Civil War, Peacemaking, and the Truth and Reconciliation Commission in Liberia: What Role Did Religion Play?

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Abstract

This thesis seeks to investigate which role Christianity, Islam and the Indigenous religions (Poro and Sande) plays during Liberia's civil war, the peacemaking process, and during the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's work. In the study each religious tradition role is thoroughly investigated separately in order to uncover each of these religions' relation to various rebels' factions and the government troops during the conflict, as well as their contributions in efforts towards peacemaking, truth and reconciliation. The thesis also discusses the role of these religious traditions collectively in view of theories on religious conflict resolution, and the success and challenges of peacemaking in the Liberian context.

The emphasis is on factors of successful religious peacemaking which other countries' religious traditions can adopt in their own given context.

 The study also accesses and seeks to uncover the impact and effects of the civil war on these religious communities' physical institutions, their adherents 'beliefs and worldviews from the Liberian perspective. The thesis argues contrary to widespread conceptions that religion did play an important role in perpetuating in and during the conflict itself; I argue that it in this period played an important albeit secondary role, whereas in the various stages of the peace processes and the truth and reconciliation commission's work it can be seen as playing a primary role.   The former and latter above tenets conform the basic argument in the thesis. In chapter four and five I explore "why and how" religion play a secondary role in regard to the civil war, as well as primary factor in resolving the conflict and in the truth and reconciliation commission's work.

Dedication

This thesis is dedicated to all Liberians and other nationals whose lives were taken during the fourteen years of "senseless civil war", including survivors and victims of the war, and to those who have worked tirelessly whether rain or shine to restore peace in Liberia.

Acknowledgment

I 'm grateful to the almighty God who has granted me the opportunity to reach this far in my academic journey. Indeed, may his name be praised for the great things he had done. There is a saying which says give a man or woman his or her honor while he /she is alive. Indeed, there are some individuals who I owed such honor in expressing my gratitude for this academic achievement. I would like to take this time to express my sincere gratitude to the administration of MF Norwegian School of Theology for the great concern it has showed during my studied and stayed at MF. When I received my admission letter, it was cleared that my study was fully financed by Lånekassen, unfortunate after arriving in Oslo I was disqualified according to some rules of Lånekassen. With such misfortune, the option was to return home or seek for alternative support to continue my study, it was the administration that took such initiative to cover some related cost for the two years of my study.

 I would sieged this opportunity to say in the Liberian context a "big thank you" to both the Central United Methodist Church in Oslo, and the Central Kirken United Methodist Church in Bergen, Norway, for their generous donations toward my study; these congregations stood by me during the difficult times of my study. I would like to take this time to say thanks to the Norwegian State Education loan system known as Lånekassen for its quota scheme offered during the initial stage of my study; although I later lost the scholarship, but I ' m thankful for the offered because without it I won't have come to Norway nor gotten admission at MF.

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List of Acronyms

ACS	American Colonization Society
AFL	Armed Forces of Liberia
CPA	Comprehensive Peace Agreement
CWPI	Christian Women Peace Initiative
ECOWAS	Economic Community of West African States
GOL	Government of Liberia
IRCL	Inter Religious Council of Liberia
IRMC	Inter- Religious Mediation Committee
LURD	Liberians United for Reconciliation and Democracy
LDF	Lofa Defense Force
LPC	Liberia Peace Council
LCC	Liberian Council of Churches
LMC	Liberian Muslim Council
LUDF	Liberians United Defense Force
MMR	Movement for Muslims Redemption
MODEL	Movement for Democracy in Liberia
NPFL	National Patriotic Front of Liberia
RLL	Religious Leaders of Liberia
TRC	Truth and Reconciliation Commission
ULIMO	United Liberation Movement for Democracy in Liberia
ULIMO- K	United Liberation Movement –Kromah
ULIMO- J	United Liberation Movement –Johnson
UN	United Nations
WCC	World Council of Churches
WIPNET	Women in Peace building Network

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1.1.0   Chapter one: Introduction

1.1.1 Background to the study

Liberia is a home to various religious traditions where majority of its populations are practicing Christianity, Islam and African Indigenous religions. As it has been observed nowadays researchers are concerned with the role of religion in deadly conflict, and at the same time the role it play in peacemaking, conflict resolution, and nations that are coming from oppressive rule or conflict and civil war that opt for Truth and Reconciliation Commission like Liberia and elsewhere. With the presented of these religious traditions in Liberia and it has recently ended its fourteen years of civil war in 2003, and followed by a Truth and Reconciliation Commission that began its work in 2006, and released its final report in 2009; it triggers me to raise the concern on the role of religion during the transitional   phase of Liberia.

Religion is likened to a "double edged sword" (Lewy quoted in Fox, 1999, p.435). It   can be used as a catalyst to encourage conflict and war. On the other side it can be used to promote peace and reconciliation (Fox, 1999, p.435; Appleby, 2000). This double roles of religion when observes within the Liberian context to the civil war and peacemaking processes it invites the question: "What role the religion play during both the conflict and peace processes and during the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's work?"

Unfortunate, for the case of Liberia researchers' works have mainly focused on the peace process, on the other hand, there is silent on the role of religion in perpetuating the conflict. Drawing his analysis on the role of religion in contemporary conflicts around the world Dolo highlights that historically religion has been trapped in conflicts and the role that religion should play in the governance process has been a contested issue. Dolo observes that Liberia is not exempted from other countries' conflicts where religion has been presented as instigator (Dolo, 2007, p.79). From his observation it means that religion in Liberia is not exempted from the role religion had played in other African countries' conflicts and elsewhere, notably the case of Sudan, Rwanda, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia, Kosovo, Iran, Sri Lanka, Egypt, Algeria, Northern Ireland, the Balkans where these conflicts or violence were portrayed as religious inspired conflicts (Dolo, 2007, p.79, Marsden, 2012, p.1-3, Appleby, 2000, p. 4).   Although Dolo didn't detail the role religion paly in fuelling

Liberia's civil war, but it can be said that it's religious dimension in perpetuating the conflict was not visible as the above countries' conflicts. Indeed, it is one of the tasks of this thesis to uncover such role.

The first glance of Liberia's civil war religious pattern perhaps can be best understood from a practical experience on how the NPFL's rebels portrayed the Mandingo ethnic group and other nationals on religious grounds. For instance, during the Liberian civil war at then a teenager in my grand parents' village a Fulani man prior to the 1990s war asked my grandparents for a plot of land, and it was given to him for doing his groundnuts farming. He was a Guinean national but he had lived in Liberia for very long time especially in that part of Liberia called Sinoe County where my grandparents used to live.

During the 1990s war the NPFL rebel's faction was persecuting both the Krahn and Mandingo ethnic groups in all parts of the country. Indeed, when the NPFL rebel's faction captured Sinoe County, it was already known by all Liberians that the NPFL's faction was searching for people from the Mandingo ethnic group and if they came in contact with any Mandingo person definite he or she should be killed at that time. Some of the reasons behind the Mandingos persecution during the first war (1990s) highlighted in the TRC's findings was their affiliation with the then president Doe's government (TRC, Vol. III, Appendices IV p.2, 2009).

Dennis went further and mentions that at the initial stage of the war Mandingos met with president Doe and pledged their loyalty and support to his government to fight against Taylor's rebels. This act of the Mandingos was one of the reasons they were persecuted by the NPFL's rebels. According to Dennis the NPFL claimed that Mandingo are traders. Therefore, they are financially up standing, their pledged to Doe mean both loyalty and financing the war against them (Dennis, undated).

The point here is Doe relationship with Islam was the same as Mandingos, vice versa when Mandingos pledged support to Doe is Islam pledging such in a broader sense since the understanding of Mandingo and Islam at the time was inseparable to many Liberian if not all.

The NPFL rebel's faction was the first warring faction to attack Doe's government. Indeed, the faction's fighters were not only after president Doe but rather all those who they could identify having close link with Doe's government such as the case of some prominent figures from the Mandingos ethnic group. Instead of the NPFL's rebels looking for those prominent Mandingo individuals who were closed to Doe's government the rebels generalized their relationship with Doe to all Mandingo people. Even some of those people from the Mandingo

background who had never seen or benefited anything from Doe's government were persecuted.

Consequently, the persecuting of Mandingo's ethnic group brought in religious identity. Since these two identities are closely inter- related and are confused at certain time in some cases with the assumption that certain ethnic groups are the carriers or the host of certain religion. This was the case of Liberia because before the war where the Mandingos were the predominant ethnic group who practiced Islam. Therefore, the NPFL's rebels adopted such perception of religious – ethnic identity for certain ethnic group and throughout the 1990s war Mandingos and Muslims were persecuted in the NPFL rebels' controlled territories (TRC's Vol. III, Appendices IV, 2009, p.1-3).

Another theory giving the account of the Mandingos' persecution posits that the earlier persecution of the Mandingo people by NPFL rebel was not on religious grounds rather it was on "ethnic-political" (Dolo, 2007, p.80). This means that Mandingos association with president Doe and his ethnic Krahn group made the Mandingos to be seen as supporters to Doe's regime (Dolo, 2007, p.80).

However, as it was observed many Liberians if not all who witnessed the Mandingos' persecution assert that practically the NPFL's rebels didn't justify their actions on the above view rather the NPFL's fighters could kill any Mandingo or Muslim person at that time. This was the case of the man in my grandparents' village. He was arrested and almost put to death by the NPFL's fighters because he was Muslim and not Mandingo. It was confusing for the rebels because Mandingos and Fulani people shared the same religion, i.e. Islam. Although at then I was teenager but such religious and ethnic similarities were well understood by some Liberians like my grandparents.

It was the villagers who intervened and rescued the man's life. The villagers later helped him to escape from the village and find his way out of the controlled areas of the NPFL's rebels. As the war continued and Mandingos and those with Muslim identities were targeted no one heard of the man throughout the war. Even when Taylor who was the NPLF leader said no one should persecute Mandingos and Muslims there was no account of the man.

The point here is that the religious identity as a way of identifying Mandingos which was used by NPFL's rebels put many people's lives at risk and some were killed during the war. It was not only the Mandingos ethnic group in Liberia but rather all of those who practiced the Islamic faith, because in Liberia it was commonly believed that all Mandingos were Muslims and all Muslims of Liberia are Mandingos. Although it has been assumed today that the majority of Liberian Muslims are from the Mandingo ethnic group. Indeed, it can be said

that this narrow way of identifying Mandingos led to the death of many Liberians and others who were not Mandingos but still Muslims (TRC, Vol. III, Appendices IV, 2009, p.2-3).

For instance, Dolo points out that not all Mandingos in Liberia are Muslims, and on the other hand that not all Liberian Muslims are Mandingos, rather some people from the Mandingo ethnic background are "Christian, agnostics and animists" (Dolo, 2007, p.81). He also highlights that there are Liberians from various ethnic groups such as the Vai, Lorma, Kpelle and Mano who are Muslims or adherents to the Islamic faith and these people are not Mandingos (Dolo, 2007, p.81; TRC, Vol. II, 2009).

1.1.2. Motivation for the study

While the above background partially served as motivation for this study what motivated me firstly most was the urge to get to know what went on during the war that had to do with people's religious affiliation. Secondly, since I was innocent young boy at that time I didn't understand what was the main reason behind the Mandingos and Muslims' persecution during the first Liberian civil war.

 It was when I returned home in 2010 after I had competed my bachelor degree of Divinity at Africa University Zimbabwe, while having a conversation with some elders in my village that the discussion gradually invited some of the devastating experiences of the 'senseless civil war'.   Eventually the topic of Mandingo and Muslims' persecution appeared. I asked "why these people were persecuted during the first war?"   The answer given to me was simply phrased in a Liberian saying "en they are Muslims (…), and Muslim people supported Doe (…)"[1]

 I appreciated their answer, but I was hesitant to ask further question rather to do my own research in order to find out more because it seemed their answer was too insufficient to me and provided a narrow justification to anyone who would be interested in the topic of the Mandingos and Muslims' persecution as one of the religious dimensions of the conflict, like myself. Thus, with such firsthand information I started to develop interest in reading documents related to the Liberian civil war and its relationship to religion particularly the Mandingos and Muslims phase of the war. Therefore, when I was admitted at MF Norwegian School of Theology and my studies have to do with religion and society, ranging from conflict, reconciliation and other areas of societal matters and people, I then decided to focus

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[1] It should be noted that the beginning of the phrase 'en' is an informal Liberian English phrase sometimes used in casual discussions amongst Liberian people.

my attention to the Liberian case where religion was among other factors that drove the conflict and the peace – reconciliation processes in Liberia. In the process of doing a case study on Liberia I found it necessary to include Christianity and the Indigenous religions[2] in Liberia instead of Islam alone which first arose my interest on the topic. In short, the above stimulated me to do this study.

1.1.3. Main research question

So, this thesis explores the role of religion in Liberia's civil war between the period of 1989-2003; posing as its main research question: What role did religion play in the civil war and during various peace agreements that were crafted ranging from 1990s to the Comprehensive Peace Agreement in 2003, and the Liberian Truth and Reconciliation Commission's work from 2006 - 2009?

1.1.4. Aim of the study

In answering its main research question, the aim of this study is to explore the dynamic role of religion during the Liberian civil war and during the peace and truth and reconciliation commission processes by way of responding to five sub- questions that are interrelated to the main research question. The five sub-questions will be discuss in chapter four of the thesis. These sub-questions of the study investigate:

a. Did warring factions show any religious affiliation during the civil war?

b. Did religious practices prolong the civil war?

c. Did religious actors help in resolving the civil war?

d. Did religious actors play any role in the Truth and reconciliation commission's work?

e. Did the conflict or civil war have any impact on Liberia's religious communities?

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[2] The selected indigenous religion for this study has two categories for both male and female. But all serve the same purposes and under one institution but their tasks distinguish them. These are traditional religious institutions that purposely serve the role of traditional initiation for youth. In the process of initiation male youths are initiated under the Poro branch, an institution only for male, and on the other hand female youths are initiated under the Sande branch that is only for female. A traditional religious priest called Zoe is responsible to coordinate each branch initiation activities, but only male Zoe is allow for the Poro and female also is allow for the Sande

1.1.5. Research methodology

There are at least two main types of relevant research methodological strategies when pursuing these questions. They are quantitative and qualitative strategies. In every research the decision to adopt which strategy to follow depends on the researcher's choice in relation to the study, although both strategies are sometimes adopted (Bryman, 2012). Although within both qualitative and quantitative researchers "think they know something about society worth telling to others, and they use a variety of forms, media and means to communicate their ideas and findings" (Denzin and Lincoln, 2008, p.14).

Both quantitative and qualitative strategies are distinct research strategies in their own rights. Both are inquiry methods but follow different research traditions in their approaches to inquiry (Denzin and Lincoln, 2008, p.14pp; Bryman, 2012, p.19pp). That is, the philosophical belief of each strategy or epistemological issues, meaning "what is or should be regarded as acceptable acknowledge in a discipline" (Bryman, 2012, p.27).

In the process of inquiry it could be said that quantitative researchers follow the positivism tradition and qualitative researchers follow a postpositivist tradition in the physical and social sciences. These two philosophical traditions hold different views on how social reality should be studied. Positivists argue that "there is a reality out there to be studied, captured, and understood; whereas postpositivists argue that reality can never be fully apprehended, only approximated" (Denzin and Lincoln, 2008, p.14). In the latter multiple methods are suggested as way of capturing as much reality as possible, theories are discovered and clarification are given, which is the interest of qualitative research (Denzin and Lincoln, 2008, p.14).

The positivism which quantitative strategies follow advocates that social reality should be studied from a natural science perspective. In contrast, qualitative strategies follow the epistemology of Interpretivism. It argues that the social world should not be study from the positivist scientific approach (Bryman, 2012, p.28).

Bryman mentions that Interpretivism is a term that contradicts the epistemology view of positivist (Bryman, 2012, p.28). This approach of enquiring knowledge is rooted in qualitative research tradition. Indeed, qualitative strategy researchers and practitioners of

Interpretivism argues that people and their institutions which are the subject matters which the social scientist study in the social world are differ from the natural science. Therefore, they should adopt a different approach of inquiry that does not follow the positivist tradition (Bryman, 2012, p.28).

Bryman cites Von Wright who notes the above contradictions on the epistemological issues of these research strategies and mentions that in the clash between positivism and hermeneutics, the latter is drawn from theology. This is used in the social science to provide an explanation which has to do with theory and methods of the interpretation of human action (Bryman, 2012, p.28).

Another way in which quantitative and qualitative research strategies differ is their relations to theory and research. In quantitative methods, the relation is deductive, meaning theories are tested or testing of theories, whereas in qualitative the relation is inductive, meaning generating theories or building of theories either during the study or at the end of the study, instead of beginning with theories testing (Bryman, 2012, p.36).

According to Denzin and Lincoln the term qualitative reflects the "qualities of entities and on processes and meanings that are not experimentally examined or measured (if measurable at all) in terms of quantity, amount, intensity, or frequency" (Denzin and Lincoln, 2008, p.14).

By differentiating quantitative and qualitative research strategies Denzin and Lincoln assert that …qualitative researchers stress the socially construed nature of reality, the intimate relationship between researcher and what is to be studied, and the situational constrains that shape inquiry. Such researchers emphasize the value-laden nature of inquiry. They seek answers to questions that stress how social experience is created and given meaning. In contrast, quantitative studies emphasize the measurement and analysis of causal relationships between variables, not process (Denzin and Lincoln, 2008, p.14). The emphasis in quantitative research is on measurement; it implies quantification in the process of both collection and analysis of data. Quantitative researcher (s) test theories, they argue the constancy, causalities and effect of the case been studied (Bryman, 2012, p.35). e.g, Is X responsible for the cause of B? When repeated, is it consistent? These are the driven concern of quantitative researchers, quantitative researchers also generalized their findings beyond the context of their study's sit (Bryman, 2012, p.35).

By contrast, qualitative research emphasizes words instead of numbers or quantification in the process of both the collection and analysis of data. The emphasis is on descriptive

interpretation of the case been studied. Findings are not generalize beyond the context of the study to other populations (Bryman, 2012). Nagy, Biber and Leavy point out that qualitative research addresses the question of "how, why, or what" (Nagy, Biber & Leavy, 2011, p.3). This study follows a qualitative research strategy. My study seeks to give descriptive meaning to people's action and behavior, and to generate theories if possible of the case. Hence, my approach is more descriptive and interpretative in words. I'm concerned with the 'how, why and what' questions which requires interpretation in words. I want to interpret how social events were socially constructed during the Liberian conflict and peacemaking processes. This study can only give such descriptive explanation following a qualitative method.

1.1.6. Research design

Research design is a "structure that guides the execution of a research method and the analysis of the subsequent data" (Bryman, 2012, p.45). There are varieties of research designs which are used in the field of social sciences to conduct research. The choice of design is one's decision depending on the study to be conducted. The adopted research design for this study is case study. A case study could be a single or multiple cases. In this regard cases include individuals, communities, societies, institutions, events and so on (Bryman, 2012, p 66; Nagy, Biber & Leavy, 2011, p.256; Denzin and Lincoln, 2008). In a case study the researcher's task is to do a "detailed exploration of a specific case, which could be community, organization or person" (Bryman, 2012, p.45). Stake mentions that case could be studied "analytically or historically, entirely by repeating measure or hermeneutically, organically or culturally and mixed methods- but we concentrate, at least for the time being, on the case" (Stake, 2008, p.119). Stake defined case study as "both a process of inquiry about the case and product of that inquiry" (Stake, 2008, p.121).

Stake classified case study into three types. He calls them "Intrinsic case study, Instrumental case study and multiple or collective case study" (Stake, 2008, p.120-23). According to Stake an Intrinsic case study is a study undertaken by a researcher because the main reason is the researcher wants a clear and good understanding of that particular case in question, and most importantly it is a case of interest to the researcher. Which he describes the researcher's interest of doing the study has been the "first and last" (Stake, 2008, p.121).Stake observes such study is not primarily undertaken to build theory, though he asserts that the researcher can do, but the matter of fact is case of intrinsic interest (Stake, 2008, p.121-23).

Instrumental case study according to Stake is a study undertaken "to provide an insight into an issue or to redraw a generalization. The case is of secondary interest, it plays a supportive role, and it facilities our understanding of something else" (Stake, 2008, p.123). By multiple or collective case study, Stake mentions that it is a study where there is less interest of one case and serval cases are combined " to investigate a phenomenon, population, or general condition" (Stake, 2008, p.123). In this regard, it is an instrumental study but with more than one case been studied. Stake says intrinsic case study usually begins with case already identified by the researcher's interest prior to the formal study, whereas both instrumental and multiple or collective case studies put the researcher to an option of choosing cases before the formal study (Stake, 2008, p.123, 129).

My case study is an intrinsic case study. As it was seen my motivation for the study is more of intrinsic interest to me, I want to gap a profound understanding of the religious associated nature of the Liberian civil war which started with Mandingos and Muslims persecution and eventually brought in other religious aspects and religious communities' roles. Most importantly, speaking about these three types of case studies' designs, Stake asserts that intrinsic case study seeks to develop what is believed to be the "case's own issues, contexts, and interpretations " (Stake, 2008, p.128). Which he calls as the "thick description" (Stake, 2008, p.128). Indeed, my aim is to do such 'thick description' in the process of interpreting the case I will be exploring.

1.1.7. Method of data collection

There are varieties of data collection methods when one is conducting a qualitative research case study depending on the research question. These methods among others are qualitative interview, ethnography, participant and non-participant observation, focus groups, document as source of data, or document analysis and oral history, just to name few (Bryman, 2012, p.377pp , Nagy, Biber & Leavy, 2011, p.256). Due to the space of this thesis I will not elaborate on the above mentioned methods except for the one which this study has adopted. This study will use 'document as source of data' or document analysis method of data collection. Speaking of such method, Bryman mentions three main types of documents. They are 'Personal documents', 'Official documents deriving from the state' and 'Private documents deriving from private sources' (Bryman, 2012, p.543-551).

Bryman asserts that these are documents relevant for both quantitative and qualitative researchers, but I am concerned with the latter. Most importantly, he highlights that data from these documents are not subject to "non –reactive" (Bryman, 2012, p.542-543).

