British government was unwilling to forgive Liberia’s debt, and the country had still not accrued the necessary revenue to pay back the loan.

Using the loan as leverage, the British forced Liberia to sign a new Treaty In 1911 ceasing even more territory from Liberia. Lacking the military and economic clout to defend itself, the Liberian government appealed to the U.S. to negotiate the

¹¹⁹ Ibd, President Arthur Barclay quote found on pg. 6.

¹²⁰ Ibd.

settlement of its second international loan with the Liberian Development Company.¹²¹ To settle the loan matter, Rowland P. Faulkner, the U.S. agent designated to negotiate between Liberia and the British company strongly suggested that Liberia acquiesce to British demands and sign the new treaty in 1911.¹²² This loss was especially painful for the Liberians because several years earlier, in 1907, the country was pressured to sign a demarcation treaty with the French government, ceding large tracts of its territory to France.¹²³ Hlophe succinctly summarizes the ramification of Liberia's border disputes with Great Britain and France accordingly:

In dispute with Britain over a 1842 treaty, Liberia lost Sherbro Island and the Gallina territories on her northern frontiers. France laid claim to the entire coastal territory of Liberia. By the turn of the 20th Century, it had lost the Southeastern coastal territory from San Pedro to the Cavalla to the French and approximately 30,000 miles of territory in the northwest to the British. Of its original territory of 167,000 square miles, Liberia ended with only a quarter of this land.¹²⁴

Thus, not only did British and French intrigue into Liberian territory provide initial motivation for Liberia's settler groups to unify in the formative years of the TWP, but the persistent threat of total annexation presented by Liberia's powerful imperial rivals throughout the decades following the Scramble for Africa, pressured Liberia's settler elites to remain unified to co-opt tribal leaders to preserve the country's sovereignty. The motivation to remain unified was quite simple. Failure to remain united under a single party amid such extreme international pressure could have easily spelled the end of Black settler rule in Liberia. Indeed, President Arthur Barclay, the eighth TWP

¹²¹ The loan taken out by the Liberian Development Company is referred to interchangeably as British Loan or the Johnston Loan, after Sir Harry Johnston, the British chairman of the Liberian Development Company.

¹²² Liberian Gov Archives II, Box 11, Great Britain, Anglo-Liberian Boundary Commission 1911-1913, 9.

¹²³ Liberian Gov Archives II, Box 11. Franco-Liberian Boundary List of Documents, c. June 1956, 11.

¹²⁴ Hlophe, 1979, 98.

president, captured this sentimentality in his December 11, 1906, Address to the Legislature, declaring to his fellow citizens that, “we shall never be able, adequately to discharge our duty to the State unless, while attending to our own concerns, we keep a finger on the pulse of International Public Opinion.” “Our duty to our Country,” he continued “is to some extent marked out by the thought of the world today of which we form a part.”¹²⁵

Internal fragmentation such as what resulted from Liberia’s first disastrous loan, and episode which I consider in the next chapter, more than any other mechanism has been linked to regime breakdown. In the absence of heavy industry and or a robust reserve of natural resources from which TWP could utilize windfalls to assuage its coalition members, the threat of total inhalation was a powerful unifying agent for Liberia’s settler elites. Being, as Barclay described, “an African State surrounded by populations of the same race, under alien rule,”¹²⁶ Liberia’s Black settlers could not afford to let their guard down in the late 19th and early 20th century colonial West Africa. They in essence were in a perpetual state of insecurity.

The insecurity produced by the colonial great powers on all of the country’s borders – The British to its Northwestern border, the French to its Northeastern and Southeastern border – provided the necessary conditions for Liberia’s disparate settler factions to unite under a dominant party and remain so until the regime began to unravel during the Tolbert administration in the 1970s, ultimately collapsing in 1980.

¹²⁵ Elwood Dunn, Sr., *The Annual Messages of the Presidents of Liberia 1848-2010 State of the Nation Addresses to the National Legislature: From Joseph Jenkins Roberts to Ellen Sirleaf*. (Berlin: New York: De Gruyter), 448.

¹²⁶ *Ibid.*

This insecurity, more so than the country's economic crisis, pushed Liberia's political factions to align.

3.3 Conclusion

In this chapter, I have argued that the international forces of the late 19th Century combined to provide Liberia with the necessary conditions to erect a durable dominant party. Although the literature on dominant party formation has tended to focus on regimes founded from revolutionary origins such as Mexico's PRI, the Liberian case reveals that a revolution per se may not be the most important predictor for dominant party creation. Ultimately, I find evidence that rather than domestic level factors or the specific international level predictors emphasized by the extent theories of dominant party formation and survival, international factors were more salient in the rise of a dominant party regime in Liberia. Despite the absence of an external occupying force against which to unite, the ongoing threat of territorial annexation compelled Liberia's elites to unify under a single dominant party.

Although the U.S. for instance, may have had an interest in Liberia's existence, it was not willing to risk serious conflict with other powerful colonial powers for Liberia's protection. The precipitation of foreign intrigue into the country's territory and the omnipresent threat of total annexation pushed Liberia's settler factions to set their differences aside and unite under the TWP. These findings raise interesting questions about how necessary mass level revolutions or elite-led counter revolutions are to the creation of a dominant party system. I leave it to future research to explore this relationship in other contexts.

Chapter 4. The Civilizational Myth: Symbolic Legitimation and Party Cohesion

*"While we have in our aborigines a population sufficient, in point of numbers, for all the wants of this nation, still, there will be needed, to some extent, and for some time to come, that civilization and Christianity possessed by our brothers in other lands, to give this native element its proper direction, consistency and force."*¹²⁷

Since the previous chapter centered on the international forces that conditioned Liberia's domestic politics. The next three chapters will focus on how the TWP utilized the Three Pillars of Authoritarian Stability to deal with the domestic and international pressures it faced. The current chapter will emphasize the legitimation component of my argument. I utilize secondary and archival documents to show how the TWP leveraged the pre-existing civilizational tropes of the colonial period to formulate a unifying national ideology to legitimate elite settler rule. I argue that the civilizational myth, the Party's primary symbolic legitimation tool, was an indispensable factor in the Party's stability.

This chapter is divided into four sections. The first section *Ethnicity and the Genesis of the TWP* traces how Liberia's ethnic divide structured early Liberian society and how ethnicity in turn influenced the TWP's creation. The second section *Ethnicity and Economic Crisis* sketches how Liberia's ethnic divide as well as its abysmal economic conditions impacted the country's first TWP President. The aim will be to provide evidence affirming the depth of Liberia's ethnic cleavage to foreground the last

¹²⁷ Hilary Richard Wright Johnson Annual Message to the Legislature, circa December 4, 1884, in, Elwood Dunn, Sr., *The Annual Messages of the Liberian Presidents*, (Berlin: New York: De Gruyter, 2011), 345.
https://books.google.com/books?id=saY4ubEU20QC&pg=PR13&lpg=PR13&dq=Reginald+B.+Goodridge,+Sr&source=bl&ots=K7pf23VnNZ&sig=ACfU3U2id2emMRPyAFAluTJZxpOqR34BZw&hl=en&sa=X&ved=2ahUKEwiHp6_v0d_nAhVCV6wKHRK4Bo0Q6AEwBHoECAoQAQ#v=onepage&q=Reginald%20B.%20Goodridge%2C%20Sr&f=false

two sections emphasizing the legitimization ideology that allowed the TWP to overcome Liberia's political divide. *The Civilizational Myth and Party Cohesion* section reveals how the TWP appropriated existing civilizational tropes to construct a national narrative that subsumed all of Liberia's settler factions. The Final section, *Civilizational Myth and International Legitimation* provides some evidence of the TWP's employment of its national narrative to gain Liberia the acceptance of the international community.

4.1 Ethnicity and the Genesis of the True Whig Party

From the founding of the Liberian settlement in 1822 until the late 19th Century, Liberian political life was defined by a strict social hierarchy. At the bottom stratum of this hierarchy was the country's vast native population. Although no census data exists to provide a precise account of the country's native tribespeople before the post-WWII period, the 1974 Census shows that by that date, Liberia's natives made up 97.1 percent of the total Liberian population.¹²⁸ From this, one can reasonably assume that at least forty times as many natives lived on the land than the 2,388 settlers reported to be living there in the 1843 Census.¹²⁹ Indeed, the RP President J.J. Roberts estimated in 1869 the country's population to consist of "no less than 600,000... of whom 15,000 emigrated from the United States, the remainder being for the most part aboriginal inhabitants."¹³⁰

¹²⁸ Republic of Liberia, *Census of Population and Housing Final # 2*, 1974, xii, in William Kory Collection, 1959-1995, Government.

¹²⁹ Tom Shick, *Liberia Census: An Analysis of Settler Society Before Independence*, 1843, 2, in Svend Holsoe Collection, Box 57, Printed Materials, Chronological/Mixed.

¹³⁰ Roberts quoted from Jane Martin, "How to Build a Nation: Liberian Ideas About National Integration in the Later Nineteenth Century," *Liberian Journal*, Vol II, 1969, 15.

Although a few of these native people came to be incorporated into the Liberian body politic, most were excluded from any meaningful participation in the country's political life. Until the 20th Century, Liberia's relationship with its native population was fraught with mistrust, abuse, and outright war. In fact, the statutes of Liberia formerly classified native Africans as "subjects" not citizens.¹³¹ According to a notorious 1862 supreme court ruling in the case of *Peter Davis v. Republic of Liberia*, the court determined that while the "depth of ignorance" of native subjects and their "incapability of understanding civilized governments" made it necessary for the Liberian state to govern over them, that "they were not to have the benefit of it when they are arraigned under it for crimes committed."¹³²

The Congo people, Africans from various parts of the continent that had been captured and released into Liberia by British and American naval ships from slave smugglers following the abolition of the international slave trade in 1808, occupied the stratum directly above the native masses. Given their relative social privilege in the early Liberian social hierarchy – that is, relative to the native masses – we can think of the Congoes as Liberia's lower middle class. In the early days of the colony's existence, the Congoes were few, comprising merely 424 settlers compared to 2,887 Americo-Liberians from 1820-1843.¹³³ Because of their small numbers and their lack of education early on, the Congo people did not play a very significant role in early

¹³¹ Jane Martin, "How to Build a Nation," 1969, 17-38.

¹³² Charles Huberich, *Political and Legislative History of Liberia*, Pt. II., Chapt. XXIII, 867.

¹³³ *Ibid*, Part 1, Chapt. XVI, 630. see A.C.S Ann. Reports, VI, 30, for original.

Liberian politics.¹³⁴ Yet as I demonstrate, this lower-mid-level societal group would play a prominent role in the TWP's ascendancy.

Above the Congo settlers were Liberia's pure Black American (and eventually West Indian) immigrant settlers. At the top of the social order was the Mulatto or fair-skinned mixed American immigrants. The American immigrant settlers endearingly called themselves Americo-Liberians as homage to their country of origin. Fierce mistrust and animosity existed between Liberia's Mulatto and Black settlers. The ethnic/class boundaries between Liberia's Mulatto and Black settlers can be traced to the Black experience in pre-Civil War America. In the 18th and the 19th Century U.S., two contingents of Blacks existed – free Blacks, who made up a minority of the Black population, and enslaved Blacks, who constituted the vast majority of Blacks in the United States.¹³⁵

Most of the U.S.' free Blacks were racially mixed and generally lighter-skinned than their pure-Black enslaved counterparts. Although their status as free persons did not guarantee them equality to their white countrymen, America's free Mulattos were typically better off than their pure Black counterparts. They were often more educated and perceived as more adaptable to white culture and civilization.¹³⁶ The relative privilege Mulattos enjoyed in the U.S. put them at odds with their pure Black brethren

¹³⁴ Note that there is a discrepancy between the census summary provided by Huberich and that provided by Tom Shick (the first 1843 census figures discussed above). The difference is likely due to the fact that Shick's summary does not include census data from the Cape Palmas settlement, which until 1857 was under the jurisdiction of the autonomous Maryland Colonization Society. All agree however, that when the ACS conducted its 1843 census, the number of Americo-Liberians was vastly greater than that of the recaptured Africans.

¹³⁵ David Reese, 2018, loc 1180-1196; Charles River Editors, *The End of Democracy in Liberia*, (Charles River Editors, 2018), location, 74-140.

¹³⁶ James Ciment, 2013, Ch., 3; David Reese, 2018, location, 1234-1270.

who often viewed them with an air of suspicion; seeing them more as sympathizers of the white race than champions of Black equality. Edward Wilmot Blyden, renown early pan-Africanist of Igbo (pure Black) descent and one of the TWP's founding members, bleakly described the Black-Mulatto color divide of the 19th Century in his 1874 letter to William Coppinger, Secretary of the American Colonization Society. Blyden asserted in his correspondence that:

Freeman reminds me of the bitterness which prevails in America between the colored and blacks, which he says only a few white men understand. The Mulatto or mixed man, whenever any question comes up in which the whole class of colored peoples are interested, and by which the mixed element hopes to secure some advantage for themselves, then the Mulatto or quadroon is loud in calling himself a Negro, and pretends to be proud of the name, while his concept for the Negro is supreme.¹³⁷

When the American ACS commissioned the *Elizabeth* to set sail for a small tract of land in the hopes of establishing a Black colony on the West Coast of Africa in what would become Liberia in 1822, the Blacks most readily available for emigration and those deemed suitable by some members of the ACS were the free Mulattos. The racial color divide that characterized the Black experience in Antebellum America traveled across the Atlantic to permanently shape Liberia's ethnic hierarchy, with the merchant Mulatto settlers at the helm and the pure Black agriculturalists at the bottom. Blyden again reveals the nature of the ethnic cleavage in the years leading up to the TWP's ascension, maintaining that:

However opposed it may have been to the past policy of your country [the U.S.] to distinguish between the half breed Negro and the pure Negro and however futile such a distinction may have been where nothing depended upon it but the facility of general proscription - you cannot hope or expect to build up in this country a Negro government without bearing in mind the influence of race characteristics and tendencies. The Mulatto, conceived as he was as a general thing in violation of all moral and social laws,

¹³⁷ Blyden to Coppinger, *Selected Letters of Edward Wilmot Blyden*, 176, na, Holsoe Collection, Box 57.

has brought to the Negro race nothing but physical degeneracy and mental and moral obliquity.¹³⁸

Even during the period of white colonial administration (1822-1835), the Mulatto settlers were given first preference for administrative positions by the agents of the ACS in the colony, which allowed them to dominate not only in the civil service but also the educational and commercial sectors as well. Most of the “merchant princes” in the 1840s, such as R. A Sherman, Joseph Roberts, and Frances Devany were Mulattos.¹³⁹ Therefore when the white administrators of the ACS stepped down from governing Liberia, the Mulatto settlers assumed the ruling class position and organized themselves in the Mulatto dominated Republican Party (RP).

Although some of the most enterprising Black settlers such as Wilmot Blyden, J.W. Blackledge, and Edward J. Roye succeeded in overcoming the colored-based quasi caste system to become successful statesmen and merchants, most of them were agriculturalists largely engaged in cash crop farming.¹⁴⁰ Black Americo-Liberian settlers organized themselves in the True Black Man’s Party, the predecessor to the TWP. Upon independence in 1847, Joseph Jenkins Roberts, the country’s first president, a conspicuously fair-skinned Mulatto, perpetuated the skin-based caste system which he inherited. Roberts contended that since the tropical climate took a greater toll on Mulattos, they “should be favored in administrative positions.”¹⁴¹

¹³⁸ Ibid, 176.

¹³⁹ James Ciment, 2013, Chapt., 3.

¹⁴⁰ Hlophe, 1979.

¹⁴¹ Roberts’ quote found in J.B. Webster, A.A. Boahen, and H.O. Idowu, *The Growth of African Civilisation: The Revolutionary Years, West Africa Since 1800*, (Longmans, 1967), 162, Svend Holsoe Collection, Box 57, Temporary Notes.

Blyden also agreed with Roberts regarding the feebleness of the Mulatto settlers, although he disagreed with the President's prescription. Writing to his colleague cataloging "students who have ever been in Liberia college" he recalled that, "It will be seen that not only were they [enrolled students] not natives (aborigines), but more than three-fourths the number have been largely mixed with Caucasian blood, and among these death and disease have made sad ravages."¹⁴² In discussing the lack of suitable teachers for Liberia college, Blyden continued that:

"Pains and money have been bestowed upon persons largely mixed with Caucasian blood, who, if males, have mostly died, or if females, have got married and assumed the cares of a family. It seems that the females of mixed blood, who are not obliged to put forth much exertion and not subject to much exposure, last longer than the males. It appears, also, that Mulattoes born and brought up in America, if they can pass through the acclimating process, stand the climate much better than those born here, but only by engaging in as little physical mental labor as possible. Persons having an admixture of foreign blood are very frail, easily take cold, and seldom recover from a severe attack of illness. Such men have had the lead and management of things, and by the fearful example of their disastrous inactivity, have been obstructive guides, discouraging all energy and go-a-headativeness."¹⁴³

Liberian Historian James Ciment offers additional support to these claims, reporting that of the 2,887 repatriated African Americans sent to Liberia between 1831-1843, 45 percent "died of disease, war with the natives, accidents" and or other miscellaneous causes.¹⁴⁴ Of course, the Black settlers rejected the racial philosophy that led the President to make his polemic declaration and endeavored to upend the system. America's colonial societies which sponsored the repatriation of Blacks to Liberia initially reinforced the racial caste system by favoring Mulatto emigrants who

¹⁴² Blyden, *Selected Letters of Edward Wilmot Blyden*, 213-215, Svend Holsoe Collection, Box 57.

¹⁴³ Ibid, 213-215.

¹⁴⁴ James Ciment, 2013, Chapt., 3, Loc 1037.

supported the Republican Party upon their arrival because Mulattos constituted the largest number of free Blacks in the United States.¹⁴⁵ Although only 2,905 free Blacks lived in Ohio, Indiana, and Illinois in 1810, this number grew to 6,598 by 1820, and again to 14,834 by 1830, and swelled to 28,105 by 1840.¹⁴⁶ In the interest of rooting out the growing free Black population to diminish the possibility of them inciting revolt among their enslaved brethren, many members of the ACS supported expelling Mulattos in particular.

