| **RESEARCH ARTICLE**

Tribalism vs Democracy in Africa: The Case of Liberia and Sierra Leone

Issah Hassan Tikumah
Department of Sociology, School of Humanities, Arts and Social Sciences ,University of New England, Armidale - NSW, Australia
Corresponding Author: Issah Hassan Tikumah, **E-mail:** tikumah72@yahoo.com

| **ABSTRACT**

Both Liberia and Sierra Leone are still grappling with legacies of brutal civil wars (1989 to 2003), with tribalism - the unfair treatment of others on grounds of tribal identity differences - widely regarded as a primary driver of these conflicts. The goal of this study is to find out how the Liberian and Sierra Leonean diaspora in Australia offer solutions to the problem of tribalism, drawing from their own exposures to Australia. The study revolves around the main research question: 'To what extent, if at all, is tribalism perceived to be a major cause of conflict in your country?' Semi-structured interviews were conducted with 25 Liberians and 25 Sierra Leoneans across Australia. The thematic content analysis technique was used to categorize themes and patterns across the various interview scripts. One of the main findings was that tribalism promotes conflict by demoting democracy: 76% of the Liberians and 73% of the Sierra Leoneans pparticipants were of the view that the consolidation of a strong civil society and sound democratic culture were essential for a sustainable state of peace and stability in Liberia and Sierra Leone, and that tribalism was thwarting the growth of a strong democratic culture in their home countries. To build a genuine democratic culture in Liberia and Sierra Leone, tribal politics must be banished. Educational and legislative measures should be instituted to stem ethnic voting in national elections.

| **KEYWORDS**

tribalism, flawed democracy, conflict in Africa, diaspora, Liberia and Sierra Leone

| **ARTICLE INFORMATION**

1.   Introduction

Both Liberia and Sierra Leone are post-war countries. Like the case of most civil wars in Africa, tribalism has been identified by some researchers as a major factor in the civil wars in Liberia and Sierra Leone (Zenna, 2023; Osman, 2022; Moriba & Edwards, 2009; Fakondo, 2008). Historical tensions and hostilities between the various peoples in Liberia and Sierra Leone have stifled genuine dispensation of democracy, stagnated the emergence and consolidation of effective civil societies and thwarted the growth of effective democratic culture in these countries. In the view of the majority of Liberians and Sierra Leoneans in Australia, the tribalistic style of governance not only created conditions for the outbreak of the civil wars in their countries but has also become a threat to the sustainability of the gains of peacebuilding efforts since the end of the civil wars two decades ago. According to these respondents, the consolidation of a strong civil society and sound democratic culture are essential for long-term peace and stability, and tribalism is a stumbling-block to the emergence and growth of a strong democratic culture in these countries. To place Liberia and Sierra Leone on a smooth path to a state of lasting peace, stability and development, tribalism must be vanquished for democracy to stand in the vanguard.

This paper commences with a clear articulation of the research question and methodology, outlining the approach used to collect and analyse data. The findings from the field are then presented and interpreted. A review of relevant literature follows, examining the convergence and divergence of participant perspectives with existing research. Finally, the paper synthesizes the literature and empirical findings to draw meaningful conclusions

This study is relevant, timely and ground-breaking for being the first of its kind. It pioneers an exclusive focus on the Liberian and Sierra Leonean diaspora communities in Australia. Beyond providing participants with the fulfillment of contributing to peace, stability, and development in their homelands, this study will equip policymakers, non-governmental organizations, and stakeholders in Liberia and Sierra Leone with innovative insights into post-conflict societal reconstruction and development initiatives.

2. Research Question

The goal of this study was to ascertain the perceptions of Liberians and Sierra Leoneans living in Australia of the relationship between tribalism and conflict back home. Thus, the respondents were asked the following question:

> To what extent, if at all, is tribalism perceived to be a major cause of conflict in your country?

The findings exposed an intricate connection between tribalism and weak democracy in Liberia and Sierra Leone: Tribalism fuels conflict by undermining democratic institutions.

