Could Democracy be a Trigger for Conflict?

- The case of democratic violence in Liberia

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Date: 2017-01-09
Subject: Peace and development
Level: Bachelor
Course code: 2FU32E
Abstract

The aim of this thesis is to prove the hypothesis that liberal democracy could trigger conflict when implemented to a post-conflict country. During the last decades there has been a debate regarding whether the implementation of liberal peacebuilding and liberal democracy is a mean for peace or a mean for conflict. Researchers arguing for the importance of democracy claims that it is the most peaceful regime and that democracies almost never engage in war. The critics of the liberal democracy argue that the norms and values that characterizes the liberal democracy is not suited for countries with other norms, that it is not a substantial mean for promoting human development and security and that the peacebuilding efforts of the West simply is a mean to control the world security. I have in this thesis presented the research debate and placed myself amongst the critics of the liberal democracy. The case of Liberia was used to try and prove the hypothesis.

The method used is qualitative. I have used a qualitative text analysis as well as the method of process-tracing to process the information. The theories used are the democratic peace theory and the congruence theory. The research questions which I have based my study on are the following; Could the implementation of liberal democracy as a mean for peace, on the contrary bring conflict instead? Was it the liberal democracy that casued a continuation of the conflict in Liberia?

The results found is that the transition towards liberal democracy does entail conflictual elements and that there is the possibility of an aggravation of the conflict unless certain factors such as the timing of election and the level of security are thought of. In the case of Liberia there are facts showing that the liberal democracy could have aggravated the conflict, there are however other factors playing a role in this as well and I have therefore not been able to draw the conclusion that my hypothesis is true. Nonetheless I have been able to draw the conclusion that the implementing of liberal democracy is a potential factor behind the continuation of violence in Liberia. The liberal democracy did not create peace as the democratic peace theory suggests.

**Keywords:** democracy, liberal democracy, Liberia,

**Thanks to:** A big thank you to my tutor Jonas Ewald for all the support and great ideas.
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Introduction

The liberal peace concept, once thought to be unsuited in a postcolonial world, experienced an immense rise during the aftermath of the Cold War. Following the boom of Western humanitarian and peace interventions during the post-war era, the liberal democracy was an attempt to better and protect the world. (Duffield, 2007; 7) The Western powers, awakened by the threat of global instability and insecurity, united in order to reconstruct war-torn societies and reach state order. (Duffield, 2007; 8)

Since this period liberal democracy and economic liberalisation have been implemented to countries recently emerging from war or conflict. Kirsten Howarth (2014) writes that, "it is widely expected that the signing of a peace accords and subsequent liberal peace intervention will lead to ‘improved living standards, institutional restructuring, the transformation of political culture, the reshaping of social relationships and increased economic growth’" (Howarth, 2014; 262)

The advocates of liberal democracy argues that the benefits of a democratic regime and liberalism are many, for example Immanuel Kant (1795) brings up the idea that democracies rarely if ever go to war with each other, Kofi Annan (2001a) mentions that the democratic approach is not perfect but it does create a peaceful atmosphere for conflict resolution and Michael Doyle (1986) also agrees that liberal states are different and more peaceful, but they are however also prone to war. The liberal wars however, are wars only fought for liberal purposes (Doyle, 1986; 1160).

The common knowledge seems to be that liberalism and democracy will bring peace and well-being for the people of the country. The changes that for example Howarth mentions and the benefits that Kant, Annan and Doyle discusses however oftentimes fails to materialise for many people living in these post-conflict countries. A large number of people in these reformed countries live in a continuation of poverty, underdevelopment and violence. (Howarth, 2014)

As well as there are many advocates of the liberal democracy, there are many critics of this approach. Oliver Richmond (2011) argues that the specific set of norms that characterizes liberalism is not developed for countries and cultures with completely different norm- and knowledge systems, Edward Newman (2011) argues that the critique against liberal peacebuilding missions is an effect of the shortcoming regarding the promotion of human development and welfare and prevention of re-emerging violence, Mark Duffield (2007) discusses that the missions of improving the
security amongst the “ineffective” states is merely a means of protecting the global security and the “effective” states, and Anna Jarstad & Timothy Sisk (2008) brings forward that research has shown that democratization can bring conflict.

Despite much critique, liberal democracy is still an integral part of international peacebuilding. The people of recipient states are still living in poverty, underdevelopment and violence and further on, democracy could also be a potential trigger for conflict (Howarth, 2014). This thesis is built on the hypothesis that implementing liberal democracy in a post-conflict country could act as a trigger of conflict. This hypothesis will further on be evaluated through the analysis of one case study.

1.1 Research problem

Implementing liberal democratic reforms to post-conflict countries is an action so embedded that it is rarely even noticed anymore. The western liberalism has become the model for peace, through which the western-led agencies and institutions are trying to unite the world under the same hegemonic system. (Richmond, 2011; 1)

Since the ending of the Cold War in 1989 the liberal peacebuilding process in post-conflict countries have been a growing industry. These missions aimed at preventing the recurrence of violence and to create a stable and lasting peace. (Paris, 2004; 13) The ending of the Cold War lead to a situation where the United Nations and other international organizations could be more involved in countries formerly strongly controlled by the Cold War allies. This opened up opportunities for mediation in conflictual countries and this is where the current peace-building process grew to be what it is today. During the 1990’s the United Nations arranged thirty-three peace operations. What they all had in common was the general strategy of promoting stable and lasting peace by implementing democratization and marketization. (Paris, 2004; 16-19)

There are many practitioners arguing for the importance of democracy in post-conflict countries. Kofi Annan for example argues that a well-working democracy is the best solution for creating lasting and stable peace (Annan, 2001a). The agents for liberal peace are many, the UN, the OSCE, NATO, the EU, the World Bank and the IMF to name a few. These are some of the promoters of the liberal democracy and the practitioners of liberal peacebuilding. (Paris, 2004; 22)

Many researchers are arguing for democracy as a precondition for peace, and argue that democratic states are more peaceful since they never or rarely go to war
Steve Chan however argues that these remarks oftentimes are based on quantitative research and that the proponents of these arguments usually conduct statistical research using large sets of data, while the researchers conducting qualitative research on specific cases rarely get similar results. (Chan, 1997;60) Dean Babst, a proponent of the democratic peace theory, reported that between 1789 and 1941 no wars were fought between democracies (Babst, 1972;55). This was later on invalidated by a study made by Melvin Small and David Singer, which showed that democracies participated in fewer wars simply because there were fewer democracies during 1815 to 1965 (Small & singer, 1976).

Jarstad and Sisk argues that; “A common assumption is that democracy implies peace and, vice versa, that peace implies democracy” (Jarstad & Sisk, 2008;20). And whilst this is potentially true in theory, the ending of war and conflict does not necessarily mean the end of violence and implementing democracy does not stop this violence (Jarstad & Sisk, 2008,26). A democratic reform is supposed to bring economic liberalization, respect for human rights and rule of law (Rose, 2009;11). Democracy is widely accepted as the opposite of violence, where the leaders are freely chosen by their people and where everyone has the right to voice their concerns. Moran however brings up the question of why people see the need for continued violence if these conditions are met. (Moran, 2006;1)

Duffield argues that the issue of human security in the developing world is a mean for the effective states to control the global security. He describes that during the 1990’s there was a significant increase of liberal peace interventions, and the justification for this was to “change the nature of conflict”. The issue of human security was also working as ground for this. (Duffield, 2007;116) The need for security does not solely benefit the humans in the so called ineffective states, but it is also beneficiary for the people of the effective states. By focusing on the security aspect, which embodies the fact that there could be dangerous consequences of underdevelopment, the governmental institutions, NGO’s and agencies that promote human security could potentially prevent conflict, migration and other effects of unsecure conditions. The effects are therefore not only local, but global. Hence, there is gain for the effective states to promote security through liberal peace interventions as well. (Duffield, 2007;112-115)

The westernized liberal ideology has been forced down on countries emerging from conflict and in desperate need of peacebuilding since the ending of the Cold war (Paris, 2004). As seen from many cases during the last decades, this could
however be equally problematic as rewarding. Many countries such as Afghanistan, Iraq and countries in the Arabic spring region have faced the difficulties of adapting an ideology totally different from the one in the country. Many cases have disproved this idea that applying democracy will indirectly mean peace. (Campbell et al, 2011;1) Despite of this, democracy and liberal peacebuilding is still widely accepted as a necessity for post-conflict countries. In some cases, this reform could actually trigger conflict instead of creating a stable and lasting peace. (Howarth, 2014;261)

There are many examples of cases where liberal democracy has failed to create a stable and lasting peace (Campbell et al, 2011;1), I have chosen to use one of these cases when I conduct my research in order to make a more in-depth analysis. The case chosen for this topic is Liberia. A country that is very different from other nations in Africa since it never was a European colony unlike most of the continent. The country is described as “founded by freed slaves” and was seen as a haven for people of colour who had been freed from slavery. In 1847 Liberia declared its independence and for one hundred and thirty-three years after that democratic elections were held regularly. Liberia is the country in Africa with the longest experience of political independence. (Moran, 2006;2-5) Then where did Liberia go wrong and why did they fall victim of civil war? This is what I aim to research by using the hypothesis that democracy is a trigger of conflict. This hypothesis will be further explained in section 1.3 below.