Although early Liberian history is sometimes seen strictly as a period of Mulatto rule, some scholars also characterize the period 1847-1869 as a period of a vibrant two-Party system in which substantive debates took place between the two leading parties.¹⁴⁷ The True Black Man's Party (TBMP) otherwise known as the Whig Party (WP), for instance, was able to present credible challenges to the RP in the Legislature and the Judiciary. For example, Edward James Roye, Liberia's first pure-Black president whose administration I consider in greater detail below, was a member of the Liberian Supreme Court, offering dissenting opinions on important national questions under the TBMP. Roye was notoriously ousted from his post as Chief Justice of the Liberian Supreme Court due to political and philosophical differences with the ruling RP.¹⁴⁸ The RP and the TBMP clashed over issues ranging from whether to sever ties with the American Colonization Society, a stance not supported by the Black Americoes

¹⁴⁵ Webster, et al., *The Growth of African Civilisation*, 1967, 162, Svend Holsoe Collection. Box 57., Temporary Notes.

¹⁴⁶ "A Lecture on African Colonization," *African Repository*, 344-345, Svend Holsoe Collection, Box 57, *African Repository* - Printed.

¹⁴⁷ Mary Fiske, 1960; Smith, 1970, 61.

¹⁴⁸ Webster et al., 1967, 162; Svend Holsoe Collection, Box 57, Temporary Notes.

and opposed by the Mulattos, and the question of whether to expand into the hinterlands, a position supported by the Black Americoes and opposed by the Mulattoes.

Still, Liberia's early political arena was less than democratic, as the RP maintained a vice-grip-like hold on national politics. Not only did all the early presidents from independence until 1869 claim membership to the RP, but much of the country's bureaucratic posts were also occupied by its members. It was under this pretext that in 1860:

“a few men of ebony complexion some of whom had fled from the wrath of segregation and discrimination, prevalent then in the land of their birth, with heroic hearts, faith in God, self-sacrificing principles... banded themselves together in a strong group, in the Settlement of Clay-Ashland, Saint Paul River..., to liberate the Republic of Liberia from the principles and practices of Toryism, Royalism and Caste distinction, which were the ideals and ideologies of the then ruling Republican Party of Liberia and formed the True Whig Party of Liberia.”¹⁴⁹

Official Party documents trace the Party's founding to the “Clay-Ashland-Settlement, Saint Paul River on the premises of John Henry William Goods under the tree in his yard.” The Party's membership came mostly from the fringes of the settlement, particularly Clay-Ashland, Louisiana, and Caldwell where many of the Congo people lived. It was well resourced upon its founding, possessing its own printing press donated by founding member John H.W. Goods.

¹⁴⁹ Col. T.W. Dupigny-Leigh, County Secretary of the True Whig Party, Liberia, 2, Svend Holsoe Collection, Box 57, *Temporary Notes on the Founding and Establishment of the True Whig Party of the Republic of Liberia*, https://drive.google.com/drive/u/0/folders/1tiBmWJKbUCUy2bvlPigneE-YSg_gYquW.

4.2 Civilizational Myth and Party Cohesion

Given Liberia's calamitous economic foundations, the TWP's leaders did not have the resources to legitimate their Party through developmental means.¹⁵⁰ Instead the Party's leadership relied on symbolic legitimation as the primary strategy to justify its rule as well as the country's very existence to its domestic audience. Specifically, the TWP leveraged a national narrative, which I call the *civilizational myth*, to bind the various settler factions into a single nation. The central feature of this national myth was the belief held by Americo-Liberian settlers that they (like their Euro-American fellows) were the purveyors of civilization. That it was up to them to bring the so-called "heathens" of the dark continent into modernity so that they too could become civilized. In his October 24, 1870, memo to the Secretary of State announcing his resignation, Consul General Gerard Ralson reflected on why he so appreciated his service to the Republic. He stated that:

I feel still the greatest interest and attachment to Liberia after more or less connection with it since 1820 (indeed in 1818) when Burgess and Mills passed through Philadelphia enroute for Africa and stayed in my father's house for some time, for the purpose of selecting a locality for the settlement of the American negroes who might be disposed to go thither for the foundation of nationality which I hope will in time diffuse civilization and Christianity throughout the immense African peninsula.¹⁵¹

In his December 8, 1870 address to the Legislature President Roye pronounced that "Notwithstanding all the sore trials and difficulties with which we had been beset, Liberia is to become one of the most important agencies in imparting light, civilization,

¹⁵⁰ The only acceptance to this claim is President William Tubman who's unprecedented 30-year reign saw the greatest growth in Liberian history. From the 1950s-early 1970s the Liberian economy was the second fastest growing economy in the world, second only to post-war Japan.

¹⁵¹ Consul General Ralson to Secretary of State Lewis, Liberian Gov Archive 1, Box 2, State Department, *General Correspondence 1868-1872*, 35.
<http://fedora.dlib.indiana.edu/fedora/get/iudl:1260884/OVERVIEW>.

and Christianity into this part of Africa."¹⁵² In defending his hinterland policy, President Anthony W. Gardener, Liberia's 9th president and TWP standard-bearer, echoed the same theme in his December 12, 1878 address to the Legislature, remarking that, "Our interior abounds in a vast variety of natural resources that can be made subservient to the commerce of the world, as well as a great benefit to say Liberia, to nothing of the civilizing effect upon the aboriginal inhabitants of the Republic of Liberia. Commerce is said to be a powerful civilizer to any people."¹⁵³ He continued that:

...It is our duty as a Christian Government to go forward and do all we can in our day and generation, to bring about the grand result, not only of the unification, but the civilization and Christianization of the thousands of heathens now sitting in darkness and in the region and shadow of death.¹⁵⁴

To be clear, the civilizational ideology was not invented by the TWP. Rather, as Consul General Ralson's reflection underscores, it was a product of the grander civilizing narrative that underpinned the colonial empires of the 18th and 19th Centuries.¹⁵⁵ Indeed, in his First Annual Address to the Legislature as the nation's first president, Joseph Jenkins Roberts of the RP asserted that "no maxim of public law – relating to savage tribes occupying territories in the dominions of civilized nations – is more universally established, than that of suffering no interference of foreigners."¹⁵⁶ This civilizational ideology was embraced by the Americo-Liberian settlers who were primarily from the U.S. and the Caribbean. As such, they were exposed to the

¹⁵² Dunn, Sr., *The Annual Messages of the Liberian Presidents*, 222.

¹⁵³ *Ibid.*, 299.

¹⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 311.

¹⁵⁵ Randolph B. Persaud, "Killing the Third World," 271.

¹⁵⁶ Dunn, *The Annual Messages of the Liberian Presidents*, 30.

paternalistic ideas that undergirded the civilizational myth, which had justified their subjugation as slaves in their former homes.¹⁵⁷

Yet, rather than accepting a subordinate status or advocating general equality upon their return to Africa, the Americo-Liberians appropriated the civilizational myth for their own use against the natives and elevated themselves as equal suppliers of civilization. Secretary of State H.R.W. Johnson communicated this quite strikingly in his December 21, 1871, report to the Legislature refuting the British claim over Liberia's northwestern territory that:

The remark of Governor Hill, that the natives will never consent to be ruled by men of their own color is exceeding invidious. If the remark be in any respect true it arises from the fact that the natives of the coast have been so corrupted through intercourse with immoral foreigners, that they have been rendered quite abnormal in their traits.¹⁵⁸

Yet although the civilizational myth predated the TWP, there was a clear difference between how the myth was used under RP rule versus the TWP. The difference between the RP's use of the myth compared to that of the TWP is that the RP mostly restricted the myth's applicability to the Mulatto settler class. The TWP on the other hand incorporated a much broader segment of the settler population, particularly the Black Americo-Liberian settlers and Congoes, most of whom at this time had lost all connection with their native homeland. Indeed, it's worth repeating here that the TWP manifesto proclaims to have been founded to "liberate the Republic of Liberia from the

¹⁵⁷ James Ciment, 2013, chapt, 3 Loc 255-357.

¹⁵⁸ Johnson to the Legislature, Liberian Gov Archive 1, *General Correspondence 1868-1872*, 115. <http://fedora.dlib.indiana.edu/fedora/get/iudl:1260884/OVERVIEW>.

principles and practices of Toryism, Royalism and Caste distinction, which were the ideas and ideologies of then the ruling Republican Party.”¹⁵⁹

The Party’s leadership affirmed its commitment to universal human rights 100 years later at the Centennial Celebration of the TWP in the statement adopted by the Party, declaring that “For over one hundred and twenty years of our e[x]sistence as a nation, our forebearers and we have striven assiduously to make our native land a center of justice, a true haven of peace and prosperity and a citadel of liberty for all.”¹⁶⁰ In this spirit, the Party’s leadership implored their partisans to “not forget that the True Whig Party has its origins historically rooted in the recognition of the vital need of equal opportunities for all people of the country regardless of status, class or background.”¹⁶¹

This is a message that resonated not only with the Black Americo Liberians, but also found resonance among the Congo population. The alliance between the Black Americo-Liberians and the Congoes was not inevitable, as either group could have aligned with any of Liberia’s other ethnic or class groupings. Instead, the Black Americo-Liberian’s alliance with their Congo brethren was a strategic political ploy by the former to seize control of Liberia through the TWP. This merger was made possible because the Black Americoes were able to bring the Congoes into the Party’s tent by identifying with them and incorporating them into the national legitimization myth. From the colonial period and throughout the RP’s reign, the Black Americoes and Congoes were

¹⁵⁹ True Whig Party of Liberia, *Complete Dossier*, 1969, 19, Svend Holsoe Collection, Box 57. https://drive.google.com/drive/u/0/folders/1tiBmWJKbUCUy2bvlPigneE-YSg_gYquW.

¹⁶⁰ Republic of Liberia, *One Hundred Years Later*, 1.

¹⁶¹ True Whig Party of Liberia, *Complete Dossier*, 1969, 20, Svend Holsoe Collection, Box 57.

generally perceived and treated as second-class citizens (the latter much more so than the former).¹⁶²

The origin of the Mulatto and Black dichotomy which has its roots in the antebellum U.S. was discussed above. Unlike the Mulatto and Black Americoes, the Congoes had not been exposed in any meaningful way to Western culture prior to their arrival to Liberia. Originating from disparate localities throughout the African continent, they shared little beyond their skin color with each other and much less with the Black Americoes. Being generally of darker complexion, they had even less in common with the Mulatto emigrants. Although the Congoes were given provisions such as housing, food, land, and education to support their livelihoods under the supervision of the ACS and eventually the Liberian government, this was done in such a patronizing manner, as to render their social status below both cadres of the Americo-Liberian settlers, but above the aboriginal tribal people. In describing the arrangements adopted for “disposing” of the Congoes, the ACS’s agent J. Ashmun communicated the following:

1. They are to form a community by themselves, entirely unconnected, except in worship, and as hereafter state, with the other Colonists. They reside together, under the constant direction of Major T. Draper, a single man, who constantly occupies apartments connected with theirs
2. The Superintendent is to control their hours of rising and sleeping, lead the family devotions, diligently instruct them in reading, writing, figures, and the principles of Christianity from three to four hours, daily.
3. D. George¹⁶³ is appointed to take charge of them at a particular hour every day, leading them into the field, and teach them agriculture, for several hours subject to future designation.¹⁶⁴

¹⁶² Blyden, *Selected Letters of Edward Wilmot Blyden*, 177, Svend Holsoe Collection, Box 57.

¹⁶³ From the available data, I’m unable to determine who exactly D. George was, but he was clearly an agent put in charge of providing the Congoes the skills to become self-sufficient contributors to their new home.

¹⁶⁴ Huberich, Pt. I., Chapt. XVI, 630. see A.C.S Ann. Reports, VI, 30, for original.

Thus, the Congoes were both socially and geographically separated from the Americo-Liberian settlers. Although the first group of Congoes were settled in and around Monrovia, the government began resettling them in the peripheral locations such as New Georgia, Caldwell, and Maryland where they were physically isolated from the government. Over time the Congoes began assimilating to their new home, first learning to coexist together, and eventually with the Americo-Liberian settlers. Through the basic education provided by the colonial administration (and eventually the Liberian government) and religious missionaries, the Congoes obtained a simple education, learned English and converted to Christianity. Some were adopted or apprenticed by affluent Americo-Liberian families, and in some cases eventually married into prominent families.¹⁶⁵ Through these processes, the recaptured Africans gradually became “civilized” and desired to advance their socio-political standing.

By making civil rights such as the commitment to eliminate “all forms of discrimination”¹⁶⁶ a central plank in its platform, the TWP could credibly expand the reach of the civilizational myth to include not just the Mulattos, but also the Black and Congo settlers. Because the settlers generally viewed the natives as uncivilized their incorporation into the TWP tent was tentative at best, and for most, not forthcoming until the Tubman administration in the post WW II era.¹⁶⁷ The more unifying reformation of the civilization myth was viewed much more favorably among the non-Mulatto Americo-Liberians who despite being descendants of repatriates just as their Mulatto brethren,

¹⁶⁵ Ibid., 632.

¹⁶⁶ True Whig Party of Liberia, *Complete Dossier*, 1969, 19, Svend Holsoe Collection, Box 57.

¹⁶⁷ Jane Martin, “How to Build a Nation,” 1969, 15-42.

were nevertheless viewed and treated as second-class citizens under the RP. Even though they gained a considerable degree of success in some areas of government such as the legislature and the supreme court, the presidency eluded the Black Americas for the first three decades following Liberian Independence.

The decision to expand the civilizational myth was, therefore, politically expedient for the Black Americo-Liberians.¹⁶⁸ For the Congo people, not only did the TWP alliance provide them a chance to climb the political ladder, but the myth allowed them to escape the stigma of their perceived backwardness. They had both a symbolic and material interest in aligning with the TWP because the opposition party was unwilling to recognize them as equal players in Liberian society. One of the core issues that positioned the TWP as the champion for the equality among the settlers was its opposition to a RP supported naturalization law that barred “colored men” from becoming naturalized citizens.

In the 1853 presidential election between Stephen Allen Benson of the RP and Samuel Benedict of the Whig Party (WP), the naturalization question became especially salient¹⁶⁹ To gain the support of the Congo and pure-Black settler populations, the WP opposed the naturalization law and supported the granting of citizenship to colored men upon taking the oath of allegiance. This more universal platform was pivotal in securing

¹⁶⁸ Svend Holsoe Collection, Box 56, *The Wane of Political Support*, Chapter 11, 2-4, undated.

¹⁶⁹ Note that despite tracing its official founding to the 1860, country experts also argue that the TWP was represented in Liberian politics at least since the 1850s under the name Whig Party. In the 1853 presidential election for instance, the WP ran future TWP standard Bearer Edward J. Roye as its Vice-Presidential Candidate. Because the record is not completely clear on this, a reasonable middle ground seems to me, to consider the WP as the progenitor to the TWP. However, one views the issue, the TWP continued to embrace and champion the universal interpretation of the civilizational myth effectively setting itself apart from the RP as the party of progress.

the support of the Congoes and Black Americoes for the WP. An article in the Colonization Herald summed up the WP's strategy and the eventual outcome of its approach in the following:

The Hobby of the Whigs was internal improvement, and opposition to a naturalization law. The fact of every colored man's being a citizen immediately after taking the oath of allegiance, and having the right of suffrage upon becoming freeholders, gave the Whig party more influence among recent emigrants, than had the Democratic or "True Liberian" party on account of their belief in the necessity of a Naturalization Law. With very few exceptions, every Liberian who had been in the country over twelve years voted the "True Liberian" ticket.¹⁷⁰

Yet the WP did not reap the fruit of its labor right away. Indeed, its candidate Benedict lost to Benson. After losing the 1853 contest as well as the subsequent elections, the WP reorganized itself into the TWP and elected the former WP Vice Presidential candidate, Roye as its standard bearer. The TWP continued to champion the universal social justice related themes of its predecessor which effectively expanded the concept of the civilizational myth beyond what the RP was willing and able to do. The universal nature of the Black Americoes appropriation of the Civilizational Myth also made it possible for even the Mulattos to comfortably fit under the TWP tent. Although the Mulattos eventually became subsumed into the TWP orbit, the prospect of a new political order with the Congo settlers at the helm compelled a Mulatto citizen in May 1869 to write to the editor of the *African Times* lamenting that:

¹⁷⁰ *Colonization Herald*, No. 101, August 1859, Holsoe, Box 57, Chronological/Mixed, Colonization Herald, Type Script. Jan 1858-Feb 1863 [Printed].

The Congos here are a dangerous element; the people are allowing them to vote, though they are uncivilized, which practice I consider to be very dangerous. The present Administration granted deeds for lands to these Congos, and they were allowed to vote in consequence. The Congos are vast in numbers. I shall not be surprised to see them bring forward a candidate from their own stock and choice and vote him in at the next election; and I know that they will have force enough to keep him in the Mansion; and, more so, it will be considered resisting Constitutional authority should we try to prevent him taking his seat as an executive officer. Therefore, I say, look out soon for a Congo president in Liberia.¹⁷¹

The Republic never did see a Congo president but, the TWP ascendancy ushered in over a century of Black settler rule. The cleavage between Congo and Americo-Liberian would eventually become so diluted due to intermarriage that the categories would lose their meaning in the ensuing decades. Indeed, all three groups of settlers would eventually be considered inter-changeably as Americo-Liberians, or Congo people.¹⁷²

4.3 Civilizational Myth and International Legitimation

Although the evidence is much more limited, there seems to be some signs that the civilizational myth had an international appeal as well. Liberia's ruling settlers seemed to employ the civilizational ideology to help legitimize the regime's right to exist and rule among other world powers. Given the ubiquity of the civilizational trope in 19th-century world affairs, particularly the Western civilizing mission underpinning colonialism at the time,¹⁷³ the TWP like the RP before it, was able to leverage the civilization myth

¹⁷¹ To the Editor of the *African Times*, "Election for President of Liberia," Monrovia, May 11, 1869, 142, Svend Holsoe Collection, Box 57, 1870-1890.
<file:///Users/kingwehyee/Downloads/Box%2057.%20printed%20materials.%20chronologicalmixed.%20African%20Times%20-%20printed%201870-1890.pdf>.

¹⁷² Liebenow, 1969; Saigbe Boley, *Liberia: The Rise and Fall of the First Republic*, 1983; Hlophe, 1979.

¹⁷³ Persaud, 266-283.

at strategic points to justify its colonial foothold to the pre-eminent world powers, namely France, Britain, and the United States.

