

## **LIBERIA**

### **HISTORY:**

Liberia is a country in West Africa which was founded by free people of color from the United States. The emigration of free people of color, and later former slaves, was funded and organized by the American Colonization Society (ACS). The mortality rate of these settlers was the highest in accurately recorded human history. Of the 4,571 emigrants who arrived in Liberia between 1820 and 1843, only 1,819 survived. In 1847, the ACS encouraged Liberia to declare independence, as the organization could no longer support the colony against territorial incursions by the neighboring British and French. The ACS as well as several northern state governments and local colonization chapters continued to provide money and emigrants as late as the 1870s. The United States declined to act on requests from the ACS to make Liberia an American colony or to establish a formal protectorate over Liberia, but it did exercise a "moral protectorate" over Liberia, intervening when European powers threatened its territory or sovereignty.[6] As a result, eleven signatories established the Republic of Liberia on July 26, 1847, eventually electing the Virginia-born Joseph Jenkins Roberts as the nation's first president.

Liberia retained its independence throughout the Scramble for Africa by European colonial powers during the late 19th century, while remaining in the American sphere of influence. President William Howard Taft made American support a priority. From the 1920s, the economy focused on exploitation of natural resources. The rubber industry, specifically the Firestone Company, dominated the economy. Until 1980, Liberia was controlled politically by descendants of the original African-American settlers, known collectively as Americo-Liberians, who were a small minority of the population. From 1980 to 2006, the violent overthrow of the Americo-Liberian regime would lead to years of civil war that devastated the country and its economy. In 2005, elections were held in Liberia, and Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, who had once been arrested by Samuel Doe and lost to Charles Taylor in the 1997 elections, was elected President of Liberia. She was Africa's first female head of state.

There have been some critiques of her rule, but Liberia has been stable and made significant economic progress. In 2011, President Sirleaf was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize, along with Leymah Gbowee of the Mass Action for Peace and Tawakkol Karman of Yemen, who also championed women's rights and peacebuilding.

### **DEFENSE:**

The Armed Forces of Liberia (AFL) are the armed forces of the Republic of Liberia. Tracing its origins to a militia that was formed by the first black colonists in what is now Liberia, it was founded as the Liberian Frontier Force in 1908, and retitled in 1956. For almost all of its history, the AFL has received considerable materiel and training assistance from the United States. For most of the 1941–89 period, training was largely provided by U.S. advisers, though this assistance has not prevented the same generally low levels of effectiveness common to most of the armed forces in the developing world. As of 2014, the AFL consists of two infantry battalions, a Service Support Company, a Military Police Company, a Logistics Command, and the Liberian National Coast Guard. For several years after the war, a Nigerian Army officer served as head of the armed forces. After President Weah was elected, Prince C. Johnson III became Chief of Staff, promoted to Major General, and Geraldine George Deputy Chief of Staff, promoted to Brigadier General.

Relying heavily on foreign cash established a false sense of stability and growth in the economy, as infusions of foreign cash were temporary. The lasting impacts of

Liberia's aid flows are coming into focus now that much of the world has moved on. The United Nations Mission to Liberia has pulled out altogether. Other major organizations and countries have reduced their funding too, including Sweden, a leading donor to Africa. Aid from the U.S., whose leaders helped found Liberia in the 19th century as a destination for freed African Americans who either moved there by force or free will, fell sharply as well. It dropped from \$228 million in 2011, when assistance began to dry up, to \$86 million in 2018.

#### CULTURE:

Liberia is a multiethnic and multicultural country. Diversity has always been celebrated in Liberian culture ethnicity-based civil wars aside in regard to cuisine, music, fashion, language and people. The nation contains just over 4 million people, and while some are Americo-Liberian, or descendants of African Americans, most are from the native groups of this region.