1.2 Objective

During the last decades, there has been a debate regarding whether implementing liberal democracy is the best option for countries recently coming out of a conflict or countries with a completely different set of norms and values from the countries who developed the liberal peacebuilding approach. Researchers are arguing for the liberal peace approach as the most peaceful since democracies rarely go to war, as a better option than conflict and argues that it is the ideal form of government (Kant 1795, Jarstad & Sisk 2008, Piereson 2016). There are however researchers that argue for the conflictual elements of democracy, the failures of preventing re-emergence of violence and the failures of involving locals in the process (Darby 2006, Newman 2011, Richmond 2011).

The purpose of this study is to, by using the case of Liberia, prove the conflictual aspects of implementing liberal democracy. By doing this research I hope to bring some new knowledge to the debate. My study will take a critical attitude towards
liberal democracy and will therefore be placed amongst the critics. By doing this research my goal is to share knowledge about the consequences of implementing liberal democracy in countries torn apart by conflict and in countries where a totally different regime has been in place or where the cultural values are completely separated from the liberal ones. The liberal thinking has worked in the western societies but countries and people who does not share the same values and knowledge might not respond as well to these changes, in fact it could actually trigger conflict. This is what I aim to prove with this thesis, by using the case of Liberia.

1.3 Hypothesis

“Democracy could be a trigger of conflict”, this is the hypothesis which this research is based on. The hypothesis is neither new or innovative, I do however hope to bring some new light on the topic and some new information with the case of Liberia. The hypothesis is based on research done by Roland Paris, David Chandler, Oliver Richmond and Mark Duffield, to name a few. All of these thoughts will further be explained in chapter 2.1 where I present the research done previously on this topic.

To clarify, this hypothesis is not directed to prove that democracy triggers conflict in countries who has been working democracies for a long time, it aims to prove that implementing liberal democracy in war-torn countries and countries with different cultural values could bring more conflict instead of preventing it. The western countries who have been liberal for centuries are not applicable to the hypothesis, as this governmental form originates from the values shared by these countries. The hypothesis is however applicable to countries recently emerging from civil-war and countries torn apart by political differences, hence my case Liberia is suited for this research.

1.4 Research questions

- Could the implementation of liberal democracy as a mean for peace, on the contrary bring conflict instead?
- Was it the liberal democracy that casued a continuation of the conflict in Liberia?

1.5 Relevance
There is a considerable relevance in researching this topic. Critique has been directed towards the liberal democracy as a post-conflict reform during the last decades. But despite this critique democracy is still the most common tool in order to bring peace to post-conflict countries. The relevance of doing this kind of research is to spread knowledge about the dangerous and fatal effects of implementing democracy to a country that is not ready for this transition. Although research has been done on this field previously and although this is not a new hypothesis I see a relevance of continuing to do research on this. All the big and influential peacebuilding organizations are advocates of the liberal peace and cases like Liberia are examples of why this peacebuilding-approach is not working.

Another aspect of why it is relevant to do this research is that the information that is available to find in form of books and articles about liberal democracy mainly regards the peaceful effects of it, and not the violent effects. Most sources to be found when searching on democracy describes it to be the most peaceful political regime and the ideal governmental form, and hence this is not always true I see great relevance in further bringing this topic up for discussion.

1.6 Disposition

This research is structured under six chapters. Chapter one, which is the introductory chapter, gives an overview of the research problem, the ongoing democracy-debate, the questions which I aim to answer with this research, the objective and the relevance of the research. This chapter shortly gives the reader a preview of the research and the aim of this study.

Chapter two consists of the theoretical framework. In this chapter I present the previous research done on this topic. I give a presentation of both sides of the debate, the research arguing for democracy as a mean for peace and the research arguing for the conflictual elements of the democratic regime. In this chapter I also describe the theories used to prove my hypothesis.

Chapter three describes the methodological framework where I present the methods used for collecting and analysing my research findings. In this chapter I also discuss the limitations and delimitations that I have made and the validity and reliability of the research.
Chapter four consists of background for my case. As my case only looks at Liberia and the democratic process in that country I found it interesting to also include a chapter regarding the democratization process in Africa. The background helps me to reach a fuller understanding of the topic and my specific case and serves as a good base for analysis.

In chapter five the research findings are presented and an analysis of these. In this chapter I answer the questions that I presented in chapter one. In chapter six, the conclusion, I more concisely present the results of my research and discuss my findings.

2 Theoretical framework

In this chapter I will start out by presenting the previous research done on this topic. I have gathered some of the most renowned names within this field in order to have a reliable platform to stand on. After the chapter on previous research I will present the theories used for this thesis. I have chosen theories that will help me conduct better analysis of my research findings and to help me prove the hypothesis that democracy is a trigger for conflict.

2.1 Previous research

The research done on democracy and democratization is massive. A great deal of the material found on democracy covers the relationship between democracy and peace and how one affects the other. What I found to be interesting when searching for topics relating to democracy though is that the research field done on democracy as a trigger of conflict is not equally substantial. My literature review will mostly consist of research with a critical approach towards liberal democracy. I however find it important to have knowledge regarding both sides of the debate and I will therefore also mention some arguments for the importance of democracy in order to reach peace. This I find important in order to locate my research in relation to the existing research debate. Below I will present arguments from both sides of the debate.

2.1.1 Promoters of democracy
Immanuel Kant brought up the notion of “democratic peace”, the idea that democracies basically never engage in conflict with one another. This led to the conclusion that the expansion of democracy would reduce the potential risks of armed conflict. (Kant, 1795) Nils Petter Gleditsch agrees with Kant that democracies are more peaceful and argues that “the importance of democracy lies in it being a near-perfect sufficient condition for peace” (Gleditsch, 1995;297).

Kofi Annan, the seventh Secretary-general of the United Nations argues that no conflict can be resolved without resolving the issue of state, who controls it and how and the answer nowadays is almost always democratic in form. He also mentions that the practices of democracy are not perfect but at its best democracy is a good method for managing and resolving disputes in a peaceful atmosphere. (Annan, 2001a)

Another statement by Kofi Annan implies that democracy or “participatory governance” is a powerful tool for peace; “The natural conflicts of society can be resolved through the exercise of state sovereignty and, generally, participatory governance (Annan, 2001b).

Jarstad and Sisk discusses that the motives for a post-war democracy are compelling. Today a termination of war and conflict in the form of democracy is much more preferred than the continuation of killing. For the international community today democracy is a form of government where the root causes and the grievances of all parties are negotiated peacefully and without any bloodshed. (Jarstad & Sisk, 2008;4)

James Piereson argues that democracy in recent times has been held up as the ideal form of government and that this is the standard which all regimes should be measured against. He also brings up that all recent wars of our time have been wars for democracy and that all political decisions and movements now are valued in terms of how they contribute to the ongoing march towards democracy. (Piereson, 2016)

2.1.2 Researchers arguing against democratization

David Chandler argues that the liberal approach is simply an exercise of ‘empire in denial’. By this statement Chandler means that the peace-building performed by the Westerners is more similar to a state-building process where the westerners claim their power by asserting their authoritarian system and therefore denying the power of the recipient state. (Chandler, 2006;1)

In countries such as Guatemala, El Salvador, Afghanistan and South Africa, John Darby argues that the ‘insecure peace’ they are experiencing is an output of the
liberalisation reform. These are all countries where civilian insecurity is high as a result of severe criminal violence. Darby claims that the violence that characterized these countries during the civil conflict has now transformed into a form of political violence. (Darby, 2006;6)

Mark Duffield discusses the assumption that the states who are considered to be effective believe it to be their moral duty to protect and improve the lives of people in the ineffective states. This in turn will lead to an enhancement of the international security. Development will reduce poverty and therefore also reduce the risks of future instability. This in turn will improve the security for the international community, as famine and instability in countries could have effects on other countries in terms of immigration, conflict and despair. Hence, by prioritizing the security of people, which largely is connected to underdevelopment this is really a mean of strengthening the international society for the effective states. (Duffield, 2007;2)

Duffield also brings up that a new empire, created by donor governments, NGO:s and UN agencies, promises rule of the people and participatory governance. It is a practice of “imperialism in a hurry”, the aim is to quickly get results in order to quickly get out. Duffield argues that this new empire is only legitimate if the result is a betterment for the citizens, the problem however is that is does not keep the promises it gives and does not practice the empowerment that it preaches. (Duffield, 2007;8)