In his December 12, 1876, Annual Message to the Legislature President James Spriggs Payne, Liberia's 4th president (and RP standard-bearer) pronounced his elation that the country's foreign relations "have continued...without interruption" and that "there is good reason to believe that the civilized world appreciates the endeavors of a young community to maintain a civilized government upon this dark continent."¹⁷⁴ In his December 18, 1880 message to the Legislature arguing for an updated Customs system, President Gardner quipped that "recently certain occurrences have forced upon me the conclusion that it is absolutely necessary that we resort to such measures as are resorted by all civilized governments for the maintenance and preservation of the body politic."¹⁷⁵

The internalization of the civilizational myth made the president ambivalent to the danger of having a foreign naval presence in his backyard. Rather than perceiving the posturing of the German war boat the Victoria on its shores as an imminent threat, President Gardner communicated to the Legislature in his December 1881, message his belief that the Victoria's visit "[has] done a great deal to enhance the prestige of the Republic among the coast tribes, proving to them that infractions of peace and disregard of the usages of civilized nations will not go unpunished."¹⁷⁶ Gardner's

¹⁷⁴ Dunn, 275.

https://books.google.com/books?id=saY4ubEU20QC&pg=PR13&lpg=PR13&dq=Reginald+B.+Goodridge,+Sr&source=bl&ots=K7pf23VnNZ&sig=ACfU3U2id2emMRPyAFAluTJZxpOqR34BZw&hl=en&sa=X&ved=2ahUKEwiHp6_v0d_nAhVCV6wKHRK4Bo0Q6AEwBHoECAoQAQ#v=onepage&q=Reginald%20B.%20Goodridge%2C%20Sr&f=false.

¹⁷⁵ Ibid, 317.

¹⁷⁶ Ibid., 321.

successor, Alfred Francis, the third TWP president asserted the regime's unequivocal connection to the West in his December 1883 Annual Message to the Legislature, declaring that "It is not for a moment to be doubted that the nations of Europe and that of the United States are interested in the welfare of Liberia as one of the most effective entrances to the interior of Africa, and one of the most promising agencies for its civilization."¹⁷⁷ With the country's autonomy at stake due to French intrigue into its borders at the turn of the 20th Century, President Arthur Barclay in his 1906 Address to the Legislature intreated his fellow citizens that:

Our future depends entirely upon our own action. We are urged to advance. If we obstinately preserve a still and unprogressive attitude, we can hardly expect international support or favor. If we, on the other hand show a disposition to go forward, to measure up to the international ideas of what a civilized state ought to be, we shall have many friends and helpers in unsuspected quarters, at home as well as abroad.¹⁷⁸

The Party had several reasons to believe that their self-proclaimed status as civilizing agents on the dark continent was responsible for their good standing among the community of states. After all, why else would their polity be the only independent republic on the vast African continent? Why else would the society of states acknowledge its sovereignty by establishing diplomatic relations with it? Why else would a great colonial power like Great Britain pursue arbitration to settle the North-West boundary dispute rather than simply annex the much weaker, resource-stricken country?

Given these extraordinary facts, one can see how Roye, the first TWP President, could gleefully report to his Legislature his amicable meeting of September 8, 1879, with

¹⁷⁷ Ibid., 331.

¹⁷⁸ Ibid, 465.

U.S. President Grant at the Executive Mansion in Washington, that he was, “pleased to notice the earnest interest, manifested by the Chief Magistrate of the great Republic in our little state, and the readiness which he exhibited to do whatever he could to promote the welfare of Liberia.” Continuing that “Through his kindness, I was enabled to negotiate with the United States Government for a beautiful little iron steamer, the ‘Rescue’.”¹⁷⁹

4.4 Conclusion

In this chapter I have grappled with a central question concerning scholars of authoritarianism, namely, in the absence of great resource endowment, how does a weak authoritarian state legitimize itself to its citizens? To begin to answer this vexing question, I’ve revealed how Liberia’s ruling elites appropriated the civilizational tropes of the 19th-century colonial era to construct a national myth to unify their distinct settler population under a dominant Party. From the Liberian case, it can be seen that when national myths are deeply embedded into the fabric of an authoritarian regime, that such a regime can withstand extreme internal pressures. The civilizational myth provided Liberia’s ruling settlers with a deep sense of purpose and shared identity, one that served as the glue to unite an otherwise fractious assemblage of settlers. The civilizational myth also seems to have been used by elites to appeal to the sentimentalities of other colonial powers, thereby legitimizing their right to rule to their international audience.

¹⁷⁹ Ibid, 219.

Although a theory cannot be overturned by the findings of a single case, Liberia's TWP does provide an opening to reconsider conventional explanations of the sources of authoritarian legitimation. The dominant Party regime literature has long attributed the source of party legitimation to a revolutionary founding moment. Although the TWP's rise to power did culminate in a crisis, the Party's founding moment was not characterized by the type of elite or mass led revolution that brought about other long-lived dominant parties such as the Cuban Communist Party, or the Communist Party of Vietnam. Instead, much like modern authoritarian governments, the TWP came to power through electoral means. Because the TWP was not founded through a revolution, its leaders could not benefit from the same type of legitimacy as leaders of revolutionary party regimes. Instead, the Party's elites had to construct their national myth through the race-based civilizational ideology that characterized the 19th Century imperialist world. This national ideology proved to be an effective unifying tool and a device for the regime's stability. From this, one can glean that modern non-democracies that predominantly rise through electoral means can institute symbolic legitimation strategies that can sustain their rule for long period

Chapter 5. Co-optation and True Whig Party Survival

By the 1880s, the TWP's absorption of Liberia's various settler factions had been complete. The harmony that now existed within Liberia between the country's settler cadres was made plain in President Hilary R.W. Johnson's December 14, 1886, Annual Message to the Liberian Legislature amid the worst global depression of the 19th

Century. In his message, the President elated that “it is cause for felicitation, that notwithstanding the almost unprecedented depression that has embarrassed trade and commerce, and industry generally, throughout the civilized world, the country has been free from the suffering and the insurrectionary outbursts that have afflicted other lands.”¹⁸⁰

Scholars of Liberian politics and history generally agree with Johnson’s sentiments, affirming that once the TWP regained power in 1878, the color and ethnic divide that once defined the country’s socio-political order was dissolved.¹⁸¹ However, less is known about how precisely this erasure occurred. The most common explanations offered by country experts emphasize anthropological and sociological factors such as inter-marriage and membership to social clubs such as free masonry.¹⁸² Although these factors certainly played a role in fostering cohesion amongst Liberia’s settler groups, these explanations are less than satisfying. Intermarriage, for example, has existed throughout history, yet wars have always been fought between communal groups and nations. Indeed, intermarriage did not prevent the Krahn and Dahn who are not only linguistically related tribes of Liberia’s hinterland, but groups in which inter-marriage has always been commonplace, from warring against each other during the county’s civil war in the 1990s.

¹⁸⁰ Dunn, 2011, 349.

https://books.google.com/books?id=saY4ubEU20QC&pg=PR13&lpg=PR13&dq=Reginald+B.+Goodridge,+Sr&source=bl&ots=K7pf23VnNZ&sig=ACfU3U2id2emMRPyAFAluTJZxpOqR34BZw&hl=en&sa=X&ved=2ahUKEwiHp6_v0d_nAhVCV6wKHRK4Bo0Q6AEwBHoECAoQAQ#v=onepage&q=Reginald%20B.%20Goodridge%2C%20Sr&f=false

¹⁸¹ Boley, 1983; Fiske, 1960; Smith, 1970.

¹⁸² Fraenkel, 1964; Hlophe, 1979.

Membership to social clubs such as masonic lodges is even less convincing of an argument for how Liberia's settlers overcame their ethnic divide. For social club membership to explain group cohesion within the ruling elites, the settlers would have all had to belong to a single lodge to be made to conform to the same set of rules. However, not all settlers belonged to one masonic order. In fact, there were several masonic lodges to which various families and groups belonged. Second and relatedly, because of the strong sense of in-group versus out-group membership such associations produce, one would expect participation in such clubs to heighten rather than reduce conflict among settler communities. Because the TWP was fundamentally a political institution, understanding how it maintained unity between its various factions requires a political explanation. I argue that once the TWP succeeded in incorporating the disparate settler elements into its fold it maintained their support through institutional features that facilitated cooperation and power sharing. Central to the Party's design was its structured process of patronage distribution among its members.

Yet, Liberia's settlers were a mere fraction of the country's overall population. Indeed, beyond the coastal areas where most of the settlers lived was a vast indigenous population, each with their own political institutions and structures. For the Liberian government to take full control of its destiny, it had to control its hinterland natives. To achieve these ends, I argue that the TWP elites implemented a series of control mechanisms to co-opt the country's prodigious native population. The regime's method of control was exemplified by an indirect system of administration fashioned after the British model. Not only did the co-optation of hinterland tribes protect the regime from native overthrow, but it also protected it from state death by the great colonial powers at

its borders. The co-optation and repression (the subject of the following chapter) of the hinterlands helped to legitimize the regime's territorial claims to the international community enabling it to preserve itself from total annihilation from its external foes. I understand co-optation to mean elites' strategic efforts to bind relevant political actors or groups to the regime.

I advance this argument in three steps. First, I consider how the TWP's institutional design facilitated the absorption of Liberia's various settler factions. Next, I outline the global dynamics of the mid-late 19th Century that pushed the TWP leadership to more intentionally expand into the hinterland to co-opt the country's various tribal communities. Finally, I reveal the specific co-optation methods employed by the regime and the resonance of these strategies among the native population.

5.1 United They Stand: Co-optation and Elite Cohesion

Politics had become the only viable means for any socio-economic mobility in Liberian society by the turn of the 19th Century. Given that Liberia was still suffering from the economic setbacks it had experienced in earlier decades, commercial enterprise was almost completely depressed and nonexistent. The Republic's already harsh economic conditions were compounded by the worse depression of the 19th Century which saw a precipitous drop in the country's leading commercial exports coffee and coco.¹⁸³ The value of coffee for instance dropped from 24 cents a pound to just 4 cents a pound.¹⁸⁴ To make matters worse, the Liberian Government was

¹⁸³ Hlophe, 1979.

¹⁸⁴ Ibid.

spending more money than it was collecting. Lamenting this desperate situation, WM Coppinger, President of the ACS complained to Liberian President Johnson in his July 2, 1884, that:

It seems to us more and more apparent every succeeding year that the financial affairs of the Liberian government need thorough revision. Expenses must be cut down and salaries diminished, offices abolished, and more taxes and tariff revenue raised. Unless this policy is at once adopted, and the people and officials of Liberia exhibit a spirit of sacrifice and self-denial not seen hither-to, it will be but a question of perhaps the century, whether the Republic shall be wiped out from the Map of the Nations.¹⁸⁵

Under these extreme economic stressors, the TWP's coalition could have easily fractured. But because the party offered many intrinsic political benefits to its members it would have been too costly for them to dissolve their allegiance to the party. Liberia's unitary-republican structure for example, made membership to the party extremely appealing to its members. The government's institutional form provided political rivals an avenue for power sharing while enabling the party to exert a high degree of control over Liberia's ruling elites. As a unitary government, the Liberian constitution (as well as the TWP's official rules) gave considerable power to the central government whose head, the President, was imbued with the power to appoint and dismiss his cabinet members, ambassadors, judges, heads of bureaus, as well provincial officials such as District and County Commissioners.¹⁸⁶ The president's broad appointment mandate gave him significant control over the destiny of much of Liberia's political class.

¹⁸⁵ WM. Coppinger, President of the American Colonization Society, to H. R. W. Johnson, President of Liberia, The Svend Holsoe Collection, Box 57, Printed Materials, *Chronological/Mixed, Executive Papers for the Legislature: Suggestions Concerning the English Loan 1871*, 1884, na, 2. https://drive.google.com/drive/u/0/folders/1tiBmWJKbUCUy2bvlPigneE-YSg_qYquW.

¹⁸⁶ Article III, of the 1847 Liberian Constitution found in, Liberia, the statute laws of the Republic of Liberia passed by the Legislature from 1848 to 1879: Together with the Constitution and amendments, reprinted according to an act approved Dec. 28, 1878. With a copious index, (Monrovia: T.W. Howard, Government Printer, 1879), 13 <https://hdl.handle.net/2027/nyp.33433008032629>; The Revised Rules and Regulation of

Yet as political scientists have long observed, leaders do not rule alone.¹⁸⁷ Indeed, although the president certainly did exercise substantial power under the party's rules as well as the republic's unitary form of government, the republican feature of the Liberian polity balanced the scale. This is because the President and Legislators had to be elected by popular vote to exercise power.¹⁸⁸ Given the time and resource constraints intrinsic to running and winning a robust political campaign, membership to a well-organized and well-resourced political party offered huge advantages to partisans. For example, as a member of a viable party, one could utilize the party's brand to develop a political platform and one could leverage the party's resources to mobilize voters.

According to the official party rules, "every member of the administrative committee who is an official of the government" was required to pay "two percent (2%) of their salary" each year to the party's Treasury.¹⁸⁹ This along with the candidate subscription fee and Executive Committee fee collected by the party provided the resources to crush its political rivals in the electoral arena. In a country with a decrepit economic foundation such as 19th and 20th Century Liberia, these benefits must have

The True Whig Party of Liberia in, Liberia. *The True Whig Party: One Hundred Years Later*, (Ministry of Information, Cultural Affairs & Tourism, 1975), 89.

¹⁸⁷ Mesquita, Bruce Bueno de, and Alastair Smith, "Political Survival and Endogenous Institutional Change." *Comparative Political Studies* 42, no. 2 (2009): 167–97.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/0010414008323330>.

Gallagher, Mary E, and Jonathan K Hanson. "Power Tool or Dull Blade? Selectorate Theory for Autocracies." *Annual Review of Political Science* 18, no. 1 (2015): 367–85.
<https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev-polisci-071213-041224>.

¹⁸⁸ Article II & III, of the 1847 Liberian Constitution found in, Liberia, *The statute laws of the Republic of Liberia*, 1879, 12-13. <https://hdl.handle.net/2027/nyp.33433008032629>.

¹⁸⁹ Liberia, 1975, 90.

been magnified and found to be extremely appealing to political hopefuls with few avenues for socio-political advancement.

After defeating the RP in the 1878 national elections the TWP became the only viable political organization in Liberia.

The swelling of the pure-Black stock from the pre-U.S. Civil War era and the subsequent cessation of immigration in the post-U.S. Civil War era discussed in the previous chapters, gave the TWP's pure-Black settlers the numerical advantage over their political rivals. With its newfound monopoly over the lever of political ascension, membership to the TWP became the central vehicle through which political aspirants from all segments could realize their political ambitions. Because presidential hopefuls required the party's support to mobilize partisans and the general public to win elections, presidential candidates and their coalition members agreed to share power through the dominant party. This commitment ultimately positioned the TWP as the most powerful player in Liberian politics.

The TWP's design provided the necessary tools it required to effectively control its members and facilitate power sharing. The party was centrally organized around a National Committee consisting of a General Treasurer, General Secretary, Legal Counsel, National Vice Chairman, National Chairman, and the party's Standard Bearer which was the President of the Republic of Liberia. As the Standard Bearer of the party, the President was "consulted on everything of interest that [went] on in the party of political bearing."¹⁹⁰ Yet the President did not exercise absolute power. In fact, the

¹⁹⁰ Ibid, 81.

President's power was significantly contained and attenuated by the party's leadership vis-vis the Administrative Committee whose officers were to "always be in close political touch with the National Standard Bearer in all matters relating to the welfare of the Party."¹⁹¹ The Administrative Committee consisted of a cross section of Liberia's elites including:

"The National Standard Bearer, National Chairman, National Vice Chairman, General Secretary, General Treasurer, Legal Counsel, General Auditor, the Vice President, Members of the President's Cabinet who are members of the Party ; Members of the Liberian Senate who are members of the Party ; Members of the House of Representatives who are members of the Party ; County and Territorial Chairmen and Secretaries; ten (10) members of the County Party who shall be elected from each County and five (5) from each Territory."¹⁹²

By having nearly every government sector represented in the Administrative Committee, the Party could not only ensure that key players had an influence on the government's decisions, but it could also foster policy consistency and inter-agency harmony throughout the government. To ensure that the Party's most powerful posts were strictly held by loyalist, the Administrative Committee nominated the party's core leadership including "the National Chairman, National Vice Chairman, General Secretary, General Treasurer, Legal Advisor and three (3) Assistant General Secretaries" at its meeting preceding the National Presidential Convention every four years.¹⁹³

At the National Convention partisans could then vote to certify the nominated candidates. Because the Administrative Committee was the principal policy making

¹⁹¹ Ibid.

¹⁹² Ibid, 81-82.

¹⁹³ Ibid, 82.

body, its officers met annually at a time “designated by the National Standard Bearer.”¹⁹⁴ At these meetings partisans could present and openly debate policy issues and thus have substantive input on the Party’s priority areas. From the Administrative Committee, decisions regarding the Party’s strategic direction and policy priorities were developed and communicated to members of the Legislature, and local party units which consisted of local chairmen, secretaries, and treasurers from every county and other subsidiary posts.¹⁹⁵ In his November 8, 1910 letter to President Barclay, H.G Birch, Super Intendent of Sino County and local TWP partisan expressed his unequivocal commitment to supporting the National party’s agenda, stating:

We have been informed by National Executive Chairman of the True Whig Party, that A meeting held in Monrovia on the 26 of October 1910 composed of the Local Chairman and the Executive Committee of the several town ships of Montserrado County and it was decided, that the name of the Honorable D. E Howard be carried to the National Convention and be Recommended to the Convention as the choice of Montsarado County for the Presidency of this Republic for the next encumbency, and request at an early date as possible the opinion of the Whig Party of Sinoe, in reply and I beg to say we have not up to this date called a meeting but we being a few in number it is fully known to all we shall call a meeting before our men leave for the Legislature but we are a part of True Whig Party and whatever is done at the head Courture of the True Whig Party we are bound to sustain the same.¹⁹⁶

By leaving the power to convene the Administrative Committee to the discretion of the National Standard Bearer, the party was susceptible to an imperial presidency and the emergence of factions within the party more loyal to the president than the party itself. As a countervailing mechanism to the Standard Bearer’s discretionary power, the party also consisted of an Executive Committee whose duty it was to “meet from time to

¹⁹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁹⁵ Ibid, 84.