3. Methodology and Data Collection

The dataset for this qualitative study comprises interview responses from Liberian and Sierra Leonean individuals residing across Australia. A convenience sampling method was employed, with 25 Liberians and 25 Sierra Leoneans interviewed. Table 1 below outlines the locations and number of participants involved. Thematic content analysis and narrative analysis techniques were utilized to identify, categorize, and synthesize themes and patterns within the interview responses.

Table 1   Research Participants Across Australia

City	Number of Participants	
	Liberians	Sierra Leoneans
Armidale	1	0
Brisbane	7	14
Canberra	2	4
Melbourne	2	0
Sydney	11	6
Perth	1	0
Uralla	0	1
Wollongong	1	0
Total number of participants	25	25

Participants were recruited through personal networks and social events, including church gatherings and cultural celebrations. The sample consisted of 50 individuals, with a gender distribution of 37 males (74%) and 13 females (26%). The median age of participants was 48 years old. Participants had to have lived in Liberia or Sierra Leone during the civil wars, be at least 30 years old, and resided in Australia for a minimum of 5 years, allowing them to reflect on their experiences in both countries.

4. Liberia
4.1 Data Exposition and Interpretation on Tribalism and Democracy in Liberia

Given the commonly deplored state of democratic culture in many African countries, especially when viewed through the Western analytical lens (EIU 2022), it is not irrational that someone from Liberia who has experienced a Western liberal form of democracy such as Australia would not be very satisfied with the state of democracy back home. It is not surprising, therefore, that the vast majority (76%) of the respondents expressed discontent with the quality of democracy in Liberia against the backdrop of the prevalence of tribal politics. The existence of ethnic-based electoral constituencies means that political leaders are merely tribal representatives, resulting in the exclusion of certain (rival) tribes from government. Table 2 below summarises the response by theme:

Table 2 Response by sub-theme on how Tribalism works against democracy in Liberia

Theme	No of respondents (out 25)	Percentage
Politicians use tribalism to campaign	22	88%
High illiteracy and low civic responsibility	18	72%
Tribal identity supersedes national identity leading to ethnic voting	18	72%
Average	**19**	**76%**

A few extracts from the interview transcripts would be enlightening. Respondent LBM49 highlighted the segregatory foundations of Liberia as "the original sin":

> There has never been a genuine democracy in Liberia. The nation was founded in 1822 as a neo-colonial state in the sense that the Americo-Liberians who were ruling the country took the indigenous people for granted. They never actually treated them as citizens. That was the original sin. So, we had neo-colonialism, black people colonizing black people in Liberia - strange enough! Then the coup happened to replace one form of discrimination with another: indigenous people now oppressing their fellow indigenous people on the basis of ethnic differences. The Americans were very successful in disuniting the Liberian tribes. Certain tribes were treated with disgust. For instance, the Mandingo tribe, because they were Muslims and resisted every possible effort made to Christianize them, could not be assimilated into American culture, so the other indigenous people were told by the Americo-Liberians through their Churches that "These people are not Liberians; they are foreigners." So, Liberians learnt to play politics through tribe and religion and they can't change. They only vote for someone from their tribe or someone endorsed by their tribal leaders. This cannot work with real democracy. Everybody should be treated as citizens with equal rights.

On his own part, Respondent LBM55-A had this to say:

> What we need is a genuine democratic culture. Those tribalistic injustices that prevailed and caused the civil war still prevail even today. And politicians are tapping into all that. People go through tribal lines in everything, especially in politics. This guy is our fellow Grebo man so let's support him to win a parliamentary seat so that he can help the Grebo people. Another man would be supported to win merely because he is Mandingo so he will promote our interests. There are no ideological considerations in politics. The only real political ideology one can point to is the tribe. This is primarily because the vast majority of the people are illiterate so they can't understand any challenging political thought. But they can understand the tribe.

Respondent LBF39 spoke with me on phone while on a holiday in back in Liberia. She spoke as an eyewitness to the 2023 presidential electioneering campaign:

> Yes, because when the political seasons come around people fall right back into trying to galvanize people around tribal lines and disqualify people along tribal lines as opposed to whatever their platform/political ideology is. Especially, when it gets closer and closer to the actual election, everything turns tribalistic and bitter. And as I am talking to you right now, I am currently in Liberia and I am seeing what I am telling. Tribalism is holding democracy hostage in Liberia.