Jarstad and Sisk argues that research has shown that democracy and democratization can contain conflictual aspects. The failure of implementing democracy may cause conflict, and the implementation of democracy may cause an aggravation of the conflict. Especially two aspects of democracy might activate conflict in war-torn countries. First of all democracy itself, which includes conflictual elements, could be critical for a country polarized by violence. The aim of democracy is to regulate conflict through norms and institutions, but it also generates conflict through contestation in the form of elections and polarization. Hence democracy provides both the opportunities and the incentives for conflict. The democratization-process might entail conflictual elements as well. The changes and shifts of power, central to the development towards democracy increases the risk of violence from the losing power. (Jarstad & Sisk, 2008;29)

Edward Newman writes that post-conflict peace-building missions have been under great critique during the recent years. He argues that this is a result, not only of the effectiveness regarding the prevention of re-emergence of conflict but also of the less successful promotion of welfare, human development and inclusive democratic
politics in post-conflict countries. As it is a fundamental in the liberal approach to both create an environment where re-emergence of violence is prevented and to create a foundation for sustainable peace this shows a lack of success regarding the democratic approach. (Newman, 2011;1737)

Oliver Richmond argues for the importance of an advancement of the liberal peace in his book; A post-liberal peace, where he discusses the consequences that the liberal peacebuilding causes and the contradictions which it brings (2011). He discusses that the communities and individuals of post- conflict countries mainly aspires to lead lives that are meaningful and prosperous and does not solely aspire to live according to the Western developed forms of liberalism. What these communities find meaningful is their own needs, identity, representation and independence. If these needs are ignored they might become part of a resistance. Richmond argues that international organisations cannot solely create peace without an intimate relationship with the people who are part of that order and peace. (Richmond, 2011;112)

As Richmond mentions, the most important limitation that many of the liberal peace-operations have faced is the lack of engaging the local actors and to take into consideration the cultural, aspects such as customs, history and former political and economic systems. The liberal peace represents the ideas of a specific set of actors with a narrow set of norms, interests and techniques that are not developed for countries with a completely different knowledge system and set of norms and values. (Richmond, 2011;3)

2.1.3 Conclusive thoughts on the previous research

The research presented above will form the platform for my thesis. My research will take a more critical view towards liberal democratization and I will therefore use the literature from for example Richmond, Duffield and Paris more than the literature from Kant and Annan. I will place my research amongst the literature that has a more critical standpoint towards liberal democracy. However, I do find it important, as I have mentioned before, to have information from both sides of the debate and I will therefore use both sides as background for my research.

2.2 Theory
Below I will present the theories that I have chosen. The first theory that I present, “the democratic peace theory”, was chosen since it presents thoughts that are opposite to the ones that I aim to prove. I therefore included this theory as an opposition to my hypothesis in order to create more means for analysis. The second theory, “the congruence theory”, will be used to help me verify why democracy does not always go hand in hand with countries who does not share the same culture as the liberal western ones. Both of these theories will help me prove the hypothesis that democracy could be a trigger of conflict.

2.2.1 The democratic peace theory

As mentioned in earlier sections, liberal democracy is seen as a mean for peace and the democratic peace model has been used to build peace in countries torn apart by conflicts. The statement that democracies are more peaceful than other regimes and that liberal democracy is what post-conflict countries should strive for are ideas which I argue against in this thesis. Therefore the democratic peace theory works as an opposition to the hypothesis that I aim to prove.

The democratic peace theory originates from the thoughts of Immanuel Kant, who claimed that democracies are less prone to engage in combat with one another (Kant, 1795). These ideas however did not gain any political power until the U.S President Woodrow Wilson applied them to the Versailles settlement after World War I. The thoughts that democracies are more peaceful was a central part of Wilson’s foreign policy during this period and by implementing this during the Versaille peace conference he became the first statesman to express these thought. (Paris, 2004:41)

During the end of the 1900’s, there was a consensus that the democratic states do not go to war with one another. At this time there were also studies showing that democracies also have less domestic armed conflicts. (Hegre, 2014) Kant’s ideas regarding the democratic peace was resurrected during the 1970’s and 80’s by Michael Doyle and Dean Babst who pointed out the peacefulness of democracy (Babst 1972, Doyle 1983).

Ekevold, Jacobsen and Jacobsen argues that there are two theoretical explanations for why democracies maintain peaceful. Firstly, institutional theory implies that the institutional characteristics of democracies, such as free elections and the separation of powers works as a restrain towards the political leaders. Secondly, normative theory argues that the pacifistic means of these states have to do with the norms and values of well-established democracies and that these are externalized to the
international relations, which in turn decreases the risk of states taking violent measures. (Ekevald et al, 2016)

As Edward Mansfield and Jack Snyder describes it, scholars claim that the democratic peace theory is "as close as anything we have to an empirical law in international relations" (Mansfeld & Snyder, 1995). The idea that democracies never go to war with one another has therefore been implemented in the American foreign affairs. President Clinton claimed in his State of the Union address in 1994, that "Ultimately, the best strategy to ensure our security and to build a durable peace is to support the advance of democracy elsewhere. Democracies don't attack each other, they make better trading partners and partners in diplomacy" (Clinton, 1994).

This theory will be used as a tool for analysis. I will use this as a contradiction to the hypothesis which I aim to prove, in order to create more substance for reasoning around my findings. As I do find it important to keep focus on both sides of the democracy-debate, this theory will be used as a stand for the pro-democracy side and further I will include a theory that will help me prove the hypothesis.

2.2.2 Congruence theory

The democratic peace theory is used as an opposition towards my own hypothesis and is therefore applicable as it consists the thoughts which I aim to disprove. The Congruence theory however will be used as a supplement to help me reach the desired outcome of this research. It has been argued that the ideas of the liberal democracy are much constructed in accordance to the norms of western societies. The culture and norms of countries in other parts of the world are therefore not necessarily suitable with the culture of liberal democracy. The congruence theory is therefore applicable as it could help me prove my hypothesis. It is possible that liberal democracy is very suitable for countries who share the same culture as the countries where the liberal democracy had its origin, liberal democracy could however on the contrary trigger conflict in countries who does not share the same norms and values.

The central argument for the congruence theory is that in order for a democracy to be stable the governments authoritarian patterns need to be congruent with the authoritarian patterns of the people and the society. (Welzel, 2009;134) This theory was first developed during the 1960’s by Harry Eckstein and has since then elaborated, the core hypothesis is however still the same. Eckstein argues that the fundamental condition for a democracy to achieve greatly, is congruence. (Eckstein, 1997)
Dalton and Shin writes that countries with a stable political system oftentimes have cultures and institutions that are congruent with each other. Authoritarian states for example depends on a public that is quite submissive and either lacks the ability to challenge the state or accepts its power. The obstacles that non-democratic states face is therefore to foster a political culture that is congruent with the democratic order. (Dalton & Shin, 2006;5)

When this theory was presented it received a lot of criticism, and remained an unproven theory for many years. There were doubts that the beliefs of the masses could influence the level of democracy in such way. The theory however gained many adherents as it implies that a society can be shaped by shaping its institutions. Since then, research has demonstrated that there is, in fact, a strong connection between mass beliefs and level of democracy. Data has shown that the stronger the emancipative values is in a society, the higher the level of democracy is. (Welzel, 2009;134-135) Inglehart for example has validated this theory by comparing the congruence between democratic stability and political attitude in twenty-two different nations (Inglehart, 1990).

2.3 Conceptual framework

As the concept of democracy, liberalism and peace most likely is very different based on ones culture, origin and preconceived ideas, the conceptual framework used for this thesis will be presented below. Democracy as an example is a concept with many different interpretations and meanings and there are many levels of democracy. To make it more apparent what is intended when the word democracy, or concepts such as peace and liberalism, is being used I will present a description of the concepts.

2.3.1 The Minimalist definition

The minimalist definition of democracy is the minimum level of democracy that is needed in order for a state to be called democratic and is therefore a concept to have in mind. A state cannot be called democratic unless these conditions are met. The minimalist definition of democracy suggests that instead of people deciding what the government does, the people decides who governs. A state needs to have a free competition for a free vote. The conditions necessary for the minimalist definition of democracy is; the right to vote for all adult citizens, the elections need to be free and fair and thirdly the decision of the principal offices in government, confides to the voters. (Rose, 2011;12)
2.3.2 Liberal democracy

The liberal democracy concept is the most important concept in this thesis, as the research revolves around the implementation of this. Unlike the minimalist definition of democracy where the main focus is on the election-process and the people’s right to vote, the liberal democracy focuses more on free and equal citizenship, a shared set of social rules and institutions that maintain the democratic culture. The core of liberal democracy resides in an institutional design where all members are in consensus that in order to obtain free and equal citizenship there needs to be a required set of social rules such as the right to free speech. Core values of the liberal democracy is the right to political participation, freedom of expression, freedom of religious practice and equality before the court. (Callan, 1997;2)

3 Methodological framework

The methodological framework will be qualitative. As the topic for this thesis is democracy and its conflictual effects I found it to be most suitable to do a qualitative study and therefore go more in-depth with the events that led up to the failing of democracy in Liberia. I will conduct a desk study where I intend to look in to the case of Liberia. In account of this being a desk study I will rely on sources such as books and peer reviewed articles as my data. After the method is presented, a section on the validity and reliability of this research will come and thereafter a section on the delimitations I have made and the limitations that I have faced.