¹⁹⁶ Super Intendent H.G. Birch to President Arthur Barclay, in, Liberian Government Archives I, 1828-1911, Box 4, Sinoe County 1910-1911, 3.
<http://fedora.dlib.indiana.edu/fedora/get/iudl:1290094/OVERVIEW>.

time when called by the National Chairman and take action on all matters affecting the party during the recess of the Administrative Committee.”¹⁹⁷ Specifically, the Executive Committee’s mandate was to discuss matters relating to:

- (a) The state of the Party with tendency and trend of local and general opinion. (b), Intended legislation on part of the Government. (c) Scope and object of private bills intended to be introduced by the Members of the Senate and House of Representatives. (d) Public officers and the manner in which they have performed their duties during the year. (e) Mention of young partisans who have been active and zealous in the interest of the Party and are recommended for notice and promotion. (f) Any matter of general interest to the Party or likely to hinder, or promote its efficiency or influence. (g) Possible candidate for the Presidency and Vice Presidency and so forth.¹⁹⁸

In placing the power to convene the Executive Committee with its broad mandate into the hands of the National Chairman instead of the National Standard Bearer, the party preserved the ability to take corrective actions if the President or the Administrative Committee were in disharmony with the party’s interest. In addition to possessing a quasi-veto power over the government by virtue of being a member of the Administrative Committee and possessing the right to convene the Executive Committee, the party Chairman also held the power to “expel any member of the party” with “...a two-third vote” of either the National or Local party, depending on the partisan’s rank within the party infrastructure.¹⁹⁹ This meant that anyone belonging to the party, including the President could be removed from it by the chairman with the appropriate number of votes from the proper party unit. Hence, although the President did exercise de-jure powers, the party was the de-facto ruler.

¹⁹⁷ Liberia, 84.

¹⁹⁸ Ibid, 85.

¹⁹⁹ Liberia, 1975, 90.

The Party also preempted internal division through its clear articulation of how patronage was to be distributed between its members. According to the Party rules, the patronage of the party was to be “evenly distributed among the different precincts in each county, and territory in accordance with the relative importance and strength of the vote.”²⁰⁰ Although the rules do not provide any additional information about what this meant in practice, one can surmise that a county such as Montserrado, which houses the country’s capital, might have enjoyed a larger share of the party’s patronage flow. This would have likely meant that partisans of Montserrado were overrepresented within the party and the government as a whole relative to a more peripheral territory such as Maryland.

Partisans of Montserrado County or any other territory with a powerful voting block such as Sinoe would have been able to funnel a larger share of government transfers and other side payments to themselves and their home territory. In her sweeping survey of ethnicity in Monrovia, Fraenkel finds strong evidence showing how entrenched Monrovia’s leading families were in the Liberian government.²⁰¹ Yet because some patronage is better than no patronage, partisans of less important territories would have been just as satisfied with their share of patronage.

While the President had the power to appoint the highest-ranking officials such as ambassadors, Superintendents and the aforementioned officers, Senators maintained the power to recommend “all other County officials...upon the endorsement of the

²⁰⁰ Ibid, 89.

²⁰¹ Fraenkel, 1964.

leader of the county for consideration by the President.”²⁰² In this way, partisans in the Senate as well as local county heads also had a real say in how the Party’s patronage was distributed. Not only did this privilege provide direct access to the President himself, but it also allowed mid and lower ranking partisans the ability to embody the role of a patron for their own network of supporters. In this way, lower ranking partisans could enjoy some influence and prestige.

To further facilitate power-sharing, the TWP partisans had the power to select Liberia’s President and Vice President at the Party’s National Convention. The convention was held every two years prior to the May 7, 1907, constitutional amendment which increased the presidential term limit from two years to unlimited four-year terms. With this amendment, the convention was held every four years. When the constitution was again amended to restrict the presidential term limit to eight years term in the 1970s, the convention was also held every eight years. In his April 10, 1911, letter to President Barclay, reporting the activities of the local party unit in anticipation of the National Convention, Super Intendent Birch informed the President that:

Sir only a few lines communicating our politic of the present our Local Executive Committee of the True Whig Party met on the 5th of April in Lexington there we chose the men to lay before the Party in a meeting to be held on the 7th of April, in meeting on the 7 Leader minor slated the object of the meeting, we then ratify the doings of the General Convention held at Monrovia of the True Whig Party. We then nominated Amos Witherspoon Senator for Representative JJ Ellis JKP Green and H McCarther, now we are open to see what opposition come against us. I was informed that A few people had a meeting and say they had chosen S.B Miller for the Senate LW Roberts, Nephew Dunbar, Brace Well, Representative, But the end is nothing none of these men except Dunbar will accept of such foolishness up to this date I don't see nothing to hinder our success.²⁰³

²⁰² Liberia, 1975, 89.

²⁰³ Super Intendent Birch to President Barclay, in Liberian Government Archives I, 1828-1911, Box 4 Sino County 1910-1911, 26. <http://fedora.dlib.indiana.edu/fedora/get/iudl:1290094/OVERVIEW>.

The National Convention was attended by all prominent partisans including, “the President and Vice President ‘when they are elected by the Party,’ National chairman, National Vice Chairman... Assistant General Secretaries and the Executive Committee,”²⁰⁴ to name a few. To attend and participate in the nominating contest one had to be a member of the Party. Nomination was made either by a committee appointed by the Chairman, roll call or in open convention by acclamation.²⁰⁵ Each partisan was entitled to one vote. Participation in the National Convention was not an insignificant affair because the decisions made by partisans at the Convention literally decided the country’s leadership. Indeed, a common adage that developed during the TWP’s reign was echoed by Partisan J.N.W Horace during the Observance of the Centenary Celebration of the E.J. Roye Memorial Building on December 22, 1969, that “when a Whig Caucus decides upon a candidate for an office, it is always considered absolute; the Convention merely ‘ratify the decisions of a Caucus’ and the candidate is considered elected.”²⁰⁶ Indeed since 1878 when the Party came to power nearly a decade after Roye’s overthrow, no Liberian president ever got elected without the Party’s approval.

To maintain this strict level of commitment to the party and ensure uniformity to the Party’s interest, the party devised several innovative control mechanisms. One of the ways in which the party facilitated uniformity among its partisans regarding public policy was by enabling the Executive Committee to appoint a party leader “in each

²⁰⁴ Liberia, 1975, 86.

²⁰⁵ Ibid, 87.

²⁰⁶ TWP Partisan J.N.W Horace to the partisans of the TWP, Ibid, 24.

branch of the Legislature.”²⁰⁷ These leaders were responsible for “taking charge of the Government’s business and of the interest of the administration”²⁰⁸ and acted as the party’s Whip in their respective chambers. The Party further maintained that:

Every bill or other measure promoted by the President or the head of one of the Executive Ministries after approval of the National Standard Bearer, shall be entrusted to one or other of these leaders who shall, after conference with his fellow partisans of the Legislature, introduce the bill or resolution suggested by the Government which shall be allowed to have its first reading. Should any member of the Party then have serious objection to said bill, he shall so inform the National Standard Bearer, who shall thereupon call a conference to decide the fate of the proposed measure, which shall be fully and carefully discussed and explained. The decision of the conference shall bind all members of the Party and Partisans of the Legislature interested in the proposed bill or measure.²⁰⁹

Partisans of the Legislature who refused to support the party’s initiatives were punished “in such manner as the Executive Committee may deem proper and desirable.”²¹⁰ Thus, the party exercised considerable discretion with respect to its punishment tactics. A favored technique was the expulsion of detractors from their official offices. In his May 30, 1911, letter to President Barclay, J.M. Moore, Superintendent of Grand Bassa County, pleaded with the President to exhibit grace toward a suspected party rebel, intreating that:

I learned that on yesterday that the Whig Party – or a part of the Executive Committee met for the purpose to have some of the Gov. officers dismissed and a list was made up to be sent to you. On that list appeared the name of Commissioner J.Q. Allen, because he did not support the entire "Ticket" of the "True Whig Party." I can say for Comm. Allen that on the day of the Election, he did support our "Ticket" Except --- D.E. Howard. All the rest of the candidates he supported. I respectfully beg that you will not dismiss Mr. Allen, as he is a True Whig.²¹¹

²⁰⁷ Ibid, 87.

²⁰⁸ Ibid.

²⁰⁹ Ibid.

²¹⁰ Ibid, 88.

²¹¹ Superintendent J.M., Moore of Grand Bassa County to President Barclay, Liberian Gov Archives I, Box 4, *Grand Bassa County 1909-1911*, 26-27.
<http://fedora.dlib.indiana.edu/fedora/get/iudl:1290060/OVERVIEW>.

Another mechanism the party had at its disposal to enforce its rules and secure the cooperation of its Partisans was the ability to audit individuals, departments, and even national elections. An important leadership post in the Administrative Committee that allowed the party to perform this task was the role of the General Auditor. The General Auditor was empowered to audit the reports of the General Secretary and the General Treasurer who were required to submit their reports to the General Auditor, who in turn was required to submit these findings to the Executive Committee.²¹² Concomitantly, partisans could not hide behind their votes because the Legislature maintained the power to request the Secretary of State to avail to the Legislature the votes of national elections. On December 9, 1891, then Secretary of State and later President Edwin Barclay was directed by the Speaker of the House of Representatives to, “forward to the House the Ballot Boxes of the last Biennial Elections held throughout the Republic May 5. 1891.”²¹³ Upon producing the ballot boxes, the Secretary wrote back to the House:

Gentlemen, in obedience to your request of even date, I have the honor to forward herewith the Ballot Boxes of the last Biennial Election held throughout the Republic May 5, 1891. I have the honor to be gentlemen, your ableist servant E. J. Barclay.²¹⁴

Not only was the party’s design critical to its ability to maintain cohesion between its various factions, but the country’s truncated electorate also made cooperation among the country’s elites possible. As I showed in the Legitimation chapter, Liberia’s ruling

²¹² Liberia, 1975, 83.

²¹³ Barclay to House of Representatives, in Liberian Government Archives I, 1828-1911, Legislative & Executive Correspondence, 1891-1897, 2.

<http://fedora.dlib.indiana.edu/fedora/get/iudl:1264303/OVERVIEW>.

²¹⁴ *Ibdi*.

elites were but a tiny fraction of the country's overall population. Not only were they the descendants of the few settler groups from the Americas and re-captured Africans who combined made up less than 5 percent of the country's population, but according to the 1847 Constitution, they were exclusively comprised of the male property-owning minority of the already few settler class. Because most of these elites worked in the Liberian government, they could readily share the spoils of the government among themselves. Indeed, the archives are teeming with evidence of the Liberian Legislature passing legislations that benefited the few ruling elites at the cost of the general welfare. One of the most significant examples of this regarded the Legislature's acceptance of the U.S.'s 1920 financial plan for Liberia.

By the 20th Century, Liberia once again found itself in a financial crunch. After terminating its second £100,000 international loan which it had received from a British mining corporation called Liberian Development Company in 1907, Liberia now turned to the U.S. for assistance. To help address its financial woes, the U.S. proposed a financial plan for Liberia that included a \$5,000,000 loan, and a mining concession. The plan also proposed putting the Republic's fiscal management under the supervision of the National City Bank of New York to act as Liberia's Fiscal Agent. Although the proposal appeared favorable on the surface, its acceptance would have effectively dissolved Liberia's autonomy to manage its own affairs. Yet, Liberia's elites saw the plan as an opportunity to grow their personal coffers. In his November 23, 1920 letter to his superior back in England, the British Acting Consul-General reported on the loan affair stressing that the Liberian Government has "just passed into law the grant of the extension of rights of 'The Mountain Mining Company' at Sinoe,... and have also

increased the salaries of their Cabinet Ministers against the veto in each case of the President."²¹⁵ The legislature took its' directive directly from the Executive Committee of the TWP which instructed its members to handle the financial plan in the following manner at its July 7, 1920 meeting held in Maryland County:

...our Representatives are hereby instructed not to reject abruptly the said Programme no matter how unfavorable it may appear, but to append to it such modifications and amendments as will bring the Scheme within the views of our Government. (2) That a Commission be immediately dispatched to Washington to hold conversations with that Government with the view of harmonizing such points of differences as shall appear between the submitted scheme and the views of the Liberian Government. (3) That under no circumstances shall any action be taken in connection with the said programme that tends in any sense to infringe the provisions of the organic law, or, to dislocate the status of any official provided for thereunder. (4) That until the question of the American Credit has been finally disposed of in the manner above indicated, our Representatives are strictly forbidden from considering in the remotest manner a loan or Credit from any other foreign Government individual or corporation or from authorizing any such stop. The resolution has no application to any proposition, or scheme for economic and commercial development. (5) Resolved further that these resolutions be spread upon the Party 's journal and a copy supplied each member of the Legislature and the Chief Justice, and that a copy be sent to the President and Vice President.²¹⁶

Thus, the TWP's institutional design provided the necessary mechanisms for controlling its coalition while also providing for the institutionalization of power sharing. Because the rules around the distribution of power and the spoils of government were made intelligible through the party 's official covenant, loyalists and potential detractors alike could operate under a much more predictable political environment. In an atmosphere of severe economic scarcity such as 19th and 20th Century Liberia, the resources required to structure a robust party machine following the fall of the RP proved too great for the old mulatto guard. It was much more feasible for them to

²¹⁵ *Liberia: To Foreign Office (Folder 9)*, ,Government Papers, The National Archives, Kew, 1920, 26. http://www.archivesdirect.amdigital.co.uk.ezp1.lib.umn.edu/Documents/Details/FO_458_51.

²¹⁶ Ibid, 15-16.

bandwagon with the coalition of Black and Congo members of the TWP to continue to enjoy political power and prestige in an environment with few other avenues to do so. Not only did the Black and Congo possess the numeric advantage following the rise and subsequent fall of immigration discussed in the previous chapter, but they were able to construct a robust party that co-opted the prominent elements of Liberian society.

5.2 The Doctrine of Effective Control

In this section, I provide a brief overview of the factors that lead to Liberia's desire to control its interior territories more vigorously. Five years after the Berlin Conference, the colonial powers met again in 1890 at Brussels to codify the doctrine outlined in the Brussels Act establishing standards around what constituted a legitimate colonial claim. The Brussels Act of 1890 established the *doctrine of effective occupation* which decreed that "the most effective means for counteracting the slave trade in the interior" include "progressive organization of the administrative, judicial, religious, and military services in the African territories, placed under the sovereignty or protectorate of civilized nations." Additionally, the Act outlined that the interior of colonial claims should be "strongly occupied" by the occupying powers "in such a way as to make their protective or repressive action effectively felt in the territories."²¹⁷ It went on to specify the several activities and institutions that would provide for this enterprise including the building of roads, railways, telegraph lines, schools, hospitals, and several other developmental projects.²¹⁸

²¹⁷ *Slave Trade, Suppression of, Etc: General Act*, 6.
<https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=nnc2.ark:/13960/t3b03v044&view=1up&seq=2&skin=2021>.

²¹⁸ Ibid; Harrison, Akingbade, "The Pacification of the Liberian Hinterland," *Journal of Negro History*, 278.

In light of the *doctrine of effective occupation*, the colonial powers endeavored to create elaborate systems of control over their colonial territories. They were met with the practical challenge of controlling a disparate collection of people with varied cultures and socio-political practices, some harboring hostile attitudes towards the mere notion of statehood. Perhaps even more important, they faced the challenge of administering over vast and varied terrains containing native populations that outnumbered them 1 to 2,900 square feet and 1 to 45,000 Africans in some territories.²¹⁹ To deal with these challenges, the European powers operated one of two systems of administration; direct rule, exemplified by the French and indirect rule, typified by the British.

Mamdani's description of both direct and indirect rule is particularly helpful for my purpose. His account of these systems functionally highlights the bifurcating tendencies, that is, the propensity of colonial administrations to separate the foreign occupier from the natives. Mamdani underscores the proclivity of colonial administrations to divide African society along the line of citizen and subject.²²⁰ This penchant typified all colonial administrations, including that administered by the TWP in Liberia.

Of the two variants of colonial administration, direct rule was the most centralized. This system was characterized by "a single legal order defined by the 'civilized' law of Europe."²²¹ Under this administrative system, the only institutions that were recognized were those of the colonial state. The system eradicated native intuitions and granted citizenship only to those who the colonial administration deemed

²¹⁹ Mamdani, 1996, 73.

²²⁰ Ibid.

²²¹ Ibid, 16.

"civilized." The so-called uncivilized native populations lived under the precarious and nebulous designation of a subject, an identification that rendered no legal protection or privileges under colonial law. Under the system of direct rule, the arm of the imperial state was far-reaching, permeating deeply into social, political, and economic life. Given the depth of its reach, direct rule entailed the destruction of communal autonomy, requisition of land, and the defeat of tribal peoples. Of the two administrative models, this was the costliest to imperial powers.²²²

Indirect rule was not all-encompassing as direct rule. It was an administrative system that allowed conquered populations to retain a greater degree of autonomy over their lands and customary practices. However, many would argue that these customs were distortions of actual African traditions. The system relied upon a stratified network of intermediaries comprising (a) local and regional agents of the colonial state called commissioners who oversaw the general administration of native populations. This role involved serving as the administration's liaison to tribal leaders. Tribal authorities called chiefs (b) served as representatives of their tribal people to local and regional commissioners and, by extension, the colonial state. The colonial administration either intentionally selected tribal leaders among tribes with a history of hierarchical social structure or was manufactured and imposed where none had previously been.²²³

Rather than being subsumed under one law as in the case of direct rule, two types of laws co-existed under the indirect rule, each governing two distinct populations.

²²² Alexander Lee and Kenneth Schultz, "Comparing British and French Colonial Legacies: A Discontinuity Analysis of Cameroon," *Quarterly Journal of Political Science*, (2012); Michael Crowder, "Indirect Rule—French and British Style," *Cambridge University Press*, (1964). Mamdani, *Citizen and Subject*, 1996.

²²³ Crowder, 1964; Illife. 2017; Lee and Schultz, 2012; Mamdani, 1996.

Civil law, a corpus of formal rules codified in the European conception of the rule of law, governed the colonizers. As "torchbearers of civilization," this legal domain was accessible only to the "civilized" non-native settlers.²²⁴ Native Africans were governed by customary law, which, as Mamdani suggests, operated based on ethnic identity. Tribal authorities such as village councils and tribal chiefs were the custodians of customary law. Customary law was only applicable to native Africans belonging to a discrete territory under what the imperial administration defined as a tribe. Hence, given the variability of tribal groupings in Africa, there was no single identifiable customary law. Instead, each tribe set and dispensed their version of customary law.²²⁵ Because it lacked the human resources to enact the more costly direct system of administration, Liberia opted for indirect rule as its chosen method to control its disproportionately large native population.²²⁶

Although the Liberian government, since at least 1862, had been practicing a scaled down form of indirect rule, it was not until after the Scramble for Africa, particularly the Brussels Act of 1890 that the country began taking a more concerted effort to administer over its hinterland territories. The implementation of indirect rule in Liberia occurred in stages, being first introduced by President Richard Wright Johnson (1884-1892) in a more limited form following the Berlin Conference, then being expanded upon by President William David Coleman (1896-1900) and codified under President Arthur Barclay (1904-1912).²²⁷

²²⁴ Mamdani, 1996, 109.