Respondent LBF35 suggested intercultural education and exposure as a way of detribalizing the political landscape in Liberia:

> Ours in a Liberia is a type of system that makes everyone a foreigner in his own country, I mean a foreigner to people from the other tribes. So for me to accept someone from another tribe to rule me in my own village or region is like accepting the rule of a foreigner, colonization of some kind. Every tribe are living by themselves. They don't learn about others, no one teaches them, and they don't want to know. There is no bridge connecting the different tribes together. The cultural barriers are so stiff. This stiffness can be weakened through intercultural education. If people learn about other tribes and no longer view them as foreigners, then they will no longer worry about which tribe is ruling or which

tribe is representing this or that region. They will follow the ideas and policies of the candidates, not their tribes. That is when we can have true democracy. In Australia they have multiculturalism that shows you how to respect the culture of everybody. That is why in Australia you can see a first-generation immigrant representing a predominantly white constituency. The same thing is happening in Europe and United States. You can see how Obama became American President. Because in these Western there is not too much emphasis on ethnic barriers in elections. The emphasis is on talents, intelligence and character, honesty, integrity, hard work. They do not care about where you come from.

Respondent LBF57 supported the thought of Respondent LBF35:

Political parties should have a national character, capable of fielding candidates in every constituency. People should not contest elections in their tribal regions. The candidate should come from a different tribe, not the tribe of that constituency. But the candidate must be someone who knows the culture of the people and understands their language. In Liberia we are not short of competent bilingual or even multilingual people who can represent people from other regions in parliament. Moreover, through the educational institution we can create such multicultural political representatives.

From the above submissions one is led to believe that Liberia's democracy has been flawed since its inception, with deep-seated ethnic differences working against the democratic spirits. Taking advantage of the high illiteracy rates and low civic awareness among the masses, politicians exploit the tribal sentiments of the people to further their diabolical interests, leading to ethnic voting rather than conscientious exercising of democratic rights. These challenges bedevilled Liberian democracy from the neo-colonial regime of the Americo-Liberian era until the present.

I now will explore the literature to see how it conflates with the views expressed by my research participants.

4.2 Literature Review on Tribalism and Democracy in Liberia

4.2.1 Quality of democracy in Liberia

The EIU's democracy index is based on five measurement vignettes: *electoral process and pluralism, functioning of government, political participation, political culture, and civil liberties*. Based on this criterion, the EIU (2022, p. 67) identifies four types of regimes in operation around the world: *full democracy, flawed democracy, hybrid regime or authoritarian regime. Full democracies* are where there is adequate respect for "basic political freedoms and civil liberties", media diversity and independence, independent judiciary, effective rule of law and effective system of checks and balances. In *flawed democracies* there is basic respect for civil liberties and media freedom, free and fair elections, though there are "significant weaknesses in other aspects of democracy, including problems in governance, an underdeveloped political culture and low levels of political participation." In *hybrid regimes* elections are held regularly but are not free and fair; judicial independence, media freedom and political opposition are restricted; corruption is widespread, while the rule of law and civil society are weak. *Authoritarian regimes* refer to a system where the "political pluralism is absent or heavily circumscribed." It is a state of dictatorship. There is no judicial independence; elections are sham or non-existent, and there is widespread abuse of human rights and infringement on media and political expression.

Based on the above criteria, the EIU (2022, p.9) has subsequently listed Liberia as a *hybrid regime*. However, I am inclined to revise EIU's grading and instead raise Liberia's democracy bar a step higher to a flawed democracy. This is for two reasons: First, the EIU survey preceded the November 2023 presidential elections which international election monitors and observers unanimously acclaimed as an unprecedented free-and-fair electoral exercise in Liberia's political history, with the incumbent gracefully conceding to his rival, even before the vote counting could end, and in spite of the extremely narrow gap in the vote-count - 50.9% : 49.1% (Reuters, November 19, 2023) - between the two contestants. Second, as usual of Western evaluators of socio-political affairs in Africa whereby Western ethnocentrisms determine the yardstick, typical African analysts may view the EIU's democracy index as Westcentric to a certain extent (Edor, 2024; Oduor, 2019). For instance, the right to abortion LGBQT+ rights are all integral parts of the EIU's measure of civil liberties and political freedoms – concerns over these categories of rights saw the U.S demoted from full democracy to flawed democracy in 2016 (EIU, 2022). However, being unapologetic conservative Christians and Muslims, the overwhelming majority of the people in most African countries, including Liberia, would not recognize these concerns as legitimate human rights and would instead level accusations of seeking to impose Western values on Africa. In this case, the idea of 'hybridity', where the 'global' meets 'the 'local' (Uhlin, 2021, p. 11) would be a useful mediator in a quest for some objectivity. In other words, the views and sentiments of the Liberian people themselves as to what democracy actually means should be coupled with the expert opinion of external observers in determining the quality and extent of democracy obtained in Liberia. Against this background, I consider it helpful to juxtapose the EIU's index with that of the *Afrobarometer* (2008-2018) which actually considers local opinion in evaluating democracy in Liberia.