3.1 Method

Below I will present the method used for this thesis. I will explain how I have acquired my sources and what methods used to process the information into my analysis.

3.1.1 Sources

The sources I have used for this thesis are all secondary sources, as this is a desk study. I have put my focus mainly on books and peer reviewed articles as I find these the most reliable. When necessary I have used a couple of other sources such as governmental websites and a transcript of State of the Union Address. I have however thoroughly controlled these websites and have found them to be reliable. In order to find these
sources, I have relied greatly on the University library’s search engine called OneSearch. In order to find my material on Liberia, the civil war and the transition towards democracy I have combined many search words such as; *Liberia democracy, Liberia civil war, Liberia conflict and Liberia liberalism* and in order to find sources regarding the democracy debate I have used search words such as; *democracy violence, democratic peace, liberal peace, democracy conflict* and many more.

When I began my research, the first step was to collect as much information as possible, I needed to make sure that I would have a solid foundation for my study. Since the amount of information on countries who has undergone conflict and civil war is very differing I was not sure that I would find enough sources to support my research. I did however find a few solid sources that will be of much assistance and sources that helped me form a better understanding of both my topic and my case. Although I found enough information to conduct a research study I also consider it important that there is not too much written already on both my topic and my case, as I do want to contribute with something new to the debate. Seeing that there was not too much to find on both Liberia and democracy triggering conflict I proceeded with my work.

The next step regarding my sources was to sort out the most important ones and the sources that would not contribute to my research. When deciding what sources to use I have had my research questions in mind. It was important for me to have sources that would support my hypothesis and sources that would help me answer my questions but also sources that contradicts my hypothesis in order to establish the research debate. I tried to find the most prominent names within the democracy debate and the most essential arguments in order to place my research amongst them. I found the “big names” within this debate by simply reading the articles and books I found through my OneSearch-search and then searching for the researchers most commonly mentioned.

### 3.1.2 Qualitative text analysis

In order to process the information in my sources I have used the method of qualitative text analysis.

Qualitative research has its roots in the time of colonization, when knowledge about the indigenous people of the colonies were collected and then represented back to the West. The research field started with observations of foreign settings such as culture, customs and habits of other groups. Today qualitative research is a method of cultural and interpretive studies. (Denzin & Lincoln, 2008;1-3)
There are three major components of qualitative research. The first component is the data, which is collected either through interviews, observations or documents. The second component is the procedure of interpretation and organizing of the data, also called coding. The third component is the written or verbal report, which might be presented through an article or in a book. (Strauss & Corbin, 1998;12)

3.1.3 Process-tracing

The method of process-tracing is applicable on a qualitative research, such as mine, as it traces the causal chain of specific events. Since my research is much based on historical events in Liberia I found it useful to work with this method.

Process-tracing is according to David Collier a fundamental tool when doing a qualitative research. He describes that process-tracing is a method often used by scholars who deals with a within-case study which is based on qualitative data. (Collier, 2011) One of the first definitions of this method was coined by Alexander George and Timothy McKeown the year of 1985 as a method of within-case analysis to evaluate causal processes. (George & McKeown, 1985;35). Collier describes this method as "the systematic examination of diagnostic evidence selected and analysed in light of research questions and hypotheses posed by the investigator" (Collier, 2011).

George and McKeown have also brought forth a new definition of this method and explains process-tracing as a “method [that] attempts to identify the intervening causal process - the causal chain and causal mechanism - between an independent variable (or variables) and the outcome of the dependent variable” (George & McKeown, 2005;206).

As my research aims to prove the hypothesis that democracy could trigger conflict, I need to trace the causal chain of events in Liberia that led to the failing of democracy. Therefore I find this method suitable in order to help me analyse the findings and help me prove my hypothesis.

3.2 Validity and reliability

In this section I will present a discussion of the validity and the reliability of this research. As this research is qualitative and based on secondary sources there is of course the issue of its reliability. The data used for this thesis is not primary, which means that I have not conducted the data myself, and could affect the reliability of this research. Instead of
conducting the data myself, I have however relied on sources with a very high reliability such as peer reviewed articles and books. The authors of these books and the researchers behind the articles are renowned names and well-established in this research-debate.

When conducting a text analysis and a qualitative research there is always the possibility of unobjectiveness. In order to tackle this I have however compared many different sources in order to reach the most commonly based facts. I have based this research on many different sources in order to create a stable foundation to draw conclusions from.

3.3 Limitations and delimitations

The delimitations that I have made for this thesis regards mostly the size of the research. When deciding on the topic and the cases I found it very important that the size of the research would not be too overwhelming as we do have a limited time frame. My initial plan for this topic was to do a multiple-case study where I look into countries where an attempt to democracy has failed. The idea was to research around three cases in order to bring forward a general understanding that implementing democracy could trigger conflict. Nonetheless I decided to delimit myself and only choose one case and instead go more in depth with the causes and actions that led democracy to become conflictual.

As I have made the choice to delimit myself to one case study, the generalizability will be affected. A study on multiple countries would have generated a greater ability to generalize my hypothesis. I did however make the decision that it would have taken too much time to do a multiple-case study and instead I decided to go more in depth with the one case. There is also the possibility that the case chosen for my research will generate a different result than other cases would have, this research will however help to bring greater understanding of the case of Liberia.

The limitations that I have faced are amongst other things, the quality of sources. As I try to base my findings on as many sources as possible to increase the reliability of my research, I have also come across some trouble regarding the information that different sources give. I have found that the dates and years does not always conform between the different sources, which makes it hard to determine which source has the most accurate information. As Aeschylus once said; “In war, truth is the first casualty”, and this is often the case in countries torn apart by conflict or war. To tackle this problem I compare the different sources that I have in order to find the most commonly referred date or year. Since this is a desk study, one limitation associated with the sources is that
I have to rely on secondary sources, meaning data that is collected by others. And as mentioned above, in countries with a recent background of conflict it is hard to find reliable sources.

4 Background

As background for this thesis I have chosen to look into the broader context of democracy in Africa and how it is being applied to African states. I do this in order to have the bigger picture of how democracy works on the African continent. From that knowledge, I will then be able to deepen the analysis on my case Liberia. I will present the Palaver democracy, which is argued to be the African form of democracy. I do this in order to show that there are many types of democracy, not only the liberal democracy that exists in the West. Also in order to show that democracy does exist in African states as well, although in another form and this type of democracy have existed since long before the colonizers came.

Jean Francois Bayart (1999) argues that the political and economic situation in Africa is characterized by five symptoms. Firstly, the diplomatic and economic exclusion of Sub-Saharan Africa. The second symptom that Bayart discusses is the lack of democracy in African states. Thirdly, the continuation of conflicts and the spread of these. The fourth symptom regards the recomposition around new foreign powers and influences and the fifth concerns the growing implications for the Africa-based entrepreneurs who according to western criteria might be involved in illegal activities. (Bayart et al, 1999) I will further on focus on the issues of democracy in Africa and the problems that African states are facing when transitioning to democracies.

The weakness or failure of the African state is usually ascribed to the lack of democracy. It is, however, argued that Africa does have democracy and many researchers have proven that it was there long before the colonizers came (Kabongo 1986; Molutsi 2004; Ayoade 1986). Many African leaders have demonstrated this by using a number of African ideologies, such as the Pan Africanism of Nkrumah, the African socialism of Nyerere and the African Humanism of Kaunda. They argue that Africa does have democracy, although in another form, and in order for democracy to work in African states the state-building and political culture have to be based on the African understanding of democracy. Belachew Gebrewold discusses that there are a couple of problems with the African democracy, firstly, that it mainly consists of men and secondly,
that this palaver system is very different from the modern state-based system. (Gebrewold, 2008;148)

The palaver democracy is argued by many African intellectuals to be the identity of the African culture (Gebrewold, 2008;151) and Christian Anyanwu argues that it is an example of the African view of democracy. The palaver democracy is very different from the liberal form of democracy in the sense that the palaver aims at reconciling all views, not just the majority. To quote Gyekye “the elders sit under the big trees, and talk until they agree” (Gyekye, 1988) The participants of the palaver are not equals, as there is a hierarchical system, but everybody is allowed to speak and everybody is listened to. This system ensures that every opinion is included in the process of deliberation. One could say that the palaver democracy is much broader than the liberal, as it concerns every question relevant to the community and aims at reaching a consensus. (Anyanwu, 2012;100-102)

The palaver system on the one hand is being promoted as the identity of African culture, but on the other hand many has adopted the western state system that was created by the colonizers. This paradox has led to serious consequences for the Africa of today. The palaver perception of democracy does not fit well into the state system created by the westerners. (Gebrewold, 2008;151)

During the 1990’s Sub-Saharan Africa went through a democratic wave. This transition towards multi-party rule began with Namibia in 1990, and ten years later 43 countries had been introduced to democratic elections. Countries with a formerly closed political system began to open up and the people of Africa demanded greater accountability from their leaders. Nearly all African countries have gone through a liberalization of government, by accepting press freedom, releasing political prisoners and allowing opposing parties in the elections. While almost all African countries go through political elections today, the quality of the procedure is very variable. (Bratton, 2009;339-341)

5 Analysis

In this chapter I will present the findings relevant to my research questions and analyse them by applying theories and previous research. I will start by giving a brief presentation of the history of Liberia and the chain of events that led to the civil war. This will form the basis on which I further develop my analysis. I believe that in order to understand
where Liberia failed in becoming a liberal democracy it is vital to have knowledge regarding the whole historical process and therefore I will start by briefing this. In section 5.2 the analysis of the history will then start.