²²⁵ Crowder, 1964; Illife, 2017; Lee and Schultz, 2012; Mamdani, 1996.

²²⁶ Ellis, 1911.

²²⁷ Akingbade, 1994.

5.3 The Conquest of the Hinterlands

In this section I reveal how the TWP succeeded in co-opting the scores of Native tribes' people residing in its hinterland territories. By the mid-1880s, not only was Liberia under enormous pressure to establish effective control from the international community, but it also found itself incurring great losses from native raiding bands and internecine native wars. In his first annual address to the legislature in December 1884, President Johnson reported that "trade has been somewhat obstructed the past year by the Fish War, which for some years has been waging at interval between the Bittars and Carbors." In the same address the President warned his Legislature that "within a year and a half the Republic will have to encounter its greatest financial difficulty - the English Loan of 1871. He continued that all efforts to settle or postpone the loan had not been taken until alas the country now found itself in "an accumulation of troubles."²²⁸

A year later in his December 18, 1885, address, the President further lamented that, "during the year there have been repeated some of the predatory incursions among the native tribes." He pressed that, "these raids hinder trade and industry. Foreign colonies on the west coast suffer from these troubles equally with the Republic."²²⁹ It was under these circumstances that the President declared that the country had reached "a momentous crisis" which would require "the most careful management and the greatest circumspection in [its] conduct...[to] avoid those

²²⁸ President Hilary R. Johnson annual address the Liberian Legislature, Dunn, 2011, 338.

²²⁹ *Ibdi*, 345.

disagreeable entanglements that work the ruin of nations, and especially young and struggling nations like this {Liberia}.”²³⁰

In the spirit of establishing greater control over the Republics’ territorial claims for the sake of security and revenue generation, President Johnson called for a “more efficient system... to be devised than that followed for years.” Specifically, he called for a system that would “place the collection of the taxes in the country under the control of a few honest and reasonable officers, instead of in the hands of a host of irresponsible persons.”²³¹

The duplication of responsibilities by the multitude of tax collecting agents (mostly militia men) rendered the country’s tax collecting system utterly inefficient because as the President observed, it precipitated “frequent conflicts or confusion of interests and jurisdiction, diverse interpretation and application of law” and tended to “obscure the real object and intention of the Government in creating these officers.”²³² But to achieve this aim, the government had to extinguish the various native wars that threatened the economic interests of its imperial rivals as well as its own internal security.

The government’s first step in installing indirect rule was to establish a military presence in the hinterland to suppress the internecine conflicts among its native populations. With the intensification of the Scramble for Africa feeding the appetite of its imperial rivals for territorial aggrandizement, President Johnson called upon his

²³⁰ Ibid, 339.

²³¹ Ibid, 355.

²³² Ibid, 358.

Legislature to take more decisive action to protect the country's autonomy than what had been its past practice. Laying out the parameters of what would become the country's new policy toward its natives the president relayed to his Legislature in his December 4, 1884, address that:

“From its origin, the State has expended almost yearly considerable sums on commission to the various tribes. In some cases, the results have been satisfactory; in others, where the tribes are remote from powerful centers of civilization and have been accustomed to recognizing no argument but that of physical force.”

He continued that:

In the case of tribes not too remote from the centers of Government, small military expeditions are often effectual in maintaining the peace of the country, when other means have failed. And where the action of the Government is prompt and energetic, the object can generally be accomplished without bloodshed... In remote sections, I am of the opinion that small military posts or black hoes would be the surest means of insuring the peace of the remote interior. The little garrisons might possess also an itinerant capacity, moving from post to post, as occasion might require...²³³

With the strategy thus articulated, the president returned to the question of the incessant Fish War which up to the date of his address had been raging for several years between the Boatswain and Golah tribes. To resolve this conflict and future conflicts between other native tribes, the president opined that:

...the only effectual remedy is, to keep constantly on the coast an armed vessel, that there might be a constant exhibition of physical force. Besides the advantage referred to by the possession of a steam gunboat, the Government would experience considerable benefit in the collection of the revenue, and it's facilitating the work of the revenue officers.²³⁴

²³³ Ibdi, 334.

²³⁴ Ibdi.

The policy outlined by President Johnson guided Liberia's official policy towards its natives from 1884 following the Berlin Conference, until 1890, in response to the new international norm around effective occupation that resulted from the Brussels Conference of 1890. In keeping up with the zeitgeist of the time, President David Coleman called for a more concerted effort to pull the country's hinterland sections more intently into the government's orbit by pursuing the very policies called for at the Brussels conference. Outlining what would be the country's new policy towards its natives, the president explained to his Legislature in his December 14, 1896, annual address that, "It is the desire and determination of the government to open roads to the interior and to enforce peace and order upon them as far as our limits extend." To achieve this, he recommended that:

...each of the native tribes be located in their respective sections of the country; that the census be taken, and that the government appropriate sufficient lands (which are not to be unlawfully disturbed) upon which they may plant coffee and other exportable products, as well as those necessary for home consumption. I would recommend also that block-houses be erected in each of these sections sufficient to accommodate a suitable number of men under the command of an officer with certain military authority, who shall have associate with him a discreet and influential aborigine, who shall be styled general superintendent of the tribe, with the authority to settle all matters or disputes arising among them not purely judicial.²³⁵

Now, rather than merely stationing militia patrol in certain hostile tribal communities in a passive and responsive manner as was typified by the Republic's past native policies, the government now endeavored to permanently station officers among the native tribes to monitor them and more efficiently collect taxes. Moreover, the government now sought to actively enlist the service of certain "influential" tribal leaders

²³⁵ Ibdi, 394.

to assist them in their purposes. Although these changes were much more progressive than past policies, what truly distinguished the new policy forwarded by President Coleman was his newfound commitment to promote Americo-Liberian settlements in native communities to bring civilization to the hinterland tribes in order to fully establish settler hegemony over them. In the same annual address, President Coleman appealed to his Legislature asking them to, “pass an act to encourage missionaries to establish schools adjacent to these block houses and give them full protection in the work which they might establish for the promotion of civilization and Christianity.”²³⁶

The TWP’s installment of indirect rule was finalized under President Arthur Barclay in 1904. Whereas previous hinterland policies merely sought to implant government agents among the tribal communities to monitor and collect taxes from them, President Barclay was committed to not only restructure the government’s administrative institutions, but also the political organization of native chieftains. In this effort, the President established a bifurcated administrative code that simultaneously allowed the government to exercise a greater degree of control over the hinterlands while providing for a greater level of autonomy (at least compared to direct rule) to friendly native chieftains. In his December 15, 1904, Annual Message to his Legislature, the president called upon the body to “regulate the government of the native community of the Country.”²³⁷ To achieve this, he suggested that the body pass a bill that would allow the government to control the hinterlands, “through the leading native families” and called upon the government to “make it a point to recognize and support them {the

²³⁶ *Ibdi.*

²³⁷ *Ibdi.*, 431.

leading native families} and get them to work with us {the Liberian government}.”²³⁸

Specifying the parameters of the bill, the President continued that:

The desired bill should be arranged on the following lines. Assimilation of tribal territory to townships; right of inhabitants to land within a specified area; local self government granted to people, the recognition and administration of Customary Native law, both locally and by Courts of the Republic. Supervision of native population by commissioners living among them; the creation of two new courts, the court of the native Chief, and that of the District Commissioner. The former will take, in Native communities, the place of justice of the Peace in the townships inhabited by the civilized population. The latter will deal with appeals from the Court of the Native Chief and will hear and settle disputes between members of different sections of the same tribe; or persons of different tribes within his jurisdiction... it should also be made a misdemeanor for any chief or other person to refuse to obey the summons of the President, the secretary of the Interior or the Superintendent of County or District when it becomes necessary to investigate matters and things tending to disturb the peace of the country.²³⁹

Although the government's reconstitution of its administrative system did provide a greater degree of local control than direct rule, its reach into the management of native affairs became much more conspicuous and tighter. The establishment of native courts which were supervised by Americo-Liberian magistrates now allowed the government to determine how certain civil matters such as the distribution of communal inheritance was to occur. For instance, in a memorandum outlining to District Commissioners how native estates should be administered, it was communicated that, “at the death of a chief - his estate is immediately placed on an Inventory to be taken by the District Commissioner of the Districts.” The memorandum also regulated traditional ritualistic practices, exacting a fine of “no less than \$100.00 nor more than \$500.00” for chieftains using Bark Sessywood for the administration of their traditional rituals.²⁴⁰

²³⁸ *Ibdi.*

²³⁹ *Ibdi.*

²⁴⁰ Liberian Gov Archives II, Box 9, *General Records 1914-1924*, 2 & 5.
<http://fedora.dlib.indiana.edu/fedora/get/iudl:1337567/OVERVIEW>.

More consequently, by reordering the native communities into a township system and ascribing natives' right of land to specified territories, the government facilitated the reification of ethnicity where these identities had historically been fluid. This process also entailed the replacement of native kingship institutions for that of a chieftaincy system in which native chiefs and paramount chiefs were elected by the tribal elements living within their defined territories. Because several different tribes could and often did reside within the government's newly specified territories, this meant that elected chiefs could administer over tribal groups over which they traditionally had no authority.

Not only did the accumulation of greater political power entice local chiefs to cooperate with the government's administrative scheme, but weaker tribes also bought into the new administrative system because it offered them protection from the aggression of rival tribes. The government bolstered the status and security of certain weak tribes that gave their loyalty to the regime by bestowing upon their chiefs and other influencers titles of nobility on an ad hoc basis, allowing them to enjoy the spoils of high office. Friendly chiefs could enjoy access to the burgeoning trading networks of the interior and could utilize their office to grow their personal wealth and influence; they could even deploy state resources to transgress against foes that had aggrieved them in the past.²⁴¹ In his letter of June 8th, 1912, to Chief Mambu, a friendly chief in the Northwest territory regarding the boundary dispute with the British, President D. E. Howard expressed his gratitude for the chief's loyalty and made some serious overtures for his continued support. The President wrote:

²⁴¹ Whyte, 2017, 28-29.

It makes my heart feel glad when I hear from Commissioners of how true you are to your Country and to the Liberian Government. I have always heard that you were a big man and a good man ... and the Liberian people could trust you and all the Commissioners Winkey, Lomax, Cooker and Twe - give you a good name, and ... Mr. Twe has just written and told me plenty more good news and ... all pleases my heart, for I am down at Ducor doing all I can to save your Country for you and your children so that your children can take charge of the country when you are dead. If your Country remains Liberia it will belong to you, but if ... sides with the English then you know what a hard time it will have, so you must not let them fool you... I am sending you my commission in which I have made you the Paramount Chief of the whole Country.²⁴²

In his June 11, 1921, letter to District Commissioner Dihdwo Twe of the Tengea District in the Northwest province, the President ordered his District Commissioner to reward Chief Mambu's service to the government with cash payments and an invitation for a state visit to Monrovia:

I am more than glad to hear of Mambu's loyalty to the Government. I am enclosing a letter to him and his commission as our Paramount Chief, and also a draft on the Bank of B. W. Africa for L 50, out of this amount you will make Chief Marmbu a present of L 40 as coming from the government to show our good heart towards him. I suggest giving it all in silver and make a speech to Marmbu about ... for me and tell him I have heard of his loyalty and am proud of him and that I am very anxious for our and English matter to be finished so that he and some of his big people can come to Monrovia to see how I will treat them for aligning with the government in the Yacparopay war.²⁴³

Another example of the lengths to which the government went to co-opt native influencers can be found in Grand Bassa county when the government took keen interest in acquiring the land of an influential clan chief for the sake of developing rubber. To entice the chief to relinquish his land and traditional authority to the state, the government offered cash payments and a political promotion as in the Mambu example. Specifically, the government expressed to the chief that:

²⁴² President Howard to Chief Mambu, Liberian Gov Archives II, Box 1, *Executive Mansion, General Correspondence, 1912-1915*, 1. <http://fedora.dlib.indiana.edu/fedora/get/iudl:1246097/OVERVIEW>.

²⁴³ President Howard to D.C. Twe, Liberian Gov Archives II, Box 1, *Executive Mansion, General Correspondence, 1912-1915*, 16. <http://fedora.dlib.indiana.edu/fedora/get/iudl:1246097/OVERVIEW>.

The Government is very much interested in this rubber collection, and if you give assistance and fully cooperate with Mr. Brown²⁴⁴ [the agent collecting rubber in the chief's area], it is very likely not only that your people will get some money out of it, but you might improve your status and become a real clan chief rather than an acting clan chief. Whether you are promoted or not depends upon your full and effective cooperation with Mr. Brown.²⁴⁵

The government's co-optation practices helped bolster the regime's internal cohesion even amid extraordinary international and domestic pressures. Once co-opted native elites served as the state's agents to monitor and control its hinterland communities to protect itself against total annexation from its great colonial rivals. Given their military and economic weakness, Liberia's Black settlers could only hope that their claim to Western civilization, and their exercise of stricter control over their native tribes, would imbue them with the necessary level of legitimacy to protect them from total annexation by their more powerful colonial rivals at all corners of their boundary.

Although indirect rule did indeed favor certain tribes, it simultaneously disadvantaged others. As result of the inherent inequity produced by indirect rule, consternation was stirred among native communities that stood to lose out because of these new administrative changes. One such example occurred two decades after indirect rule had been firmly established over the hinterland. In 1938, two chiefs of the Central Province within the Gibi chieftaincy claimed to have been elected as paramount chief. Apparently, both men had been independently conferred to the post by a top government agent, with Commissioner Watson supporting one, and the Chief of the Bureau of Tribal Affairs V.J. Fahnbulleh supporting the other. In response to this

²⁴⁴ The name of the agent collecting rubber in the chief's territory.

²⁴⁵ Unknown Government agent to Acting Clan Chief Sadaki Dawehn, Liberian Gov Archives II, Box 2, *Grand Bassa, Clan Chiefs, 1931-1943*, 9.
<http://fedora.dlib.indiana.edu/fedora/get/iudl:1194586/OVERVIEW>.

situation, RSS Bright, Secretary to the President warned the Tribal Affairs chief that “the person eligible to the chieftaincy by popular vote is often an instrument of discontent in the tribe and disregard of Government orders.” And warned further that, “sight should therefore be taken in deciding the question of the Paramount Chieftaincy of Gibi.”²⁴⁶ Ultimately, the Government decided to approve chief Mayongai to the post of Paramount Chief because he had apparently exhibited a greater level of loyalty to the government. In concluding the matter, Mr. Fahnbulleh expressed his gratitude to President Barclay that:

"It is very good that present Interior Policy is against giving administrative control to outstanding tribal men who have developed disinclinations to submit to Government authority and who are using all their personal influence to stop public work begun by Government authority."²⁴⁷

In addition to helping the regime monitor and contain native mobility and dissent, indirect rule and the rents offered by the government to co-opted influential native elites, perhaps more importantly, it helped legitimize the fledgling country's status as a sovereign nation among the community of states. Indeed, President Garretson Wilmot Gibson in his December 16, 1903, Address to the Legislature argued that “settlements wisely planned and judiciously located, will have the two-fold effect of largely developing the resources of wealth in the nation, and of spreading Christian civilization in the region and beyond.” Continuing, the President asserted that:

“...the opening of such interior settlements as are here alluded to, will also be the means of affording protection to the large amount of European and American capital

²⁴⁶ Secretary Bright to Bureau Chief Fahnbulleh, Liberian Gov Archives II, Box 1, Interior Department, *Bureau of Tribal Affairs, Central Province, 1938-1941*, 1.

<http://fedora.dlib.indiana.edu/fedora/get/iudl:1246725/OVERVIEW>.

²⁴⁷ Ibid, 5.

that is now waiting to be invested in this country, so soon as it can be done with safety and profit to the owners.”²⁴⁸

In other words, by establishing effective control over its hinterlands, the regime could signify its legitimacy to other colonial powers by acting as a colonial power. The Americo elites wagered that by administering a system of control that conformed to the dictates of the international norm of statehood that they could affirm their status as the rightful rulers of the Liberian state.

Not only does the regime’s survival over the course of a century validate President Gibson’s belief that effective occupation would protect the regime from Western imperialism, but the government’s involvement in many of the prominent international accords throughout its existence is also probative of this fact. Some of the notable international conventions that Liberia was Party to include: the Brussels Convention, the International Prime Meridian Conference, the Universal Postal Congress, the Third International Copy Right Conference, the Anti-Slavery Convention, and the League of Nations; of which Liberia was a founding member. Liberia’s participation in these international conventions as well as its other diplomatic engagements are important because the conduction of foreign relations is one of the distinguishing features of an internationally recognized sovereign nation.²⁴⁹

International law scholars ascribe two principal characteristics to sovereign nations, internal sovereignty, and external sovereignty.²⁵⁰ Internal sovereignty is the

²⁴⁸ Dunn, 2011, 427.

²⁴⁹ Robert Jackson, and Carl Rosberg, “Why Africa’s Weak States Persist: The Empirical and the Juridical in Statehood,” *World Politics*, (1982); Tim Dunne, *Chapter 15: The English School*, in *The Oxford Handbook of International Relations*, 2008; Young, “The Post-Colonial State,” 2012.

²⁵⁰ Jackson and Rosberg, 1988; Dunne, 2008.

principle that provides states the right to govern the behavior of their citizens through a combination of coercive and non-coercive measures including but not limited to laws, taxation, appropriation of property, and the military draft. External sovereignty is the doctrine in international law that acknowledges the state and its agents as the only legal actors with the right to engage in treaties and other international relations with other states and entities on behalf of their citizens.²⁵¹ Because the principle of external sovereignty is premised on the recognition the international community of state's recognition of another state's right to exist and rule over its prescribed territory, Liberia's foreign relations is the most powerful proof that one can present to affirm that the international community recognized it as a legitimate sovereign nation. By exercising greater control of its provincial territories, the TWP succeeded in buttressing its legitimacy to the international arena to protect its autonomy.

5.4 Conclusion

I have argued in this chapter that to maintain its dominance over Liberian politics, the TWP had to co-opt power brokers within both the settler and native communities. To co-opt its political rivals Liberia's new ruling elites utilized the TWP to institutionalize power-sharing and monitoring among the country's elites. The country's decrepit economic state as well as the vacuum left in the wake of the RP's defeat positioned the TWP as the only viable political Party in Liberia. As the best resourced Party in a state in which politics was the only mode of socio-economic mobility, joining the TWP became extremely attractive to not just the Party's loyalists, but also its former rivals.