Afrobarometer explores popular understanding of democracy in Liberia using a series of "democracy vignettes"... with responses ranging from completely democratic, to a democracy with minor problems, a democracy with major problems, or not a democracy." The report indicates that Liberians had "a good understanding of the meaning of democracy." From the Afrobarometer reports, Liberians' understanding of democracy is not quite the same as that of the EIU. So much so that even media freedom and strong political opposition parties, which are regarded as prerequisite balancing forces in a functioning democracy in the Western sense, are not considered by majority of Liberians to be so sacrosanct for a democratic state to operate. Yet a majority (62%) of Liberians believe that their country is a "full democracy" or a "democracy with minor problems" (Afrobarometer, 2023a, p. 1).

Liberians in Australia view the political system in their country as tribal and ethnic-based. These descriptions are not congruent with the idea of full democracy. Besides, in view of the widespread cases of miscarriage of justice, including "extrajudicial killings, arbitrary arrests and restrictions on freedom of expression and media" still ongoing in Liberia (Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labour, 2023a, p.1), perhaps few external analysts would feel morally comfortable to agree with the 62% Liberians who think that their country is a "full democracy". Yet it would be equally arbitrary and self-opinionated to ignore the opinion of this majority and classify their country as a hybrid regime as per the index of the EIU outlined above. That is why I consider it fair to use the term 'flawed democracy'. (i.e. the midway between full democracy and hybrid regime) to describe Liberia's case.

Unfortunately, my investigation did not ask Liberians for the definition of democracy. Neither did my research participants use these specific terms – *full democracy, complete democracy, flawed democracy, hybrid regime or authoritarian regime* – to describe the political scene in their country. They used deprecating expressions such as this: "There has never been a genuine democracy in Liberia... This cannot work with real democracy" (Respondent LBM49). Against this backdrop, it has become necessary for me to negotiate the grading terminology for Liberian democracy based on a dialogue between the published literature and the circumlocutory expressions of my research participants.

4.2.2 Historical context of tribal democracy in Liberia

For Liberians living in Australia, democracy in their country is flawed by virtue of tribal politics, ethnic-based electoral constituencies and under-representation of certain tribes in government. These traits of democratic deficiency are not an aberrant intrusion into Liberian politics. Ethnic politics/style of governance in all of its ramifications formed the foundational bricks of the Liberian state and has been the essential mechanism in the country's socio-political and economic progression and regression through the decades. The Americo-Liberians established and ruled over an apartheid state. The art of governance was the exclusive privilege of the tiny minority of Americo-Liberians only. The indigenous people were not only completely excluded from the government but also, having been denied citizenship and education, they were not even allowed to vote. While marginalizing and disfranchising the indigenous populations, the Americo-Liberian elites actually patronized ethnic chiefs in a divide-and-conquer strategy to maintain their ethnic hegemony over the indigenous people (Bøås and Utas, 2014).

Popular feelings of alienation and frustration over the Americo-Liberians' tribalistic and exclusionary style of governance eventually gave expression to popular rejoicing and celebrations in Liberian streets to welcome an indigenous coup d'état led by Samuel Doe in 1980. Unfortunately, the euphoria over Doe's coup d'état was short-lived as it soon became clear that the new regime was for the good of Doe's Krahn ethnic group and not for all indigenous people in the country. Virtually all positions of high significance in government and the military under Doe's regime were filled up by his fellow Krahns. As explained earlier on, the other tribes were not only excluded from Doe's government but were also subjected to brutal treatment as political opponents. Tensions between the Krahn and other tribes augmented already-existing traditional/historical differences between the various tribes to fragment the Liberian society into pieces of ethnic blocks and thus fostered the mood for civil war (Bøås and Utas, 2014).