5.1 Liberia, Africa’s oldest democracy

Liberia, the oldest republic in Africa, is very different from the rest of the continent. It was never colonized by a European country and is portrayed as “founded by freed slaves”. Liberia was seen as a haven for people of colour who no longer were enslaved. (Moran, 2006;1-2) After the freeing of the slaves, the Americans saw a problem in the growing number of free blacks in the country (OTH, 2016). One issue was the slave revolts, which were very costly and almost always led by freed slaves and another issue was racial amalgamation which according to white leaders would lead to a degradation of the human character. These problems required national attention and the organization, the American Colonization Society (ACS) was founded to deal with the problem. (Omeje, 2009;2021)

The United States sent the ACS to find a suitable place in West Africa and 1821 they convinced a local leader to sell them a piece of land. After their settlement, the states sent more black people to the new colony. In 1824 this piece of land was named Liberia. (OTH, 2016) The country received its name from the Latin word liber which means free. Liberia was governed by the ACS until they declared its independence in 1847. (Omeje, 2009;21) The African American settlers committed to an American form of constitution and democratic institutions. (Moran, 2006;4) The indigenous people living in the land now known as Liberia, were generally welcoming to the returnees, as they recognized them as descendants returning to the land of their ancestors. The repatriates saw themselves as settlers and pioneers and the locals as natives and country people. (Omeje, 2009;21) Liberia’s Declaration of Independence, issued 1847, excluded the natives from citizenship. The marginalization of the native Liberians continued with the formation of the first government in 1848. (Omeje, 2009;22) The Americo-Liberians suppressed the natives in a series of wars and formed a form of forced labour that continued until 1930 when the League of Nations denounced it as slavery (Paris, 2004;90)

Liberia was “democratically” ruled for one hundred and thirty-three years following the Declaration of Independence. Elections both for the Presidential office and for local offices were held on regular intervals. The settlers however maintained exclusive rights of the institutions until 1860. (Moran, 2006;4) In 1860 indigenous leaders formed
a new party, the True Wig Party (TWP), and in 1869 they defeated the Republican Party. (Omeje, 2009;22) Between the years 1848-1884, political conflict between groups was a fact, however physical violence was never an option (Omeje, 2009;22). Many presidents at this time were forced to resign due to corruption, the political atmosphere nonetheless remained peaceful at first (Moran, 2006;4).

5.1.1 The embarking of the civil war

Despite the seemingly peaceful atmosphere that characterized the political space in Liberia, the country in Africa with the longest experience of independence, fell victim of civil war and state collapse during the 1990’s (Moran, 2006;5).

It all started with a military coup in 1980, where a group of native Liberian army officers overthrew the Americo-Liberian regime. (Paris, 2004;90) The coup was the work of seventeen men of the Armed Forces of Liberia (AFL), the highest ranked member of the group was Master Sergeant Samuel Doe. These conspirators came to power without any prior knowledge of government. Samuel Doe, the new Commander in Chief of Liberia informed the Liberian people that the coup had taken place in order to put an end to various human, constitutional and civil rights violations. (Omeje, 2009;31) The native population of Liberia welcomed the change and the new regime at first, as they thought their needs and interests would be cared for. Doe however adopted a very authoritarian rule, similar to the Americo-Liberian regime before him, that only benefited the small minority in which Doe himself originated. Many non-supporters of Doe were eliminated and oppositions were suppressed. (Paris, 2004;90) Doe’s regime had turned into a ferocious dictatorship and people of Doe’s own ethnic group, the Krahn, gained power over all political and military institutions. His regime was characterized by corruption, a degenerating economy and the assassination of any opponents. (Nilsson & Söderberg, 2006;398)

Five years after the coup, Doe agreed to open up the country for civilian rule once again. (Paris, 2004;90) In 1985 general elections were held and four parties participated, the Unit Party (UP), Liberia Action Party (LAP), National Democratic Party of Liberia (NDPL) and Liberia Unification Party (LUP). (Omeje, 2009;32) Even though the election was validated as free and fair (Moran, 2006;9) electoral corruption was a fact and when Doe realised he was about to lose the election, he manipulated the vote count and declared his win (Paris, 2004;91).
5.1.2 The first civil war

The failed election of 1985 led to a period of political resistance. In 1989 a rebel army led by Charles Taylor crossed the border from Côte d'Ivoire to Liberia with the sole purpose of unseating General Samuel Doe. (Nilsson & Söderberg, 2006;398) This was the beginning of the first Liberian civil war which lasted between 1989-1997, also known as the Taylor war (Omeje, 2009;34).

Taylor and his rebel force, the National Patriotic Front for Liberia (NPFL), attained support from the outer parts of the country and thereafter worked their way towards the capital of Liberia, Monrovia. (Paris, 2004;91) Taylors local resistance developed into a full-blown civil war by 1990 (Moran, 2006;9). By this time, Taylor controlled nearly all parts of the country outside of the capital. Regional organisations such as the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and their peacekeeping force Economic Community of West African States Monitoring Group (ECOMOG) sponsored peace-negotiations in order to reach stability in Liberia. (Nilsson & Söderberg, 2006;398) The peacekeeping mission failed and the killing continued, President Doe was captured and killed in 1990. ECOWAS and the United Nations organized a number of peace-settlements during 1990-1997, none of which were successful. (Paris, 2004;91) The civilians in Liberia were very affected during this period of violence. Kidnappings, rapes, massacres and torture were carried out by warring parties parallel with peace-negotiations. (Nilsson & Söderberg, 2003;6) Twelve peace settlements were separately negotiated and successful, each of them however collapsed quickly. Not until the second signing of the Abuja Accord, 1996, could peace be reached. (Paris, 2004;91)

This peace agreement contained a timeframe for a ceasefire, the disarmament and demobilization of forces and the creation of a temporary power-sharing government until the holding of a democratic election 1997. The election was carried out on July, 19 1997 and thirteen candidates participated. Taylor won the election with 75 percent of the votes and international supervisors of the election certified that the voting was conducted according to the rules. (Nilsson & Söderberg, 2003;7) Charles Taylor was therefore elected President and the Abuja Accord II was the last peace agreement during the first civil war. (ibid;10)
5.1.3 The second civil war

The election of 1997 was the end of the first civil war. The political situation in the Liberia however stayed unstable and violent clashes continued to occur between Taylors armed forces and opponents to the new regime. (Nilsson & Söderberg, 2003;12) The pattern of authoritarian leadership, marginalization and the suppression of rivalries was firstly established by the Americo-Liberians and was later adapted by Samuel Doe. There was little change to this pattern after the election of 1997, which might have served as fuel to a leader who shortly after the election began to strengthen his monolithic political system based on suppression and violence. Taylor followed the footsteps of his precursors and repeated the same mistakes as the Americo-Liberians and Doe. Hence, the violence and the fighting soon resumed. (Paris, 2004;94-95)

The second civil war started with the forming of a new rebel group, the Liberians United for Reconciliation and Democracy (LURD), which aimed to remove Taylor from the presidency (Omeje, 2009;36). Year 2000, LURD conducted their first military attack in the north-western part of Liberia (Nilsson & Söderberg, 2003;12) The rebel group quickly advanced towards the capital and Taylor mobilized his former fighters in order to confront the rebels. The government, on Taylors’s orders, began to arrest people of different beliefs and members of other ethnic groups, who were considered not to be trustworthy. (Paris, 2004;95) The conditions worsened and Taylor, who stood face to face with an inevitable military defeat and a great deal of international pressure, resigned and left the country in August 2003 (Omeje, 2009;36).