²⁵¹ Ibid; Young, 2012.

The Party's institutional features as well as the miniscule number of elites requiring to be co-opted allowed the TWP to exercise strict control over its ruling coalition.

By the turn of the 19th Century, the pressure to conform to the norm of *Effective Control* unleashed by the Scramble for Africa became too great for the regime to resist. The Brussels Agreement of 1890 compelled Liberia's settlers to construct a more robust administrative system to control their provincial territories. To achieve this end, it was shown that the Liberian government co-opted certain influential native elites to use them as state agents to control and monitor their local population. This strategy served the dual purpose of protecting the regime from domestic and foreign threats.

Domestically, indirect rule protected the regime by enlisting native elites to help govern sparse and often hostile native communities. Once these influential native leaders were successfully co-opted through inducements (and sometimes force), they could then use their social influence to compel their co-ethnics to comply with the central government. Through the exercise of greater control of its hinterland, the regime could more credibly signal to the international community that it had the right to exist as a sovereign state. Although this appeal was very tenuous given the country's miniature size and weak military and economic positioning on the global stage, the regime's enhanced control of its hinterland through indirect rule helped protect it from total inhalation.

Chapter 6. Repression and Regime Stability

"Chief, how I sent you word to send me carriers and you allow me to walk from the boundary to here? Now, I fine you \$10:0:0 and you must bring it and put it on this table before I sit down."²⁵²

Like all authoritarian regimes, repression was an essential survival tool for the TWP. But unlike durable dominant parties found in more resource endowed countries such as China, Malaysia, Taiwan, or the Soviet Union, Liberia's TWP did not possess the coercive apparatus to forcefully subdue its hinterland populations for much of its history. The tiny size of the country's ruling settler population from which it could recruit posed a serious challenge to the regime in its attempts to organize an effective military and policing apparatus. As I revealed in chapter 5, the regime's initial response to this challenge was to require all males sixteen and above to volunteer in the national militia. However, as international pressures heightened for states to exercise absolute control of their territorial claims, the Liberian state could no longer rely singularly on its ad hoc militia.

The possession of an organized military had now become a basic requirement of statehood in the new international arena. Liberia's reaction to these exigencies was the creation of its national military force, the Liberian Frontier Force (LFF). The force was created to collect taxes and police the hinterlands. Yet as the establishment of the LFF helped facilitate Liberia's integration into the international order, it also presented the TWP with an acute challenge; how to use its repressive apparatus in its interest without

²⁵² Super Intendent John Watson to Paramount Chief old man Lahai, Liberian Gov Archive II, Box, 9, 1914-1924, 34.

the apparatus turning on the regime? The regime's answer to this question was essential to its durability.

In this chapter, I will argue, following Timothy Nevin²⁵³ and Gus Liebenow²⁵⁴ that the LFF bolstered the TWP's survival by allowing the regime to outsource repression. Outsourcing of repression in this context refers to the institutional design of the LFF, which operated like the indirect administrative system described in chapter five in which, rather than exercising direct control of its regime of repression, the central government delegated this responsibility to external actors or subsidiaries, particularly district commissioners.

Not only did the LFF's organizational design relieve the TWP government of direct control of the Liberian military/police, but it also served to absolve the government of responsibility for the force's conduct.

Therefore, rather than blaming the entire TWP government for their woes, the native population which the force was created to monitor generally blamed their treatment on regional administrators and or the LFF itself. The Outsourcing of Liberia's regime of repression was necessitated by the country's lack of resources and facilitated by the obscurity which existed within the institutions that constituted the country's regime of repression.²⁵⁵ I argue that these conditions provided a mutual benefit to the

²⁵³ Timothy D. Nevin, "The uncontrollable Force: A brief history of the Liberian Frontier Force, 1908-1944," *The International Journal of African Historical Studies* 44, no. 2 (2011): 276.

²⁵⁴ Liebenow, 1969, 111.

²⁵⁵ By regime of repression, I mean the formal and informal rules that guided the use of state led coercion as well as the government appointed/enlisted actors charged with the implementation of coercion throughout Liberia. The present definition is intended to be as broad as possible to capture the breadth and complexity of coercion and its attendants, greed, and corruption in the TWP regime. Therefore, although the LFF was the most glaring manifestation of the regime's repressive apparatus (as is true for the military and police of all countries), I hope to also highlight the role of the often-invisible decision

regime as well as the LFF generally, producing a symbiotic relationship that ultimately helped the TWP survive into the late 20th Century.

To advance this argument I draw from the Liberian Archives at Indiana University and the 1930 report of the *International Commission of Inquiry into The Existence of Slavery and Forced Labor in the Republic of Liberia*. The Commission was a League of Nations led four-month long investigation which commenced on April 14, 1930, and concluded August 8 of the same year. The Commission's findings were informed by a series of structured interviews with diverse stakeholders including native chiefs and subchiefs, common native people, cabinet members, and public officials representing all three branches of the Liberian government. Although only 264 depositions were officially transcribed, the investigation was broad sweeping, recording over 3,000 natives in attendance for the various meetings held in Maryland County alone. In their four months surveying the Counties and towns most impacted by what they believed to be "conditions analogous to slavery and tending to acquire the status of classic slavery," the Commission heard many testimonies of the abuse and oppression.²⁵⁶

This chapter is divided into four sections. The first two sections provide a background of the LFF, outlining its structure and purpose within the government's broader administrative design. The Liberian Frontier Force section specifically offers a brief historical sketch of the force, its origin, and the party's efforts to control it following its tumultuous early period under British command. The Organizational Design and the

makers of the TWP and their minions through this definition, to illustrate how the various silos of the government's repressive regime interacted to reify themselves and prolong the TWP's survival.

²⁵⁶ Harrison Akingbade, *The Liberian Problem of Forced Labor, 1926-1940*, *Africa (Roma)* 52, no. 2 (1997).

Outsourcing of Repression section picks up where the previous section leaves off by detailing the force's redesign efforts, the philosophy that undergirded its recruitment method, and the distribution of power and decision making in the government's repression regime. The last two sections provide empirical evidence of the government's pacification of the hinterlands using its repression regime.

The Tribal Reaction to Repression Outsourcing and Regime Stability, specifically follows the shameful Fernando Po episode which triggered an international investigation into slavery in Liberia encapsulating the institutional reach of the government's repressive regime. The final section, Tribal Reaction to Repression Outsourcing and Regime Stability, provides further evidence of my argument through the country's early experience with the Firestone rubber company and reveals how certain native intermediaries might have stifled potential coups from below. I conclude with remarks on what I hoped to convey in this chapter.

6.1 The Liberian Frontier Force

In chapter 5, I outlined the international accord which established the effective occupation of territory as a central pillar of statehood in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. In accordance with the *Brussels Agreement* of 1890, the Liberian-French Agreement of 1907 required Liberia to “keep up an efficacious police along the frontier” or risk French occupation “should the resources of the Liberian Government not allow them to maintain a garrison itself.”²⁵⁷ In the same year, equally threatened by the

²⁵⁷ Ambassador White to the Secretary of State, Foreign Office of the United States, Frontier Agreement Between France and Liberia, N. 3532/19-20, 831.
<https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1907p2/d223http://images.library.wisc.edu/FRUS/EFacs/1907/reference/frus.frus1907v02.i0008.pdf>

prospect of British occupation and financial ruin, Liberia was also forced to take out its second national loan for £100,000 which was to be managed by the British owned Liberian Development Company. These international pressures converged with the domestic pressures arising from the series of native uprisings discussed in chapter 3 to compel the Liberian legislature on February 6, 1908, to pass a Joint Resolution appropriating \$60,000 to establish the LFF. The force was charged with "garrisoning the posts on the frontiers and maintaining public order."²⁵⁸

Of all the factors credited with the LFF's founding the most proximate was the 1907 Johnston loan. Although President Arthur Barclay, by 1907 had already laid the groundwork for the formation of the LFF as part of his broader hinterland integration policy, it was the £100,000 Johnston Loan that outlined the institutional structure of the LFF. Rather than assisting the Liberian government with reducing its debt however, the loan compounded the country's indebtedness. As disastrous as the loan was for the Liberian government, President Barclay saw no other alternatives in his quest to meet the demands of the new international order outlined in the *Brussel Agreement*. In desperate need of revenue to deliver on his hinterland integration policy, Barclay agreed to turnover Liberia's rubber concession to the British operated Liberian Development Company, transferring the administration of customs duties to British control.²⁵⁹ Specifically, the loan charged two British officials, a Chief and Assistant Inspector with the collection of Liberia's customs and duties. Besides "maintaining public order," the

²⁵⁸ Huberich, 975; Navin, 275–97, 279.

²⁵⁹ Box 57, Temporary Notes, Fredrick Starr, Liberia: Description, History, Problems, Chicago, 1913, 202.

LFF was thus created for the sake of collecting taxes to pay back the loan by which it was established.

The organization of the LFF, like indirect rule in Liberia, was modeled after the British system, namely its West African Frontier Force. Founded in 1898 to control its West African colonies of Nigeria and Sierra Leone, the British West African Frontier Force was comprised of several warlike loyal African tribes from different sections of their respective countries. These disparate groups of native Africans made up the regular army. The officer Corp consisted of British nationals who were appointed by civilian District Commissioners, effectively blurring the line between the political and military sectors.²⁶⁰ Although it is beyond the scope of this project to analyze the extent to which this structure was successful in the British case, as I illustrate below, when applied to the Liberian context, it presented a serious challenge of control, but ultimately assisted the regime's survival. The bifurcated institutional hierarchy as well as the subscription of "warlike" tribes into the regular army which characterized the British West African Frontier Force was transplanted onto Liberia in the structuring of the LFF.

Lacking the expertise to construct a professional army, the Liberian government acquiesced to British demands to allow them to organize, recruit, and train the LFF. Captain R. McKay Cadell a veteran of the British wars of conquest in South Africa was tapped as the first general to command the force in 1908. Not only was a British officer initially the head of the force, but British subjects from neighboring Sierra Leone,

²⁶⁰ Ukpabi S.C., The Origins of West African Frontier Force, *Journal of Historical Society of Nigeria*, December 1966, Vol 3. 485. https://www-jstor-org.ezp1.lib.umn.edu/stable/pdf/41856709.pdf?refreqid=excelsior%3Afa7dec82945ba4d0c5623da1a25aab48&ab_segments=&origin=&initiator=&acceptTC=1; Navin, 2011, 280.

particularly of the Mende ethnic group, were overrepresented in the early LFF.²⁶¹

Indeed, it is estimated that of the 250 LFF troops that were in service at the time, 71 were British subjects.²⁶² These British recruits gave their allegiance to Major Cadell who had amassed considerable influence over Liberian affairs, rather than the state. Cadell gained his influence not only through leading the Liberian army, but also because he held several high-profile public offices such as chief of police, tax collector, and city treasurer. These posts combined with his coveted position as Major General of the LFF placed Cadell in control of a vast patronage network from which his closest supporters benefited.

All this power and influence emboldened Major Cadell, who always viewed himself as a British national first and foremost, to lead a military mutiny against the Liberian government in January 1909 under the pretense that the government refused to pay his soldier's wages.²⁶³ Whether Cadell was justified in his coup attempt is a matter of opinion. What is true though is that the Liberian government had developed a reputation for not paying its service men which caused consternation within the military. Indeed, in his March 9, 1931, letter to TWP President Edward Barclay, N. Milton, an officer of the LFF informed the President that it had been "almost 8 months we have not received a cent as payment from the government."²⁶⁴ The question of wages persisted

²⁶¹ Harrison Akingbade, The Pacification of the Liberian Hinterland, *Journal of Negro History*, 179 (3): 277-96, 282; Nevin 2011, 280.

²⁶² Nevin, 2011, 281.

²⁶³ *Ibdi.*

²⁶⁴ N. Milton to President Edward Barclay, March 9, 1931, Liberian Government Archives II, Box 4, Maryland County True Whig Party, 1931-1943.

throughout the LFF's history and defined its relationship with the central government and the hinterlands tribes.

In response to Cadell's mutiny, the TWP lead Liberian Legislature called for Cadell's immediate resignation. Cadell reluctantly acquiesced to the government's demands on Feb 1, 1909. Within 24 hours of his resignation, he issued President Barclay a letter threatening the President to pay the salaries of his men within 24 hours of receiving his letter, otherwise he would not be "responsible" for the President's safety.²⁶⁵ In response, Barclay promptly deployed 400 militiamen to meet Cadell and his rebels to thwart the mutiny. Cadell responded in kind by blockading the roads leading out of Monrovia, thus, initiating a standoff between the militia who remained loyal to the Liberian government and members of the LFF who remained loyal to Cadell. On February 10, 1909, the British gunboat *Mutin* was spotted in the Monrovia harbor encircling the area. Likely due to American diplomatic pressures, the British Council commanded Cadell to surrender at Camp Johnson in February 1909.²⁶⁶

Cadell's disloyalty to the Liberian government was propagated by the ambiguity that existed within the institutional hierarchy of the LFF. Although the force was established by the Liberian government, the agents to which its leadership answered were British. Indeed, Cadell believed that rather than the Liberian government, that he took his command directly from the British Receiver Generals who collected Liberia's revenue pursuant to the Johnston Loan that established the LFF.²⁶⁷ The lack of clarity

²⁶⁵ Navin, 281.

²⁶⁶ *Ibdi.*

²⁶⁷ *Ibid.*

concerning the command structure of the LFF combined with the vast patronage network he controlled sparked Cadell's ambition in Navin's words to "rule Liberia as his own private fiefdom." Yet, years after his coup plot was thwarted, the institutional ambiguity and underlying revenue scarcity that motivated Cadell's rebellion continued to persist in the LFF.

Cadell's coup attempt combined with Britain's expansionist policy drove Liberia away from Britain's political orbit, a country which the government once lauded as a friendly ally. By this time, American interest in Liberia piqued after U.S. diplomats came to the realization that absent of U.S. intervention, that Great Britain and France were committed to parsing up Liberia between themselves, therefore eradicating America's own colonial project in Africa. This newfound interest in Liberia prompted the TWP led government to turn to the U.S. for assistance in training and leading its military to replace the British officers serving in the LFF at the time. In response to the Liberian government's request, the U.S. dispatched the Faulkner Commission in 1909 to investigate the conditions in Liberia and provide recommendations to the U.S. government about how to proceed with Liberia's request.²⁶⁸ The Commission had three key mandates:

- 1) To make a demonstration that will let the rest of the world know that the United States has not lost interest in Liberia and that it means in some way to reawaken and strengthen its former interest and connection. 2) To be of any service in the way of suggesting improvements and reforms in the government of Liberia. 3) To help strengthen the educational work in the country.²⁶⁹

²⁶⁸ Timothy Rainey, "Buffalo Soldiers in Africa: The Liberian Frontier Force and the United States Army, 1912-1927" (Ph.D. thesis, Johns Hopkins University), 20.

²⁶⁹ Rainey, 2002, 69.

The commission submitted its report to the U.S Secretary of State in 1909

recommending that:

- 1) ...the United States extend its aid to Liberia in the prompt settlement of boundary disputes; 2) That the United States enable Liberia to refund its debt by assuming as a guarantee for the payment of obligations under such arrangements the control and collection of the Liberian customs; 3) That the United States lend its assistance to the Liberian Government in the reform of its internal finances; 4) That the United States lend its aid to Liberia in organizing and drilling an adequate constabulary or frontier police force; 5) That the United States should establish and maintain a research station in Liberia; 6) That the United States should reopen the question of establishing a naval coaling station in Liberia.²⁷⁰

The report continued that a total of three American army officers should be dispatched to Liberia to train and command the LFF. It was requested also that the three officers consist of one captain and two Lieutenants from the U.S army who would be installed and paid as a Major and Captains while commissioned in Liberia.²⁷¹

Importantly, the report recommended that whether officers or enlisted, those selected for service in Liberia should be Negroes.²⁷² It called the U.S and Liberian governments to execute formal treaties documenting the agreements between the two countries. The Commission further recommended that the salaries of the of the U.S officials be treated as a customs duty, which was to be paid in advance by the American appointed Customs Receiver. Because Liberia by this time had cultivated a reputation for not paying its troops, the U.S was keen to ensure the payment of its officials' salaries.²⁷³

²⁷⁰ Ibid, 70.

²⁷¹ Ibid, 71.

²⁷² Ibid, 72.

²⁷³ Ibid, 73.

6.2 Organizational Structure and the Outsourcing of Repression

The U.S government did not take any significant action on the Commission's recommendations for a couple of years, however. Yet by 1912, Liberia's internal challenges, which included its ongoing economic needs, exacerbated by the ruinous 1906 Johnston Loan, native uprisings, and imperial encroachment, compelled President Daniel E. Howard (1912-1920) to issue a direct appeal to U.S President William Taft to "designate" the U.S army to assist Liberia in restructuring and managing its military and economic affairs.²⁷⁴ For the first time in its history, the U.S government in conjunction with an international receivership comprised of British, French, and German banks, resolved to offer Liberia a new \$1,700,000 loan. Because the loan mandated that the British customs receivers be replaced by U.S. officials, British influence in Liberian financial affairs was severely crippled.²⁷⁵

The Liberian government's expulsion of British officers from the LFF practically eliminated British influence over Liberia's internal affairs and left a leadership vacuum which was to be filled by Liberians and Americans. The British subjects from Sierra Leone that had enlisted under Cadell were mostly replaced by poor Congo and native Liberians. U.S military attaché Major Charles Young was appointed to command the force accompanied by five additional U.S soldiers. The number of non-commissioned American soldiers eventually peaked at 15. These U.S servicemen were mandated to turn the LFF into a professional army through an advisory role.²⁷⁶ To ensure accurate

²⁷⁴ Ibd, 76.

²⁷⁵ Wayne, Taylor, *The Firestone Operations in Liberia*. Washington: (National Planning Association), 1956, 48.