4.2.3 Current state of tribal democracy in Liberia

In post-conflict nations, elections and peaceful transfer of power are often mistaken for the healing of old pains and the return of peace and normalcy, and Liberia is a victim of this kind of misconception (Bøås and Utas, 2014). Far from healing pre-existing wounds, the agonizing circumstances of the civil wars only aggravated the socio-political cleavages that had led to these wars. It is these very antagonistic cleavages that determine the outcome of the electoral processes in Liberia. Whether presidential candidates in post-war Liberia can win votes in any particular constituency depends on the kind of tribal alliances they form and not by virtue of the ideological merits or personal integrity of the candidate in question (Bøås and Utas, 2014). Against this background of ethnic-based electoral constituencies, one can only expect that positions in government will be filled by members of the tribes that voted for the winning candidate. In fact, Liberia's constitutional order of power-concentration in the Executive branch of government, in spite of constitutional claims to separation of powers, leaves too much space for political adversaries (in other words, unfavourable tribes) to be excluded from government positions. The following passage from October 6, 2017 edition of the Washington Post remains true even today:

True, Liberians can vote for the candidate of their choice. Yet power remains concentrated in the office of the president to an extraordinary extent. She appoints everyone from regional leaders to local sheriffs and judges. The result is a system of patronage run wild. Elected officials and political aspirants at every level — from the national government to schools and hospitals — focus on continued access to authority and money rather than policy objectives.

Nevertheless, there are grounds for hope in the future of Liberian democracy. On the evening of 14 November 2023, following a presidential runoff elections, Liberians, Africans and global observers were thrilled and elated to hear these words of gracious concession coming out of the mouth of President George Weah on Liberia national television.

> Ladies and gentlemen, tonight, the CDC (party) has lost the election, but Liberia has won. This is the time for graciousness in defeat, to put national interest above personal interest. The Liberian people have spoken, and we have heard their voice. However, the closeness of the results reveals a deep division within our country…

The news media throughout West Africa and beyond was stormed with eulogies and accolades to President Weah as a true statesman of Liberia and a living example for other African leaders who have earned global notoriety for doctoring electoral procedures and processes to perpetuate their grip on power. A popular saying goes: 'Rome was not built in a day'. The so-called full democracies evolved over long periods of time. One can hope that the high degree of civil and political maturity Liberian politicians and people exhibited in the 2023 general elections is a huge leap in the march towards the development of the ideal democratic culture whereby enlightened ideological politics will displace tribal politics.

5. Sierra Leone
5.1 Data Exposition and Interpretation on Tribalism and Democracy in Sierra Leone

Unlike the Liberians who overwhelming listed tribalism as a primary factor in their civil war, only 16% (4/25)of Sierra Leoneans listed tribalism as a direct factor in their civil war. However, the vast majority (73%) of them believed that tribalism had become a major threat to peace and stability in post-war Sierra Leone by sabotaging the growth of democracy in the country. Table 3 below summarises their response by theme:

Table 3 Response by theme on how Tribalism works against democracy in Sierra Leone

Theme	No of respondents (out 25)	Percentage
Political dominance of particular tribes	17	68%
Tribalized electioneering and governance	19	76%
Tribalism as potential trigger of future conflict	19	76%
Average	**18**	**73%**

Here are a few extracts from the interview transcripts:

Respondent SLF43:

> When we talk of democracy, we are actually talking of a level-playing field for all citizens irrespective of their tribe or ethnicity. .. The war was caused by hate borne by prejudice, misinformation, ignorance and fear of others. Unfortunately, tribalism and abuse of power remain the two dominant evils. There are two dominant tribes, the Mendes and Temnes. These two tribes control the government and not only they discriminate against each other, but also they marginalize all other tribes. No equal opportunities in terms of access to education, jobs and the like. Just by looking at your family name people know where you come from, which tribe you belong to, and you can be denied an opportunity based on your tribal identity. There is no equality in anything; everything is based on who you know, not on what you have, not your qualification. So sadly, the most important qualification is the tribe and not education. Politics is like family business, and this is inter-generational. That was the incubator of the civil war. Unfortunately, it is still going on. No improvement has been made after the war. The war obviously did not teach us any lesson.