The United Nations quickly arranged a new peacebuilding operation in Liberia and set up the conditions for negotiations regarding a new peace agreement between the warring parties. The UN Mission In Liberia (UNMIL), were instructed to supervise the cease-fire and set up the preparations necessary for the new election, which was scheduled 2005. (Paris, 2004;95)

5.2 Cultural differences

From this point, the analysis of the democratic process in Liberia will start. The history of Liberia has been presented, in the coming chapters the main focus will however be on the actions towards democracy that happened as a peace intervention during and after the civil war. The “democracy” that existed before the civil war will not be analysed deeper nor will this be taken into consideration as I try to prove my hypothesis. The analysis will
regard the usage of liberal democracy as a peace intervention, and as the settlers converted to the political regime of their attendants and did not include the natives this would not work as a good ground for analysis. As the aim of this thesis is to prove the hypothesis that applying liberal democracy to a post-conflict country could trigger the conflict, the following chapters will analyse the usage of a liberal democracy as a mean of peace during and after the civil war period.

As the congruence theory argues, in order to reach a stable democracy the governments authoritarian patterns need to be congruent with the authoritarian patterns of the people and the society. There must be a similar political culture in order to succeed with the transition. I will below present the importance of culture in order to reach democracy, and the effects that follows if culture is not accounted for.

Democracy has its origin in the northern Atlantic area, and is much related to two traditions; Protestantism and British descent. This however does not mean that these two traditions favour democracy. These were merely situated in the area of pre-industrial capitalism, they neither created capitalism nor democracy. The countries around the north Atlantic embraced pre-industrial capitalism and the arising democracy, despite that they were not British or Protestants. To claim that democracy is only suited for countries with capitalism and a British or Protestant descent is therefore not true. (Welzel, 2011:80) It is argued that the so called “failure of the African states” is based on the lack of democracy in these. Researchers however argue that Africa does have democracy, although in another form and that it has been there since long before the colonization. Thus, in order for democracy to work in Africa the state-building and political culture have to be based on an African understanding of democracy. This form of democracy is very different from the liberal one which has caused some difficulties for states who adopted the western form of democracy. (Gebrewold, 2008:148-151) Africa have for a long time been imagined by the Westerners to be the opposite of the West. The African political institutions has been perceived to be characterized by secrecy, autocracy and religious beliefs, unlike the Western institutions who are perceived as transparent and open. It has been argued that Africa is not ready for democracy. In the Western world, the institution most associated with democracy is the competitive elections, and even though elections is viewed to be a relatively new import in Africa, Liberia has a long history of this politic. (Moran, 2006;101)

When Liberia declared its independence from America, they committed to an American constitution and the democratic institutions of their attendant. (Moran,
The settlers, often referred to as Americo-Liberians, were rather American and not African in regard to orientation. They still had very strong sentimental ties to America which could be seen clearly through their preferences of government. These Americo-Liberians still regarded America to be their native land and they were accustomed to the Western manners. They built houses similar to those in the southern parts of America and ate American food. They spoke English and practiced Christianity. As mentioned, the political institutions were shaped as the American ones, with an elected president and a governmental body with a Senate and a House of Representatives. (Akpan, 1973) The problematics of the political takeover carried out by the Americo-Liberians is that they failed to include the African aboriginals. Liberia had been peopled by more than twenty different communities for centuries before the settlers came and they had managed their own continuity of existence in their individual areas. (Omeje, 2009;78) At first, the Liberians were needed by the Americo-Liberians. They traded protection and schools in return for sovereignty of the newly formed Liberian government over their tribal governments, to follow the laws implemented by the government, to allow the government to handle all tribal disputes, and to never go to war between tribes without consulting the government. The Liberians therefore became the protectorates of the Americo-Liberians. In reality however, the Americo-Liberians seldomly interfered with the native Liberians who continued to follow their own laws and were governed by their local rulers. (Akpan, 1973) The natives were considered inferior and had no opportunities of working their way up, the settlers remained in political and economic control and all benefits stayed with the settlers. (Omeje, 2009;78)

The history of marginalization and exclusion of members of native groups in Liberia, has caused cultural differences in the country. The electoral process was very segregated as the natives were denied the right to vote until 1946 causing deep cultural differences. The Americo-Liberians strongly stuck to the cultural differences that set the “savages” and themselves apart. (Moran, 2006;75)

Moran explains that the lost sense of nationalism in Liberia, is most likely the cause of the first civil war. She argues that many scholars either explicitly or implicitly contrasts nationality and tribalism in Africa. One can explain ethnicity or tribalism as an earlier form of group identity, a more traditional form than nationalism. Nationalism in many African states is seen as modern, and feeling committed to one’s state has not fully replaced the attachments that many has towards their local identity and tribe. The Americo-Liberians who consider themselves to be civilized have a stronger tie to the
nation, meanwhile native Liberians have very strong attachments towards their tribe or ethnic background. (Moran, 2006;75) It is believed by some Liberians that Liberia needs a strong leader who can discipline the people. If one group would win an election, there is no guarantee that the leader would not revert to the warlord-politics and autocratic means of the precursors. As can be seen from Liberia’s history, this is the most probable outcome. (Reno, 1998;107) The congruence theory argues that the authoritarian patterns of the people, needs to be congruent with the authoritarian patterns of the government. If people are submissive to an authoritarian leader who discipline them, then an authoritarian leader most likely will be elected.

Cultural differences and a lost sense of nationalism could most likely be the trigger of the first civil war, this however does not disprove my hypothesis. My hypothesis is that implementing liberal democracy to a country torn apart from war could trigger the conflict. And Liberia, at the time of the first civil war, had already experienced a form of democracy for over a century. During the coming chapters I will however analyse how the implementing of liberal democracy was the probable cause of the continuation of violence in Liberia.

5.3 Building peace by building democracy

From the 1990’s and forth, the conflicts, genocides and wars that has taken place in the Middle East, Balkan and numerous African countries have been ascribed to the lack of democracy. The ultimate goal of any post-conflict country is perceived to be free and fair elections, and any processes towards this goal, such as capacity-building and promotion of civil society, is seen as solutions to attain this goal. As violence and democracy is regarded as the opposite ends of an evolutionary scale, democracy is seen to be the solution to violence. (Moran, 2006;1) Democratic states never engage in war, we are told (Kant, 1795). They only engage in war with liberal intentions and when nondemocratic states overstep their boundaries (Doyle, 1986;1160 & Moran, 2006;1).

It has been argued in the democratic peace literature that democratic regimes are a conflict-preventer. This argument is a product of the fact that western and developed states for a long period of time have succeeded to avoid wars among themselves. The liberal peace suited the interests of the western states who benefited from the avoidance of war as they conducted trade with these countries. (Ramsbotham et al, 2011;129) The idea that democracy and liberalization fosters peace and acts as a
counteraction towards violence is not new. The U.S President Woodrow Wilson considered this model to be the peak of political development, and presumed the spread of democracy to act as a promotion of peace (Wilson, 1895;572-573). The Wilsonian beliefs, resting on the thoughts of Immanuel Kant amongst others, are the basis for the peacebuilding missions of today. (Paris, 2004;41)

It is however argued that it is very hard to achieve peace and democracy simultaneously after a civil war. Jarstad and Sisk discusses that the conditions necessary for the initiating of democracy are not favourable enough after a civil war and the opening up of a political space where the people rule might only cause an aggravation. In order to achieve a peaceful atmosphere for political contestation and respect for human rights, there need to be at least a minimum level of peace. Jarstad and Sisk therefore argues that the timing of peace missions and the transition towards democracy needs to be right in order to attain a liberal form of peace. (Jarstad & Sisk, 2008;35)

Whether or not a polity is democratic might not be the most crucial matter, in many cases it is the type of democracy that is established that is the most important aspect. The case in many African countries is that democratic institutions acts more of form and not as much of substance. The avoidance of war mainly regards to if the local domestic institutions have the ability to provide acceptable models for handling conflict in locally acceptable ways. This is not necessarily always in accordance with the democratic values, the indigenous methods might however be superior to the western ones. (Ramsbotham, et al., 2011;131)

In Liberia, after the civil war had erupted, the international peacebuilding actions were aggressive. Since the ending of the Cold War, large scale peace interventions have taken place all over the world in countries emerging from conflict. A lesson learned from the case of Liberia however, is that these quick-fix interventions of ending conflict and building peace was not sufficient in preventing the recurrence of conflict. Around the turn of the millennium, the UN and other multilateral institutions started to discuss how peacebuilding could be improved and developed. It was decided that the current peacebuilding strategies needed a reorientation in order to create stable peace in countries emerging from conflict. This reorientation took a “macro-level” approach which included the strengthening and reconstruction of the state and the institutions. The earlier peacebuilding efforts mainly focused on the micro-level and quick-fixes. Statebuilding, which is not synonymous with peacebuilding became the new approach in order to create peace. Statebuilding thus, is a complicated project in African context, as most African
states come from a history of colonization, where only the interest of the colonizers were considered and where the state largely became an alien concept characterized by lack of legitimacy. (Ero, 2012;233-235)

The statebuilding-approach formed by international actors, with the goal of reaching a lasting peace, however was not always consentive with the views of national actors. The national actors were not a unanimous group and they did not share the same view, they were all looking for their own interests and agenda and these interests often clashed. (Ero, 2012;238) And as Jarstad and Sisk argues, bringing democracy to a country where a civil war or conflict has taken place could aggravate the conflict and bring the contesting into the political arena (Jarstad & Sisk, 2008;29). How the transition towards liberal democracy was carried out in Liberia and how this affected the violence in the country will be analysed further in the coming section.