²⁷⁶ Nevin, 282

accounting of the expenses paid to maintain the LFF, a hierarchy of reporting was implemented known as the *Original Papers*, which stipulated that:

...all estimates, accounts and vouchers necessary to complete accounting shall be prepared by the Staff Officer known as Military Adviser, and approved by the Secretary of War; then to be taken to the Secretary of the Treasury to be checked; then to go to the office of the Secretary of War for file... The 'Duplicate Papers' are to be retained by the Military Advisor.²⁷⁷

Although the Liberian government reserved the right to suggest and reject advisers, this power was rarely exercised and when it was, it was largely ignored. For example, in Spring 1927, the Liberian government informed the U.S Department of State of its disapproval of the “type of Americans recently nominated as officers in the frontier force,”²⁷⁸ by which they meant the noncommissioned American officers from the American negro regiment. Yet the U.S ignored this demand under the pretext that “West Point or other officers of the regular army could not regularly be assigned to service with the Liberian frontier force; two, there were no suitable qualified colored officers available.”²⁷⁹

By agreeing to put foreign agents in charge of its army, Liberia had effectively outsourced its repressive regime, removing the TWP rulers from the nexus of decision making and responsibility for the LFF’s actions. Although Americans had replaced British officers by 1912, little had changed about the LFF’s organizational structure and the underlying philosophy by which it operated under Cadell. As a pullover from the

²⁷⁷ Secretary of War to unknown source, Liberian Government Archives II, 1911-1968, Box 7, War, 1912-1914, 14.

²⁷⁸ *Foreign Relations of the United States*, 1930, Volume III, Liberia, eds. Joseph V. Guller and Tyler Dennett (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1945), Document 428.
<https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1930v03/d428>

²⁷⁹ *Ibdi*, <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1930v03/d429>

British Colonial Force, for instance, the LFF clung to a belief emblematic of the *civilizational myth*, that certain ethnic groups such as the Kissi, Gbandi, Mende, and Mano in the interior were naturally predisposed to be warriors. The TWP government and its American Advisors also reasoned that because the natives of the hinterlands, in comparison to their coastal brethren, had been less contaminated by Western ideas due to their relative isolation, that they would be easier to control. As discussed in Chapter 5, these groups were enticed to join the force by the prospect of elevating their economic and social statuses, as well as the opportunity to punish their ethnic rivals, among other things. These factors made these historically weak, but friendly ethnic groups the ideal targets for recruitment into the LFF's regular army corps.

The heightened territorial tensions with its colonial rivals, Great Britain, and France, pressured the force to focus its recruitment efforts more specifically among friendly ethnic tribes along the regions in which it shared a border with its colonial rivals. While poor Congos and friendly native tribes made up most of the force's enlisted soldiers, the officer corps was comprised principally of the more "civilized" Americo Liberians who took their orders from their American commanders.²⁸⁰ In a telegram to whom one might assume was his Superior on September 19, 1928, British Diplomat A.F. Orchard reported that:

Apart from the United States Officers attached to the Liberian Frontier Force for instructional purposes, it is not possible to say whether the force contains any foreign national. According to the Liberian laws in the possession of the Foreign Office aliens

²⁸⁰ Ibid, 282.

are not eligible to serve. It has been shown, however, that some British subjects from Sierra Leone were recruited in the original frontier force, and it is possible that some have continued in the service.²⁸¹

The composition of the Liberian army caused tensions not only vertically between the native enlistees and their Americo-Liberian officers, but also horizontally among native enlistees. Some of these recruits had come from tribes that held historical animosities towards one another and used their uniforms and rank to not only punish their enemies in their assigned regions, but also their fellow soldiers. In his February 15, 1940, letter to President Edwin Barclay, Second Lieutenant D.D Akoimala of the LFF reported that his commanding officer Captain John G. Watson suspended him from the duties of an officer "without any investigation or charges presented" against him. In the letter, Akoimala provides four occasions in which Watson "attempted to use violence" on him based on his tribal identity. On one occasion, Akoimala claimed, that his wife of "seventeen years" was "badly cursed" by commanding officer Watson in his own quarters.²⁸² Akoimala continued that:

What surprised me mostly was that when he told me that we the Buzzi (Lormah) had been slaves to them the Vais and that fragment can still be traced at their home. That when he was in the Liberian Frontier Force, I was wearing G string.²⁸³

On another occasion at the parade ground where all the enlisted men were sorry for me. Instead of my commanding Officer treating me as a brother officer, in my mind, he wants to treat me as a one of my tribes men who were slaves to them that he refers to.²⁸⁴

²⁸¹ A.F. Orchard, Foreign Office FO_ 458_101_9, National Archives, UK, September 19, 1928. http://www.archivesdirect.amdigital.co.uk.ezp3.lib.umn.edu/Documents/Images/FO_458_101/9.

²⁸² Box 5, Sinoe County Liberian Frontier Force Sasstown Report, 16, Jan 1940, 6. <http://fedora.dlib.indiana.edu/fedora/get/iudl:1226337/OVERVIEW>

²⁸³ Ibid.

²⁸⁴ Ibid.

Besides the ethnic composition of the force, another point of contention was the ambiguous chain of command that existed within the Liberian military infrastructure. As discussed in chapter five, long before the founding of the LFF, Liberia relied upon an ad hoc militia comprised of abled bodied males between ages sixteen and forty-five.²⁸⁵ Rather than dissolving this militia or subsuming it under the LFF's chain of command after the force's founding, the militia remained its own autonomous body. Whereas the LFF took their orders primarily from the American advisors that commanded the force, Liberian officers commanded the militia.²⁸⁶

Yet, although the American advisors exercised de jure control of the LFF, their influence was attenuated by another feature of Liberia's administrative hierarchy which convoluted the de facto chain of command. According to Liberian law, the chief civil authority responsible for the administration of hinterland territories was the Commissioner-at-Large. This officer was charged with pacifying the hinterlands and overseeing all matters pertaining to the interior, including the actions of the LFF. To administer over these territories, the interior was divided according to districts with no representation in the legislature and were managed by a District Commissioner.²⁸⁷ It would not be until 1965 under TWP President William Tubman that the interior territories would be incorporated as counties with representation in the state legislature.²⁸⁸

²⁸⁵ Republic of Liberia, [1847 Constitution in, *The Statute Laws of the Republic of Liberia*], 1975. <https://hdl.handle.net/2027/nyp.33433008032629>.

²⁸⁶ Rainy n.a, 99-100.

²⁸⁷ *Ibdi*, 100.

²⁸⁸ Steven Knowlton, *Liberian Country Flags in Historical Cultural Context*, n.d, 69. The Liberian Constitution established 3 counties, Montserrado, Grand Bassa, and Sinoe, all situated on the coast. The 1857 incorporation of Maryland brought the total number of counties to 4, prior to the Tubman administration's Open-Door and Integration policies which established full native suffrage and provided for the incorporation of the first four hinterland counties. Among these were Lofa Bong, Nimba, and Grand

Because of the communication and logistical challenges of traversing the hinterlands and their limited numbers, the American advisors could not practically administer over the expansive and unnavigable Liberian hinterlands exclusively. This logistical limitation allowed District Commissioners to exercise considerable power and autonomy in the management of their assigned territories. The prestige and patronage networks available to District Commissioners discussed in chapter five provided great incentives for the poor underpaid LFF troops to remain loyal to them.²⁸⁹ A looming character in the TWP's pacification of the Liberian hinterland whom we shall revisit was Super Intendent John Watson. In his October 22, 1924, address to the natives of Grand Cape Mount touting his elevated status from Country Commissioner to Senior County Commissioner, Watson revealed how he planned to administer his jurisdiction in the following:

I come to tell you all goodbye, because I have reached the place where my father was: I am now Supt. Of this county; except God promote me higher, I am satisfied with where I have reached. Cape Mount is now a county and I am the chief. Whatever we say and whatever we don't will stop at Cape Mount; we will not carry any more of our matters to Monrovia. I am now going for your new commissions.²⁹⁰

By the 1920s, the LFF which once stood at merely 600 soldiers in 1912 had swelled to 1,500. These soldiers were deployed throughout the countryside under the command of District Commissioners such as Watson with a thirst for greed, corruption,

Gedeh counties in 1965. Seven additional counties were added after the Tubman administration, the most recent being River Gee in 2001, bringing the total county number to 15.

²⁸⁹ Rainy, 101.

²⁹⁰ Watson to Paramount Chief old man Lahai, Box 9, 1914-1924, 34.
<http://fedora.dlib.indiana.edu/fedora/get/iudl:1337567/OVERVIEW>

and violence. As the force grew, the government was able to station detachments at all district headquarters under likes of Watson.²⁹¹

6.3 Tribal Reaction to Repression Outsourcing and Regime Stability: Fernando Po

Although it is difficult to say whether the organizational idiosyncrasies of Liberia's repression regime were intentionally designed or fortuitous, it was nevertheless effective in preserving the TWP's rule. In this section, I provide further evidence in support of the present chapter's central claim, that the TWP's outsourcing of repression aided in prolonging its survival. Since the previous section dealt with the institutional design of the regime's repressive regime, my focus in this section will be to reveal the native experience with the regime's repression. By analyzing the experiences of native Liberians to the LFF, we can discern how these communities interpreted their subjugation and begin to piece together how they endured their condition long enough for the regime to survive another half a century from the creation of the LFF. A mass level of analysis also promises to provide critical insights into why the Amerco-Liberian TWP overthrow never materialized from the mass level.

I argue that Liberia's native communities generally disassociated their repression with the central government in Monrovia, and instead blamed individual district commissioners and the LFF for their suffering. Any effort to carry out a sustained mass level revolt was attenuated by the active involvement of certain native chiefs in the repression of their own communities. This tendency was due not only to the somewhat

²⁹¹ *Ibdi.*

autonomous nature of local government units in their administration of the hinterland, but also because Liberia had only begun cultivating a cosmopolitan national identity in the post WWII era under William V.S. Tubman. The fragmentary nature of Liberia's repressive regime allowed Liberia's ruling TWP government to present itself as a benevolent mediator and even champion of the people, despite being the primary beneficiary of its repressive regime.

No account of the pacification of Liberia's hinterlands would be complete without a discussion of the Fernando Po epoch. Fernando Po is a small Island off the coast of what was then the Spanish colony of Equatorial Guinea. From the early to late 19th Century the Island's primary commodity was palm oil. Palm oil was later replaced with the introduction of cocoa production in the late 18th-early 20th Century. This shift produced a change from trade to agriculture, requiring human capital to cultivate the new crop. Yet the labor demand outpaced the island's labor supply. The island's plantation companies would find the laborers they required on the coastal mainland of West Africa, particularly Sierra Leone and Liberia.²⁹²

Liberia's economic woes at the turn of the 19th Century meant that the county was in desperate need of revenue. Thus, in 1905, Liberia agreed to supply workers on contract who were shipped by chartered German ships to carry them to cocoa plantations on Fernando Po. The agreement was formalized in the 1914 convention between the Liberian and Spanish governments.²⁹³ The treaty provided that Liberian contractors were to be paid a fee for each laborer sent to Fernando Po for two years.

²⁹² I.K. Sundiata, "Prelude to Scandal: Liberia and Fernando Po, 1880-1930, 102.

²⁹³ *Ibdi*, 102-103, 108; Rainey, 115.

The wages accumulated over the two-year period were then “deposited in gold in Monrovia to be paid in local currency when he returned to Liberia.”²⁹⁴

Not only did the 1914 convention provide Liberia an opportunity to receive much needed revenue, but it also offered safeguards to the Liberian government and laborers. For example, the convention called for a Liberian consul to be stationed at Santa Isabel, Fernando Po, to oversee the treatment of Liberian nationals on the Island, restricted the recruitment of laborers to specific Liberian ports which were to be managed by Liberian agents managed by the Spanish Consul in Monrovia. The accord also authorized Liberia to appoint four recruiting agents and planters from Fernando Po to liaise between Liberian authorities and Fernando Po plantation companies.²⁹⁵ Despite these safeguards, Liberia’s native population who were the primary targets for labor recruitment, were brutalized not only by their Spanish employers, but perhaps more so by the LFF soldiers and the civilian officials entrusted with their protection.

To obtain laborers, Fernando Po cocoa plantation companies partnered with local Liberian agents whom they paid to produce the men referred to derogatorily as “boys” to work their cocoa plantations. In some instances, local chiefs were enlisted directly by these companies, but in many cases, government subsidiaries such as district commissioners facilitated the exchange. The companies would set a quota for the total number of men they required, and district commissioners would charge native chiefs from various tribes within their district with providing a certain number of men from their village to meet the quota. The LFF were the enforcers used by the district

²⁹⁴ Rainey, 115.

²⁹⁵ Sundiata, 107.

commissioners to coerce tribal communities to comply with the labor demands. Once obtained, the Liberian laborers would then be housed and fed until the arrival of a Spanish steamer to transport them to Fernando Po. When the steamers arrived at Liberia, the Liberian laborers were given an advance note in the form of goods and cash equivalent to three months of wages or \$12 which they were meant to receive once arrive at Fernando Po. Although it is difficult to determine for certain, the Liberian recruiters likely appropriated the payment leaving the laborer with little to nothing.²⁹⁶ The recruitment practice is illustrated in the following passage from the League of Nation's report on slavery and forced labor in Liberia:

In 1927 Superintendent Yancy demanded 100 boys from the Barrobo section for Fernando Poo. He gave the order to District Commissioner Scott. The Commissioner gave the order in turn to the Paramount Chief. The Chief, objecting, delayed and soldiers were sent to catch them.²⁹⁷

When the soldiers arrived at Barrobo, the young men of the village were nowhere to be found. After the Paramount chief balked at the command to produce the young men demanded by the Superintendent, the Frontier soldiers proceeded to catch "old men, women, and children" until the young men came from hiding behind the bush to surrender to the Frontier soldiers. They were then apprehended and taken in by the Frontier solders. The young men that were taken from the village in 1927 had not been returned by 1930 when members of the International Commission of Inquiry visited the village, a full year after their subscription should have expired.²⁹⁸

²⁹⁶ Sundiata 104.

²⁹⁷ Report of the International Commission of Inquiry into the Existence of Slavery and Forced Labor in the Republic of Liberia, United States Government Printing Office, Washington, 1931, 39.

²⁹⁸ Ibid, 39.

In Sinoe County forceable recruitment and shipment of Liberian natives to Fernando Po with the assistance of the LFF and certain government officials was rampant and reported as late as 1928. Samuel Ross, Former Senior District Commissioner of Greenville, Sinoe County, and later Postmaster General of Liberia led the recruitment of some 600-800 Liberian natives to Fernando Po in direct violation of the Liberia's law against the exportation of labor out of the country from Montserrado County in 1924 alone. Between August 1 and September 21 of the same year, Ross ordered District Commissioner Watson to procure natives for Fernando Po. D.C. Watson passed this order along to his subordinate, Quartermaster Ed. H. Blackett, to "capture, with the aid of soldiers, a large number of natives from the town in his section, secure and deliver them to Mr. Sammy Ross in Greenville, Sinoe County."²⁹⁹ On September 21, 1927, Quartermaster Blackett again received an order from his superior, District Commissioner Watson, to "take soldiers and capture as many male natives as he could, not exceeding 250, and deliver them to Sammy Ross for shipment to Fernando Poo."³⁰⁰

Chief Nomeh, of the Sikon clan in Sinoe County testified to these actions, reporting that Brackett "flogged and tied all who refused to go with him and took away 'about four boat loads'; and that his people ran into the bush."³⁰¹ The chief also fled his village to seek refuge in Greenville in order to escape the ire of the District Commissioner and to protect himself from further raids from frontier soldiers.

²⁹⁹ Ibid, 22

³⁰⁰ Ibid, 22-23.

³⁰¹ Ibid 23.

Quartermaster Brackett and Senior District Commissioner Ross arrived at the Greenville port with their human cargo on October 5 to have then Postmaster General Reginald A. Sherman transport them across the river where they were to await the steamer which was to transport them the Fernando Po. Ross perhaps sensing suspicion on the part of Sherman, handed him a radiogram which he wished to be forwarded to the Secretary of State requesting Ross to “send 300 boys whom he had on hand, by a German steamer instead of the usual Spanish steamer since there were involved the expense of feeding them.”³⁰²

Sherman ultimately transported the men across the river. However, upon his return, he was handed yet another telegram from Ross in which Ross offered “£25.0.0 and payment of a back personal debt of £17.0.0 for his approval of the shipment of the boys.” Upon alerting local postmaster, C.D. Majors of the bribe, Sherman was made aware by Majors that the men which he had been ordered to transport were in fact ‘forced out of the country.’³⁰³ Sherman reported the incident to the Attorney General and Secretary of State Barclay, but the official order given to Brackett by District Commissioner Watson implicated the highest level of the Liberian government, including President D.B King himself. Although the District Commissioner, Quartermaster Brackett, and the President all maintained their innocence, Watson’s official letter in which he ordered Brackett to capture the men was a direct contradiction. Watson wrote to Brackett the following:

You are hereby ordered to proceed immediately with theses soldiers upon the receipt of this letter, by the instruction of the Honourable Commissioner General John W. Cooper,

³⁰² Ibid, 24.

³⁰³ Ibid, 24.

of the Hinterland, R. L. down to Green Ville, Sinoe, with as many men labourers as you possibly can, not exceeding 250, and there deliver them to the Hon. Samuel A. Ross, for the purpose of being shipped to Fernando poo, per orders of his Exclty, the president C.B.D. King; each man is to take with him one hamper of cleaned rice for this ration, and after the shipment, whatever is left you are to sell it out and report the cash here at this office on your return, to assist in paying off the staff.³⁰⁴

Although Ross and Bracket were indicted on charges which were not specified in the available records, Ross was nevertheless appointed Postmaster General to succeed Sherman while the case pended for the February 1928 term of the court. Therefore, rather than being punished for his crimes, Ross was rewarded handsomely. Moreover, the very individuals in the Liberian government who attempted to hold Ross and his collaborators accountable were themselves punished for trying to uphold the law. For instance, the matter was concluded with the dismissal of both county attorney Witherspoon, who oversaw the case, and county superintendent Grigsby who investigated the case. This extreme lack of accountability permeated the entire Liberian government serving to benefit the TWP leadership and the general Americo-Liberian aristocracy at the detriment of the native masses. The indigent state of the country conditioned its leaders to not only ignore the corruption and abuse taking place throughout the country, but they relished perpetuating the system and therefore their hegemony.

The government-sponsored actors of coercion served as a powerful deterrent to native chiefs to publicly speak out about their experiences. Yet a few brave chiefs did step forward to discuss their treatment by the hands of the Liberian government. Native chief Confo Peter of the Pokpa chiefdom was one of these brave men. In an October

³⁰⁴ Ibid, 25.

22, 1924, assembly of chiefs called by the central government, to investigate interior matters, chief Peter conveyed his elation at the opportunity to:

...talk because the things that civilized people are doing to us are very heavy on us, and so I am willing to tell the truth. We the people here, are connected with both sides of the boundary. My father was born in Liberia, but he went over and born me on British side.