Non -reactive data means that these documents data were not requested by the researcher or originally for the purpose of the study that is in question, such as this study. Indeed, there is no biases in the data; the researcher didn't come into contact with those whom the information or data was produced. From the above three types of documents, this study will use the latter as method for collecting data. That is, official document deriving from the state, in this case, the Liberian Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Final Report is an official document deriving from the state, the government of Liberia (GOL). In the process of collecting data I will read and analyzed those documents contained in the TRC's report related to religion and the conflict. These will include textual texts and audio recorded videos materials of witnesses' testimonies displayed on the TRC' official website. After listening to these videos I will then transcribe and interpret them to my data, in addition to the already textual texts.

1.1.8. Method of data analysis

When documents are used as source of data in qualitative research there are three suggested approaches to analyze or interpret such data. First, is the qualitative content analysis, second, is the semiotics and third is the hermeneutics analysis. In qualitative content analysis the researcher main task is to search for themes in the data or materials been analyzed. Semiotics approach to data analysis deal with signs. It is mainly concerned with symbols used in everyday life, in this kind of analysis the researcher task is to transform symbols or signs into textual meanings. Therefore, semiotics analysis is referred to as the "science of signs" (Bryman, 2012, p.559).

Hermeneutics analysis is a method of analyzing data from the perspective of the original author. In this approach to data analysis the researcher or analyst is to make an effort to interpret the text or data and bring forth the meaning from its author perspective. The social and historical sitting in which the data was produce when familiar is an advantage of the analyst (Bryman, 2012). The emphasis in this approach is it emphasizes the researcher ability of interpretation and to be familiar with the social and historical context of the place the texts, events, or data have been generated (Bryman, 2012, p.560).

From the above three methods of documentary data analysis discussed, this study will use both the qualitative content analysis and hermeneutical analysis. Best reason for this choice of data analysis is, it places the researcher in the position to identify major themes through the study and these themes are useful in comprehending the main episodes of the study. Second, the hermeneutical analysis puts the researcher in a position to articulate well both human's actions and behavior of the case. Another advantage is I was in Liberia throughout the war and I'm familiar with the general context and some of the concrete places where the data were produced.

1.1.9. Research materials

The materials for this study is based on documents and literature. My materials are mainly the Liberia's Truth and Reconciliation Commission Final Report, tittle, Consolidated Vol. II. 2009. Due to the large amount of volumes contained in the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Final Report and my specific interest of study, I will concentrate my sources of data to one of its volumes tittle Volume III, appendices IV 'The Conflict, Religion and Tradition'. My choice for this document based on the research question and the inquiry of the study. Relevant data could easily be found from the TRC's official report in which data was collected from the 15 counties of Liberia from individuals and institutions. The TRC also had sub-committee that generated data from religious and traditional institutions on matters pertaining to the conflict and these religious institutions relationship to the conflict.

1.1.9.1 Other materials

Alongside the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Final Report, I will use other sources which are relevant in providing answers to the research questions. These will include scholarly literature and other documents which are displayed at the TRC's official website that are not included in its Final Report volumes, such as press leases, audio hearing recording videos, witness's testimonies transcripts and so on.

1.1.10. Composition of the thesis

This thesis contain five chapters. Chapter one is the introductory chapter and it is based on three sections which highlight the background to the study, my motivation for the study and

research methodology of the study. Chapter two is concerned with the theoretical approach to the study. In chapter two various theories and key terms to be used in the study will be defined and conceptualized. In chapter three I will present materials which set the historical context of the study. In chapter four I will discuss and analyze data related to the research main and sub-questions, meanwhile, themes will be identified and analyzed. Finally, chapter five closes the curtain of the thesis by doing a summary of the entire thesis and stating the final conclusions of the study.

1.1.11. Conclusion

The purpose of this chapter was threefold. First, it provides the reader with an understanding of the background to the study. In the background the chapter highlights the religious link of the war concerning Mandingo and Muslims' persecution by the NPFL rebels. Second, the chapter shared with the reader the researcher's motivation for doing the study, which also relates to the Mandingo and Muslim's persecution but with the curiosity of the researcher to pursuit a study on the topic. Thirdly, the chapter highlights which choice of methodological approaches the study has followed. The chapter discussed both quantitative and qualitative research strategies and various methods of data collection, data analysis and the selected research design. Having discussed various options, the study adopts a qualitative research strategy, case study design, document as source of data collection, and both qualitative content analysis and hermeneutical analysis of data as methodologies in conducting the study. It was highlighted that the selected document to be used is the Liberia's Truth and Reconciliation Commission Final Report, Consolidated Vol. II and Vol. III Appendices IV, and along with scholarly literature.

2.2.0. Chapter Two: Theoretical approach to the study

2.2.1. Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is twofold. First, I will define and conceptualize key terms used in the study. The usefulness for doing this is because each term has different meaning in each discipline and context. Second, in this chapter I will do an overview on some religion and conflict theories and conflict resolution theories. On the latter more emphasis will be given to religious conflict resolution theory. The aim of examining these theories is to take those relevant to the study and then applied to the Liberian case.

2.2.2. Defining religion from the social sciences perspective

Max Weber (1864-1920) a renowned scholar among others who had contributed to the founding of the discipline of sociology is well known for refusing to define religion in his study. Aldridge cites Weber's argument that "to defined 'religion', to say what it is, is not possible at the start of presentation such as this. Definition can be attempted, if at all only at the conclusion of the study. The essence of religion is not even our concern, as we make it our task to study the conditions and effects of a particular type of social behavior" (Weber, quoted in Aldridge, 2013, p.22).

According to Aldridge the above statement had led many scholars of the time to criticized Weber and some noted that at the end of his study he didn't provide a definition. These critics raise the question that without defining religion how would one determine factors to include in religion when it is been study. Despite refusing to define religion Weber viewed religion as social phenomenon that exist and humans practiced. This means for him the sacred aspect of religion was not paramount to him as others in their attempt who defined religion and the accent is stressed on the sacred and beliefs practiced by individuals, communities and groups (Aldridge, 2013).   .

 This study does not take Weber' approach of not defining religion but rather it has visited scholarly literature to bring forth the definitions of religion they have offered and to work with the relevant one for the purpose of this study; despite Aldridge contends that "there is not, and never will be, a universally agreed definition of religion" (Aldridge, 2013, p.22). Aldridge continues that any act of defining religion is "an act of power, because all definitions provoke counter definitions" (Aldridge, 2013, p.3).

Before deriving at the working definition of religion for this study it is important to trace the root word of religion. Previous researcher such as R.S. Appleby has traced the origin of the term 'religion' back to the Latin phrase religare, which denotes the meaning " to bind together" (Appleby, 2000, p.9). Scholars such as Aldridge observes that defining religion was and is a contested one. Tracing the root word of religion in his book he cites a Latin phrase which the term religion comes from, 'religio' (Aldridge, 2013, p.2).

According to Aldridge after 2,000 years of debate among academic scholars with various suggestions to the meaning of 'religio' only two are considered. Out of these two standing meanings of 'religio' one is attributed back to the ancient thinker Cicero (106-43 BCE). Cicero argues that 'religio' comes from 'relegere' meaning "to read again' or 'to retrace" (Cicero, quoted in Aldridge, 2013, p.2). Cicero continues that "Religion involves retracing, studying, cultivating and transmitting the customs, practices and traditions of one's ancestors. Religion implies cultural identity, so religion and culture are inseparable" (Cicero, quoted in Aldridge, 2013, p.2).

The second meaning of 'religio' is attributed to Lactantius who is said to be a Christian convert whose view is recorded as respond against Cicero's position. Making reference to Lactantius, Aldridge highlights that Lactantius early fourth century CE writings revealed that "religio comes from 'religare' meaning "to bind again" (Lactantius, quoted in Aldridge, 2013, p.2). Lactantius speaking of 'religare' adds that "Religion involves bonds of piety and devotion that tie human beings to God. Religion implies active faith. Religion and culture are not inseparable. Religion is the transcendence of culture" (Lactantius, quoted in Aldridge, 2013, p.2, pp).

From the above two definitions one can see tension that each definition of religion has encountered with previous one. Cicero's definition emphasized the effort of repeating, tracing and keeping customs and so on, that the individual or the community holds as values, norms and customs from one generation to other generation, that culture and religion are differ, while in Lactantius's definition the emphasis is placed on the relationship between God and human's activities, and religion and culture are one but religion is above. Perhaps one can argues that Lactantius Christian background had influenced his thought on what is religion or what religion does, though Aldridge didn't say whether he was converted before his argument or prior to his conversion.

Appleby is among others who acknowledged that religion is an act 'to bind again', building his theory on religious conflict resolution, Appleby argues that religion implies collective effort and unity, group working together (Appleby, 2000).

Aldridge observes the above both definitions of religion and concludes that 'relegere or religio' all defined what religion "really is" (Aldridge, 2013, p.3) He goes on saying defining religion is an act of "power" on grounds that each definition will provoke counter ones, has it was seen above. He asserts that academics, politicians, lawyers, religious leader and the followers all have interest on how religion is defined, he continues that defining religion has both 'ethical and political' consequences on societies, people of all faiths and including those of none faith (Aldridge, 2013, p.3).

Emile Durkheim (1858-1917) a distinguished sociologist of his age and a contemporary of Weber, in his effort to define religion argues that "religion is a unified system of beliefs and practices relative to sacred things, that is to say, things set apart and forbidden-beliefs and practice which unite into one single moral community called Church, all those who adhere to them" (Durkheim, quoted in Aldridge, 2013, p.24). Here Durkheim places the emphasis on both beliefs and practices that are associated with sacred things and these things have forbidden aspects, precepts and not just ordinary but carry a moral weight, here religion is seen as an organized system mainly the Church or religious communities.

Alan Aldridge discussed two schools of thoughts among contemporary sociologists in defining religion. These schools of thoughts are called 'broader inclusive and the narrower exclusive'; he noted that the latter is said to enjoy more privileges among contemporary sociologists despite both are not freed of problem (Aldridge, 2013, p, 26). It is these schools of thought followed below.

2.2.2.1. Inclusive school of thought definitions

Intellectualists of inclusive defining religion argue that:

> We propose that religion be defined as a system of beliefs about the nature of the force (s) shaping man's destiny, and the practices associated therewith, shared by the members of a group. A religion is: (1) a system of symbols which act to (2) establish powerful, pervasive, and long lasting moods and motivations in men by (3) formulation conceptions of a general order of existence and (4) clothing these conceptions with such an aura of factuality that (5) the moods and motivations seem uniquely realistic. It is in keeping with an elementary sense of the concept of religion to call the transcendence of biological nature by the human organism a religious

phenomenon. Religion is a system of beliefs and practices by means of which a group of people struggles with the ultimate problems of human life (Aldridge, 2013, p, 26).

Aldridge cites prominent critics of inclusive definitions such as Yinger, Lenski and Luckmmann who argue that such definitions are too broad and it defined all inhabitants of the universe religious, i.e., all human beings are religious, including atheist and those who have declared themselves non- religious. These critiques contend that a definition of religion that is central to ultimate problems, or forces shaping human destiny or such as the human transcendence of biology is to make everybody religious regarded one claimed to be or not. This shows the short coming of inclusive definitions. However, on the other side, they also acknowledged that sociologists who are the opinion of generalizing religion to all human beings in term of defining religion are most likely influenced by the view of ' humanity – a philosophical anthropology' that all humanity is religious by definition and such claim provide justification for these definitions. They went on saying that "the transcendence of biological nature is a universal phenomenon of mankind" (Aldridge, 2013, p.27).

2.2.2.2. Exclusive school of thought definitions

Proponents of exclusive school defining religion write that religion:

> An institution consisting of culturally patterned interaction with culturally postulated superhuman beings. Religious culture is that set of beliefs and symbols (and values deriving directly therefrom) pertaining to a distinction between an empirical and a super-empirical, transcendent reality; the affairs of the empirical being subordinated in significance to the non-empirical … Religious action is action shaped by an acknowledgement of the empirical /super-empirical distinction. The set of beliefs which postulate and seek to regulate the distinction between an empirical reality and related and significant supra empirical segment of reality; the language and symbols which are used in relation to this distinction; and activities and institutions which are concerned with its regulation (Aldridge, 2013, p.29).

At the outset of these contemporary sociological definitions it was highlighted that Aldridge explicitly mentioned that these definitions are no problem free. As the above points just discussed and some limitations were highlighted about the inclusive definitions same can be said of the exclusive definitions. Both inclusive and exclusive treat religion from a different perspectives. Exclusives definitions are distinct from inclusive in a sense that inclusive

definitions are functional, i.e., they stress what religion does; and on the other hand, exclusive definitions are substantive, i.e., they defined religion in term of what religion is (Aldridge, 2013, p.29). This means that when one adopts the inclusive approach of religion one is concern with the functional aspects of religion, what religion does for the people and society at large. An example of this approach to religion is the famous saying of Marx that religion serves as the 'opiate' of the people (Aldridge, 2013). On the other hand the exclusive approach to religion would include those who stress the emphasis on the sacredness of religious practices and beliefs as the building components in defining religion, or it theological model where the accent is placed on gods or God (Aldridge, 2013, Appleby, 2000).

According to Aldridge despite exclusive definitions attempt to be cautious in defining religion and didn't 'drag in' footballers, and other social clubs; nor downplay the question of religion's decline or growth, he contends that these exclusive definitions are not still unproblematic (Aldridge, 2013, p. 29). Aldridge mentions that exclusive definitions have ignored key terms and concepts which   are traditionally been thought of as central aspects to religion. He observes that exclusive's definitions made no reference (s) to God / gods, or spiritual beings, nor the transcendence or another world, or soul, or life after death. He also points out that in exclusive's definitions the concept of 'supernatural' is replaced with 'superhuman', the 'super-empirical', and the 'supra-empirical' (Aldridge, 2013, p.29).

According to Aldridge the concept of 'superhuman' does not fit or exist in all cultures; secondly, what is really to be considered as the 'superhuman' is unclear or ambiguous. He goes on saying that the concept of 'superhuman' in this context referred to this world rather than any other. Therefore, such concept can't be used as an equivalence term for the 'supernatural' in its religious context. He continues that both the terms 'super-empirical and supra-empirical' don't referred to world 'above or over' this one universe (Aldridge, 2013, p.29).

From the above criticisms of both inclusive and exclusive definitions it can be said that sociologists attempted to provide universal definitions that will suit all the world religions, regions and mainly generally acceptable worldviews of what religion is or does. However, has it appears this aim has fallen short of many criticisms. Aldridge asserts that the failure of both inclusive and exclusive definitions are challenged because there are "diverse cultures and new religious movements continually threaten to break the mould with new modes of beliefs and practices" (Aldridge, 2013, p.29). In an effort defining religion R. S. Appleby, a professor of history at the University of Notre Dame, defined religion in his book that

"Religion is the human response to a reality perceived as sacred" (Appleby, 2000, p.8). Appleby definition of religion highlights that 'religion is the interpreter of the sacred, discloses and celebrates the transcendent source and significance of human existence' (Appleby, 2000, p.8). The list of sacred among others rang from symbolic, moral, and organizational sources. Appleby used both the terms 'the holy' and 'sacred' interchangeably to mean the same. Appleby cites the 1917 German theologian and philosopher of religion, Rudolph Otto (1869-1937), who argues that 'the holy' "is a category of interpretation and valuation peculiar to the sphere of religion" (Otto, quoted in Appleby, 2000, p.28).

Here it is noted that Appleby's definition of religion involved human's action in response to what they understood as sacred. The emphasis is on interpreting what people view of been holy, these things are then communicated in various forms to display ultimate meanings and answers to their everyday life, an example of these will include the Bible, Koran, and other customs, norms ,beliefs embedded in a religious tradition teachings.

In their essay, Fox and Sandler defining religion conceptualized it and identified five approaches in which religion can be defined. Although they acknowledged the definition of religion among theologians or in the theological field that is more concentrated on the nature of deities, but they didn't include such definition of religion in their studies rather they viewed religion from a social sciences perspective. According to Fox and Sandler religion influences all social aspects, including human's behavior and society (Fox and Sandler, 2006, p.2).

It is through this influential role of religion they came up with their five models. They write: "that first, religion can be among the bases of identity; second, religion include a belief system which influences behavior; third, religious doctrine or theology can often influence behavior; fourth, religion is a source of legitimacy; and finally, religion is generally associated with religious institutions" (Fox and Sandler, 2006, p.2-5).

This definition of religion is differ from the previous ones though there are some related aspects or similarities which made it to be both inclusive and exclusive. However, the point in this one stressed the emphasis on where religion is found among other social attributes of human and what it does for the human beings and the society at large.   From the above definition I will adopt the first characteristic of religion, i.e., identity approach of religion will be used in this study. In this context religion is just as other social attribute of group identity that provide sense of belonging for the person or group, e.g. nationality, ethnicity or a person claiming to belong to certain social grouping. Despite the short coming of both the inclusive (functional) and the exclusive (substantive) definitions of religion, this study followed the

inclusive school of thought, meaning the functional approach to religion because the study is concerned with what religion does, or what it does for the people and society and not what religion is (substantive).

2.2.3. Defining civil war

Sarkees defined civil war as "any armed conflict that involved military action internal to the metropole of the state system member; the active participation of the national government; effective resistance by both sides; and a total of at least 1,000 battle –deaths during each of the war" (Sarkees, undated).

The above definition of civil war suits the Liberian case in the sense that, first the Liberian war was an armed conflict characterized by military actions internally; second, throughout the 14 years of war the national government was fully involved in all the combats with various rebel factions; third, both sides were effective to the resistance of each other's in the process where the weaker ones and even stronger ones lost more from both sides and the death toll perhaps exceeded more than 1,000. However, accurate account of death rate during the period which both rebels groups and the national government troops lost is lacking and beyond this study. Lastly, it can be said that throughout the two phases of the Liberian war the combats were particularly between one, two to three or more rebels groups at some points and the then national government.

The evidence can be best demonstrate from the insurgency of Taylor's rebel faction and the then Doe's government during the first war in Liberia date from 1989-1990s, this period brewed more than 5 to 7 independent rebel groups before the end of the first war according to the Liberia's Truth and Reconciliation Commission findings. While in the second war dating from 1997 to 2003 the battles were now between two main rebel factions and then Taylor's government which was elected democratically during 1997 presidential election (Liberia's TRC, Consolidated, Final Report, Vol. II, 2009). Indeed, according to the characteristics of civil war outlined in the COW one can conclude that the Liberian war was indeed a civil war.

2.2.4. Defining Reconciliation

According to reconciliation scholars there is no universal applicable meaning to the concept of reconciliation. Indeed, reconciliation will mean different thing to different people and at different time as it will be seen in later discussions followed. However, it would be necessary to trace some roots words where the term reconciliation comes from before applying it to any

given context. According to scholars such as Philpott noted that the concept of reconciliation has ancient meaning, which means "restoration of right relationship" (Philpott, 2006, p.14). In Hebrew reconciliation comes from the phrase tikkun olam, which means "to heal, to repair, and to transform" (Philpott, 2006, p.14). Also in it Greek version, it root words are katallage, apokatallasa and diallaso. All these words denote the concept of reconciliation, they mean "to adjustment of difference, reconciliation, restoration to favor; to reconcile completely, to bring back a former state of harmony, and change the mind of anyone, to be reconciled, to renew friendship with one" (Philpott, p.14). In Latin reconciliation comes from the word concilium, meaning "a deliberative process by which adversaries work out their differences in council" (Philpott, p.14). In Arabic reconciliation is expressed as Salima which denotes the meaning of "peace, safety, security, and freedom, (…) to be righteous, to do right, settlement, compromise, restoration, and restitution" (Philpott, 2006, p.14).

Auerbach highlights that reconciliation implies both a process and an outcome. He observes there is more emphasis stressed on the former when reconciliation is being undertaken by any society. In his essay the term reconciliation is used interchangeably with the phrase "stable peace; it is the long-term goal of any process of conflict resolution" (Auerbach, 2006, p.176). Writing about reconciliation as both process and outcome Auerbach in his essay discussed Kriesberg's four characteristics in the process of reconciliation that former enemies are ought to follow in their pursuit of reconciliation. According to Auerbach, Kriesberg observes that in an effort toward reconciliation those involved such as the perpetrators and victims are required to meet some requirements, he asserts that "they acknowledge the reality of terrible acts that were perpetrated; accept with compassion those who committed injurious conduct, as well as acknowledging each other's suffering; believe that their injustices are being redressed and anticipate mutual security and well- being" (Auerbach, 2006, p.176). From the above it can be said that reconciliation is a process and an act of reestablishing broken friendship which is the outcome aspect that involves two parties, that is, the perpetrator and the victims.

2.2.4.1 Theory of reconciliation

In her essay, Clegg mentions that peacemaking is a complex and difficult task in both conflict and post conflict situations. She adds, if such peace is to be 'sustainable' it has to happen at different levels. That is, this is a process of various stages. Therefore, she suggests that

societies that have experienced long violence conflict and divisions among its peoples like the case of Liberia should follows the model of 'societal reconciliation,' an approach to reconciliation that encompasses what she calls 'a collective will to co-existence, renegotiation of identities and the courage to embrace the threatening others' (Clegg, 2008, p.81-92).

 Speaking of the concept of reconciliation Clegg in her essay classified four categories of reconciliations; they are political, societal, interpersonal and personal reconciliation (Clegg, 2008, p.81-82).

> Political reconciliation is about managing the macro level of society. It deals with issues of re-establishing order, governance and justice. At this level peace agreements are crafted and ratified, (...) in this type of reconciliation, forgiveness and repentance are not necessary, but questions about who can apologize or express regret and the role of ritual and memorialization are important (Clegg, 2008, p.82).

Clegg mentions that societal reconciliation "is about managing the group to group level of society. It focuses on people, in their corporate aspect, learning to share a formerly contested space and is more concerned with relationship than with justice per se" (Clegg, 2008, p. 83). In this model of reconciliation Clegg highlights that it focuses on the 'establishing or reestablishing' aspect of broken relationship and at the same time striving to create an atmosphere where former perpetrators and victims can now live in harmony without violence. Forgiveness and repentance which are among others core aspects in most reconciliation exercises, Clegg asserts that these are not demanding in this model of reconciliation, although she adds that the can be part of the process but what is more essential for this approach to reconciliation is the present of what she calls "will to co-existence" (Clegg, 2008, p.83).

Interpersonal reconciliation "is about an individual to individual or small group to small group (such as family to family) level of relating. Here forgiveness and repentance are paramount. This is about personal hurt and healing" (Clegg, 2008, p. 83).