5.4 The implementing of liberal democracy in Liberia

Elections was not an unfamiliar phenomenon in Liberia when liberal democracy was implemented. The Americans brought the form of elections with them as they settled in Liberia. Both rural and urban areas engaged in elections in different contexts, not exclusively elections for national and local governance. Church organizations, schools and other associations all engaged in elections to choose leaders. (Moran, 2006;101) It is argued that the democratic trappings such as elections, never were more than a showpiece though, that Liberia since its roots has been ruled by a single elite through a one-party state (Moran, 2006;5). When the civil war broke out, international efforts was made in order to bring peace and prevent the return of conflict. This nonetheless had little effect on the violence in Liberia. (Ero, 2012;233) Before the signing of the peace agreement there were seven warring fractions controlling various parts of the country. Child soldiers, rapes, massacres, torture and mutilation in order to put the civilians in terror have been documented. Not until eight years after the civil war had erupted, and countless attempts to peace talks, did a cease fire take hold. (Moran, 2006;120)

In 1997, as a mark of the ending of the first civil war, Liberia went through its first presidential election in twelve years. According to international observers the election was regarded to be free, fair and transparent. Nearly thirteen parties were registered on the ballot, giving the people of Liberia a great range of choice. After almost one-hundred years of single-party rule the majority of people in Liberia voted for Charles Taylor, a warlord responsible for many deaths and much violence during the eight years
of civil war. (Moran, 2006;105-106) The election was planned to take place in May 1997, but was postponed to July due to a lack of time. It was clear that there was not enough time to allocate refugees, organize parties, secure weapons and to carry out the election in time. It was argued that the election process was too rushed, international organizations such as the United Nations and the African peacekeeping force were however keen to reach a resolution. (Moran, 2006;120) Under the rule of Charles Taylor the state was not able to revive the already collapsed state institutions. Taylor and his government was unable to provide basic infrastructure or public service and the national institutions were broken. International smugglers, in collaboration with the Liberian elites witnessed Liberia as a haven. (Ero, 2012;236)

The lesson learned from the first Liberian civil war was that security is an essential factor in statebuilding and in order to guarantee long-term peace. During the first civil war the international actors, such as the UN, focused on the process of election and thought this was sufficient enough to ensure the stability of the country. The mandate of the United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL) was during the second civil war designed to correct this mistake and to instead provide security coverage in Liberia. (Ero, 2012;243)

Unlike what the democratic peace theory suggests, that democracy fosters peace, the democratic process alone with elections and majority vote will not solve the problems of for example marginalization and discrimination. (Berg-Schlosser, 2011;52) The democracy promotion aims at liberalizing the autocratic regimes and to contribute to the following democratization in recipient countries. Global agents such as the UN, the EU or countries such as USA are the promoters of this liberal democracy. These agents are consciously trying to pass on new institutions, new behaviour and a new mentality, simply for the purpose of promoting democracy in recipient countries. (Yilmaz, 2011;96-97) Meanwhile the peacebuilding efforts and the elections in Liberia were considered a success and the international agents wrapped up their work, the democratic elements were not durable. The liberalization of the autocracy in Liberia did not last for long as Charles Taylor started to repress the political rivals and disassemble the democratic progress. This simply triggered a new civil war, causing concerns regarding the sustainability of the results and whether the liberalisation could create the conditions necessary for a lasting peace. (Paris, 2011;34-35)
5.5 Why did democracy fail in Liberia?

Richard Rose defines democracy as a state with free and fair elections in order to hold government accountable and a rule of law which is the foundation of political accountability. These two conditions need to be met in order for a state to be democratic. In order to establish a stable democracy, one must start by including the political institutions. Today there are some states in the world who are either fully democratic or fully autocratic and many states that are incompletely democratic. A common mistake is to talk about regimes that are not democratic as failing, this is however not necessarily true. States such as China and Saudi Arabia are not failing in becoming democratic, they have managed to maintain undemocratic. (Rose, 2009;11)

Richard Rose’s definition of democracy is in this case applicable to the case of Liberia. There were elections held and a rule of law, the problem however was that this did not include all of the people. The exact definition of the word democracy is “rule by the people”. Even though this does not contain any indication of how the people are supposed to rule, the minimalist definition signifies that the people decides who governs instead of the people deciding what the government does. (Rose, 2009;12) And, the most important denominator here is rule by the “people”. It is not possible to have a fully functioning democratic state when a large portion of the people does not have a voice in the election process.

There are a few specific factors that could lead to the derailment of democratization in a country. The first factor is the people and the possibility of an uprising or a revolution. The second factor are insurgents who, by the means of provoking a civil war could destroy the chances of democracy. Foreign powers is the third factor, who could potentially launch an invasion. The forth factor is the intervention of the armed forces in the political arena and the fifth factor that could destroy democracy is if the elected leader engages in autocratic actions. The role of the chief executive is particularly important, who plays a large role in the political future of the country. (Fish & Wittenberg, 2009;258) In the case of Liberia where the chief executive has been a series of warlords, the fifth factor plays a large role. Warlords in Liberia have used commerce in order to attain political power. As an example Charles Taylor was in control over the commerce of gold, diamonds, timber and rubber. (Reno, 1999;79) The first factor is as well a potential reason behind the failing of democracy in Liberia, but very much dependant on the fifth factor. As warlords forced their way to power, and used fear as an incentive to
win elections, the rebel groups of Liberia protested. New rebel groups were created and there was an intensifying of the conflict. (Nilsson, 2009;17-19)

During the conflict, many rebel groups emerged which only intensified the violence. Despite efforts from international organizations, such as ECOWAS and the UN, the violence between the warring parties quickly resumed to hostilities after every peace effort. It was not until the signing of Abuja II peace agreement in 1996 that violence ended. The peace agreement confirmed that an election would take place nine months after the signing. It was also decided according to the peace agreement that ECOWAS would restructure the security sector, due to a lack of resources this was however never put to action. Charles Taylor won the election of 1997 with 75 percent of the votes, it is however argued that Taylor won due to fear of him resuming the war if he lost. There were reports claiming that violations of the election had taken place, this was however discarded and the election was regarded as free and fair. Taylor presumed the violent behaviour of his precursor and it did not take long until further rebel groups had emerged. (Nilsson, 2009;17-19)

Democratic elections entails conflictual elements such as contestation which could, as in the case of Liberia, cause a polarization. When an election takes place between candidates in a country with a conflictual background, the competition for votes could emphasize the differences between the warring parties rather than bringing them to common ground. Democracy could in this case both provide the opportunity for more conflict and the motivation for it. In consolidated democracies, these issues are often managed peacefully through established institutions, in a post-war country however, this could lead to serious outcome. The transition to democracy could as well entail features that increases the risk of conflict, as this transition often implies a shift of power and other changes. Losing parties or those who lose power might find the incentive to continue the violence. (Jarstad & Sisk, 2008;29)

As Ramsbotham et al. (2011) argues, violent conflicts are unlikely to occur in states where there is a conceded and legitimate base for the political community and where the community secures the accepted values of the members. In contrary, when force is used to allocate roles and resources and when this distribution is not even and illegitimate, the occurrence of violence is more likely. (Ramsbotham et al., 2011;129) The Americo-Liberians, who used coercion in order to gain control and distributed the power very unevenly between groups of people, arranged the perfect precondition for violence and intrastate war. It is argued that stable democracies are less prone to civil war
by comparison of other types of regimes, and the same goes with stable autocracies. It is democracies that are not fully democratic and the regimes experiencing a transition that have the highest risk of falling victim of a civil war. (Ramsbotham et al, 2011;131) The conclusion of this argument is therefore that a country transitioning to a democratic regime, or possibly even from a democratic regime, have a higher probability of experiencing a civil war than countries who do not transition.

5.6 Democracy as an enhancer of conflict

It has been argued that democracy potentially could be an enhancer of conflict instead of a preventer. As an example, Jarstad and Sisk argues that if the implementation of democracy fails it could cause an aggravation of the conflict, and democracy could also generate conflict by bringing the contestation into the political atmosphere instead. (Jarstad & Sisk, 2008;29) As previously mentioned, the first Liberian civil war demonstrated that security is a major factor in order to guarantee long-term peacebuilding. The international actors, such as the UN, focused on the process towards the election and with the idea that this was sufficient, they did not focus much on the state and the security-factor. (Ero, 2012;243) In order for democratization to succeed, Jarstad and Sisk argues that there needs to be at least a minimum level of security. Although this statement have been advocated for over thirty years, the international peacebuilding actors actively promoted liberal democracy in countries where these conditions were lacking. (Jarstad & Sisk, 2008;28) As in the case of Liberia where elections was promoted and thought to be a sufficient mean by itself (Ero, 2012;243), the international actors such as the UN and the African peacekeeping force rushed the election and thereafter left the country (Moran, 2006;120). Charles Taylor who won the election, most probably due to fear of resuming the violence, quickly proceeded with the autocratic means of his precursor. (Ero, 2012;236) Peacebuilding through election, was therefore not a successful operation in this case and the violence continued, causing a second civil war.

