
NAI NEWSLETTER

5 September 2003

With focus on Liberia and Rwanda

Liberia: Towards a new beginning?

Will the fourteen-year civil war of Liberia end with a 'regime change', i.e. a change from warlord politics to a developmental democracy? The guns are still far from being totally silent in this country, or in the region.

On 11 August, Charles Taylor stepped down under immense pressure, both from within Liberia and from his African peers. This was an unprecedented move, and a success for regional efforts to support the peace process. African troops will be helping to keep the peace in the country, for the government forces have little control over the territory and the people. Liberian civil society has been immensely weakened by decades of authoritarian rule and civil war. Regional efforts to support the peace process therefore seem to be the only hope for Liberia. One of the challenges is to protect the peace accord signed in Accra a few weeks ago, and gradually eradicate warlordism, that has been developed into an art in this country.

On 14 October 2003, Liberia will have a power-sharing arrangement, with a fairly broad-based transition government, headed by a businessman, Gyude Bryant. This will be a historic development. Members of the government and other top executive cadres have been chosen from all parties, all counties of the country and civil society. Never has Liberia had such a broad based government. Their main task for the next two years will be to lead the country's tedious reconciliation and reconstruction processes. The new government will depend on the military and political support it gets from the states of the region.

The Economic Community of West African States, ECOWAS, and the African Union have demonstrated African ownership and preparedness to find a lasting solution to the governance and humanitarian crises in the region. The key question, however, is whether or not the international community is willing to support a massive and long lasting presence of West African and UN troops to help keep the peace in Liberia.

The formation of the new government that will preside over the destiny of Liberia as of October 14, 2003 is a sign that Liberians may now be about to begin a new chapter in their history. But will the immediate past president, Charles Taylor, and the other perpetrators of gross violations of human rights answer for their crimes? How can the demobilisation of ex-combatants and re-settlement of refugees and internally

displaced persons be carried out, the administration, communications infrastructure and the economy re-built, and a civic culture instituted? What could a two-year transition and 'democratic elections' mean in a country where poverty and unemployment are so widespread, and the state and social institutions so weak?

For more information:

on the significance and challenges of the ongoing transition in Liberia.

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Other useful contacts:

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Relevant research: Youth combatants and intrapolitics of the Liberian civil war (1997-2002) and Liberian refugees in the Ivory Coast.

Relevant publication: *Sweet battlefields: youth and the Liberian Civil War*, Uppsala, 2003. 288 pp.

Useful websites:

<http://www.liberian-connection.com>

TLC–Liberian Connection

http://www.equitorial.com/news_libF.html

Equitorial.com

http://www.irinnews.org/frontpage.asp?SelectRegion=West_Africa&SelectCountry=Liberia

IRIN follows the day-to-day development in the region. It also provides archive service

<http://allafrica.com/>

allAfrica.com

<http://www.nai.uu.se/links/country/westafrica.html#Liberia>

NAI's 'A guide to Africa' provides more background material on the net.

Recent NAI publications on Liberia:

Desirée Nilsson:

Liberia: The Eye of the Storm

A Review of the Literature on Internally Displaced, Refugees and Returnees

A literature review on internally displaced persons, refugees and returnees in relation to Liberia, written by Desirée Nilsson at the Department of Peace and Conflict Research, Uppsala University.

Available for download at the NAI's webshop:
<http://www.nai.uu.se/webbshop/ShopSE/index.html>

Will elections lead to democracy in Rwanda?

On August 25 Rwanda held its first presidential elections since the genocide in 1994, resulting in continued Kagame rule. Parliamentary elections are scheduled for September 29. Is the situation in Rwanda ready for these steps? Will the elections contribute to the process of building democracy or are there risks for a backlash?

During 100 days from early April to mid July 1994 an estimated 800.000 ethnic Tutsi and moderate Hutu were killed by Hutu extremists in a frighteningly well-planned genocide. The tragedy was stopped only when the country was taken over by the Tutsi-dominated Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF) through its Rwandan Patriotic Army (RPA).

The RPF formed a transitional government involving other political groupings basically in accordance with a power sharing formula agreed upon before the genocide. The country functions comparatively well today. However the transitional government has rendered criticism for successively pruning out parties to the coalition and most often individuals of Hutu origin.

Criticism has also been heard concerning the government's harsh methods in upholding security, both internally and in DRC, where remnants of the perpetrators of the genocide, the Interahamwe, still linger.

International observers have given mixed opinions on the fairness of the August 25 elections. Will the same occur over the forthcoming parliamentary ditto?

For more information:

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Ridaeus has many years of experience from the Great Lakes region and follows regional developments closely.

Useful recent articles:

"Rwanda. Genocide's shadow", The Economist, August 30th 2003, p 11.
"Rwanda's presidential election. Kagame won, a little too well", The Economist, August 30th 2003, pp. 27-28.

Useful websites:

<http://www.crisisweb.org/projects/project.cfm?subtypeid=5>

International Crisis Group provides several quality background papers (also with executive summaries) on Rwanda.

http://www.irinnews.org/frontpage.asp?SelectRegion=Great_Lakes&SelectCountry=Rwanda

IRIN follows the day-to-day development in the region. It also provides archive service.

<http://www.nai.uu.se/links/country/centralafrica.html#Rwanda>

NAI's "A guide to Africa" provides more background material on the net.

<http://web.amnesty.org/library/Index/ENGAFR470102003>

Amnesty International's Press Release on the Run-up to the Presidential Elections.

<http://www.comelena.gov.rw/francais/index.html>

Commission electorale nationale (Rwanda):

http://europa.eu.int/comm/external_relations/human_rights/eu_election_ass_observ/index.htm

EU:

<http://www.idea.int/>

The website of IDEA International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance.

NAI publications on Rwanda:

Filip Reyntjens:

"Talking or Fighting"

"Small States in an Unstable Region"

"Again at the Crossroad" (available for download)

These three reports describe the background to the recent developments in Rwanda and Burundi, covering the period 1998-2001. Written by Filip Reyntjens, professor of Law and Politics at the Institute of Development Policy and Management, University of Antwerp

NAI webbshop: <http://www.nai.uu.se/webbshop/ShopSE/index.html>

Other contacts from NAI's researcher database:

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Relevant research: The psychology of humiliation. Peace and reconciliation and conflict resolution not only at the international and national levels, but also at micro levels.

More about elections:

a) Publications available in the NAI library

Elections in Africa—A Data Handbook. Ed. by Dieter Nohlen, Bernhard Thibaut and Michel Kennerich. Oxford, Oxford University Press 1999. 984 pp.

Multi-Party Elections in Africa. Ed. By Michael Cowen and Liisa Laakso. Oxford, James Curry, New York, Palgrave, 2002. 387 pp.

b) websites

A project proposal for mapping an electoral code ... :

<http://www.globalcentres.org/html/docs/NePAD/Landsberg%20Summary.pdf>

Address at the opening of the African conference on elections...:

<http://www.anc.org.za/ancdocs/history/mbeki/2003/tm0407.html>

EU's human rights and democratization policy:

http://europa.eu.int/comm/external_relations/human_rights/eu_election_ass_observ/index.htm

FORTHCOMING EVENTS

The Göteborg Book Fair, 25–28 September 2003.

NAI will participate at Internationella Torget in booth H05:21 with a book exhibition and seminars.

For more information see: <http://www.nai.uu.se/news/bobsve.html>

Nordic Africa Days, 3–5 October 2003 in Uppsala

For more information see

http://www.nai.uu.se/sem/conf/africa_days_03/invitationeng.html

Comments on the Newsletter are welcome.

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