 Personal reconciliation "is about a person reconciling the parts of her /himself that are, or have become, alienated since conception. It includes, psychological personal growth work and developing personal and spiritual awareness. …compassion and forgiveness are paramount" (Clegg, 2008, p.83).

 From the above four types of reconciliation models this study approach to reconciliation will be the societal reconciliation approach. One of the reasons this study follows this model of reconciliation is, it stressed the emphasis on reestablishing the relationship between the perpetrators and victims in a post conflict society with less or no demand to justice and my case study is concerned with a post conflict society reconciliation. Second, the other three

don't fit the case of Liberia in term of reconciling its people rather it needs one that can search for reconciliation at higher level of the society as societal reconciliation implies.

2.2.4.2. Defining reconciliation in the Liberian context

Throughout the life span of Liberia's Truth and Reconciliation Commission it was observes that the commission didn't define reconciliation for what it was or meant for the Liberian people despite the TRC's work included core aspects of reconciliation; and also reconciliation was one of its mandatory functions in its mandate. However, following the completion of the TRC's work and publishing its' Final Report a new mechanism for reconciliation emerged from within the government of Liberia (GOL) under the title A Strategic Roadmap for National Healing, Peacebuilding and Reconciliation. A project undertaken by various ministries of the Liberian government and other local institutions, including civil societies, where religious communities fall, also with an international aid of the UN targeting to achieve its goals mentioned in its tittle within the given period from June 2012 to July 2030 respectively. From the lunching of that project one can argues that the TRC's work was in completed and needed a supplement as the government did, while at the same time acknowledging that reconciliation is a process (Towards A Reconciled, Peaceful and Prosperous Liberia, 2012-20130).

Thus, the Strategic Roadmap for National Healing, Peacebuilding and Reconciliation defined reconciliation:

> As a multidimensional process of overcoming social, political, and religious cleavages and mending and transforming relationships; healing the physical and psychological wounds from the civil war, and confronting and addressing historical and structural wrongs, particularly conflict root causes including ethno-politics, religious, social, and regional exclusion, corruption and impunity as well human rights violation (Towards A Reconciled, Peaceful and Prosperous Liberia, 2012-20130).

Breaking down or explaining this definition of reconciliation would require a further study of itself. Therefore, through the length of this study at some points references might be made to some aspects of it where necessary in the furthering discussions. Importantly, this definition gave the meaning of what Liberians expect when they talk of reconciliation in post conflict Liberia. I will now turn to societal reconciliation which this study has adopted and then emerge it to the Liberian context of reconciliation as working definition for this study.

2.2.4.3. Clegg defining societal reconciliation

In her essay Clegg writes that societal reconciliation:

> Is a complex of processes and structures at personal, communal and institutional levels, necessary to bring all the elements of the society into positive and life-living relationship with God and with another. Societal reconciliation arises as the highest aspiration of human needs for identity, belonging and community; it is expressed in holistic patterns of relating: responding without resort to physical, verbal, emotional violence; letting go of prejudiced or bigoted attitudes and beliefs; mitigating the divisive effects of core beliefs which cannot be surrendered; recognizing differences and seeking or creating common ground; dialoguing in the expectation of changing and being changed by others; promoting inclusive processes, languages and participation; respecting self, others, and the natural world; challenging injustices and other destructive patterns of relating; dealing fairly with all; reflecting critically on one's own and one's own communities' behavior and calling to account oneself, one's community and others (Clegg, 2008, p.84).

Looking at the definition of societal reconciliation and the Liberian context of reconciliation which was presented earlier both approaches to what reconciliation would taste are similar. In the Liberian context of reconciliation the emphasis is placed on 'multidimensional' process that will addresses the society's entire need and its people, an approach to reconciliation that will cross cut the society although there is no direct reference to God as what was noted in the definition of societal reconciliation. Nevertheless, both advocate the inclusive approach to reconciliation, the vital language in the Liberian context noted was the multidimensional process while on the other hand, societal reconciliation acknowledged the complex structures, these two ways of approaching reconciliation include all matters and parties involved in the broken relationship, such concepts invite both the protractors and the victims effort to strive for the re-establishment of harmony in the post conflict society which is the outcome as the goal of reconciliation . Therefore, it is this concept of reconciliation I will follow as working definition.

2.2.5. Truth and Reconciliation Commissions

Truth and Reconciliation Commissions are institutions that usually formed to deal with society's transitional process after an authoritarian government under military or civilian

dictatorship rule heading toward a more democratic political system of nations that were affect by such rule and leaving divisions amongst its people (Lerche, undated).

Hayner, a well-known scholar of transitional justice cited in Shore defined Truth Commissions as the "generic name given to non -judicial body that deals with past human rights abuses in a particular country" (Shore, 2009, p.28). This definition means that Truth Commissions are not a judicial system that give rulings when people are guilty but rather a mechanism put in place to investigates and find out what went wrong during the period of violence or conflict in the past between both the perpetrators and the victims in a given country.

Later, Hayner redefined Truth Commissions extending the definition of Truth Commission to its functional tasks. Hayner in her second definition she defined Truth Commissions "as official, temporary mechanisms that are established to investigate a pattern of past human rights abuses or violations of international humanitarian law, are tasked with investigating, reporting, and recommending reforms and in the process serve to formally acknowledge past wrongs that were silenced and denied" (Hayner, quoted in Shore, 2009, p.28).
From this second definition according to Shore, Hayner observes in 2003 it was about 21 truth commissions worldwide beginning 1974.

Shore cites Hayner's four characteristics of truth commissions worldwide that "they focus on the past; they investigate a pattern of abuses over a specified period of time; they are temporary bodies that tend to operate for six month to two years and complete their work with publication of its findings; they are officially sanctioned, authorized or empowered by the state" (Shore, 2009, p. 28).
Richard Wilson describes Truth and Reconciliation Commissions as "post war structures for publicly addressing unresolved issues arising from past human rights violations", which "typically consist of an investigative team with a mandate to take testimonies, corroborate evidence, document human rights abuses and make recommendations regarding structural reforms and reparations"(Wilson, quoted in Lerche, undated).
With the above background on the definitions and description of Truth and Reconciliation Commissions one can mention that it was the structure and purpose the Liberian Truth and Reconciliation Commission was based on. The Liberian TRC was part of the peace negotiation process and was later sanctioned by the government of Liberia with a task of three years exercises. After completing its task, it was followed by the publication of its findings and it was dissolved.

2.2.5.1. Defining Truth in the context of Truth Commission

Defining 'truth' in the context of truth commission has been challenging for previous and ongoing truth commissions as Shore observes. He asserts that this has been one of the weaknesses of truth commissions in its practical works. According to Shore conflict resolution theorists argue that "a commission's mandate and context will determine the focus of the truth commission" (Shore, 2009, p.77). (Shore, 2009, p.78). Shore observes that scholars who have conducted previous studies on truth commissions have considered 'truth' in truth commission's context to mean giving an account of "historical account, or a recording of the legacies of human rights abuses that occurred under dictatorship, authoritarian or totalitarian regimes" (Shore, 2009, p.78). From the above it be said that defining truth in truth commissions is a contested issue, what truth will mean for each society's truth commission will differ from the others. Despite conflict resolution theorists suggest a Truth Commission defining truth in its own context the Liberian Truth and Reconciliation Commission didn't define truth in its context nor give no meaning to which truth it was pursuing among Liberians.

2.2.6. Religion and conflict theories

Jonathan Fox, one of the scholars who has written extensively on religion and conflict outlined four theories of religion and conflict in his article tittle 'Towards a dynamic theory of ethno- religious conflict' 1999. Fox mentions that the first type of theory is concerned with the "nature of the religions and ideologies themselves" (Fox, 1999, p.432). This first theory posits that certain types of religions are more likely to dispose their followers to conflict or violence than others (Fox, 1999, p.433). The second theory looks at the political, social and economic environment in which the conflict takes place (Fox, 1999, p.432). The third theory Fox mentions that it takes a "structural view of the relationship" (Fox, 1999, p.432). The fourth theory he calls it the "laundry list" (Fox, 1999, p.432). It list varieties of ways in which religion affects conflict or how religion is manifested in conflict. However, Fox observes it does not put these factors of religion that affect conflict into a clear conceptual framework (Fox, 1999, p.432).

2.2.6.1.1. Group one: 'Some religions are more violent than others' theory

From Fox's typologies on religion and conflict theories, it can be said that religions that fall under this first category of theories are religions that embraced violence or promoting violence, conflict and revolution acts than those of their counterparts. This first set of theory view is embedded in Weber's theory. In his theory according to Fox, Weber argues that "religion with world accepting ideologies are more likely to take part in revolution than those with world rejecting ideologies" (Weber, quoted, in Fox, 1999, p.433). Though while this first theory is based on the view that certain religions and their ideologies lead their adherent to violence, Fox also highlights that there is a high consensus among scholars on the literature that all religious traditions have both violence and quietism aspects (Fox, 1999, p.433).

2.2.6.2. Group two: 'Environmental theory'

 Environmental theory argues 'that some changes in the international environment is the cause for the recent rise in religious conflict' (Fox, 1999, p.433). Proponent scholars among others of the view of environmental theory are Huntington and Juergensmeyer. In his famous theory, 'The clash of civilization,' Huntington argues that in the new age (post-cold war) the main source of conflict will not be the primary cause of ideological or economic factors but rather cultural factors will be the sole cause of division among humankind and most conflicts of the age. He continues that possible source of conflict in global politics will occur between nations and groups on the grounds of different civilizations (Huntington, 1996, p.1).

 In his study, Huntington refers to civilization as 'cultural entity' (Huntington, 1996, p.2). These entities labeled Huntington, includes "villages, nations, regions, ethnic groups, nationalism and religious groups," and among these entities there are cultural differences which are not homogeneous. Huntington contends that differences among civilizations are not 'real' but rather 'basic'; thus, according to Huntington to differentiate civilization from each other one must consider "history, language, culture, tradition, and most important religion" (Huntington, 1996, p.2pp).   The point in Huntington's theory in relation to environmental theory is in the process of civilization there are possible mean for a resistance of one culture to oppose the other, mainly in the environment of a religious grouping, because entities' worldviews of one civilization is differ from others.

For instance, Huntington writes that "people of different civilizations have different views on the relations between God and man, the individual and group, citizen and the state, parents and children, husband and wife",…"rights and responsibilities, liberty and authority, equality and hierarchy" (Huntington,1996, p.3pp). These above worldviews according to Huntington are fundamentals which are far more differences among political ideologies and political regimes (Huntington, 1996, p.4).

In his study on religious violence, Juergensmeyer built his theory of what he calls 'secular nationalism' theory (Juergensmeyer, 2008, p.1). This theory offered an explanation of religious violence in relation to environmental theory. Juergensmeyer observes that the concept of 'secular nationalism' has been criticized by religious activists in the third world. He argues that religious critics in the third world see 'secular nationalism' as a political ideologies that is embedded with Western cultures and politics of governing the society. Radical religious actors in the third world perceived secular nationalism as ideology that is deficient for both moral and social ordering of the society. Indeed, such political cultural system must be replaced with one of religion that can respond to the ordering of society morally, spiritually and politically adequately (Juergensmeyer, 2008, p.1-7).

The concept of 'secular nationalism' is a concept referring to the notion of 'nation state'; where a nation is founded on neutral grounds free from all form of nationalism on religious identity basic. It is a concept said to have replaced the past which used to be associated with traditional ethnic identity and religiously governed states. According to Juergensmeyer, the optimistic of secular nationalism which was embraced by its nationalists was not realized.

He highlights that Secular nationalism promised freedom and equality among others, unfortunate, these have not yet been achieved mainly in the third world.

Therefore, radical religious extremists around the third world are opposing to such culture and political system which is seen as form of civilization and a change in the social and political environment. This changed has marked some of the rebellion of religious activists in modern conflict around the third world (Juergensmeyer, 2008, p.9-17). One of the weaknesses of this theory is it focused much on religious violence emerging from the third world, it has constructed the world socially.

2.2.6.3. Group three: Structural theory

Fox highlights that structural theory is concerned with the relationship that exist among officials of religious leaders such as (clergies, Imams and others religious officials) and the religious institution with the government entities or institutions, elite classes and that of the opposition groups (Fox, 1999, p.438). Theorists of Structural theory assert that the structure of the relationship between both the religious and the political elites is what determine the Church or religious group involvement in rebellion acts. Here the religious institution may either choose to support one side of the party in question and on the other hand, may form a coalition with the ruling class to rebel on the other party (Fox, 1999, p. 438).

2.2.6.4. Group four: Laundry lists theory

Laundry lists theory is a theory that looks at all factors on how religion is manifested in conflict whether the conflict with socio-political or economic roots. It is embedded with the second and their theories. In this theory religious inspired violence has numerous causes relating to the conflict (Fox, 1999, p.440). For instances Fox cites one of Lewy's five characteristics that explain how religion can get involve in non-religious conflict that "religion can be manipulated for political purposes" (Fox, 1999, p.441).

From the above four theories I will use the first theory, and both structural and laundry lists theories. Although it had been said that the Liberian conflict was not a religious conflict but I am interested in both the violence and quietism role of religion during the conflict. Therefore, applying these theories to these three selected religions and the conflict will provide an understanding of which religions disposed it followers to the conflict or was more violence than it counterparts during the conflict, and how it got involved.

2.2.7. Religious actors

According to Appleby 'religious actors' are "people who have been formed by a religious community and who are acting with the intent to uphold, extend, or defend its values and precepts" (Appleby, 2000, p.9). Therefore, in this study 'religious actors' referred to such people with the labeled characteristics in Appleby's definition, but here I 'm concerned with those who strive for peace in the name of the religious community instead of violence or war. Thus, religious community here could be Christianity, Islam or the Indigenous religions

and their adherents who were striving for peace during the civil war in Liberia as it will be discussed in chapter four.

2.2.8. Defining conflict   resolution theory

Conflict resolution theory is a method of ending conflict between rivalries or nation states and has its root in the 'realist' school of thought. Such school of thought had dominated the study of international relations for decades. This school of thought defined conflict resolution that "conflict erupt over material interests and nourished by the belief of each side that the continuation of the hostilities will bring about tangible profits; when push by realistic power calculations to terminate their conflict, the rivals will direct their efforts at resolving the conflict usually through compromise and contractual agreement" (Fox and Sandler, 2006, p.175).   Conflict resolution among cognitive scholars is defined as a "political process through which parties in conflict eliminated the perceived incompatibility between their goals and interests and establish a new situation of perceived compatibility" (Fox and Sandler, 2006, p.175).

2.2.8.1   Overview of conflict resolution theories

Many scholars, among whom are Shore, Appleby, and Marsden in their writings noted that religious inspired conflicts had dominated past conflicts and ongoing conflicts around the world. For instance, these scholars cite the Palestinians – and Israelis conflict, radical Islamic jihadists and Western nations and other national conflicts where religion is attacking another religion, such as the case of Catholics and Protestants fighting each other in the Streets of Belfast, Northern Ireland and in India where Hindu fighting against Christian denominations, the Chechen war (1994-96, 1999-2009) and Kosovo (1999), the on and off conflict in Nigeria between Christians and Muslims, young Muslims in the Middle East involvement in conflict, the Islamic Militant Al Qaeda who has been noted as an international actor from it attacked on the World Trade Center (1993), the 9/11 attacked and so on (Appleby, 2000, p.4-7, Marsden, 2012, p.1pp, & Shore, 2009, p.1,). With the above background to religious motivated conflicts international conflict resolution theorists have hold onto the view that an established religion is a prime source of conflict (Shore, 2009, p.1). They argue that religion has often served to legitimate and exacerbate deadly conflicts as the above mentioned violence, indeed, it cannot resolved conflict.   With this claim

international conflict resolution theorists have downplay the role of religion in resolving conflict, they view religion as anti-modernity to progress and other modern developments in society (Appleby, 2000, p.4-7). However, in spite of the dark side of religion has passed down in history, among scholars is   Appleby who has argues contrary to the claimed of international conflict resolution theorists. Appleby observes the successful role of religious actors in conflict resolution and transformation around the world and asserts " that a new form of conflict transformation 'religious peacebuilding ' is taking shape on the ground, in and across local communities plagued by violence" (Appleby, 2000, p.7). Now it is to this new model of conflict resolution I   will focus my attention below because it is the adopted theory the study follows.

2.2.8.2. Religious conflict resolution theories

As it was discussed above in contrast to international conflict resolution theorists' views contemporary religious scholars among others are R.S. Appleby, Marc Gopin, Scott Thomas, Fox, Sandler, Douglas Johnson and Cynthia Sampson who acknowledged religion as positive contributor to both theories of conflict resolution and the practice of diplomacy. These religious conflict resolution theorists argue that "if religion played a significant part in people's lives, and religion played a part in fueling the conflict, then when resolving the conflict, religion must be at least taken into account, for without this consideration, peacemakers, diplomats and mediators not only fail to deal with the fundamentals of conflict, but they also miss potential peacebuilding resource in religious traditions themselves" (Shore, 2009, p.1 pp, Marsden, 2012, p.3pp).

The involvement of religious actors in the process of delivering foreign policy, development, and diplomacy and conflict resolution was encouraged among other faith based scholars notably Robert Seiple and Dennis Hoover (Marsden, 2012, p.3). According to scholar such as Marsden notes that the development of religious conflict resolution date to the 1990s among religious conflict resolution theorists with a high level of emphasis that "if religious tradition and teaching could encourage violence and conflict, so the same traditions could be applied to bring about the resolution of conflict" (Marsden, 2012, p.3). Proponents of religious conflict resolution theory argue that religious traditions are host of various mechanisms that are useful in the process of promoting peace and resolving conflict, such as "scriptures, teachings, and a historical memory of peacebuilding, peacemaking, peacekeeping and

conflict resolution" (Marsden, 2012, p.3pp). Religious conflict resolution theorists contend that policy makers should turn to religious actors, encourage their involvement in finding solution to terminating conflicts and for long term peace. R.S. Appleby went further acknowledging the fact that militant religion produced two religious actors, i.e., one is the terrorist or violence actor and the nonviolence or peacemaker actor, he mentions that the nonviolence actor provide an opportunity for peacebuilding and sustainable peace or last peace in conflict zones, therefore the they need "recognition and support" (Appleby, 2000, p.7, Marsden, 2012, p.4).

Marsden in his essay cites three instances where religion has served as source of legitimating violence, exacerbated other forms of conflicts and injustices, such as the case of Northern Ireland where religion was used for legitimating violence between Protestant Clergies and Catholics, the case of South Africa where the Dutch Reformed Church was favoring the apartheid system and the former Yugoslavia and Serbian Orthodox Church where the Church was at the forefront for the quest of a greater Serbia, however, on the other hand, he argues that it was the involvement of religious actors that brought peaceful conflict resolution, stable peace and reconciliation in these regions. Thus, he highlights that there are potential in religion for healing, peacebuilding rather than dividing and destructions (Marsden, 2012, p.4). Discussing this double role of religion promoting violence and peace, Appleby employs the concept that "Religion is powerful medicine", he offered, "and it should be administered in small doses, if at all" (Appleby, 2000, p.7).

2.2.8. 3. Some challenges and limitation of religious conflict resolution theories

Despite the success of religious actors' involvement in resolving conflict around the world Marsden observes that there are some challenges and not only the ambivalence role of religious violence. Speaking of these challenges Marsden cites David Smock who observes and proposes that "Improving relations among significant elements of religious communities in conflict is certainly a worthy goal, even when this does not end violent conflict" (Smock, quoted in Marsden, 2012, p.5). Smock goes on adding that it is important to link faith-based peacemaking to secular and political ones, without such relationship it "almost never create peace" (Smock, quoted in Marsden, 2012, p.5).

Marsden highlights that religious conflict resolution is not an independent approach rather an 'under-utilized aid,' it can serves to create and sustain peaceful solution in term of conflict (Marsden, 2012, p.5). Despite the challenges that come along with religious conflict resolution theory, it is the adopted theory I will apply to the Liberian case. My choice for this theory is it emphasized the inclusiveness of religious actors and at the same time acknowledging important elements in religious traditions for long term peacemaking and reconciliation works. Secondly, physical conflict ends at once but reconciliation is a long term process and the present of religion in this process is to help address the aftermath of the conflict in a post conflict society like Liberia.

2.2.9. Conclusion

In the chapter various terms used in the study were defined and conceptualized. Theories of religion and conflict, as well as conflict resolution theories were discussed. The study opts to treat religion from the social sciences perspective. Looking at religion from the inclusive school of thought approach which defines religion in its functional context, meaning that it is primarily concerned with what religion does. In this case, religion is not seen as a sacred institution, the emphasis is not on deities. Rather it is on the social aspect of religion. In this light religion portrayed in varieties of ways. For example, among others a warring faction here could be seen as a religious institution.

Various concepts and definitions of reconciliation was discussed and the adopted was the societal reconciliation approach. This will be applied in the Liberian context of reconciliation. The adopted theories of religion and conflict are some religion are more violent than others, the structural, and the so called laundry lists theories. The first theory stating that certain religions are likely to dispose their adherents to conflict than others religions, and the second theory posits that the relationship between religious institutions and government or others social institutions determine religious communities involvement in a non-religious conflict, whereas the their theory highlights that among other factors religion can be manipulated to get involve in conflict, see (p.32-35). Religious conflict resolution theory was adopted as the working theory for the study. It is a theory which advocate religious actors' participation in conflict resolution, whether social, political or religious conflict.

3.3.0. Chapter three: Historical context of the study

3.3.1. Introduction

 This chapter aim is to provide historical insight to the context of the study. In the chapter I will be presenting and developing historical events in relation to the conflict that went on prior to the conflict, and how these events served as memories and possible sources instigating the conflict. The chapter also made an effort in providing the reader with some historical acknowledge of the study site, that is, Liberia, its location and other information which are useful to the study.

3.3.2. Locating Liberia

Liberia is a country located in West Africa, and is one of the Countries in the world that have experienced long deadly conflict. Liberia is bordering by three neighboring countries and the Atlantic Ocean. Liberia occupied a land space of 43, 000 square miles, on the Northwest lies the Republic of Sierra Leone, on the Northeast lies the Republic of Guinea, and on the Southeast is the Republic of Côte d'Ivoire. The Country has fifteen political sub -division Counties and these Counties are identified historically with particular indigenous ethnic grouping, perhaps expect Montserrado County where the Capitol City (Monrovia) of Liberia is situated with its diverse populations. English is the official language of the nation and along with a form of English version referred to as the 'Liberian English' that is commonly spoken among the locals. There are approximately 20 indigenous spoken languages among its ethnic groups, but 16 are recognized as official (TRC, Vol. II, 2009, p.13).