The largest of the groups, making up about 20% of the total population, are the Kpelle. The Kpelle originated in what is now Sudan, moving to the coast in the 16th century. A large number of Kpelle today still rely on subsistence farming and live in traditional thatched huts, although modern materials like zinc roofs are now becoming common. The next largest ethnic group in Liberia is the Bassa. The Bassa people make up around 13% of the total population, and are one of the only groups to have their own writing system, called Bassa Vah. While many Bassa communities practice Christianity, a large number also adhere to traditional religions that include spirit and ancestor worship, as well as various ritual sacrifices of livestock. The third largest group in Liberia is the Grebo. About 10% of Liberians identify as Grebo. The Grebo were traditionally a coastal people, and the first with whom the African American colonists interacted. Those are the three largest ethnic groups in Liberia, but they are not the only ones. The Gio are mostly farmers, clearing agricultural plots out of the forests, and make up about 8% of the population. The Kru make up around 6% of the population and include several smaller ethnic groups. Another 5% identify as Lorma, 5% identify as Kissi, and 4% are Gola. The rest of Liberia's population includes a variety of smaller minority populations, including the Americo-Liberians. According to the 2008 National Census, 85.5% of Liberia's population practices Christianity, Muslims comprise 12.2% of the population, largely coming from the Mandingo and Vai ethnic groups, The vast majority of Muslims are Malikite Sunni, with sizeable Shia and Ahmadiyya minorities, Traditional indigenous religions are practiced by 0.5% of the population, while 0.4% subscribe to no religion

#### POLITICAL RESOURCES:

The Politics of Liberia takes place in a framework of a presidential representative democratic republic modeled on the government of the United States, whereby the President is the head of state and head of government; unlike the United States, however, Liberia is a unitary state as opposed to a federation and has a pluriform multi-party system rather than the two-party system that characterizes US politics. Executive power is exercised by the government. Legislative power is vested in both the government and the two chambers of the legislature.

The Constitution of Liberia is the supreme law of the Republic of Liberia. The current constitution, which came into force on 6 January 1986, replaced the Liberian Constitution of 1847, which had been in force since the independence of Liberia. Much like the 1847 Constitution, the Constitution creates a system of government heavily modeled on the Federal Government of the United States, The rule of law is

not enforced effectively, and weak property rights and the judicial system's lack of transparency seriously impede private-sector development. Sustained economic revitalization will depend on diversification, strengthened institutions, action to combat corruption, and political stability.

#### NATURAL RESOURCES:

Liberia's urban and rural peoples alike face a daunting burden of national reconstruction: restarting self-sufficient rural agriculture, providing health care for the war's victims, and restoring the national economy. Liberia has bilateral and multilateral agreements with a number of countries, including the United States. The Ministry of Commerce and Industry (MOCI) is the designated authority that facilitates duty-free quotas and free trade across Liberia's borders. Liberia has three trade and investment agreements with the United States, under which the country enjoys duty-free and preferential trade benefits. They include the African Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA), a Trade and Investment Framework Agreement (TIFA), and the Generalized System of Preferences (GSP). Liberia's trade composition with Africa is relatively concentrated in a few products in terms of both exports and imports. Liberia has a trade deficit with Africa. In 2017, intra-Africa exports were valued at US\$ 173 million while imports were about US\$ 374 million. Intra-Africa exports account for 89% of Liberia's global exports while intra-Africa imports account for 29% of Liberia's global imports

#### ECONOMY:

The Liberian Dollar has been the official currency of the Republic of Liberia since 1943. The Liberian currency includes coins and banknotes, which are issued by the Central Bank of Liberia. The symbol used is L\$, to differentiate it from other Dollar currencies. The Liberia war crisis has caused a lot of problems for the country, Poverty, lack of education, disillusionment, and exploitation of natural resources that caused Liberia's civil war in the first place still exists today. This threatens not only Liberia's future but that of the entire region. It doesn't help that wars rage on in neighboring countries such as Ivory Coast and Guinea and Liberian ex-combatants are being recruited to fight just across the border. Liberia's long-term economic viability is going to depend on large-scale foreign investment in the resource sector, but that investment will not occur until there is full security

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