He sent me over here and I was raised in Monrovia in President Johnson's time by Isaac Dixon. We love this country because it is a black man's country. "When Mr. Watson was D.C.-- He pushed the chiefs without any just cause, but they cannot say openly because the chiefs are afraid that if they expose what had been done to them, they would be dismissed, and so they have kept silent, but I will talk it."³⁰⁵

The Liberian government was first put on notice of the abhorrent practice described in the above anecdote, which was rampant in their country, by the British consul-general who wrote to the Liberian government in 1913 alerting them to the fact that slavery was taking place there. Specifically the British consul-general wrote, "It is reported that Liberians have recently been taken into slavery in other parts of Africa, Krumen being shipped by steamers on the Liberian Coast and landed without their consent at Fernando Po where they find themselves forced to work on plantations."³⁰⁶ Despite this warning, the Liberian Secretary of State Joseph J. Sharp informed the British consul-general that Monrovia would not take further actions to restrict labor shipman to Fernando Po. Although the advent of WWI relegated the issue to the background, the War's end brought the issue to the forefront of global affairs.

In 1927, the slavery allegations against Liberia stirred consternation within the international community. Although several books and traveler' accounts had accused Liberia of practicing slavery since the British consul general in 1913, the issue gained

³⁰⁵ Sworn Statement of Confo Peter, (Speaking of the Pokpa Chiefdom), Box 9, 1914-1924, 32.
<http://fedora.dlib.indiana.edu/fedora/get/iudl:1337567/OVERVIEW>

³⁰⁶ Quoted from Sundiata, 10.

new prominence after Thomas J. R. Faulkner, a Presidential candidate and former TWP member who abandoned the party to run as the People's Party candidate, publicly accused the administration of TWP President Charles D.B. King of supporting slavery in Liberia.³⁰⁷ On June 8th, 1929, the U.S. State Department ordered the U.S. Minister to Liberia to transmit to the Liberia Secretary of State a memorandum to:

... advise your Excellency that there have come to the attention of the Government of the United States from several sources reports bearing reliable evidence of authenticity which definitely indicate that existing conditions incident to the so-called "export" of labor from Liberia to Fernando Po have resulted in the development of a system which seems hardly distinguishable from organized slave trade, and that in the enforcement of this system the services of the Liberian Frontier Force and the services of influence of certain high Government officials are constantly and systematically used.³⁰⁸

The Liberian government categorically denied these accusations retorting that "...the government of the Republic will have no objection" to the issue of slavery "being investigated on the spot by a competent, impartial and unprejudiced commission."³⁰⁹

Thus, the International Commission of Inquiry was constituted on April 7, 1930 comprised of three members; one being a member of the Liberian Government, former President; One American member, Dr. Charles S. Johnson; and One League of Nations member, Dr. Cuthbert Christy.³¹⁰ The commission published the report of their findings on September 8, 1930, in which they concluded that on the question of whether slavery existed in Liberia:

...Although classic slavery carrying the idea of slave markets and slave dealers no longer exists as such in the Republic of Liberia, slavery as defined by the 1926 anti-slaver convention does exist in so far as inter- and intra-tribal domestic slavery exists.

³⁰⁷ Rainey, 115.

³⁰⁸ International Commission of Inquiry, 4.

³⁰⁹ Ibid, 4.

³¹⁰ Ibid.

On the question of whether shipment contract laborers to Fernando Poo was associated with slavery, the commission found that:

...a large proportion of the contract laborers shipped to Fernando Poo and French Gabun from southern counties of Liberia have been recruited under conditions of criminal compulsion scarcely distinguishable from slave raiding and slave trading, and frequently by misrepresenting the destination.

On the question of whether the Liberian government had been involved in the practice of slavery. The commission found that:

... Vice President Yancy and other high officials of the Liberian Government, as well as county superintendents and district commissioners, have given their sanction for the compulsory recruitment of labor for road construction, for shipment abroad and other work by the aid and assistance of the Liberian Frontier Force; and have condoned the utilization of this force for the purposes of physical compulsion on road construction, for the intimidation of villagers, for the humiliation and degradation of chiefs, for the imprisonment of inhabitants, and for the conveying of gangs of captured natives to the coast, there guarding them till the time of shipment.³¹¹

It is thought that between 1914-1927, an average of 600 native men and a total of 7,268 were captured and transported to Fernando Po under conditions indistinguishable from slavery.³¹² The embarrassment that the Fernando Po incident caused the Liberian government, whose constitution expressly outlawed slavery, compelled the TWP to oust President Charles D.B. King and his vice president Allen Yancy from office to preserve the country's sovereignty and perpetuate the TWP's rule. After the Commission published its report, there were serious talks in the global community about placing Liberia under the guardianship of an international body thereby destroying the country's ability to decide the course of its own destiny. The party's unprecedented decision to oust its own standard bearer can be viewed as a last-

³¹¹ *Ibdi.*

³¹² Sundiata, 107.

ditch effort to signal to the international community that the TWP government was now willing to comply with international norms. Apparently, the party's decision paid off because the TWP went on to rule for another 50 years. Yet under the surface, many of the practices that triggered the investigation persisted.

6.4 Tribal Reaction to Repression Outsourcing and Regime Stability: The Firestone Concession

As tragic as the Fernando Po epic was for Liberia's native population, sadly, it was far from the only example of systemic repression perpetrated by the Liberian government. The other noteworthy example of the regime's repressive proclivity can be traced to the arrival of the Akron Ohio (U.S.) based Firestone tire and rubber company in 1927. Firestone was founded in 1900 by Harvey S. Firestone, one of the 20th century's premier industrialists. With the proliferation of motor vehicles at the turn of the century and the onset of WWI, demand for rubber skyrocketed.³¹³ As one of the earliest entrants into the rubber industry, Firestone was uniquely positioned to take advantage of the world's rubber demand. However, his desire to expand his company's reach was mitigated by domestic anti-trust and anti-monopoly policies as well as foreign attempts to monopolize and control the global rubber market.

Ever concerned about the unpredictable nature of global commodity prices and the potential it held for harming its own economic well-being, Britain attempted to protect against the forces of the commodity market by directly controlling the global prices. To steer global rubber prices in favor of its own holdings in Malaya and Ceylon

³¹³ Taylor, 1956, 38-39.

for example, the British instituted the Stevenson Plan. Under the Stevenson Plan, a sliding scale of production and export controls were implemented that automatically set the price of rubber based on the performance of the preceding quarter. It set export quotas for rubber producers and levied a tax on shipments that exceeded the set quota. This global price setting mechanism was administered exclusively by the Colonial Office in Britain.³¹⁴

Whereas the British were preoccupied with establishing control measures over the global rubber market, Firestone's interest was keeping the price of crude rubber as low as possible to stimulate the use of rubber despite the deleterious fluctuations of global commodity prices.³¹⁵ This required an exponential increase in the scale of rubber production and an abundance of labor. Like the cocoa companies of Fernando Po, Firestone would find both assets in Liberia. By Firestone's directive, in April 1924, Donald A. Ross, a Scottish rubber-growing expert arrived in Liberia to research the feasibility of mass-producing rubber in Liberia. From his survey of the Liberian landscape, Ross proposed a two-pronged plan to begin production in Liberia. The first phase of the proposal entailed Firestone's leasing of an abandoned 2,000-acre rubber plantation formerly used by the British Company some 20 miles east of Monrovia at Mt. Barclay for 99 years. The second phase of the plan involved Firestone's receipt of a concession from the Liberian government providing the company the right to lease up to one million acres of land for 99 years at just six cents per acre. Given the abysmal state of the country's economy and its revenue needs, the in their November 1926 session,

³¹⁴ *Ibdi*, 44.

³¹⁵ *Ibdi*, 45.

the Liberian Legislature passed legislation accepting the terms of the unprecedented Firestone concession.³¹⁶

In addition to securing the 99-year lease of up to one million acres, the concession also required the Labor Bureau of the Liberia to annually supply 50,000 laborers to work the various Firestone rubber plantations throughout Liberia.³¹⁷ The burden to deliver on this agreement fell on the local governing units who employed the same tactics discussed above to recruit laborers for Fernando Po in their recruitment for Firestone. Native villages and towns that refused to provide laborers were often pillaged and burned down by the LFF soldiers on orders from Monrovia. On October 13, 1924, a conference was called with the Tewa chiefs in which the Secretary of State's attempted to gather the latest update from the town regarding a dispute between the Tewa and Gola. The Speaker of the Tewa tribe whose name was apparently not recorded replied that:

We have many palavers here, but the soldier matter is the biggest of them all. They, the soldiers, have caused the depopulation of most of the towns in the boundary; and as the remainder of the people moved inland ward to the Maffa River, the soldiers followed them there with the same trouble. This is causing the depopulation of the Tewa country.³¹⁸

District Commissioner Dennis's December 12, 1938, report to the central government recalling the state of affairs in the central district of Kakata, corroborates native accounts such as the above statement provided above by the Tewa chief. District Commission Dennis reported that:

³¹⁶ Ibdì 46.

³¹⁷ Nevin 112.

³¹⁸ Box 9, 1914-1924, 14. <http://fedora.dlib.indiana.edu/fedora/get/iudl:1337567/OVERVIEW>

When I arrived in this District on March 10th, 1936, I discovered a very rotten state of affairs. There were no organization of the Administration, Governmental or Tribal, no control and a great depopulation. This was immediately reported to the Department in my first letter from here and a copy forwarded to His Excellency the President, and ever since that then, I have been constantly fighting these 3 issues in order to properly carry out an effective Administration.³¹⁹

As has been telegraphed throughout the chapter, the other favored coercion tactic of the Liberian government was the exaction of heavy fines upon native village heads that failed to provide enough laborers. Of all of the government's coercive acts, the summary leveling of taxes seems to have stirred the greatest discontent in native communities. The sworn testimony of several native chiefs to the State Department's representative during the conference with Twa and Gola chiefs illustrates the general native perspective on the matter. The chiefs complained that:

...We know that Government officials are to be carried in hammocks, but every time the Superintendent comes up here he always brings from eight to ten hammocks and often sends for about 80 men to convey him and his followers from the waterside. The Paramount Chief is fined when the required number of carriers is not full up.³²⁰

I know nothing of fines because I do not attend the meetings. The only trouble that I know is that we are over taxed for carriers, the boys are taken from our farms and we have no rest. I have only one town which town has been taxed three kerosene tins full of rice per month, my people told me if this continue they will leave the town to me and go away.³²¹

...What I know is that we are suffering from heavy fines, we are in the Country for the Government, and the Government work are hurting us, but it is the fines that is placed on us.³²²

³¹⁹ Box 1, Central Province Kakata District Commissioner, 1931-1943, 10

³²⁰ Sworn statement from unknown Tewa chief. Liberian Government Archives II. Box 9, 1914-1924, 15.

³²¹ Ibid, 16, sworn statement of Gocomina to the question, "what do you know about fines?"

³²² Ibid, 16, Sworn statement of Boima Kaigor to the question, "What do you know of the present condition of the country?"

The reward for native chiefs that complied with the government's demand was a one-cent-per-day per laborer commission for each "boy" sent to Firestone.³²³ Perhaps because of fear of government reprisal or greed, or both, many native chiefs willingly participated in the recruitment and taxation of their tribesmen on behalf of the government. Commissioner Dennis's report on the conditions he found in the Central province of Kakata, again is revealing, where he reported that:

The second month after my arrival here, I went to River Cess where I succeeded in bringing back to the District more than 4,000 people who had left in some cases 15 years before my assignment here. I then took up the question of the inhabitants of the District who are within the Firestone Area who are not engaged by that Company and succeeded thus far in getting Chief Kaie who had been in the Firestone Area 6 years before my assignment here and was posing himself as the Paramount chief of the Firestone Area for the purpose of encouraging a large number of people to settle around him whereby he could live upon by trying oases and receiving commission from both the boys and the Firestone Company. Notwithstanding I succeeded in bringing back Chief Kaie to the District, there are still other agents who were left to carry on the the same propaganda and scheme and those agents I have long sought in vain to get the Department interested enough to make them return home.³²⁴

The prospect of enjoying even a marginal level of socio-economic prosperity in the resource-strapped countryside sometimes instigated fierce competition among native chiefs who sought to secure their position in the dynamic Liberian patronage network. In his May 20, 1916, letter to President Daniel Howard, Chief Kanda Kai Sanfish of the Taywoh tribe appealed to the President to settle a dispute between himself and several other chiefs in his district. The issue concerned the desire of several of the chiefs nearby to partake in the patronage system by collecting taxes directly from

³²³ Nevin, 295.

³²⁴ District Commissioner Dennis to the Chief of Bureau of Tribal Affairs, Box 1, Central Province Kakata District Commissioner, 1931-1943, 10.

their clan-folk and taking the collection directly to the central government rather than the paramount chief. Sanfish complained that:

Having related to my people all what transpired at the meetings of the chiefs of our country held with you in Monrovia recently, re the payment of taxes, all the people of this section, with the exception of 60 men (a fraction of the houses of Fahn Buleh) agreed to pay the poll tax which is in accordance with the law of the land. They were very pleased that you consented to their paying poll tax instead of Hut Tax. All consent too that I collect tax from them. But Momo Fahn Buleh, Burphey and Boymah Kenyeh said that they would of themselves collect the Hut Tax from their people and carry it to you. And since I was appointed collector of all Taywoh for the time being in the presence of the other Chiefs then assembled in Monrovia, I am brining this to your notice that you may write the Commissioner General to instruct them again what your orders to the Paramount Chief were.³²⁵

The lust for greed on the part of certain native chiefs primed them to do the TWP's bidding by perpetuating the repression of their own communities. These actions would sometimes surpass what was required of them by the central government. For example, it was rather common for some chiefs to exact additional taxes upon their kinsmen beyond what was mandated by the government. Some towns even reported being forced to work on the chief's private land for little or no pay. Those that refused risked receiving public summery floggings. The willingness of certain native chiefs to abuse their power in this way posed a serious challenge to native communities that may have desired to revolt against the government. Indeed, a major reason for failure of the Grebo (1910), Kru (1915), Gola-Gbandi (1918), and Kpelle (1920), uprisings was because native chiefs of other tribes could be depended upon to come to the government's aid.³²⁶

³²⁵ Chief Kanda Kai Sanfish to President D.E Howard, May 20, 1916, Box 3, Grand Cape Mount Clan Chiefs, 1916-1919, 3.

³²⁶ Nevin, 289

On January 2, 1939, a council of chiefs and elders of the Tienpo people was held to investigate certain claims raised by a lieutenant Kaba of the LFF against Clan Chief Nyeheh of the Lower Tienpo. The Chief was implicated on several charges, three of which I provide here:

- (1) That Chief Nyeneh forced his tribes men to pay rice which he concerted same to his personal use. (2) That he obtained a credit of L5-0-0 case with a view to pay his clerk and only : 1-0-0 was paid and the balance of the said amount used by himself. (3) That said Nyeneh sinfully violated tribal customs by carrying the Devil society to the town of Kolagri again the will and consent of the Tribal Authority and having discovered the action as above stated he was called to question, thereupon he imposed an unlawful fine amounting to : 1-5-0 on the said people, the paramount Chief of his section having heard of the action of Clan Chief Nyeneh asked him to refund said amount to the Kolagri people but he flatly refused.³²⁷

When asked directly by John Watson, Captain of the LFF, whether it was a fact “irrespective of [his (the captains’)] instructions to you whilst at Sesstown not to collect any rice from your tribes men as subsistence for your clerk you forcibly demanded some and converted to your personal use? The chief plainly answered “yes.”³²⁸ When questioned by Watson whether the chief at anytime:

credit[ed] from a young man from Firestone the sum of three Pounds (£3-0-) with a view to pay your clerk but only paid the clerk the amount of £1-10-0 from the said amount and in addition there you made your clansmen collect £2-15-0 which the young man whom you credit the £3-0-0 from have not received a cent from you against his account?³²⁹

The chief replied,

Yes, I did not credit L3-0-0 from the young man referred to in Lieut. Kaba's letter of complaint, I would admit that the young man credited me only L2-0-0 and in addition thereto I made my people 5/6 each town with the exception of two who paid 5/- each.³³⁰

³²⁷ Box 5, Sino County Liberia Frontier Force Sesstown Report, 16, Jan 1940, 18.

³²⁸ *Ibdi.*

³²⁹ *Ibdi.*

³³⁰ *Ibdi.*, 18-19.

Although Firestone did eventually change their labor recruiting strategy and discontinued their use of the Liberian Labor Bureau because of the embarrassment of the Fernando Po report by the International Commission, many of the practices outlined here still persisted well into the post-War era.³³¹ After 15 years of commanding the Liberian army (1912-1926), the American advisors were also expelled, and Liberia regained full control of its army. However, decentralization continued to characterize the structure of the army into the Post War era. Commissioners and other local officials continued to exercise considerable influence in the hinterland, and continued the legacy of abuse and graft that accompanied the arrival of Firestone and Fernando Po labor demand.

6.5 Conclusion

I have attempted to show how the socio-economic environment of 20 Century Liberia conditioned the construction of a semi-autonomous repression regime which aided the TWP's survival. The absence of foreign and domestic capital necessitated the Party's construction of a repressive regime that required little effort to maintain. The solution was to decentralize its apparatus of repression, outsourcing the management of its military to external actors and delegating considerable power to local units. Under this system, local government officials and their native allies were more-less free to do as they pleased in the hinterlands.

³³¹ Nevin, 295.

In effect, the TWP's outsourcing of repression allowed it to maintain a repressive regime for cheap. What the TWP government could not offer in regular salaries and wages, it made up for by overseeing a patrimonial system in which the party's members and supporters could benefit by abusing and pillaging native communities. As with all patrimonial structures, greed was the essential stimuli animating the system. In this environment, local government officials were essentially given free rein to summarily tax and terrorize local villages with little to no consequences from the state. As long as the members of the Liberian army and the civilian leaders from whom they took their orders were allowed to abstract from the masses what they could not from the state, they were more-less content with the state of affairs.

The central government perhaps fearing the potential of a military coup from within the ranks of the mostly indigenous regular army, was pleased to keep its repressive regime minimal and as far from the center of government as possible, both institutionally and physically. The lack of a crosscutting identity such as the nationhood among the native population as well as the willingness of certain native chiefs to collaborate with the central government and its subsidiaries stymie any hope of a sustained and successful native uprising until April 12, 1980.

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