3.3.3. Religious demography of Liberia

The topic of this thesis invites one to present the religious population of the context of the study. Other way around, one has to know how many percentage of the population at least are represented in each of the three selected religions within the total population of the country where the study is focused. Out of its 3.5 million population according to the 2008 National Population and Housing Census citied in the U.S. Department of State International Religious Freedom Report (2010) adherents to the Christian religion count 85.5 percent of the Liberian

population; adherents to the Islam count 12.2 percent; adherents to the Indigenous religion count 0.5 percent; while other religions are counted for 0.1 percent and 1.5 percent represent those said to have non religion. Meanwhile, despite the Indigenous religion represents less percentage of the population than it counterparts, i.e., Christianity and Islam, the report highlights that "many religious groups incorporate elements of indigenous religious beliefs" (U.S. International Religious Freedom Report, 2010).

From the above it means that people who are professing the Christian faith are at the same time practicing the indigenous faith, same applied to adherents of Islam and vice versa of the Indigenous faith members. Among others, scholar such as Stephen Ellis also discussed such view that some Liberians may serve offices in either Christianity or Islam while serving offices in the Indigenous religion simultaneously (Ellis, 1999, p.225). Thus, one can argues that the present of both Christianity and Islam in some parts of the Liberian society didn't destroy the practices of the Indigenous religion (Poro and Sande) that mainly serving the purpose of traditional initiations in those parts of Liberia (Ellis, 1999, p.225pp).

 It has been observed that the Christian population in Liberia is composed of various ethnic groups from diverse backgrounds, while the Muslim population is believed to come from two or three ethnic groups with Mandingo the predominant followed by the Vai, and other ethnic groups. However, there are also Fulani residing in the country among whom some are already granted citizen status and these groups are generally said to be Muslims. Closed to the Christian population is the Indigenous religion which ethnic groups residing in almost all rural parts of the country are involved in the practices of the Indigenous faith (Ellis, 1999; Olukoju, 2006; TRC, Vol. II, 2009).

Unlike both Christianity and Islam where the emphasis is placed on the supernatural and followed by moral teachings. The Indigenous religion stresses teachings of morality in the context of those societies where it is found, references are made to the gods, ancestral spirits, varieties of water and bush or forest spirits, genies, spirits of association, such teachings are mainly intended to impart into the community's youths the traditions, customs and skills for adulthood; youths are initiated either by Poro or Sande (Ellis, 1999, p.226 pp, Olukoju, 2006, p. 24-26).

Most interesting to the Poro and Sande believers these spirits in particular the ancestral spirits are believed to have the power of protecting and playing an intercessor roles in the affairs of their offspring when dealing with the spirit world, it is a belief that the ancestral spirits will serve in the positive interest of their offspring's well-being. This understanding of the

indigenous religion provides an opportunity for skilled people who will then serve as mediator between the spirits of the invisible world and the real world. Indeed, specialized people within the indigenous religion will include priests, diviners, physicians (those who performed traditional healing, such as snake bit, etc), and fortune tellers who are generally referred to as Zoe(s), who themselves claimed a high profile of such task of communicating directly with the spirit's world and the real world   (Olukoju, 2006, p. 24pp).

3.3.4. 1. Brief over review of religion and politics in Liberia

Among other contemporary scholars is George Klay Kieh, Jr, a college dean of Arts and Sciences and professor of political science at the University of West Georgia who highlights that any discussion surrounding the contribution of religious actors and peacemaking in Liberia one should review religion and politics Liberia first. (Kieh, 2012).

 Since my interest in this study is to understand and explore the role of religion during the Liberian conflict and peace process, Kieh's view serves as point of departure for the discussion in this section and further discussions. According to Kieh those who have observed the Liberian political system and religion assert that since the 1820s, an era writers have described as the 'repatriation project' i.e., the returning of freed African slaves to Africa in Liberia; the Christian religion had "been and remains the mainstay of the Liberian political landscape" (Kieh, 2012).

As Kieh observes, there are three reasons why Christianity has been given more preferences in Liberian politics than it counterparts.   According to Kiek the first reason is under the repatriation project it was freed African Americans who were once slaves in the United States of America returned to the "Grain Coast" now modern day Liberia through the assistant of the American Colonization Society (ACS). The organization's effort was sponsored both financially and logistically by the American government. Inherently, both the agents and the freed African Americans slaves were professing the Christian's faith. Therefore, they took Christianity with them to the "Grain Coast". Both the ASC's agents and the African American freed slaves when landed on the 'Grain Coast' they perceived   the indigenous religions that existed in the region less value comparable to Christianity, they used terms such as "paganistic and heathenistic"(Kieh, 2012). These were some of the terms used describing the indigenous people and their religions. Indeed, they saw one of their tasks to "Christianize" the people they encountered in the 'Grain Coast' in respective to all its various traditional ethnic groups occupying the region (Kieh, 2012).

The second reason is said that the "Christianizing mission" (Kieh, 2012). It was at the heart of the repatriation project provided opportunities for overseas connections. Various Christian denominations soon establish new branches in the new mission frontiers. USA based Churches that extended their mission works in the 'Grain Coast' (Liberia) were mainly the Baptist, Episcopal, and Methodist Episcopal, Presbyterian, African Methodist, and the Lutheran Church, also the Roman Catholic Church followed latter. All these above Christian denominations mentioned according to Kieh didn't limited their mission to the spiritual aspect of those the met, but rather they were all engaged in all kinds of social services, schools, health centers among others were erected alone churches throughout the new colony that soon become sovereignty. The works of these Christian denominations attracted many of the indigenous people and they were converted to the new faith, i.e., the Christian religion (Kieh, 2012).

Kieh, cites   Amos Beyan one of the observers who had observed these Churches' works writes that "The effects of the roles of the various Christian denominations on Liberia cannot be underestimated, especially if one is to understand the social characteristics of the country. As noted, the activities of these Christian denominations in Liberia were not only limited to the promotion of the gospel, they also included preparation for the secular world" (Amos Beyan, quoted in Kieh, 2012).

The third account highlights that most notably from the period of colonial (1822-1980), although the state had gained its independence in 1847 but until 1980 there was no separation between the Church's offices and the state. According to Kieh it was the 1980 coup d'état that marked such separation between the Church and state offices. For instance, Kieh notes during the colony period of Liberia the colony government was held by protestant ministries as requirement. Another categories of groups from within the Church who headed public offices were those who scholar such as David Barrett called "Churchmen" (Barrett, quoted in Kieh, 2012).

 These Churchmen among other church officials from the founding date of Liberia till the 1980s run the country through their religious to political influences; they were serving in all the three branches of government, namely the legislative, executive and judiciary braches at the sometime serving Church positions respectively. Importantly, these Church officials dual roles of serving the Church and the state became visible from the 1944- 1980s, a period many government officials holding both public and church's offices at the same time (Kieh, 2012; Dolo, 2007, p.79-84; TRC, Vol. II, 2009).

Prominent individuals among others who associated with such role of the Church and politics between (1944-71) noted for instance, William R. Tolbert, jr. , was serving as the vice president of Liberia and at the same time was serving as president of the Liberian Baptist Missionary and Educational Convention and Pastor of the Zion Grove Baptist Church in Monrovia Liberia; Bennine Warnner was serving as vice president of Liberia at the same time was Bishop of the United Methodist Church of Liberia; just to name few (Kieh, 2012; Dolo, 2007; TRC, Vol. II, 2009).

Scholars such as Kieh and Dolo observe that Christianity influenced in the Liberian political system had also reflected in its constitution. For example, the constitution required that all Christian's holidays be observed and other Christian rituals are performed at public gathering before and up to date (Kieh, 2012; U.S. International Religious Freedom Report, 2010).

These popularities of Christian elements in the Liberian politics include both the public and private spheres convinced many Liberians to conclude that Liberia was a "Christian state" (Dolo, 2007, p.83-84; Kieh, 2012). With the above background it can be said that Christianity had a high profile in the Liberian polity. The danger of mixing politics and religion discussed above in the Liberian can be said that such relation could provide a platform for religious intolerance.

3.3.4.2. Islam in Liberia's polity

Despite the present of Islam as one of the recognized world religion in Liberia with its rapid growth it has been observed that Islam has no influence on the Liberian polity ever since from the founding of the nation till 1980s. It is reported that the presented of Islam in Liberian politics came with the presidency of the late president Samuel K. Doe (TRC, Vol. III, Appendices IV, 2009, p.1-2).

 Although according to scholars such as Kieh before 1980s Islam had already spread throughout the country, the main carriers of Islam in all part of Liberia were Islamic traders. Islamic traders settled in nearly all parts of the country most notably in the Western and Northwestern parts of Liberia where mosques were erected and they were performing their religious activities freely along their trading activities. In the process of trading these Islamic traders were also proselyting and eventually "wining souls for Allah" (Kieh, 2012). Though Kieh observes this act didn't had any impact on Islam's political involvement between the periods of 1847 -1980, a period refer to as the "Frist Republic" (Kieh, 2012).

One of the revealed reasons Islam was lacking any influential role in Liberia's politics during the first republic was it counterpart Christianity was playing the leading role in all the state political affairs as it was discussed above. Throughout the First Republic, despite of freedom of religion was already existence in the country Islam was discriminated indirectly against all forms of discriminations and mistreated during previous regimes until 1980s (Kieh, 2012; Dolo, 2007).

Those regimes whose most   strategic offices and government branches such as the legislative, executive and judiciary were occupied by conservative Christians and Church leaders thought the present of Islam will had influence on Liberian politics and it will consequently demolished and undermined the core basic of Christianity which the state was founded upon and perhaps other unrevealed reasons they thought were necessary to exclude Islam from the state affairs (Kieh, 2012; Dolo, 2007, p.79pp).

The above unfolding narrative of religion and politics in Liberia   can be best explain perhaps from the structural theory approach. This theory emphasized the relationship that exist among the officials of religious leaders, religious institutions and with the government entities or institutions, elites classes and the opposition groups, determines the Church or religious institution that is question involvement in any given conflict (Fox, 1999, p.438-442). Applying the above theory to Liberia's case it showed how Islam, Christianity and Doe's government came into conflict and even with past governments that had preference over other religions in particular the preference of Christianity over Islam for decades created opportunity for one religion to join the ruling government in any given conflict to oppose the other party.

President Doe's relationship with Islam was political in the sense that as his leadership was receiving criticism from the "progressive wing of the church" (Kieh, 2012). Doe then allied with Islamic leaders to oppose Christianity. The Church during Doe 's regime moved from its passive position from previous regimes and now was active on Doe's regime that was displaying repressive rule and committing gross human rights violations among others (Kieh, 2012; Dolo, 2007).

However, according to Kieh observers of this relation between religion and politics in Liberia   assert that Doe failed to cut tie with the Liberian Church in serving its traditional role during past   regimes, that is, "pro-status quo" that the Church had been serving in past regimes and church leaders occupying government's positions that was characterized by past regimes.

As the church continues to loss such role it had in the past it became more vocal on Doe's government and eventually president Doe decided cutting such ties with Islamic religion officials, such as Islamic clergies and others religious leaders in Islam instead of Christianity, as a religious counter force toward Christianity. Indeed, like past regimes where Christianity and Christian leaders have privileges such was the case with Doe's regime and Islam (Kieh, 2012; Dolo, 2007,p.79pp; TRC, Vol. III, Appendices IV, 2009, p.2).

 In other words, president Doe privileged Islam over Christianity during his regimes. This drew the attention of many Liberians when it was noted president Doe started appointing many Muslims in key government positions, most notably in the executive branch of the government (Kieh, 2012).

The consequence of the above cases explained about religion and politics in Liberia has dominated the civil war and left some religious adherents victimized main those from Islam. In Liberia the general assumption is no distinction between Mandingos and Islam, if one is Mandingo he or she is Muslim as it was discussed elsewhere in this thesis. The point here is President Doe's relationship with Islam put Mandingos and Muslims at risk throughout the war, while on the other hand, no one hold Christianity or Christians responsible for their relationship with past regimes.

3.3.4.3. Indigenous religion and Liberian politics

Indigenous religion while serving other significant roles in those parts of the country where it is found it has being acknowledged that Poro and Sande served a culturally unique roles. This has given it recognition in past and present regimes of the Liberian political system. For instance, Ellis cites an author who described what the author called "responsible adult in contemporary Liberia;" the author writes that "men and women who join those societies are perceived to have mastered the acts of communication that facilities interaction within and without groups and in the adjudication of conflict" (Ellis, 1999, p. 225). The phrase those societies is referring to the Poro and Sande religions, these religions are sometimes referred to as secret societies because of their ways practicing most of their religious acts in secret and keeping secret is a fundamental aspect of these religions and their adherents (Ellis, 1999, p.225pp). It is these societies whose products   the author has observed.

 Although republican form of government and Christian mission had played a major role in the declined of the political role of Poro and Sande religions. However, some Liberian

governments while privileging the Christian missionary activities which permeated those era those governments also gave recognition to the Poro and Sande religions on grounds that Poro and Sande are significant cultural institutions that impart disciplines and responsibilities in their communities' youth during their transitional period. These institutions teach youths what it mean to be a good citizen from youth to adult stage. It is this cultural and traditional roles of Poro and Sande religion made it to be referred to sometimes as 'Bush School' (Olukoju, 2006, Ellis, 1999, p.226,).

From the above observation it can be said that indigenous religion although was at the margined of the country political affairs but at the same time it was given some recognition. Nevertheless, according to scholars such as Ellis sources revealed that indigenous religious leaders have been in constant conflict with past regimes and perhaps present government over gaining full access into the Liberia polity. For instance, Ellis cites one of the late presidents of Liberia, Tubman's 1953 speech addressing a body of Council of Chiefs in one of the Central Provinces of Liberia saying that:

> There appears to be a tendency of some of the Zoes of the Poro Society to overshadow the government- appointed Tribal authority as well as Government and become the most powerful force in the Nation. In no case can this be tolerated. The Poro may operate, but it must operate as a private institution and not as a Tribal or Government institution (Ellis, 1999, p.244).

In short, the above statement reveals that that despite the Indigenous religions were given some recognition they were also denied of some political rights within the Liberian governing system of early regimes prior to the war. These institutions are found in the rural part of the country and indeed they are mixed with tribal politics and are constantly opposing to the republican form of government that has Christian influence.

3.3.5.1. The first civil war 1989-1996

The recent ended civil war in Liberia was fought during two tragic phases which is sometimes referred to in the Liberian context as World War I and II. The First war is dated from late 1989-1997, and associated with Charles Taylor as the main character with his rebel faction known as the National Patriotic Front of Liberia (NPFL) and later followed by more than five other rebel factions that emerged. Historically, Taylor's rebels invaded Liberia

late December 24, 1989, this marked the official start of the civil war in Liberia which lasted for fourteen consecutive years (Dennis, 2006; TRC, Vol. II, 2009, p.152).

3.3.5.2. The second war 1997-2003

While it is true that at the end of the first civil war an election was conducted and peace existed in Liberia, however, if it was a genuine peace it had a short life span and only some parts of the country realized such peace. It can be said that president Charles Taylor's government although elected democratically but it witnessed series of violence and armed conflicts from opposition groups (TRC, Vol. II, 2009).

 Most notably of these opposition groups was the rebel faction called Liberians United for Reconciliation and Democracy (LURD) a rebel faction whose majority of its fighters were Mandingos Muslim was occupying the Northern region of Lofa County Liberia. LURD invaded Lofa and had controlled almost over the entire Lofa County, fighting toward Monrovia against Taylor throughout 2002 until 2003. As it was observes LURD rebels became its official attacks during 1999, this means two years after the presidential election that ended the first war. Like the first war with increasing new factions emerging the second war had two rebel factions against Taylor's government.

 These factions were formed after one another first LURD and later the faction called Movement for Democracy in Liberia (MODEL) was formed in 2003. All these factions originated outside Liberia, MODEL was formed in the Cote d'Ivoire. Both factions had the same goals, meaning their targets were mainly to remove Taylor from the presidency through violence armed conflict by all mean at their disposal by appealing to religion, ethnicity and so on (Dennis, 2006; Wrokpoh, 2011; Brabazon, 2003; TRC, Vol. II, 2009).

3.3.5.3. Main causes of the civil war

In its findings the Liberian Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) identified and classified several roots causes of the civil war.   Among others, major causes that led to the 14 years civil war according to the TRC are some of the following: Poverty and poor governing system that served the interest of few people and marginalized the others. In this case, those whom interest the system was favoring were the few hand full of Americo - Liberians and on the others hand were the indigenous Liberians or natives Liberians who

were marginalized socially, culturally, and their other rights were denied (TRC, Vol. II, 2009, p.16-17) . Second, Judiciary brake down system, this means that the judiciary system was seen as an inadequate or inefficient dealing with matters or disputes adequately (TRC Vol. II, p.16-17). "Duality of the Liberian political, social and legal systems which polarizes and widens the disparities between the Liberian peoples –a chasm between settlers Liberia and indigenous Liberia" (TRC, Vol. II, 2009, p.16). Tribal division among the Liberian, culture of corruption that breed limited access to education and justice among the Liberian people, economic and social opportunities injustices, discrimination against women and violating or denial of women's rights in all society's matters as equal persons; land disputes, unequal distribution of lands recorded historically (TRC , Vol. II, 2009, p.16-17).

3.3.5.4. Others causes: "religious links"

Among other causes to the civil war in the TRC's findings this study has considered some which has religious links. Therefore in this section I focused on the religious aspects which is relevant to the study. As it was discussed earlier above on Christianity influenced in Liberia's polity the first Liberian leadership which born out of the American context was predominantly white Americans and black Africans, the latter with its ancestry links to the Black Americans. Thus, the governing system of pre –Liberia prior to the war was characterized by Euro-American life styles, and Christian life styles. At the result these groups of people saw part of their duty as a mission to "civilize and Christianize" the indigenous Liberians. An act according to the TRC that marginalized and degraded majority of the native Liberians. The idea of the so called "civilizing and Christianizing" the natives was also transmitted to the Black freed slave's administrations when they finally took over from the White American's leadership of the nation (TRC, Vol. II, 2009, p.300).

It was reported in the TRC's findings on this subject that for a native to be integrated into the settler's community one has to first be "Christianized" which was the prerequisite for acceptance into the settler's homes and communities. This act of 'Christianizing and civilizing' the natives were at all levels of the nation social and political spheres. The TRC's report highlights that during such time getting an "employment, conducting full trade, access to education", if one is from the indigenous background, i.e., natives, one has to be "Christianized and civilized" through an act such as changing his / her native name to a

Christian name, changing of religion, including everything associated with the native's identity and adapts those of the settlers' identity and cultures (TRC, Vol. II, 2009, p. 301).

According to scholars such as Dolo also highlights that even at some point indigenous Liberians children who were adopted into the settlers' communities, homes and families were discouraged or prohibited to speak their native's languages or mother tongues, singing folk songs and dance and other related practices of their heritage after been 'Christianized and civilized' (Dolo, 2007, p.21). It should be noted that the practice of Indigenous Liberians taken their children into the settler's homes was common during such time despite all the denial of one's native identity and other discriminatory forms against the native cultures, religion and values that followed; for the native it was the only mean their child or children could get education, while for the settlers it was an act of integration and making the native to be Christians by Christianizing and civilizing them.

From the above causes of the conflict it can be said that if religion was not one of the primary factors in causing the civil war it can be counted among the secondary factors in the sense that the role of the settlers during that time was religiously motived. By Christianizing the natives through an act of changing their names to Christian names and changing their religion cannot be ignore rather to be taking into account as factors that posed religious intolerance among settlers and indigenous people. For instance, the TRC's findings revealed that prior to the arrival of the settlers who carried with them the Christian religion the natives of the land were already practicing the Islamic faith and the Indigenous faith (TRC's Vol. III, Appendices IV, 2009, p.2).

Second, native's children who were adopted into the settler's home after acquiring education were those at the frontlines who started fighting for revolutionary, mainly these young men and women were fighting to reclaim amongst other their cultural and religious heritages that had been lost or condemned during the so called 'civilizing and Christianizing' project. These Liberian native individuals during their fight first changed all Christian names that was given them and they were the most prominent figures during those political movements of those days that had paved the way to the civil war. Though these men and women didn't pick up arms against those regimes at the time like the case of Charles Taylor, however, many of those figures were complicated in the civil war by supporting various rebel factions one way and the others (Dolo, 2007, p.21pp; TRC, Vol. II 2009).

3.3.6. About the Mandingo ethnic group

If one is to investigate the role of religion in Liberia's civil war such as this study the Mandingo ethnic group cannot be left out because it was generally believed in Liberia that all Mandingos are Muslims and all Muslims were Mandingos. Therefore, there should be some information giving about this ethnic group and their religion, most importantly their link to Liberia, it is to this point I now turned.   Mandingos in Liberia are people mostly identified with trading activities rather than agricultural, most importantly the name 'Mandingo' carried with it the largest Muslim population of Liberia (Ellis, 1999, p.37).

Mandingoes shared similar cultures and religion with neighboring countries to Liberia, mainly Guinea. For this reason many Liberians, if not assumed that Mandingos are not Liberians rather from one of those countries which culture and religion they have in common. The idea of considering Mandingos as foreigners is profoundly rooted in most Liberians minds, Dolo also observes this position of those considered themselves as the real Liberians and seeing the Mandingos as outsiders (Dolo, 2007, p.85).

In his book Ellis offered two theories explaining the arrival of the Mandingos and their religion in pre- Liberia. These theories are built on both oral tradition and written accounts, according to Ellis since the early history of Liberia has less account of the hinterland; the oral materials are information gathered from the Mandingos themselves explaining their origin, while the written account materials are gathered by researchers both from within the Mandingos tribal group and outsiders (Ellis, 1999,p.38).

 The first theory posits that the Mandingos are believed to come from the then ruling dynasty of medieval Mail from among the Malinke people who have migrated to the pre Liberian soil. This theory according to Ellis has dominated the Mandingos understanding of their origin. According to him contemporary Mandingos believed that they are descendants from an ancient aristocracy of traders and warriors who have moved from the savannah area to the forest region located in Liberia, and Islam is highly one of the characteristics attribute of these group (Ellis, 1999, p.38pp).