Respondent SLF47 echoed the generic role of tribalism as a conflict factor in Sierra Leone:

Tribal democracy is not democracy … In my opinion, politics and tribalism have been the primary drivers of conflicts in Sierra Leone. The civil war had its origins in a power struggle between the military and the government. But tribalism was part of all that. Tribal affiliations became more pronounced in the government, with the leader of the country being a Temne and the ruling government predominantly composed of his people. This alignment of tribes with political parties, like SLPP and APC, created and has contributed to the ongoing divisions. It's important to note that in Sierra Leone, if you identify as a Mende, you're often assumed to be an SLPP supporter, while identifying as a Temne may lead to assumptions of APC affiliation. This intertwining of tribal identity with political allegiance is unhealthy and is deepening the divisions. This complex relationship between tribalism and politics in Sierra Leone needs to be addressed for a more harmonious and inclusive society. In an ideal Sierra Leone, citizens should have the freedom to support any political party without fear of tribal retribution or persecution. Unity and a shared national identity should transcend tribal lines.

Respondent SLM67 echoed the preceding presenter's view that tribalism is only being used as a political instrument in Sierra Leone:

In the times we were growing up, tribalism was not a prominent concern. We attended school together, not bothered by each other's tribes. We lived side by side in shared accommodations, mingled freely, and even intermarried across tribes. It wasn't until later, perhaps due to the deterioration of the political situation, that tribalism became a noticeable issue. The introduction of tribalism into politics after the war seems to have exacerbated divisions. Back in our days, tribalism was virtually non-existent. But now, you can see it everywhere if you're in Sierra Leone, especially during elections.

Respondent SLM5 also bemoaned tribalism as a counterpoint to democracy. However, being a member of the opposition party, he understandably absolved the previous government and blamed the situation on the current regime:

… As for the current situation, there are concerns that tribal divisions have become more pronounced. In the previous government, which lasted for about 10-11 years, there was more diversity in leadership, with officials from various tribes. However, the current administration is seen as favoring one main tribe in its appointments, leading to a perception of tribalism being on the rise. If the current situation persists for another five years, many people fear that tribalism could escalate further, possibly reaching a point where it becomes a major factor in conflicts. Nobody wishes for such an outcome, especially those of us living in Western democracies who aspire to see positive changes and unity in our home countries. Unfortunately, tribalism appears to be gaining prominence, and this is causing concern among the population… Unless the political system is truly democratized, not just holding elections for show, one can see serious trouble lying ahead …

Similar to the opinions expressed by the Liberians, the Sierra Leonean respondents believe that a combination of educational and legal measures could facilitate the detribalization of the political landscape back home. Respondent SLM36 expressed a similar thought about the situation in Sierra Leone:

The factor of tribe should be eliminated from political elections completely. If I have the power, that is what I will do. The two main political parties in Sierra Leone, the APC and SLPP, are associated with some particular tribes and their regions: North-West for the Temne and their APC, and South-East for the Mende and their SLPP. There should be a law demanding that the APC presidential candidate must come from the South-East, while the candidate for SLPP must come from the North-West. In this way, we can neutralize the tribal sentiment; we can shift attention away from the tribal/regional ideology to national ideology. Voting patterns will no longer be polarized along ethnic or regional lines. Unfortunately, it isn't going to be easy to turn things around. Those who are in charge are not going to change, because the bad system serves their interests. But maybe the younger generations can be trained to think differently, I think so. Our children think differently from us, because they grew up here in Australia; they are more open-minded, in spite of the fact that they experience some racism in school and in the community, they don't have that kind of ethnic bigotry, due to the kind of inclusive ideas they learn in school.