Political candidates who compete for votes during an election, rather emphasizes their differences than their similarities causing even more polarization. These conflicts are often managed through peaceful means in well-established democracies, but in countries with a recent history of civil war, where weapons exist in abundance and people are still polarized this could have severe conflictual effects. Especially in a country where the election takes place without a minimum amount of security. (Jarstad & Sisk,
As mentioned in previous sections, many rebel groups emerged during the conflict and caused an intensifying of the conflict. Every peace effort quickly resumed in violence and international actors could not stop it. (Nilsson, 2009;17-19) The continuation of violence most likely bottoms in needs that are not fulfilled and in low political trust.

5.7 The means for durable peace in Liberia

As mentioned earlier, institutions play a large role in the implementation of democracy. It is argued that in order to make the idea of democracy concrete in a country, it must be related to the existing political institutions of the state and the institution play a large role in reaching a stable and lasting democracy. (Rose, 2009;11) Not only the institutions but the norms and values of the people in the country as well as the civil society plays a large role in this process. In this section, I will therefore present how the institutions and civil society could help the democratization process.

Democracy does not include civil peace or domestic stability. Simply implementing democracy will therefore not automatically lead to stability in a country. Not even in consolidated democracies can the institutions guarantee a peaceful population, or peaceful authorities. The democratic institutions does however serve as a channel where discontents and grievances can be resolved in a more orderly manner instead of settling it on the streets. (Bernhagen, 2009;30-31) Richard Rose argues that, one must start by including the institutions in order to reach a stable and lasting democracy (Rose, 2009;11). The key to prevent democracy turning violent and to reduce the risk of presidential abuse of power lies in a strong legislature. Fish and Wittenberg argues that there is a strong correlation between the power of legislature and the fate of democracy. The weaker the legislature is, the bigger is the risk of democracy failing. (Fish & Wittenberg, 2009;260)

The government naturally plays a large role in the reconstructing of post-conflict Liberia. Both sides, meaning the civil society and the government, however have a responsibility towards one another in order to ensure a successful implementation of democracy in Liberia. The government needs to realise and respect the value of having the civil society represented, and without letting interaction with representatives for the civil society replace the interaction with civic groups. It is vital that international organizations assist the need of establishing local ownership, stability and respect in order to achieve a democratic system. (Omeje, 2009;173-174) The civil society works as an
intermediary between the government and the individuals and it is important that they cooperate and encourage each other. These civil societies play a large role in post-conflict countries, such as Liberia, as they work on a grass-root level empowering people to participate in decision-making on both a local and national level and they acknowledge the needs of the people, giving them a voice. By considering the needs of the people, working with poverty reduction, gender issues and human rights they play a large role in the development of a post-conflict country, a vital part in the peacekeeping process. (Omeje, 2009:180)

The action that two civil wars later, brought peace to Liberia was to bring the required amount of security and a separation from the previous war-lord politics. In order to ensure the continuation of viable elections and peace in Liberia, the neutralizing of potential spoilers was an important step as well. After the signing of the last peace agreement there was a consensus that there was a need for a change in the political landscape of the country. (Ero, 2012:243)

6 Conclusion

The aim of this thesis was to prove the hypothesis that implementing liberal democracy in a war-torn country potentially could trigger conflict. The research done have been based on the current and previous debate between researchers arguing for democracy and against democracy. This thesis is placed amongst the research that is critical towards implementing liberal democracy in countries with a history of violence since it for instance could cause an aggravation of the conflict and the violence. As I have in the chapter above presented my research, the following chapter will include my conclusive thoughts on the result and the answers to my research questions.

Liberia have a very complex political history, one that it is hard to grasp during a shorter period of time, and it is clear that my research questions will not have a clear and simple answer. I have however really enjoyed trying to find the answers as I do find this topic to be very interesting, coming from the Western world with the predetermined understanding that democracy is the ultimate form of politics and that it is desirable to reach a state of free and fair elections for all countries. This is what we tend to believe here in the “developed world” and that is why I found it so interesting to contradict these beliefs and look outside of our liberal democratic box.

Below I have listed my research questions and the answers to these.
6.1 Could the implementation of liberal democracy as a mean for peace, on the contrary bring conflict instead?

Based on my findings, one could draw the conclusion that liberal democracy could bring conflict. As presented in the analysis-chapter, there are many aspects of both the transition towards democracy and the process of democratic elections that entails conflictual factors. In the case of Liberia, where the process of liberal democracy seemed a bit rushed and not quite well-thought out, the implementation was not a success. And as presented above the failure of democracy could aggravate the conflict even more. There was as well the factor of bringing the warring groups in Liberia together in an election without making sure there was a minimum level of peace beforehand. Bringing the warring parties issues to the political arena could aggravate the conflict and emphasize their differences rather than finding common ground for them to stand on. Without the minimum level of peace that is needed, there is also the possibility that losing parties will resume the violence after the election.

Based on my findings, I would say that implementing liberal democracy to a post-conflict country very much could entail conflictual effects. It is however not simply the implementation of liberal democracy that plays a part in this. As described in the analysis, security is very important for the future of democracy and it is important that the election is not too rushed. The security-factor and the timing of the election could play a considerable role in how the transition towards liberal democracy turns out.

6.2 Was it the liberal democracy that caused a continuation of the conflict in Liberia?

As Liberia do have a complex background it was hard to understand the development of democracy. The settlers who came from America was the first to implement “democracy”, and in that sense Liberia stands out from the other African countries. Firstly in the sense that they were never a European colony and secondly that they were the first to implement the western form of democracy. Liberia was then rather peaceful for more than a century and underwent some sort of elections, even though corruption was a fact. Thus, my hypothesis is not applicable, as the first civil war was more an effect of the marginalization of the natives and the unequal conditions between groups. In addition, I focused more on using liberal democracy as a peace intervention and therefore the period
of the civil war suited my research better. It was at first during the civil war that liberal democracy became a mean for peace, implemented by peacebuilding organizations such as the UN. I have argued that it was not the democracy itself that started the first civil war, there were many other factors that played a much larger part in that occurrence, such as cultural differences, institutional issues and exclusion. When the civil war erupted, my base for this research was founded. Like in many other countries since the ending of the Cold War, Liberia went through the liberal peacebuilding process conducted by international actors such as the UN. This is the point from where liberal democracy became a part of the rebuilding of Liberia and as I have argued, this only aggravated the conflict. Of course, other factors affected this as well but the main argument here is still that as a peacebuilding effort, this is not substantial enough. As mentioned, during the first civil war the election itself was used to build peace, and the election was seen to be a sufficient mean to bring peace to Liberia. The election was scheduled to take place nine months after the signing of the peace agreement. The UN and other international actors knew that it was a short period of time to disarm the rebels and locate refugees, the election process however continued. The international actors staging the election saw a democratic election as a simple solution to a difficult situation. Early elections is easy to organize once a peace agreement have been signed, the issue lies in the institutions and the culture of the country. Without democratic institutions and a democratic culture, democracy will never truly work. What international actors did not seem to foresee is that the staging of early election could be done quickly, changing to a democratic culture and changing the institutions however take longer time. And as argued before, the very first step needs to be a minimum level of security. As the election was staged in a short period of time, there were not enough time to disarm the people and to create the security needed in order to succeed with the implementation of liberal democracy.

One of the core issues of democracy in Liberia is that there were never a truly functioning base for liberal democracy. Before the civil war erupted, Liberia had what could be called democracy in the sense that they had elections. As it has been argued that these elections were nothing but a showpiece, and that the country was ruled by a one-party government for over one hundred years, there are however high doubts regarding the legitimacy of this politic. The politics of Liberia before the civil war was characterized by corruption, manipulating of votes and autocracy. Even after the liberal democracy was implemented as a peacebuilding effort, the elections were not done properly. Taylor won the election with a vast majority of the votes, and despite suspicions
of violations during the election, the international agents judged the election to be free and fair and rushed out of the country.

It would be very bold of me to state that it was the liberal democracy that caused the continuation of violence in Liberia, therefore I will not do this. The hope of this research was to find clear evidence that the liberal peacebuilding approach of the West, on the contrary has been the cause of conflict. Despite that I have found facts that support my hypothesis, I do not consider these facts to be substantial enough for me to draw the conclusion that liberal democracy is the sole reason for the continuation of conflict in Liberia. Although I have not been able to fully prove my hypothesis, my research has shown that liberal democracy and democratic elections could negatively affect the stability of a country, in this case Liberia. The political future of a country however lies in the culture, the institutions and timing of the elections.
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