The second theory explaining the origin of the Mandingos is dominated among non-Mandingos, i.e., their fellow Liberians. It argues that the Mandingos of Liberia came or should be traced back to the powerful Mandingos Chieftaincies which existed long ago in the pre Liberia, those chieftaincies that were situated in the Northern part of Liberia dating back to the early nineteenth century.   Some inhabitants of modern Liberia today from such region now Lofa County assert that some of the Mandingos who are said to live in Liberia originated

from the descendants of the forest dwellers who were enslaved by the Malinke people the original aristocrats of the savannah, and due to the result of them renouncing their original birthright led them to lost their legitimate right regarding them as the forest dwellers or their homeland (Ellis, 1999, p. 38-40).

Despite the controversial running through these theories the origin of the Mandingos link to the Malinke or ancient Mail are somehow related and has effect on modern days Mandingos in Liberia. For those of the forest origin religious connection to Islam according to Ellis the people of the forest were forced to convert to Islam by Almamy Samory Toure who was the mighty Malinke warlord and imposed his authority on all areas surrounding him at the end of the nineteenth century ranging from some parts of modern day Guinea and those surrounding territories bordering him such as the pre - Liberia. While those who migrated directly due to the declined of economic and other factors in the ancient Mail empire according to the first theory are the main carriers of Islam to Liberia. Despite the Muslim population in Liberia is a diverse populations containing the Mandingos, Vai, Gola, Gbandi and others ethnic groups only the Mandingos are considered not real or legitimate Liberian Muslims. Many Liberians, if not all the assumption remains alive that Mandingos are outsiders, despite the Mandingos have stayed in Liberia for decades or even several generations (Ellis, 1999, p38pp; Dolo, 2007, p.85; TRC, Vol. II, 2009).

Although it is interfering with the next chapter. However, since this chapter aim is to set the historical context of the study it should be mention that the above assumption that Mandingo Muslims are foreigners in Liberia presented a negative image during the war in general on Mandingos and mainly Mandingos Muslims, as it will be seen in the next discussions in chapter four.

3.3.7. The Liberia Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA)

From 1990s to 2003, was a period Liberia witnessed series of wars. During that period many peace agreements were crafted and singed between various rebels' factions and the government of Liberia to end the conflict. However, non-resulted bring stable peace to Liberia. It was the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA), the last peace agreement signed that officially brought the civil war to an end. Although previous peace agreements or conferences brought peace but there was no stable peace till the CPA. It was the 17th peace agreements in resolving Liberia's conflict and now historically it marked the stable peace in Liberia since 2003 after those 16 failed peace agreements during the entire conflict period.

This has led many Liberians to conclude that the CPA was the only genuine peace agreement (TRC, Vol. II, 2009, p.170, pp).

The CPA conference began June 2003 and its major task was to negotiate peace dialogue with the two main rebel factions and the then elected democratic government under the leadership of former president Charles Taylor that were fighting at the time. These rebel factions, namely: Liberians United for Reconciliation and Democracy (LURD) and the Movement for Democracy in Liberia (MODEL), along with the Government of Liberia (GOL) representatives, including all recognized political parties in Liberia at the time. These four groups were the signatories to the CPA. In addition to the above mentioned four groups of participants at the CPA there were also religious actors from both Islam and Christianity who were invited officially but were not signatories to the CPA. The setting of the CPA was Accra, Ghana West Africa. The CPA started 4 June 2003 till 18 August 2003 respectively. The sole purpose of the CPA was to negotiate with all warlords and other parties connected to the conflict finding solution to determinate the conflict that was claiming the lives of thousands Liberians each day. The CPA emphasized "genuine lasting peace, national unity, democracy, genuine healing and reconciliation among the Liberian people, and sustainable peace and security" (Liberia Comprehensive Peace Agreement, 2003; TRC's Final Report Vol. II, 2009, p. 170-172). Despite religious actors were not signatories to the CPA their presented at the CPA made a significant impact as it will be seen in the next discussions.

3.3.8. Establishing the Truth and Reconciliation Commission

Priscilla Hayner observes and writes that " The most straightforward reason to set up a truth commission is that of sanctioned fact finding: to establish an accurate record on a country's past, and thus help provide a fair record of a country's history and its governments such – disputed acts" (Shore, 2009, p.75). According to scholars of this field such as Shore, Truth Commissions are established either during the conflict or at the end of the conflict during the country's transitional period to democracy, most noted Truth Commissions are part of the negotiation process during the peace dialogue (Shore, 2009, p.75pp).

The above observation was the case of Liberia' Truth and Reconciliation Commission. It was the CPA that called for the establishment of the Liberian Truth and Reconciliation Commission. Indeed it was part of the peace negotiation process at the CPA. Thus, it is recorded in the CPA:

(a) A Truth and Reconciliation Commission shall be established to provide a forum that will address issues of impunity, as well as an opportunity for both the victims and perpetrators of human rights violations to share their experiences, in order to get a clear picture of the past to facilitate genuine healing and reconciliation; (b) In the spirit of national reconciliation, the commission shall deal with the root causes of the crises in Liberia, including human rights violations; (c) This commission shall, among other things, recommend measures to be taken for the rehabilitations of victims of human rights violations; and (d) membership of the commission shall be drawn from a cross-section of the Liberian society (Liberia Comprehensive Peace Agreement, Article: xiii, 2003).

At the end of many others exercises embedded in the implementation of the CPA most importantly such as the disbarment and reintegration of ex -combatants exercise which was seen as the prerequisite to the success of the CPA implementation among others, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission Act was finally passed into legislation for a given period under the National Transitional Legislative Assembly 12 May 2005 (An Act to Establish the Truth and Reconciliation of Liberia, 2005).

Thus, recalling both the CPA and the TRC's Act provided the working mandate for the Commission. According to the TRC's Act section 4 (a) which articulates the TRC's mandate states:

The objectives /purpose of the Commission shall be to promote national peace, security, unity and reconciliation by: a. Investigating gross human rights violations and violations of international humanitarian law as well as abuses that occurred, including massacres, sexual violations, murder, extra-judicial killings and economic crimes, such as the exploitation of natural or public resources to perpetuate armed conflicts, during the period January 1979 to October 14, 2003; determining whether these were isolated incidents or part of a systematic pattern; establishing the antecedents, circumstances factors and context of such violations and abuses; and determining those responsible for the commission of the violations and abuses and their motives as well as their impact on victims (TRC, Vol. II, 2009, p.48).

3.3.9. Conclusion

The purpose of this chapter was to provide historical insights to the context of the study. In the chapter we saw Liberia experienced deadly civil war from 1989 -2003. It was highlighted that religion and politics in Liberia was closely interrelated for decades. In particular Christian leaders were serving both public and church's offices at the same time. Since the founding of Liberia Christianity had preference in Liberia's politics. From 1980s when Doe became president Islam gained a significant role in Liberia's politics. Primary factors among others that led to the civil war were poverty, bad governance. In the chapter we also saw religion been implicated among secondary factors causes of the conflict on the role of early Christian settlers integrating indigenous Liberians by Christianizing the indigenous people of Liberia.

4.4.0. Chapter Four: Assessing the role (s) of Christianity, Islam, and the Indigenous religions   in the conflict and in the peacemaking processes

4.4.1. Introduction

This chapter seeks to discuss the role of the three selected religions with regard to their respective roles in promoting the conflict   and resolving it. Both secondary empirical data and theoretical perspectives will be applied. The discussions in this chapter relate to the research sub-questions (see 1.1.4, p.12). By answering these questions I will then derive at the main research question. At the end of the discussion I will identify core themes. These themes will be discussed, and then conclude the chapter.

In relation to religious actors role in conflict and peacemaking R.S. Appleby discusses the concept of religious militants. In his theory he highlights that there are two kinds of religious actors found in militant religion. One is the militant extremist i.e., (terrorist) and the other is the militant peacemaker (Appleby, 2000, p.11). Differentiating the phrase militant religious extremist from militant religious peacemaker he mentions that the militant extremist (terrorist) is "one who employs violence as a privileged means of purifying the community and waging war against threatening outsiders, (…) the extremist sees physical violence against his enemies as a sacred duty; the peacemaker strives to sublimate violence, resisting efforts to legitimate it on religious grounds" (Appleby, 2000, p.11).

Appleby doesn't specify which particular religion religious actors that can be termed as militant religion. Nor does he limit the concept to a certain religion. Rather these religious

actors' action determine such religion and actors. Therefore, in this chapter the discussion will be focusing on these two types of religious militants found in militant religion, but the emphasis here is on the three selected religions of this study found in Liberia, how they influenced and participated in the conflict and in the peacemaking processes as religious actors.

4.4.2. Sub- question # 1: Did warring factions portray any religious affiliation during the civil war?

On way of providing answer to the above question is to explore the role of each religion to the conflict separately. In other countries' conflict religious militants are quite visible. This is the case of the Islamic militants such as Boko Haram in Nigeria, Al-Shabaab in Somalia and Kenya, Christian and Muslim's militants in Sudan's war, or the well-known Christian militant group called Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) that was operating in Uganda, just to mention a few.

As already noted, this was not the case of Liberia's conflict. It is difficult to identify such role of religion in Liberia's conflict because religion was playing a less visible role. This has led some observers to argue that there is no evidence that religious traditions have affiliation with warring factions and warlords during the conflict. The TRC states "there is little evidence that the conflict in Liberia during the TRC mandate period was caused by religious intolerance; however, key events during the years of conflict were clearly directed specifically at religious and traditional populations and sacred places"(TRC, Vol. III, Appendices IV, 2009, p.3). With the above findings the TRC also reported that political and military leaders saw the conflict as opportunity and exploited religious and traditional differences and the existence of religious intolerance amongst Liberia's religious communities in order to win the support of each community for self-gain (TRC, Vol. III, Appendices IV, 2009, p.3).

4.4.2.1. Islam and the civil war

 The war that started during the 1990s led many Liberians to flee to neighboring countries such as Guinea, Sierra Leone and Ivory Coast, notably Liberians from the Krahn and Mandingo ethnic backgrounds. Some of these Mandingos went to Guinea a country believing

is the original home of the Mandingos and a Muslim predominant country. Since Mandingos were persecuted on both religious and ethnic grounds Guinea was seen as the safe place for Muslims like those of the Mandingos who are majority Muslims. At the result of having a large refugee population in refugee's camps outside Liberia, Ellis highlights that some leading Liberian politicians, including some veterans ex –soldiers from Doe's government and some businessmen from the Mandingo and Krahn ethnic groups who have become refugees sought for a solution to return home, i.e., Liberia (Ellis, 1999, p.94; TRC, Vol. II, 2009, p.151-158).

 Therefore, the option for them were to use violence at all cost by picking up arms against Taylor' rebel faction who had caused them to be in exiled and also taken over their properties. Indeed, the large Krahn and Mandingos populations full of youngsters provided them the opportunity to organize a warring faction from exile that lunched an attacked in Liberia under the name "Movement for Muslims Redemption" (MMR) (Ellis, 1999, p.94-95; TRC, Vol. II, 2009, p. 151-159). The MMR faction was founded on 21 February 1991, headed under the leadership of Alhaji Kromah a Liberian journalist by professional, and Mandingo Muslim man (Ellis, 1999, p.94). Among scholars Ellis observes that MMR faction was bearing a religious name on grounds that its members and leaders such as Kromah believed such name could easily win the support of Muslim countries to support the faction in their mission (Ellis, 1999, p. 94).

Another scholar of the above observation of MMR or the Islamic militia faction is Mohamedu F. Jones, who observes the faction and its leader and writes: …am ambitious Mandingo leader, Alhaji Kromah, used religion to gamer support in the Muslim world, thereby raising the specter of religious intolerance as the component of the conflict, (…) Kromah appeared to have initiated a religious crusade because it offered opportunity for more wide international support, and because it would foster his personal ambitions (Jones, quoted in Dolo, 2007, p.80-81).

 From the above views it can be said that Kromah as political and military leader exploited religion as it was mentioned in the TRC's findings because he may has likely won the local Muslim's community support and his faction men were drew from the Mandingo Muslim's community and perhaps the faction probably get support from Muslims' countries based on its name. On this role of religion implication in the civil war Ellis also asserts that the faction made a justification which was not ordinary in pursuit of their cost but rather of religious motive (Ellis, 1999, p.94).

According to Ellis the MMR faction called on all Muslims to wage jihad war against the enemy of Islam. In this case, it was Charles Taylor's NPFL rebel faction who was persecuting the Mandingos and Muslims. The Muslim faction justifying their involvement in the conflict made an accusation that "Muslims were the only single most victimized group in the whole conflict" (Ellis, 1999, p.94; 226).

The Movement for Muslim Redemption (MMR) rebel faction also argues that lot of Muslim's properties were destroyed, many lives of the Muslims were claimed by the NPFL's rebel faction, most notably according to Ellis the MMR rebel faction made a claimed that "the NPFL had burned more than 1000 mosques and schools" (Ellis, 1999, p.94). Indeed these properties were owned by Liberian Muslims.

The MMR faction didn't last as independent faction like others rebels' factions throughout the civil war but rather it emerged with another new exile faction that was founded in Sierra Leone mixed of fighters from both Krahn and Mandingo backgrounds. It should be noted that these two factions main aims were to fight the NPFL's faction but from different point of motivations. Thus, the MMR allied with this new faction organized by one of Doe's ex generals also former Liberian ambassador to Sierra Leone who had some military training knowledge from both the US and Israeli armies. This veteran personnel known as General Albert Karpeh a Krahn native, Ellis observes attracted many exiles Mandingos – Muslim fighters to join his faction. Perhaps of his long standing experienced in the military field though his faction was predominantly Krahn and Mandingo fighters (Ellis, 1999; TRC, Vol. II, 2009, p.151-159).

The new faction had ties with the Sierra Leonean government. Therefore, it was getting some of its support from the Sierra Leonean government and the government was serving as one of the main sources of supporting the faction with weapons and other logistics needed for carrying on its operation in Liberia. Along the Sierra Leone government Karpeh got supports from refugees Liberian from both the Krahn and Mandingos Muslims residing in Sierra Leone. Karpeh founded his group and labeled it the Liberian United Defense Forces (LUDF) (Ellis, 1999; p.94pp).

Seeing the rapid growth of the new faction with gross supports Kromah decided to emerge faction with Karpeh, and eventually since both factions have similar goals, that is, opposing Charles Taylor's NPFL rebels they two factions agreed to join forces under one new faction called Liberia Peace Council (LPC) under the leadership of a native Liberian from the Krahn ethnic background by the name George Boley an ex- minister during the Doe's regime (Ellis, 1999, p. 94pp). Few years later LPC gradually changed its name and formed itself into new

warring faction though with the same warlords spear heading it and perhaps all, and at the same time retaining its same goals, i.e., fighting against the NPFL faction. This new faction was under an umbrella term called United Liberation Movement for Democracy in Liberia (ULIMO) founded in Guinea Conakry, 29 May 1991, a home to most Mandingo Muslims (Ellis, 1999, p.95; TRC, Vol. II, 2009, p.155pp).

During the second war it was also noted that the Mandingo –Muslim pattern was manifested in one of the rebel factions called Liberian United for Reconciliation and Democracy (LURD), a predominantly Mandingo -Muslim warring faction who prominent figures were almost Mandingo Muslims. The faction also got some of its fighters, weapons and other supports such as religious and political for its operation from a near back predominantly Muslim's government state, Guinea, including the United Arab Emirates (The Royal Institute of International Affairs, Briefing Paper No 1, 2003).

In conclusion, from the above discussion it can be said that MMR participation in the war can be understood as religion. The changes we saw which the above rebel factions went under still carried with them the original Muslim faction's characteristics and proponent figures. Meaning from MMR to LUDF, LPC, ULIMO and later ULIMO-K, and then LURD. The emerging of all these factions with Muslim's elements and motives helped fueled the conflict.

4.4.2.2. Christianity and the civil war

Unlike the above case there is little known about Christianity relation to warring factions.   In other words the supportive role which Christianity and Christians play during the war to warring factions is not clear.   However, the TRC's findings revealed that Christianity and other religious communities during the conflict had some ties with various warring factions operating within their controlled zones. This above observation will then drags in Christianity. (TRC, Vol. III, Appendices IV, 2009, p.3, pp).

The most noted of such relationships between these religious traditions and warring factional leaders cited in the TRC's Findings was the case of the NPFL rebel leader Charles Taylor whom according to the TRC was occupying positions within the Christian tradition and the indigenous religious traditions. Although it is unclear in the findings which Christian denomination and which indigenous or tradition religions, but what is clear and important is the relationship of these religious communities with a factional leader.

Indeed, it can be said that these religious traditions relations with Taylor was seen as you give me and I give you in return. One can go further and argues that Taylor got support from these religious traditions physically, morally and spiritually, and at the same time they probably got some support from Taylor in return. It should also be highlighted that Taylor who was the head of the largest rebel faction and the main character in the Liberian conflict relationships with these two mentioned religious traditions were something where he and these religious traditions may have some influences on matter pertaining to the conflict whether in a positive or negative ways. Since religion at this juncture could serve as compelling factor and even provide space for religious intolerance (TRC, Vol. III, Appendices IV, 2009, p.3, pp).

In conclusion, despite Christianity and Christians role in fomenting the conflict is not clear, one can argues that the Christian religion's relation that co- existed between Taylor and Christians can be taking into an account as Christianity playing a secondary role in instigating the conflict.

4.4.2.3 Indigenous religions and the civil war

One of the characteristics of the civil war which was common was as the conflict escalated reaching mainly in rural towns and villages warring factions and fighters lost their main directions and goals, if there were any at all. At the result warring factions occupying rural towns and villages turned their focus to the local population instead of facing their rivals in the various battles zones. Consequently, predominant ethnic and religious groups in each rebel factions saw the opportunity to revenge on any ethnic groups, religious groups and individuals they claimed had committed past atrocities against them directly or indirectly identified with previous warring factions that have occupied the area. As the conflict had developed in that direction some people decided to pick up arms to revenge even on past memories that were not related to the ongoing conflict. During the conflict such act led to the death of many innocent Liberians who were killed for perceived past atrocities their relatives, ethnic groups, religious communities were involved (TRC, Vol. II, 2009).

This was the case of Lofa County where its populations are from diverse ethnic and religious backgrounds and mainly a home to Mandingos, Kpelle, Vai, and Lorma, Gbandi ethnic

groups, just to name few. As it was already mentioned elsewhere that Mandingos in Liberia are the largest Muslim population, these groups are Muslim by birth. The same is to some of the Kpelle and Lorma ethnic groups who are the main host of the Poro and Sande religions in that part of Liberia (Ellis 1999; TRC, Vol. III, Appendices IV, 2009, p.7-8).

From the above backgrounds it can be said that among other factors religion could be a potential source to exacerbate conflict for those who wish to use it. And this was exactly what happened since the conflict in that part of the country was mainly characterized by revenged. This was one of the revealed aspects that brought in the affiliation of the indigenous religions with one of the rebel faction groups then called Lofa Defense Force (LDF) (Ellis, 1999).

Ellis highlights in his book that the Lorma and Kpelle ethnic groups who are predominantly adherents to the indigenous religions reacted to the Mandingos, Gbandi Muslim fighters who dominated ULIMO- K, an offshoot of ULIMO faction. ULIMO-K rebels were occupying the Lofa region during the first war. As it was pointed out earlier the ethnic – religious dimension of the conflict between the Mandingos- Muslims and Kpelle and Lorma (indigenous religious groups) stemmed from past atrocities committed by the NPFL rebel's faction against the Mandingos - Muslim populations residing in that area. To be precise one of the largest and old commercial towns called Bakedu where the NPFL rebels carried on massacre on Mandingos - Muslims during the 1990s war (Ellis, 1999, p.128; TRC, Vol. III, Appendices IV, 2009, p.6).

According to Ellis, the Bakedu's massacre memories served as one of the influential reasons that led exiles Mandingos Muslims to join the ULIMO faction in Sierra Leon and Guinea 1991. A warring faction that invaded upper Lofa County between 1992 -1993 respectively. Despite the faction's objective was fighting against Taylor's rebels Mandingos- Muslims who from Lofa county purposely joined the ULIMO rebel faction to revenge against the Lorma and Kpelle ethnic peoples. In the sense that since the NPFL rebel left the Lorma and Kpelle peoples alone during the massacre it means that they were friends or sympathizers to the NPFL. In his study Ellis also highlights that when this predominantly Krahn and Mandingo's faction (ULIMO) captured Lofa county notably the Mandingos – Muslims fighters occupied residents among others things they never had legitimate rights to prior to the war. Although some of them were residing in the area before the war. These Mandingo – Muslim fighter's acts of revenge against the Lorma and Kpelle peoples included looting of their properties, inhuman treatment and killing. An act Ellis described as "cruel revenge" (Ellis, 1999, p.128).

Perhaps the most notable atrocities act of revenge of the Mandingo - Muslim fighters were the one pertaining to the violation of the indigenous religion's sacred places and their religious symbols or objects used in observance of their religious activities were taken away (Ellis, 1999, p.128pp; TRC, Vol. III, Appendices IV, 2009, p.6-9).

In respond to the ULIMO faction version of the Mandingo –Muslim faction's ULIMO- K invasion of Lofa county where the Lorma and Kpelle peoples were seen victimized a new rebel faction emerged to defend the county which was highly ethnic characterized by the Lorma and Kpelle ethnic groups . It was obvious that the Lorma and Kpelle peoples knew and could easily identify some of the Mandingo-Muslim fighters who attacked them and looted their properties or those who committed mass atrocities against them because the Lorma, Kpelle and Mandingo peoples used to live together as neighbors prior to the war in the area and in harmony (Ellis, 1999, p. 132; TRC, Vol. III, Appendices IV, 2009).

 Eventually, like the Mandingos founded faction from exiled, it is reported that the Lorma and Kpelle refugees among whom some have military experienced organized and sponsored a rebel faction known as the Lofa Defend Force (LDF) in 1993. The faction was founded among the Liberian refugees from Lofa County who were seeking refuge in Guinea with the goal of clearing the ULIMO- K fighters, i.e., the Mandingo-Muslim version from the county through the mean of armed violence. Indeed, with such objective at the center of the LDF faction it can be said that perhaps LDF was in the best interest of the indigenous religions' adherents whose physical religious institutions and sites at home were under attacked. According to Ellis sources revealed that Zoes (indigenous religion high priests) from the Poro and Sande religious traditions among whom the faction emerged provided support to the faction (Ellis, 1999, p.128-132).

Unlike the MMR , Ellis doesn't mentioned that LDF display any religious name or portray their mission in a religious manner but rather LDF was bearing the county's name as liberator faction, i.e., Lofa Defend Forces (LDF). This strategy of the faction makes it difficult to argue that it was an indigenous religion militant faction. Ellis was also careful not to make such conclusion. However, Ellis contends that LDF won the support of the Poro and Sande religions whom behave the LDF warring faction was purposely fighting to redeem and protect Lofa County from the hands of the Mandingo –Muslim fighters (Ellis, 1999, p.132pp).

This hidden role of the indigenous religions link to LDF led the TRC to consider the faction as ethnic warring faction that was formed for self-defend, though it was not exempted from

those listed in the TRC that committed atrocities against civilians and violated international humanitarian law (TRC, Vol. II, 2009, p.265pp).

Thus, it can be argue that the hidden religious dimension (s) in this part of the Liberian civil war led those with limited knowledge of the context and nature of the conflict or in which the conflict was unfolding in that part of the country to see it as ethnic conflict. Meaning Lorma and Kpelle who are majority fighters of LDF rebel faction vs Mandingos who predominated ULIMO – K rebel faction. While on the other hand, those who keenly analyzed the conflict saw religious pattern, such as Ellis (1999, p. 128pp).

In conclusion, from the above it can be said that the two rebels' factions were portraying their acts from a religious perspectives. The Indigenous religions oppose to Islam occupation to the county. Other way around, Lorma and Kpelle people's pro indigenous religions through Lofa Defense Force occupation, and Mandingos pro Islam through ULIMO-K. Religion here again can be understood as warring faction playing secondary role in the conflict.

4.4.2.4. Overview and summary of sub-question one

From the above picture of the conflict it can be said that the conflict was religious in context in spite of the high visibility of ethnicity. From the laundry lists theory approach one can say the conflict drag in religion. Since the conflict perhaps was not legitimized on religious grounds one can't go without adding that religion was manipulated by political leaders for self-gain from the understanding of laundry lists theory approach as one of its factors explaining how religion can affect conflict (Fox, 1999).

Another way the laundry lists theory can be used to describe the implication of religion in Liberia's conflict is what Ellis mentioned about the recruitment processes of LDF and ULIMO-K rebels. He highlights that during the conflict it was common for relatives and family members to encourage the youngsters to join either ULIMO- K or LDF depending which faction is pro-Islamic or Poro and Sande religions to defend or protect their community, and confidently most Gbandi youths joined the ULIMO –K easily based on their religious affiliation to Islam. Although Gbandi youths are not Mandingos but rather one of the ethnic groups of Liberia that Islam is prevalence among (Ellis, 1999, p.128-132).

Unlike Ellis, the TRC doesn't clearly state the second and third parties to the conflict as Ellis did. However, according to the TRC's findings most violence against the indigenous religions and Islam during the war in Liberia mainly in Lofa and Nimba counties were driven

by religious intolerance among adherents who joined various rebels' factions. Mandingo Muslim fighters who joined the ULIMO-K faction were revenging on non-Muslim religious communities in these counties because of the early persecution of Mandingo Muslims by the NPFL rebels (TRC, Vol. III Appendices IV, 2009, p.6-9).

 Describing the case both practically and theoretical will help identify the more violence religion that was present during the war. To determine the more violence religion during the war from above it can be said the religious context of the conflict within these factions is how the Mandingo –Muslim fighters portrayed the civil war. For instance, from the outset of this chapter it was reported in the TRC's findings that the conflict was not religious conflict though violence was directly against religious and traditional populations and sacred places (TRC, Vol. III Appendices IV, 2009).

 Applying the theory of 'some religions are more violence than others' to the Liberian case it can be said that various factions and government troops committed mass atrocities and other violations and human rights abuses against all Liberia's religious communities according to the TRC's findings. However, with such findings in reaction it was Muslims dominating the violence role of Liberia's religious communities. As it was said of the MMR militant faction above. From the above it can be argued that the religious pattern within these factions could be identified from their motivations of picking up arms. The Krahn group was mainly fighting because of the persecution of the Krahn ethnic group and the Mandingos were fighting because their religious - ethnic identities   were under physical attacked by the NPFL.

 It should also be noted that despite the MMR lost its name in few months or years, but its Mandingo Muslim fighters and leaders were majority of the ULIMO faction who later formed an independent ULIMO- K faction bearing the surname of Alhaji Kromah who then founded the MMR. Gabriel I.H. Williams also notes this religious pattern of ULIMO how it was portrayed by Mandingo Muslims during the civil war. In his study Williams observes that ULIMO faction was the second largest rebel's faction after Taylor's NPLF faction. It was sponsored by Mandingos, to be precise its ULIMO- K version with more Liberian Muslims population who portrayed the war on religious ground. He goes on saying Alhaji Kromah and his compatriots saw the civil was as "jihad   or holy war" (Williams, 2002, p.29). In the sense that they wanted to gain equal power with Christianity or Christians who they claimed had been dominating the state's affairs since its founding fathers to the date of the conflict (Williams, 2002, p.29).

Applying the theory of 'some religions are more violence than others' to Christianity case during Liberia's conflict it was noted that despite Christianity's adherents suffered violence from both rebels' factions and government troops there was no Christians militia group.

However, there were Christians who joined various rebels' factions and the government army that fought the war. These Christians individuals participation in the war is somehow insufficient at the time in Liberia's conflict to place Christianity in the category of more violence religion that exposes its adherents to violence. In other words one can't argue on grounds that those factions with few Christians were Christian militant factions. Nevertheless, using the structural theory approach to religion and conflict it can be argued that the relationship which existed between the Christian religion and Charles Taylor can be said that Christianity / Christians were involved in the conflict to oppose Taylor's antagonists.

It can also be said that the above case narrated revealed that both the Indigenous religions and Islam were visible at some point during the conflict serving as major players to it. Despite these factions were not bearing the names of each religion but on the other hand the fighters contained in each of those factions were either predominantly Muslims (ULIMO-K) or LDF-(Poro and Sande) adherents. Both have religious elements within them which can be interpreted from the laundry lists theory approach on the manifestation of religion in conflict. Meaning the conflict dragged in religious elements, such as the fighters who were either Muslim or adherents of the indigenous religions.

However, should one apply the theory of 'some religions are more violence than others' in this context of the conflict, one would see that the indigenous religions appear less violent and Islam more violent because ULIMO-K throughout the study reflects Mandingo Muslim violence.

However, from the structural approach theory it can be said that the Indigenous religions relationship with Charles Taylor and his rebel faction can't be ignored. As it was discussed earlier such relation mean that the Indigenous religions supported Taylor's rebellion act or revolutionary activities through violence. So, it was involved indeed.

In conclusion, the response to this first sub question shows Muslims' relation to the war portraying Islam as more violent religion than the others during the first and second civil war. However, on the other hand, in spite of the absent of Christian and Indigenous religions militia, theoretically it can be argued that all the three religions were manifested in the war

and they had affiliated with various warring factions and the government army but at different levels and degrees in perpetuating the conflict.

4.4.3. Sub-question # 2: Did religious practices prolong the civil war?

Answering the above question I will demonstrate from two points of views how religion was involved in prolonging the civil war. My first argument concerns religious rituals, practices and beliefs in general that were practiced during the war among the three selected religions and various warring faction's fighters. My second argument will look critically at the religious patterns or links that were unfolding during the war among factional leaders and fighters. It will in a way see rebel's faction as religious institutions.

It can be argued that throughout the war all the warring factions were strongly depending on the Traditional / Indigenous religions, including Christianity and Islam in carrying on their warfare activities. This was the case despite the modern sophisticated weapons that were at their disposal.   Below I will discuss how these warring factions' fighters and these religious communities were intermingling in prolonging the civil war with more emphasis on the Indigenous religions whose Zoes were the main host and specialists of traditional rituals, beliefs and other religious practices during the war. My argument on this question starts with an observation regarding the soldiers in the Armed Forces of Liberia (AFL), i.e., the National Army. Before the war, when Liberians heard the sound of gun they were all frightened. However, during the war that fear dramatically disappeared from among some of the population if not all. One of the main reasons behind the vanishing of such fear observes may have been the Indigenous religion's Zoes or high priests[3].

These were key players of the time offering young men and women gun proof and other traditional religious form of rituals or medicine aimed at making these youngsters feel

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[3] Throughout this study the term 'Zoe' (s) applied to both male and female. When the term Zoe(s) appears I 'm referring to the indigenous religions high priest an equivalent to the Christian priest or Imam, a person who is responsible for coordinating religious rituals and other religious activities in the indigenous religion. Sometimes Zoes are also easily referred to as high priest, though the title 'Zoe' is not used for all who are performing such role in the indigenous religion in Liberia, rather this tittle is the one used for the indigenous religions selected for this study, that is, the Poro and Sande religions. There are many of these indigenous religions existing in Liberia and each region prefer a unique tittle calling their high priest that suit the local context of that region vernacular. So it is important to make this point clear in this study, thus, by   repeating, when the term 'Zoe' appears I 'm referring to those in the Poro and Sande religions only.

invulnerable to any warfare activities. In particular this involved those who were already fighters and others who anticipated their imminent participation in the war. These indigenous religious practices were done through acts of giving fighters spiritual objectives both outward and inward. The traditional religion high priest commonly known as 'Zoe' (s) in the Liberian society were responsible for such ritual activities. The Zoes imparted these young men and women with all kinds of religious rituals and spiritual beliefs which both the fighters and the Zoes claimed to have some spiritual magical power in time of combats or warfare (Ellis, 1999, p.119; TRC, Vol. III, Appendices IV, 2009, p.3).

It should be mentioned that these religious rituals, practices and beliefs in themselves probably didn't prolong the civil war but rather their givers, consumers and carriers who were the Zoes, fighters and warlords. In this case, the warlords and fighters were given traditional religious objects and other forms of religious practices were offered to them during the war by Zoes. Traditional religious rituals practices during the war were given fighters in various forms such as in food, ritualizing objects and sometimes on the outward Zoes marked the fighters by putting "tattoo or small cuts on the skins" (TRC, Vol. III, Appendices IV, 2009; p.3, Ellis, 1999, p.119).

Such practices were done to protect them against bullets and other harms during battles. Zoes who were notoriously known for offering strong protection were searched for and assigned to fighters by each warring faction and he or she could perform his or her duty (TRC, Vol. III, Appendices IV, 2009; p.3; Ellis, 1999, p.119 pp). Although this role of Zoes should not be overestimated and it had some challenges for them because sometimes Zoes were only willing to work for factions on tribal and religious lines, but at some time they were forced. Sometime these traditional religious priests and their relatives could be killed when capture by oppositional faction who the Zoe works for.

The phenomenon of Zoes and other religious traditional leaders were also recorded in the TRC's findings. The TRC's findings state that …military leaders and combatants sought the blessing and supports of religious and traditional leaders for protection during battles. Such protection was offered by religious and traditional leaders in the form of prayers, blessings, charms and secret practices that were designed to provide protection from harm, such as 'bullet protection' (TRC, Vol. III, Appendices IV, 2009, p.3).

My argument here is those indigenous religious rituals which were offered to fighters had a significant impact on the fighters both their attitudes and their behavior toward the conflict. As it was observed fighters have developed the believed that they were invulnerable to weapons and gun used by their perceived enemies. Though in spite of such traditional

religious juju and beliefs some could still be killed by guns and other weapons during battles, but their conviction was stronger. For instance, at sometimes fighters were given a chance to go and prepare or consult Zoes few days to a planned distance battle before departure.

Most interestingly, it can be said that those fighters who were recognized having powerful protection from Zoes prepared from objects such as cow's tails, birds' feathers, just to name few were the fighters mostly inclined to fighting war than those believed have weaker protections. One can even go further saying that the protection could make the fighters courageous and it was the fighters the factions leaders depend on to fight the war. The more the faction leader thinks he or she has strong men and women who don't fear gun at the battlefronts the more such faction's leader play dead ears or could refuse to peace agreement because that leader knew with his troops they could reach their target areas. Therefore, such religious phenomenon serves as one of the factors in prolonging the war.

The second way it can be argued that indeed religion was among other factors in prolonging the conflict was from the first sub-question discussed above where the religious dimension of the two factions were observed. One of the observers who observed that religion prolonged the Liberian conflict is Patrick Wrokpoh, a journalist by professional. In his paper tittle 'Religion and Media in Liberia's Civil War', Wrokpoh highlights that at some point the Liberian conflict was seen as religious conflict where one faction opposing the other is predominated by one religion adherents. For instance, Wrokpoh cites two instances during both the first war and the second war how religion was used to prolong the conflict. He argues that during the first war the publicly spilt of the ULIMO rebel faction, forming ULIMO -K and ULIMO- J among other was religious based split where all the Muslim fighters were inclined to the K- faction which bears the surname of Alhaji Kromah a Mandingo –Muslim man, and the Krahn fighters to the J- faction bearing also the surname of Roosevelt Johnson a Krahn native. Wrokpoh contends that the spilt of the faction was not seen by those factional members as political, ethnic, or military ones, but rather it was an act of securing what he described as "religious supremacy" (Wrokpoh, 2011). Wrokpoh observes it was in the interest protecting one's religion and members who professed the same faith (Wrokpoh, 2011).

 Here it can be said that the majority of Mandingos are Muslim but for the Krahn it is not scientific to state which religion they belong to because some are Christians, Muslims, and other belongs to the Indigenous religions and even some non –religion, a point Wrokpoh didn't make clear in his observation.

Wrokpoh drawing his analysis on the second war also looked at the three parties that were involved, namely the Government troops, LURD rebel and MODEL factions, but my discussion here is on the former and latter. As it was discussed earlier LURD rebel was a faction with highly Muslim characteristics. With such religious characteristics of the faction the Government troops developed an understanding that it was Muslims attacking them rather LURD rebel as ordinary faction like MODEL, since the Government's troops were mostly fighters who professed the Christian faith and other faiths, even some would be likely no religion (Wrokpoh, 2011). Second the Government's troops had the perception that during and after attacks the LURD rebel fighters will retreat in neighbor Country Guinea, a home to Muslims and a Country believed LURD was getting some of its supports from. At the result the Government troops were targeting all Muslims in Liberia, seen Muslims in general as sympathizers to the LURD rebel. Wrokpoh concludes that this phase of the war reflected 'Christian vs Muslim' (Wrokpoh, 2011). This understanding of Christians viewing LURD rebels as Muslims also posed a challenged amongst the religious women of Liberia when they decided to include Muslim women in their peace work. Some of the Christian women according to Gbowee claimed that it was Muslims causing and prolonging the war (Gbowee, 2011, p.128). In the above case the Christian women were referring to LURD rebel's faction. Therefore, these women opposed working with Muslim women. However, it was resolved but it also created feeling and consumed their time tacking their peace effort (Gbowee, 2011, p.128).

Another way in which religious beliefs were influencing believers' attitude and behavior was among some of the women from the Christian community who interpreted the scriptures literary and opposing the idea of joining Muslims women to pray and work together. The women were calming that the Muslims are unbelievers and joining them to pray will "dilute their faith" (Gbowee, 2011, p.128). These Christian women made referenced to the Bible quoting one of Paul 's letters (II Corinthians) "Do not be bound together with unbelievers; for what partnership have righteousness and lawlessness, or what fellowship has light with darkness?" (Gbowee, 2011, p.128).

In this context Christian women perceived the Muslims women as unbelievers. One can go further saying 'light' in this context mean the Christian women, and on the other hand Muslim women as the 'darkness'. Indeed no relationship could be establish between them on religious grounds. This could be interpreted as functional meaning or one aspects of religion influencing people's thoughts and beliefs as what this study defined religion to be.

However, the leaders sorted out the issue and at the end the both religious women worked together peacefully without such an opinion of unbelievers and believers. In doing so, both Christian and Muslim women in collaboration with WIONET staff, a women NGO working for pace came up with a slogan demonstrating the significant of group unity in time of such war situation saying " Does the bullet knows Christian from Muslim ? Does the bullet pick and choose?" (Gbowee, 2011, p.129).

It was this slogan probably had influenced the women's thinking and beliefs at the time to welcome each other. The point here, all these religious beliefs created tension and somehow delay these religious women's work. Most importantly, religion created tension, and delayed peace agreement in the sense that Charles Taylor the then president of Liberia was seen as the obstacle to peace during the second war in regard that the two rebels factions i.e., LURD and MODEL stated that they could only stop fighting when Taylor step down from office. In addition to the rebels' quest the international community but mainly George Bush the then U.S. president also asked Taylor to step down from the presidency. An option which was believed to stop the ongoing conflict then immediately and to set the stage for peace negotiation among the rebels and the government of Liberia (TRC, Vol. II, 2009).

Taylor however didn't pay heed to any of these quests as soon as possible. Taylor's objection according to an online article tittle 'Pat Robertson & Charles Taylor: Defending the Indefensible president of Liberia' highlights that Taylor refused to step down on religious grounds. That Taylor saw the main and large rebel faction at the time called LURD as Muslim invasion and he could not allow Muslim take over a Christian nation because LURD was a faction predominantly Muslims (Pat Robertson & Charles Taylor, undated).

Taylor's opinion was likely backed by locals and international religious figures who have religious motives and interest to the conflict as it was seen earlier how the government troops perceived LURD rebels, and they were silent on MODEL because it main leaders and majority of its fighters were Christians and other faith, unlike LURD (Wrokpoh, 2011; Pat Robertson & Charles Taylor, undated). One of the well know external religious advocates of Taylor at the time was Pat Robertson an American Baptist Christian who accused U.S. government of Liberia's problems and objected to Bush's statement on religious grounds in his broadcasts of 700 Club Program. According to the article Robertson criticized Bush's quest of Taylor stepping down and referred to Taylor as "Fellow Baptist" (Pat Robertson & Charles Taylor undated).

The article cites Robertson argument that "So we're undermining a Christian, Baptist president to bring in Muslim rebels to take over the country. And how dare the president of

the United States say to duly elected president of another country, 'you've got to step down'' (Robertson & Charles Taylor, undated). From the above it can be said Robertson's view of supporting Taylor was religious. According to the article Robertson saw the war like a religious conflict. Taylor on the Christian side and LURD rebels on the Muslim side. Taylor wish to rule Liberia as Christian nation which was the most interest of Robertson. Indeed when Taylor relinquish power it means he give the country to Islam which Robertson envision as "handing over" (Robertson & Charles Taylor, undated).

The point here is with such religious understanding at the bottom Taylor refused to leave the country till last minutes when these rebels troops, mainly LURD was just few kilometers away from the executive mission in Monrovia and after thousand have lost their lives. Taylor finally accepted due to the rebels pressures to take part in the CPA and the same day he departed the war finally stop, following the arrival of some international peacekeepers the same day in Monrovia (TRC Vol. II, 2009, p.157; 170-172).

Second, the implication of religion as factor which prolonged the war here can be understood from the laundry list theory approach. A theory that emphasized several way religion is manifested in conflict like the above context of the Liberian conflict. Here religion has been used by politicians serving functional purpose. My argument in determining the role of religion in fuelling the conflict in this study is based on rebel factional leaders and politicians as religious member of these religious communities is an example of the above case. Taylor a Christian Baptist President and indeed the chances of Christian denominations involvement in the conflict was likely possible as the case of Robertson's position.

In conclusion, from the above it can be said that religion was not a primary but rather a secondary factor in prolonging the conflict. Religion created tension and delayed the peace negotiation process through religious practices and beliefs which were manifested in the war, and through the ways in which religious people perceived the war from a religious perspectives like the case of Taylor's view and the LURD rebel faction.   In the above context religion was playing the role as rebel faction, not as an organized community or group with the emphasis on sacred, ritual, and beliefs practices of the individuals.

4.4.4. Sub-question #3: Did religious actors help in resolving the civil war?

According to the TRC's findings at the initial start of the war Liberia's religious actors made an effort to intervene negotiating peace dialogues between Taylor's rebel and the government of Liberia during president Doe's administration and as the war continued (Gbowee, 2011, p.81; TRC, Vol. II, 2009, p.282pp).

4.4.4.1. Religious actors and conflict management during the first Liberian civil war

Under this unit I will demonstrate the theory of religious conflict resolution in Liberia's case. My argument here is to show how religious actors role during the conflict led to peaceful conflict resolution both during the first and second civil wars in Liberia. Indeed, I will advocate for religious conflict resolution theorists and practitioners involvement in conflict resolution. Since this theory was stated in chapter two, I opt not to restate it here rather to highlight it cardinal points which emphasized that "if religion played a significant part in people's lives, and religion played a part in fueling the conflict, then when resolving the conflict, religion must be at least taken into count, for without this consideration, peacemakers, diplomats and mediators not only fail to deal with the fundamentals of conflict, but they also miss potential peacebuilding resource in religious traditions themselves" (Shore, 2009, p.1, pp). Proponents of this theory are concerned with the teachings and doctrines of religion that promote peace and reconciliation (Marsden, 2012).

Therefore, it is to this phase of religion I will limit my discussion in the Liberian case. Despite their religious differences Christians and Muslims have had a good working relationship during the civil war in Liberia. Most significantly, these religious traditions' engagement in the Liberian conflict as religious conflict resolution theorists and practitioners were marked when the NPFL rebels invaded the country late 24 December 1989. For example, Liberian Christian and Muslim leaders jointly condemned the act of violence between the rebel and government of Liberia, and called both side for peaceful dialogue as it will be discussed in detail below (TRC, Vol. II, 2009, p.282pp).

Liberia's religious actors perhaps believed it is one of their religious obligations to retain peace in the world as part of their calling and mission. Therefore, with such conscious

religious actors from within the Liberian Council of Churches were very fast with their involvement to resolve the conflict at its earlier stage. For instance, the Liberian Council of Churches (LCC) on 20 January 1990, that is, few weeks after the rebel invasion raised their concerned and released a statement expressing its concern about the conflict and the mass violence that the civilian population was witnessing from both the NPFL rebels and the Armed Forces of Liberia (AFL) troops. The LCC called both sides to have peace while maintaining its position condemning all forms of violence that was unfolding during the time (Dolo, 2007; TRC, Vol. III, Appendices IV, 2009, p.4).

However, according to Dolo the appeal of LCC didn't stop the hostilities on both sides, and again the LCC stood up denouncing the act and went to the extend releasing a second statement calling for the immediate end of the conflict from both sides (Dolo, 2007, p.89pp).

Despite the early intervention of the LCC was ignored at first and second time calling both the NPFL rebels and the Government of Liberia (GOL) the LCC was persistent in their mediation process. It was the LCC that took the first initiative to negotiate a peace dialogue between the NPFL's rebels and government of Liberia during president Doe's administration (Dolo, 2007, p. 80)

Liberia's religious militant peacemakers during the conflict met with rival groups at sometimes physically in person and at time in print on matter leading to peace dialogue. For example, members of the LCC delivered its letter by a representation body to president Doe, and fortunate Doe accepted the LCC proposal to serve as mediator during the first war (Dolo, 2007, p.89). In continuation of the peace process the LCC invited the Muslim Council of Liberia to join and mediate in the best capacity of the Liberian people under an adhoc coalition which was name as the 'Religious Leaders of Liberia' (Dolo, 2007, p.89; TRC's Vol. III, Appendices IV, 2009, p.4-5).

The group began working together and on 5 June 1990, the RLL released a proposal to both the Liberian government and the NPFL's rebels which outlined the following in Dolo's book.

> (a)   Immediate cease fire
> (b)   Round table conference
> (c)   Internal security

The third which has to do with internal security was seemed as more crucial among others for the targeted ethnic groups such as the Mandingos, Krahn and those from the Gio ethnic group on grounds that these were the main targeted ethnic groups during the 1990s war. The NPFL was killing the Mandingos and the Krahn while on the other hand the AFL was killing those from the Gio because the Gios were the dominant group in the NFFL rebel's faction.

According to Dolo the document urges both the NPFL rebels   and   the government of Liberia to offer full protection of these ethnic groups within their controlled zones. Indeed it was the government duty to protect the Gio people and vice -versa to the NPFL's rebel to protect all Krahn and Mandingos ethnic groups, because president Doe was ethnic Krahn native and the Mandingos were seen mostly closed to Doe's regime and the majority of these ethnic groups were loyalists to Doe, a ground which the NPFL was persecuting them on. While on the other hand, the Gios were the majority of the NPFL rebels, therefore, Doe's army were targeting unarmed Gio citizens (Dolo, 2007; TRC, Vol. III, Appendices IV, 2009).

Fortunately, president Doe agreed to the three suggested points of the Religious Leaders of Liberia and in written president Doe sent a letter to the LCC 6 June 1990. As the Religious Leaders of Liberia saw progress in their effort by the president accepting their quest the Interfaith body which was made of Christian and Muslim leaders gradually formed into an Inter- Religious Mediation Committee (IRMC), and it negotiated the first peace dialogue held in Freetown, Sierra Leone respectively between the NPFL and the government of Liberia representatives (Dolo, 2007, p.89).

The peace dialogue however didn't make an impact on the conflict after both sides have agreed to implement a peace agreement which was discussed at the conference it was broken and hostility and fighting resumed notably from the NPFL rebels. The effort of the IRMC was not realized.   However, despite these religious militant peacemakers   first attempt failed it also was the first peace conference that paved the way for the following peace agreements that ended the first war such as the Banjul, Yamoussoukro iv accord, Cotonou Accord, Lome I and II, Kosomo Agreement, Accra Clarification. Though these conferences were not organized by the IRMC but the IRMC was playing major roles during these peace agreements conferences (Dolo, 2007, p.90; TRC, Vol. II 2009, p.282pp).

 Perhaps what was lacking and led to the failure of the first peace agreement negotiated by these religious actors was what David Smock highlights that religious conflict resolution theorists must work with both the political and the secular's peacemakers because without such relation it may create no peace (Marsden, 2012, p.5).

This point also applies both to the political and secular peacemakers. In short, there is a need for such interrelationship when working for peace. Like the case of Liberia, despite these religious actors didn't bring the first war to an end independently they still worked with political and secular peacemakers such as those above peace conferences or agreements that were named above that eventually ended the first war. As it will be seen in the continue

discussion I will explore how religious actors were the forces behind the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CAP) that ends the second war with more emphasis on the role of Liberia's religious women as model of religious conflict resolution theorists.

4.4.4.2. Liberia's Religious Actors, peacemaking during the second civil war

While it was noted during the first war most of the peacemaking efforts by religious actors were dominated perhaps by male's religious actors the second war's peace process witnessed masses of religious militant peacemakers. Most notably of these were the Religious Women of Liberia who formed themselves into women's peace organizations. However, the involvement of these religious women during the second war's peace process didn't seize the role of the IRMC that is now called Inter- Religious Council of Liberia (IRCL), neither both groups were not engaging the peace process as competing groups but rather since both were for the same cost it provided more weight for each group and other opportunities, where one could not reach the other could reach there so easily.

4.4.4.3. Inter-Religious Council of Liberia (IRCL)

The role of Liberia's religious actors during the first war was the same during the second war, meaning they were active in the peace process. It is reported that the IRCL was among various bodies that made the LURD, MODEL rebels and the government of Liberia (GOL) to sign an agreement of cease fire during the second war with the backup of the international community such as UN and EWOWAS. Both the former and latter are not religious bodies. The IRCL took the initial measure for what may be referred to as inter-mediator conflict resolution strategy where the IRCL negotiated and founded space outside Liberia for the peace conference to be held between the LURD, MODEL rebels and the government of Liberia. The IRCL suggested countries were Accra, Ghana or Daker Senegal. It should be noted that it was Liberia's religious actors first persuaded the warlords and the Liberia government to stop the conflict before the international community later followed, and it marked the beginning of the CPA (Gbowee, 2011, p.133). Here it can said that Liberia's religious actors did established the relationship of what Smock mentions, that faith based conflict resolution should integrate both the political and secular conflict resolution theorists,

in this case the international community is the one which composed of both the political and secular, indeed it led to the success of the CPA .

4.4.4.4. The role of Liberia's religious women as militant peacemakers during the second civil war

From a dream overnight which Gbowee had the Christian Women Peace Initiative (CWPI) was born and it played a significance role during the peace process as religious conflict resolution theorist. The dream was divine in nature where she described encountering God speaking to her as a religious woman from the Christian faith. With obedience to the word spoken which she heard brought together first religious women from the Christian tradition and later included women from the Islamic tradition. These religious women were active throughout the second war working for peace at the national level (Gbowee, 2011, p. 125pp; TRC, Vol. II, 2009).

The women were meeting every Tuesday during the week for prayers but they also acknowledged prayers and faith without action was a dead one. Thus, everyday prayers and fasting alone was not enough as solution toward achieving peace in the nation and they needed to put their faith into action by mean of nonviolence. Their mood waited for a five members delegation team from the WCC that was due in the country to address peace issues, mostly the team was to inquire from religious women on their concerns and experiences about the conflict between the rebels and the government. In this sense, perhaps they wanted a backup from the WCC during their visit to declare publicly their intension and eagerness for restoring peace in Liberia (Achtelstetter, 2000; Gbowee, 2011, p. 127).

While Gbowee is said to be the founder of the CWPI group the vision for working toward peace among the Muslim women of Liberia was inspired by Asatu, a Muslim woman who was presented in the Church at the time Gbowee addressed a large audience including the WCC's delegation on matter of peace in the nation calling on all women from all Christian denominations (Gbowee, 2011, p.125pp).   .

In the spirit of such calling Asatu voluntarily stood and promised to extend the message to the Muslim community's women believing it was time and the right thing for all religious women to work in solidarity toward restoring peace in Liberia. According to Gbowee during the occasion Asatu confidently declared to the crown before meeting her religious community

that, "God is up. We are serving the same God. This is not only for the Christian women. I want to promise you all today that I'm going to move it forward with the Muslim women. We will come up with something too, and we will all work together to bring peace in Liberia" (Gbowee, 2011, p.125).

Fortunately, the Muslim community's women welcomed Asatu's message which extended Gbowee's invitation of peace, and eventually both traditions women joined working together for restoring peace in Liberia despite their religious differences (Gbowee, 2011, p. 125).

This role of Liberia's religious militant peacemaker's women have been noted by all Liberians mainly those in Monrovia where the organization based and such role of these women has also been recorded in the TRC's findings. The women's work did not stop in Monrovia rather they went engaging warlords at various peace conferences influencing them to have peace and meeting some of them individually (TRC, Vol. II, 2009, p. 282pp; Gbowee, 2011).

4.4.4.5. Religious women meeting with President Taylor

As the war intensified and it was believed that when President Taylor agree to participate in peace dialogue with the rebels the war will end. Taylor refused to do such. Despite all the pressure from the rebels and the international community president ignored all. At this time the religious women were active praying and fasting, protesting in the principle streets of Monrovia. They made servals attempts inviting President Taylor to convince him to participate in peace dialogue with the rebels but he refused on many occasions. Despite it seems frustrating and challenging the women insisted with their peace protest actions in the public fields of Monrovia and later president Taylor finally agreed to meet with the women and hear their grievances. The women used the opportunity to express what they have been seeking for from President Taylor asking him to participate in a peace dialogue with the rebel factions and allowing the international troops in the country to prevent the conflict. Taylor did agreed somehow but also urged the women to do the same with the rebel factions' leaders (Gbowee p.140-142).

The point here is religious conflict resolution as its advocates have argue such as Appleby that it must be given more recognition and support is what I 'm arguing for. Looking at its success in the Liberian case. Because religious actors lived in the local context and sitting of the conflict they have deep understanding of the conflict and some have religious authority

over those involved in the conflict such as the warlords and fighters who they can easily influence by their religious teachings which promote peace and reconciliation. Example is the Liberian case, during the Sierra Leone peace dialogue the religious women presented had an impact on the warlords in the sense that they talked to the rebel's leaders as mothers and spiritual heads. The women begged them to agree and go and attend the peace conference which was pending to be held in Ghana that has entered the Liberian history as the final peace during the war as the CPA (Gbowee, 2011, p.143; TRC, Vol. III, Appendices IV, 2009, p.4-5).

It was noted that Asatu and other Muslims women representation on the women's delegation to the Sierra Leone conference had influenced the LURD rebel's leaders who were presented at the meeting because its key leaders were Muslims (Gbowee, 2011, p.143). At the end of the meeting according to Gbowee the rebel's leaders acknowledged the important of the peace and the quest from the religious women and say "our mothers came all the way from Liberia to talk to us"; (…) " well, mothers , because of you, we will go" (Gbowee, p.143)

The religious women were also among other religious actors who served as key players at the CPA influencing the warlords and the government representatives' decisions to rapidly reach a siege fire and final peace agreement (Wrokpoh, 2011; TRC, Vol. II, Final Report 2009, p. 282pp, Gbowee, 2011).

4.4.4.6. Indigenous religious actors and conflict management at the grass roots

Many Liberians acknowledged that the conflict was affecting all Liberians socially, politically, economically, culturally, and religiously. Thus, it was a demanding duty of all Liberians at that time to find solution that suits their context in preventing, and mostly resolving the conflict. At the local institutional level it will include those of indigenous institutions such as the indigenous religious tradition since it is found at the grass roots in many rural parts of Liberia. However, unlike Christian and Muslim's Actors where their contributions toward preventing the conflict and peacemaking had been noted on many occasions, such as their spear heading of peace conferences and other mediation roles were not the case of the indigenous religions. Nevertheless, according to the TRC it is reported that during the conflict Traditional leaders, among whom indigenous religious leaders are included were actively engaged at their community's levels providing some traditional forms

of peace making. These traditional religious actors helped in preventing the conflict in their various communities through various traditional approaches of conflict resolution, they also helped those who were victimized by the conflict (TRC, Vol. III, Appendices IV, 2009, p.5).

4.4.4.7 Summary of sub-question three

In the above discussion despite the challenges on the role of Liberia's religious actors engagement in the first war didn't siege their involvement in resolving the conflict during the first and second war. Indeed, we saw how these religious actors were persistent and they pursued peace through nonviolence mean. Liberia's religious actors were the driven forces behind various peace dialogues that final brought the war to an end, despite their religious differences Christian and Muslim co-existed and finally worked as religious conflict resolution theorists and practitioners, while the indigenous religions also was using traditional form of religious conflict resolution mechanisms in resolving the conflict at the grass root. Such role of religion in Liberia's peace process can be said that religion played a primary role in the peacemaking processes.

4.4.5. Sub-question # 4: Did religious actors play any role in the truth and reconciliation commission's work?

From the outset of the TRC the National Transitional Legislative body that enacted it into legislation explicitly instructed the commission to extend its work to the religious communities of Liberia, by doing an in depth inquiry into the role of these religious institutions during the war (TRC, Vol. III, Appendices IV, 2009, p.1).

4.4.5.1. Religious dimension of the TRC

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission was given the task of inquiring on the role of Liberian religious communities during the conflict and at the same time asking these religious communities assistant in fulfilling the commission's mandate that stressed the emphasis on national peace, unity, security and reconciliation. Looking at these central themes of the commission it was obvious that religious actors could not be left out because these themes are integral to religious traditions. Except perhaps 'security' that may be beyond the achievement of religious traditions because of its nature (TRC, Vol. III, Appendices IV, 2009, p. iii).

As it was observes throughout the life span of the TRC religious traditions and religious actors played a central role. Despite the commission perhaps was aware as an independent body one sanctioned by the government of Liberia the fact remained that it was in nature and context religiously characterized in carrying out some of its task. It was highly noted that religious rituals and languages were the channels through which the quest of national peace, unity and reconciliation were emphasized during the TRC's work. Indeed it needed religious actors for its message to reach at the grass roots.

Most notably of the three religions selected for this study Christian rituals and actors were seen at all levels of the commission's work. For instance, it was noted during the official inaugural ceremony of the TRC which took placed 20 February 2006, the ceremony was religiously characterized. Both religious leaders from Christianity and Islam were presented and perhaps some from the indigenous religions though not clear. At least out of the 9 members of the commission were two or three individuals from various religious backgrounds who were purposely appointed to guide the religious context of the Commission. Example of these religious individuals one was Bishop Arthur F. Kullah of the Liberian United Method Church along with other religious leaders (TRC, Vol. II, 2009, p. 26pp).

 Religious rituals at the commission's inaugural ceremony which were performed among other were Christian prayers and songs, most importantly noted was the role president Ellen Johnson Sirleaf was playing by placing the Holy Bible and Koran in the hands of the appointed 9 commissioners during their oath. If one was a Christian he or she has to kiss the Bible and if one was Muslim likewise the Koran while reciting the oath and the emphasis of forgiveness, reconciliation was stressed by each speakers during the event, mainly 'national reconciliation' (TRC, Inauguration Ceremony, 2006).

During the TRC's thematic and institutional hearings religious actors from the three selected religions in this study were invited by the Commission. These religious actors' roles were to provide the TRC with the needed information concerning each religious traditions relating both on the effect of the conflict and at the same time suggesting approaches on achieving the goal of the TRC's mandate since these religious actors were representing a large and different populations that the TRC could not reach at once.

 Religious actors from both Christian and Muslim communities during the TRC exercised were given the opportunities to publicly speak on the topic Confession, Repentance, Forgiveness and Reconciliation from each religious tradition perspective and the significant

of these components in the process of national reconciliation (TRC, confession, repentance, forgiveness and reconciliation, 2008).

As it was observed the Commission didn't employ the term indigenous religion rather traditional institution when referring to the categories of the indigenous religions. Thus, during the TRC exercised traditional institutions leaders served the role of indigenous religion. Elders or chiefs from these traditional institutions spoke on the matters of indigenous religious groups and Traditional Council of Elders at the same time. These traditional elders are the custodians of the traditional or indigenous religions. Therefore, theses traditional institutions members who participated in the TRC exercised were people from either the Poro or Sande and other indigenous religion and institutions in Liberia. While admitting the effect of the conflict on these indigenous religious institutions both the male and female speakers of these institutions emphasized national reconciliation among Liberians (Zulu, 2008; Mama Toma, 2008; Mansaray, 2008).

The presented of religious rituals and actors in the TRC can be said over weighted the Commission's work with 'national reconciliation' with little or no emphasis on legal justice per se but rather reestablishing the broken relationship between perpetrators and victims nationwide. Indeed this means that Liberians' approach to reconciliation from the religious perspective followed societal reconciliation, where the emphasis is stressed on reestablishing relations instead of legal justice.

In conclusion, it can be said that Liberia's religious actor's participation contributed significantly to the TRC's work in pursuit of national reconciliation and healing. The presented of religion bit undermined legal justice with forgiveness as an alternative to legal justice between perpetrators and victims. Religious actors' role in the TRC also should be understood as form of religious conflict resolution approach in post conflict society like Liberia.

4.4.6. Sub-question # 5: Did the civil war have any impact on Liberia's religious communities?

By way of responding to the above question one has to explore some of the effects and consequents of the war on these religious communities and their adherents.

4.4.6.1. Some negative impacts of the civil war on Liberia's religious communities

One of the well-known negative impacts of the civil war on Liberia's religious communities was the violation and desecration of religious communities' sites during the war. The worst among other sacred places which were violated was the incident at the St. Peter Lutheran Church in Monrovia. When the war started newly some communities or villages closer to Monrovia that the NPFL's rebel invaded population flee to Monrovia and thought occupying the Church's compound as refuge site would have saved their lives. Perhaps with the assumption that war could not enter sacred places, a worldview of some Liberians prior to the war, if not all. Unfortunately, this was not the case of the "senseless war" (Williams, 2002, p.28). According to survivors who testified at the TRC the refugee population that sought refuge at the Church compound was 2.000, a figure representing men, women, children and babies (TRC, "My body was covered with blood and Human Brian" 2008).

Sadly, it is recorded that it was on Sunday 29 July 1990, when armed men from the then former and late Liberia's president Doe's government national army known as the Armed Forces of Liberia (AFL) invaded the Church's compound attacking un armed civilians shooting at them indiscriminately. An attacked that led hundreds of Liberians dead and some were severely wounded. According to some survivors of the massacre the 2,000 refugee who were seeking refuge the attacked led to the death of at least 600, a figure including men, women, children and babies. One of the survivors who testified at the TRC public hearing during the memorial ceremony of the massacre narrated that the Armed Forces of Liberia (AFL) troops who carried on the massacre "After they had killed and killed, then some of the soldiers they were tired killing. So the decided to collect money from the few of us there in order to allow us to leave the compound" (ibid).

In addition to the tragic of the St Peter Lutheran Church just narrated above all religious traditions representatives who participated in the TRC's testimonies revealed that despite the conflict was not termed as religious conflict on one hand, but on the other hand religious institutions and their adherents were directly victimized on many occasions during the civil war at the hands of various rebel groups and the government troops. It should be mentioned that this sad phase of the civil war was not confined to one religious tradition rather all religious traditions of Liberia and their adherents ranging from Christianity, Islam and the Indigenous religious institutions. These religious traditions properties were looted and

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physical institutions such as Churches, church ran facilities such as hospitals, clinics, radio stations, Mission station, schools, and Mosques, Secret Bushes, i.e., (a special site outside building) used for the Indigenous religion, were all destroyed or damaged during the war (Kulah, 2008, p.15pp; Zulu, 2008; Mansaray, 2008).

Another sad story of such characteristics of the civil war on religious institutions and their adherents was the brutal killing of innocent religious leaders and others were publicly dehumanized on several occasions at the hands of various rebel groups and government troops. Some of these religious leaders who survived were those by the "Mercy of God" (Kulah, 2008).

The killing of innocent religious people that caught both the international and local people's attentions were the killing of some Roman Catholic Church five nuns, these nuns were American citizens who were serving as missionaries in Liberia prior to the war, they were murdered by Taylor's rebels (Wrokpoh, 2011; TRC, Vol. II, 2009, p278-282).

Another incident where religious site was violated and some Christian population experienced other forms of violence and some were   killed by the NPFL rebels on religious grounds according to witnesses' testimonies   at the TRC was the attacked on one of the Christian denominations located in some parts of rural Liberia at the "Never-Die Church" in Karnplay, Gbehay-Geh- District, Nimba County. According to one of the witnesses the NPLF rebel fighters entered the Church premises during the 1990s war and she and other religious women belonging to the 'Never Die Church' were gang raped, and some were killed by the rebels. The witness, in her testimony to the TRC said the NPFL rebels committed such crimes on them in the Church building because "they said they were members of the Never Die Church" (TRC, NPFL Fighters Gang Raped & Killed "Never -Die" Worshippers, 2008). Apart from the above mentioned violence on Christian population Muslims also suffered violence during the civil war, mainly from the NPFL rebels throughout the first war that led to the death of   few Muslims that is unrecorded. Even during the second war Muslim population were still at risk with Taylor's armies. For the indigenous religions the TRC recorded an incident where unknown figure of Zoes were locked in a house and it was eventually set on fire by the NPFL rebels (TRC, Vol. III, Appendices IV, 2009, p.7-8).

In conclusion, as it was highlighted elsewhere in this thesis from the TRC's findings that religious institutions and populations experienced physical violence during the war is the example highlighted above. In the above discussion we saw the war has negatively impacted on Liberia's religious communities and institutions.

4.4.6.2. Some impacts of the war Liberia's religious communities

As it was already seen above during the discussion of some of the sub-questions which were focused on the role of Liberia's religious communities in peacebuilding, indeed it can be said that the war also provided opportunities for Liberia's religious communities' cooperation. Their roles in collective peacebuilding and in addressing issues affecting the Liberian society; ranging from conflict and other injustices that can lead society into instability shows this. It was noted before the civil war such cooperation never existed among Liberian religious actors and communities. Both the Liberian Council of Churches and the Liberian Muslim Council who are the powerful and majority of the Inter-Religious Council of Liberia (IRCL), as well as each religious community were working individually when it came to addressing secular and political matters, or issues that have to do with religion and politics in Liberia. The civil war placed Liberia's religious communities on a high recognized level both nationally and internationally for their works in conflict resolution seeing it as a work which perhaps other nations can adopt as a model of religious conflict resolution in their context.

In fact, despite the existing of peace in Liberia the civil war has made Liberia's religious communities to have an established independent non-political organization, i.e., (IRCL) that is now preparing religious leaders in conflict prevention, management other relevant skills for maintain a peaceful society throughout Liberia (see Inter-Religious Council of Liberia's website).

One can't go without adding that it was the civil war that brought Liberia religious women together. Prior to the war Muslim and Christian women had no relationship. As we saw above, these groups of women's unity brought peace in Liberia and today the organization remains working as an independent organization across African nations and in post conflict Liberia on issues such as peace and reconciliation (see Gbowee Peace Foundation Africa's website).

In conclusion, despite these opportunities it can be said that the civil war had a great negative effect on Liberia's religious communities. What these religious communities lost and their adherents experienced during the fourteen years of war can't be forgotten and achieved in the next 25 to 50 years of peaceful Liberia perhaps. The war has left some religious people psychologically traumatized because of what they witnessed in their religious premises, such as desecration of sacred places which has negative consequent on believers' beliefs and their spiritual worldviews.

4.4.7. Some Critiques of Liberia's religious communities

Despite Liberia's religious communities active role in resolving the conflict these religious communities also failed to address the issues that led the country in to the fourteen years of bloody civil war at the early stages.

Among scholars are Kieh and Dolo who were critical about these religious communities saying that Liberian Christianity had been the main stay of Liberia's political system and remained a supporter to what is described as the "status quo" (Kieh, 2012). However, the above observation exempted few Christian leaders who have challenged past regimes during their time. These religious leaders were active speaking against all kinds of social and economic injustices that eventually led the nation into the civil war of those regimes of their era but their action make no impact. Notably, among these were the late Bishop George Browne of the Episcopal Church of Liberia, the late Bishop Roland J. Payne of the Lutheran Church, Archbishop Michael K. Francis of the Catholic Church, apart from these just mentioned religious leaders Kieh observes that the Church had been silenced about political actions that affect the nation such as "social justice and human development" (Kieh, 2012). Kieh highlights that Liberian Christianity had abandon its role of "Citadel of social justice and human development" (Kieh, 2012). However, with the above Kieh didn't take into consideration the limit of religion or the church within the rank of a secular nation or secular government, the church has voice but it also has limitation in a secular state like Liberia.

Kieh goes further describing the Church failure to address the Liberian society basic need from within its political context as what he calls "great responsibilities – helping to feed the hungry, giving drink to the thirty, caring for those who are sick, and visiting those who are in prison" (Matt: 25:35-45) in (Kieh, 2012).

Kieh cites Paul Gifford who has conducted earlier research on Liberia's Christianity and politics, Gifford asserts that "Liberian Christianity- far from being a force for justice and human advancement – diverted attention from the causes of Liberia's ills, left change to God's miraculous intervention, encouraged obedience and acceptance of the status quo, and thus served to entrench the ruling elite's power" (Gifford, quoted in Kieh, 2012).

Dolo went further saying that the position of Christianity at then in Liberia's political, economic and cultural affairs placed it in the position to have address human rights abuses and other forms of social discrimination that permeated early regimes prior to the conflict. He continues that the Liberian Church provided the theological grounds for various form of

injustices the Liberians natives experienced from the Americo – Liberian ruled. He also notes during the 1980 coup that brought native Liberians to political power, saying that when Liberian natives were persecuting the Americo- Liberians the Church was silent. Dolo continues that the Church has been silent from the Americo- Liberian rule to both Doe and Taylor's dictatorships rules. He concludes that such role of the Church has threaten its moral power and identifying it as an institution that has no care for the "poor and least of these" (Dolo, 2007, p. 84).

He also observes that Islam's adherents though were not in the position of Christianity but Muslims never do anything addressing issues that later contributed to the civil war, rather adherents of Islam were somehow manipulated creating ethnic division among its adherents by politicians. He also mentions that Indigenous religious leaders also failed to handle disputes at the grass root level among some ethnic figures, such as the case of President Doe and General Quiwonkpa, or Doe and Charles Taylor to abolish their violence against certain ethnic groups. Although with all these above critics Dolo also acknowledged the Christians and Muslims interfaith conflict mediation work, but he saw it as last minutes to the conflict and this body work didn't yield the expected results at the time (Dolo, 2007, p.84). The main point from the above is native Liberians at the time claimed they were marginalized by Americo Liberian rule, indeed they opted for coup in 1980 that brought them to political power through the presidency of Samuel K. Doe. Doe later failed to live to the natives' expectations, it is this native rule Charles Taylor came to overthrow with the support of some Americo –Liberians if not all (TRC, Vol .II, 2009, p.152-155).

In conclusion, if these religious communities at the time were going to engage these arrivals to sort out their differences and preach peace and reconciliation among Liberians perhaps there was going to be no war.

4.4. 8. Thematic analysis

During the discussion three themes were identified. These themes are National Reconciliation / Unity, Religious Peacemaking and Mandingo -Muslim phase of the conflict. Below I will now expand my elaboration on these themes in relation to the study.

4.4.8.1. Theme 1:   National Reconciliation / Unity

The study finds out that during the TRC exercised it was noted that national reconciliation / unity was   at the central of the commission's work. This theme among other was the main theme of some perpetrators and victims in the process of reconciling. Appling Clegg's theory of reconciliation ' a collective will to co-existence' which embedded societal reconciliation that the study has adopted, it was observed that some Liberians forgo whatever atrocities that was committed against them to embrace nation reconciliation or unity on a national level. But this also invokes the question how Liberia can achieve national reconciliation or unity when the TRC has used both restorative and retributive justices approaches to reconciliation. Some perpetrators were granted amnesty while some were enlisted for trail of associated crimes during the war. On the other hand victims' needs were not probably properly address in term of reparation or compensation. Theorists and practitioners of this theme of reconciliation acknowledged that achieving 'national reconciliation' is a difficult task for countries emerging from violence in their transitional to liberal democratic rule like Liberia (Lerche, undated).

Commenting on this challenging task of national reconciliation or unity, Lerche mentions that "in most cases, there is a tension, if not full-blown contradiction, between the officially proclaimed need of reconciliation and the capacity of the state to provide justice to the victims of past wrongs. The long term healing, stability and development of many societies may well depend on the degree to which this contraction can, at least to some degree, be resolved" (Lerche, undated).

 This contraction can be seen in the way Liberians opted for national reconciliation which is bit contrast to the commission's official approach to national reconciliation. The commission opted for justice and amnesty of some perpetrators, and at the same time recommended for reparation for victims which none has been achieved since it has submitted it official report to date of this study, and on the other, some Liberians with religious influence had opted for restorative justice toward national reconciliation which contradicts the commission's approach.

4.4.8.2. Theme 2: Religious Peacemaking

Despite the presented of non- religious peacemaking bodies such as the UN, ECOWAS involvement in resolving Liberian civil war there were religious actors involvement who provided peaceful conflict resolution mechanisms throughout the two phases of the war. Indeed, it can be said that Liberians were more religiously oriented to peacemaking and the presented of religious communities drove the peace agreements rapidly. Although retaining the fact that some religious actors like Kromah and some Muslims and Christians used religion as mean of perpetuating the conflict for political and self-gain. It can be said that Liberian religious actors were more engaged in peacemaking during the two phases of the civil war than those who were using religion as mean to their end. For instance, it was religious actors in particular the religious woman of Liberia under the name Mass Action for Peace at the CPA who displayed some action that created more attentions that is believed to have led the warlords to finally signed the CPA.

Although organizers of the CPA didn't extend official invitation to the religious women but their motivation for resolving the conflict and envisioning Liberia as a peace state led them to the CPA in Accra, Ghana. When the religious women observed that there was no progress at the CPA and they saw news on televisions how the war was intensifying in Liberia and the rebel leaders or warlords were in Ghana enjoying, having peaceful stay as Gbowee described the plight, the religious women got angry and blocked all participants of the CPA in the conference hall. This was purposely for the sake of the warlords and asked General Abubakar who was presiding over the conference that their action could only stop if the warlords agree and sign cease fire that same day or before leaving Ghana. Though their demand did not take place that same day but their removal from the conference hall way was negotiated by General Abubakar for few hours while the participants were blocked inside the conference hall. Their action was seen as threat and they were charged of "obstruction of justice" (Gbowee, 2011, p.161).

As leader of the group Gbowee was charged and when confronted with the charges on behave of the group's behavior she appealed to African traditional rhetoric demonstrating to script or undress herself naked in the public at the conference site. Attracting both her group and the conference participants' attentions where majority of the conference attendants were

Africans. The logic which was behind Gbowee's action , i.e., attempting to naked herself, accordingly in the African context it means appealing to greater power when done by adult woman at her age and above(Gbowee, 2011, p.162pp).

She explained her action that … but in threatening to script, I had summoned up a traditional power. In Africa it's terrible curse to see a married or elderly women deliberately bare herself. If a mother is really, really upset with a child, she might take out her breast and slap it, and he's cursed. For this group of men to see a woman naked would be almost like a death sentence. Men are born through women's vaginas, and it's as if by exposing ourselves, we say, "we now take back the life we gave you" (Gbowee, 2011, p.162).

With the attempt of performing such symbolic act she could not be arrested nor to be allow to continue removing her cloths, emotional fear got all participants, mainly Africans. Nevertheless, the women allowed the participants out after some negotiation with General Abubakar who himself was in solidarity with the Liberian religious women. Their quest was treated with all due respect and it is believed that it was the pushed of these religious women fear led the rebel's leaders and Taylor' government representatives to reach at rapid peace agreement at the conference. It should be noted that at the CPA though the warlords were representing their various rebel's factions, but on the other side they were just as ordinary Liberian citizens as the religious women (TRC, Vol. II, 2009, p.278-282; Gbowee, 2011. p.164).

4.4.8.3. Theme 3: Mandingo – Muslims' phase of the conflict

Applying the approach of religion as identity or associated with identity which this study has adopted to the Mandingo – Muslim case in Liberia; it was realized that during the civil war Mandingos were not seen as ethnic group rather religious group as one of their characteristics. Mandingos were generally classified as Muslims. Religion as identity during the Liberian civil war served as source of mobilization. In particular for the Mandingo Muslim factions. There was no separation between Mandingos and Muslims or ethnicity and religion in that context. The role of ethnic Mandingo's fighters and their religiosity during the civil war injected into the minds of Liberians the concept of Mandingos Muslim factions such as the MMR, ULIMO- K and LURD rebel's factions because of their religious identity they were generally referred to as Mandingo Muslim fighters. During the war all assaults and atrocities that were carried on by the above three factions mentioned was seen as Mandingo

Muslim fighters who committed those crimes instead of people calling the factions names. For example, Olukoju describing the effect of the civil war on Liberia's religious communities and adherent's beliefs with special emphasis to the Indigenous religions observes that the war had profound negative impacts on adherent's "beliefs and worldviews" (Olukoju, 2006, p.22).

Olukoju mentions that "desecration of sacred bushes and shrines were violated by Muslim Mandingo militia, sacred objects such as masks were exposed to the glare of non-initiates, and women. These violations and sacrilegious acts had negative impact on the psyche of ordinary Liberians and out raged the priests and defenders of the traditional order" (Olukoju, 2006, p.22). The point here is the Mandingo Muslim fighters were more concerned attacking other religions instead of them fighting their main adversaries in the conflict. The Mandingos Muslim rebels were mainly attacking the indigenous religion since it and Islam's adherents are the majority in counties like Lofa and Nimba, Liberia. The Mandingo Muslim fighters were after looting religious objects that are significant to the religious practices of the Poro and Sande religious traditions.

These religious properties of the indigenous religions were worth value to those interested in art business, and according to Ellis they were sold on the international art market by the leader of the Mandingo Muslim militia Alhaji Kromah. The items were sold in Conakry Guinea to traders doing African antiquities business (Ellis, 1999, p.128). In short, what I am saying is this theme redefined the conflict showing another side of Liberia's civil war, i.e., how it was portrayed by Mandingo Muslim fighters, reflecting the religious context of the civil war which I considered as the other side of the war.

4.4.9. Summary of themes

From the above themes discussed it can be said that Liberians' approach to national reconciliation is societal reconciliation in nature. However, during the analysis the question remains how Liberians can achieve national reconciliation with the contradiction to the TRC's official approach of national reconciliation which embedded legal form of justice, amnesty and traditional forms of justices, and as well as questing reparation for victims of past atrocities, despite the religious influence of forgiveness, repentance, healing and reconciliation in the TRC work. The second themes reveals the major role Liberia's actors

played in the context of religious conflict resolution, their participation in resolving both phases of the conflict, and mostly the religious women role at the CPA. In the third theme we saw there is no distinction between Mandingos and Muslim fighter's role in the conflict. In conclusion these themes proportion validate that religion in Liberia's peace process was playing a primary role from what was observed from theme I and II, whereas theme III reveals that religion was playing a secondary role in promoting the conflict in regard to Muslim characteristics that were manifested in few rebel's factions with both political and religious motives, like MMR, ULIMO-K, and, LURD, (see 4.4.2.1).

4.4. 10. Conclusion

In the process of evaluating the role of Christianity, Islam and the Indigenous religions' relations to the war and peace processes the chapter revealed both practically and theoretically that each religion had linked with various rebels' factions but in different ways. For instance, secondary empirical data revealed that Islam was physically presented in the conflict and was manifested in three various rebels' factions. Explicitly there was Islamic militia faction bearing the name Movement for Muslim Redemption (MMR), other factions which were characterized as Muslim factions were ULIMO-K and LURD rebels factions that were predominantly Mandingo Muslims.

Theoretically it was noted both Christianity and the Indigenous religions were manifested in the conflict and having ties with NPFL and LDF rebels' factions. Although there was little known about Christianity relation to warring factions, whereas the link of the Indigenous religions to warring faction was inexplicitly to LDF faction. The religious content of Islam which was manifested in ULIMO –K, MMR, and LURD rebels as noted created tension and resulted in delay of many peace agreements between President Taylor who is a Christian and these rebels' factions. However, on the other hand, the three religions civilian populations were peaceful people, therefore, they were committed working for peace as religious militant peacemakers.

As it was revealed in the chapter these religious peacemakers have independently negotiated peace dialogues between various rebels groups and the government of Liberia ranging from Doe's regime to Taylor as the war was on and off issue within the periods of these regimes. Liberia's militant religious peacemakers were the driving forces behind several peace dialogues between the rebels and government of Liberia until the war finally came to an end.

Most notably their role at the CPA and they also assisted facilitating the TRC's work. In short, all the three religions contributed to the peace process significantly than promoting the conflict.

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5.5.0. Chapter Five: Summary and Conclusion

5.5.1. Summary

The purpose of this study was to investigate which role religion played in upholding Liberia's civil war on the one hand, and which role it had in resolving the conflict on the other hand. The selected religions for the study were Christianity, Islam and the Indigenous religions. To do such in depth inquiry the study adopted a qualitative research method and case study as research design. The study materials consisted primarily of relevant scholarly literature and documents regarding the conflict in Liberia. In this way, the study is a document analysis, and the primary selected document in this analysis is the Liberian Truth and Reconciliation Commission Final Report, 2009.

The study shows that religion was implicated from the start to the end of Liberian civil war that started late 1989 with Charles Taylor's NPFL rebel faction's invasion, and ended 2003.

For instance, the 1990s phase of the war was characterized by religious persecution of the ethnic Mandingo peoples who are Liberia's largest Muslim population. They were persecuted by Taylor's NPFL rebels (TRC, Vol. II, 2009).

The study shows that the persecution of the Mandingo Muslims was based on religious as well as political grounds.

Its political dimension was caused by the close interrelationship between politics and religion that existed in the Liberian governments that President Doe succeeded.

When Doe became president   his government continued the political culture of mixing politics and religion. In doing so, preference was given to Islam over other religions, in particular over Christianity that had been dominating Liberian politics from the founding of the state until the 1980s (Kieh,   2012; Dolo, 2007; TRC,   Vol. II, 2009).

Therefore, Charles Taylor insurgency's wrath against Doe persecuted its perceived adversaries on both political, ethnic and religious grounds. This arguably affected the Mandingo Muslims, and all Muslim population in Liberia in the period from 1989 -2003.

During these years more than four insurgent Movements emerged with both religious and political motives that fought against Taylor's rebels and government, such as the MMR, ULIMO-K, and LURD rebels. These factions were religiously characterized as Muslim. In this perspective, the civil war can be understood as a struggle between Christians (Taylor's rebels and government) and Muslim   (rebel's factions), (see Wrokpoh, 2011).

The above can be described as an aspect of the war that portray how religion really was a channel in fuelling the Liberian civil war, a war that lasted for fourteen years.

 It also shows religion as one of the factors that delayed on religious grounds several peace agreements between Christian rebel leaders, Taylor's government officials, and Muslim rebel's leaders. This was shown in the discussion in chapter four in the present thesis. This religious context of the conflict was not limited to Christians and Muslims alone.

Adherents of the indigenous religions were also involved in the war on religious grounds, particularly in the conflict with Muslims. Mandingo Muslim's factions such as ULIMO-K extended their wrath of revenge to non- Muslims, mainly to the indigenous religious communities. This act led the indigenous religions' Zoes and practitioners to vow their pledge and support to an ethnic rebel faction known as Lofa Defense Force that emerged from within the ethnic groups of Kpelle and Lorma who are the host of the Poro and Sande religions. This faction fought against the Mandingo Muslim's faction during the first war in Lofa County, and all these factions' fighters and prominent leaders made their way into new rebel's factions during the second war (TRC, Vol. II, 2009; Ellis, 1999).

 Some if not all of the LURD rebels fighters and leaders; as well as Taylor's government soldiers were products of these old rebel factions. So the rebel's factions religious' motives were old as the civil war.   But this is also the case with religious   involvement in peacemaking. The early persecution of ethnic and religious peoples led Liberia's religious communities to engage in resolving the violence committed against these ethnic and religious

groups. These religious peacemakers also saw the necessity for the rebels and the government of Liberia during Doe's administration to seize the violence immediately. The above religious conflict resolution efforts were facilitated by Christian and Muslim religious leaders.

These religious leaders worked throughout the first and second wars negotiating and facilitating various peace dialogues between the rebel's factions and the government of Liberia under both president Doe's and president Taylor's regimes. During the second war, these religious leaders effort was buttressed by Liberian Christian and Muslim women who also facilitated series of peace dialogues between the LURD and MODEL rebels and Taylor's government (Glowee, 2011).

These dialogues perhaps smoothly paved the way to the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) that finally brought Liberia's civil war to an end. Although at the top the international community was spear heading the CPA, it was Liberia's religious militant peacemakers that did the ground work in broking peace. These religious actors also helped in fulfilling the TRC's mandate. The approach for reconciliation which Liberia's religious actors pursued during the TRC's work was more in the line of societal reconciliation. It had no emphasis on legal justice per se, but rather focused on the restorative aspects of perpetrators, victims and the society at large, with the emphasis on forgiveness, repentance, confession and reconciling or reconciliation nationwide (TRC, Vol. II, 2009).

5.5.2. The danger of mixing religion and politics: Lesson from the Liberian civil and religion

This does not mean that the Liberian civil war could be portrayed as a religious war. Yet one cannot ignore the ways in which religion influenced and affected the conflict. As it was discussed and observed in chapter three, Liberian politics and religion have been fused for decades in spite of the Liberian constitution stating the separation of religion and state. However, this separation was observed in practice between the years 1822 and 1980s as Christianity and Islam were competing sources of potential conflict among Liberian politicians. For this reason it is difficult to understand the separation of religion and state in Liberia to the present date of this study. For instance, Christian rituals, such as prayers are offered during public occasions, as well as Christian songs; most Christian's holidays are observed as public holidays if not all. The risk of mixing politics and religion and its long

term implication and negative consequences that we saw in Liberia's civil war can be traced from the periods between 1822 and 1980. During these years Christianity had preference over Islam and the Indigenous religions, and during the 1980s Doe's administration preference of Islam over Christianity (Kieh, 2012; Dolo, 2007; TRC, 2009).

As a result Taylor's rebel invasion persecuted Liberian Muslims whom in the majority are from the Mandingos ethnic group. Consequently, during the civil war all factions dominated by Mandingos were considered to be Muslim factions. As discussed, such was the case of ULIMO-K, and LURD factions. On the other hand factions dominated by Christians were perceived as Christian factions, like the case of Taylor's rebel and government soldiers. Thus, during the war religious adherents and institutions suffered the consequence of such established structural political religious relationship from 1822- 1980s, despite the fact that the war in general was termed as a non-religious war (TRC, Vol. II, 2009).

5.5.3. Conclusion

Prior to the study it was observed that there is a consensus in the Liberian society that the Liberian civil war was said to be without an important religious dimension, nor was it inspired by religious intolerance. However, from the findings of this study it can be said that the civil war was not religion free. The role these three selected religions have played, particularly Islam, is similar to the case of other countries' conflicts where religious militias are present. While recognizing the visible role of Islamic militias during the Liberian war, Liberians should not ignore the covert role both Christianity and the Indigenous religions played, such as having ties with rebel faction's leaders, like Taylor's relationship with these two religions, and the Indigenous religions' connection to the rebel LDF faction.

 Liberians should also look at the general religious practices and rituals that were practiced among these religions' adherents and various factions' fighters, such as blessings, prayers, and other protections for war victories and gun proof that were offered for spiritual power to militaries. This thesis argues that such practices served to perpetuate warfare activities amongst the conflicting sides. I argue, unlike the case with Islam, the role of these other religions has been less visible. But this does not mean that Islam was the only religion that involved its adherents in the Liberian civil war. This thesis has shown that Christianity and the indigenous religions too played significant role albeit their non-obvious visibility.

Indeed, to argue that it was not a religious inspired conflict all these factors has to be examined systematically and separately as this study has done with the focus on religion.

The visible role that Liberia's religious actors played in resolving Liberia's conflict as religious militant peacemakers can't be contested. But it takes a rigorous investigation of the religious pattern of the war such as the present one, i.e., examining both sides of religion throughout the war to arrive at a more nuanced conclusion regarding religion's part in also perpetuating the conflict. It did not, as generally held, only contribute in resolving the conflict at various stages and helping the TRC in search of national reconciliation in post war Liberia. In other words, my argument is that it is not valid to say that the Liberian conflict was without religious participation, or that Christianity and the indigenous religions didn't also cause violence. This become clear when looking beneath the surface of the conflict, revisiting Liberia's political and religious structures more carefully.

As I bring my study to an end, I urge Liberian political and religious leaders to avoid the structural relationship approach to religion and government since avoiding this will be more likely to leave both religious adherents and religious institutions out of any given conflict in Liberia or elsewhere. I 'm not saying that there should be no relation between these two institutions, rather there should be. But such relationship should not be one that will privilege a certain religion over another religion as it was observed during the study in both the First and Second Republics of Liberia. This led to direct and indirect religious institutions involvement in the civil war, and most importantly these religious institutions and their adherents were the victims of such relationship. Therefore, one can conclude that the direct and indirect involvement of religion in Liberia's civil war can be understood as religion playing a secondary role in the war, whereas in the peacemaking process and the truth and reconciliation commission's work it played a primary role.

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