Respondent SLM56 agreed with SLM36:

Tribal democracy is not real democracy, and without proper democracy, we can't hope to have any enduring peace and stability. Two things need to be done. First, the people of Sierra Leone should be educated to understand why they must stop voting along tribal lines. Second, the United Nations should impose a rule that people can no longer contest for elections in their own tribal enclaves. I say the UN because the local politicians will not do it. Contesting for elections

outside of their tribal enclaves is going to demand hard work. They prefer tribal politics because it is cheap, it only plays on the sentiments of the people and does not call for any high intelligence or philosophical imaginations.

The above quotations do not only clearly identify tribalism's historical role in undermining democracy in Sierra Leone, but also, they recognize tribalism's potential for future conflict. One also sees from these quotations that the civil war did not serve as a catalyst for positive. The pre-war state of tribalism and social inequality has resumed and poses significant challenges to Sierra Leone's development and stability. As political actors are the beneficiaries of the status quo, lack of political will and commitment to bringing about positive change projects a bleak scenario.

One critical observation that might be made here is the apparent overemphasis on tribalism as an obstacle to democracy. A more nuanced explanation would explore other factors that intersect with tribalism to create a state of flawed democracy. Factors such as corruption, poverty and weak institutions, all of which work against effective democracy, may exist independently of tribalism. In any case, it is important to explore opinions in the literature to examine the quality of democracy in Sierra Leone, both in its historical and current contexts, to see how they align with the views expressed by Sierra Leoneans in Australia.

5.2 Literature Review on Tribalism and Democracy in Sierra Leone

5.2.1 Quality of democracy in Sierra Leone

As with the case of Liberia, the EIU democracy Index (2022) cited above designated Sierra Leone as a *hybrid regime*. This style of governance is characterised by electoral irregularities, political persecution, repression of journalists and civil society, manipulation of judiciary and weakness of the rule of law. For the same reason that I objected to the EIU's designation of Liberia as a hybrid regime, choosing to view it as a flawed democracy instead, I would only give a qualified acceptance to the EIU's designation of Sierra Leone as a hybrid regime. Western evaluation of socio-political affairs in Africa is mostly problematic due to perceptions and influences of Western ethnocentrisms. In May 2007 when a Western journalist asked then President-elect of Nigeria, Umaru Musa Yar'Adua, how much legitimacy he could claim to have as President since international observers had discredited the elections as neither free nor fair, his retort was "By whose standards are the elections not free and fair? Western standards or Nigerian standards?" What Africans may typically frown upon as anti-human, LGBQT+ rights for instance, the Western democratic observer views as a matter of basic human rights which must therefore form an inherent part of the democracy yardstick. It becomes necessary, therefore, to reconcile the African peculiar position with the so-called international standard in order to establish an equilibrium (Uhlin, 2021). Again, the *Afrobarometer* (2008-2023), which considers local opinion in evaluating democracy in Africa, may help in finding this equilibrium.

According to Afrobarometer (2015), Sierra Leoneans define democracy as a political system that involves multiparty political elections, responsible governance, respect for civil liberties/personal freedoms and effective enforcement of the rule of law. With this definition of democracy in mind, 70% of Sierra Leoneans rated their country as a "full democracy" (Afrobarometer, 2021, p. 1).

As in the case of the Liberians, Sierra Leoneans in Australia view the political system in their country as tribal and ethnic-based, descriptions which are incongruous with the idea of full democracy. Besides, over the years, observers have widely discredited the dispensation of civil rights and political freedoms in Sierra Leone. An atmosphere of political repression, restrictions on freedom of expression and assembly, miscarriage of justice, as well as extrajudicial activities by security personnel have been widespread (Amnesty International, 2023; Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labour, 2023). Above all, Sierra Leone's 2023 general elections that maintained President Maada Bio in power were widely indicted by international observers. The electoral miscarriage is aptly summarised in the following passage from the European Union Election Observation Mission's final report:

> … voters' trust in the credibility of elections was undermined by lack of transparency during critical stages of the process, particularly during the tabulation process, and by significant statistical inconsistencies in the results. An independent citizen observer group who voiced concerns was threatened and its leadership had to flee the country, which is indicative to democratic backsliding. (EU Election Observation Mission, 2023, p.6).

This stands in sharp contrast to the widely-praised electoral process that saw a transfer of power to the political opposition in Liberia in 2023. Much as it will be self-opinionated to designate Sierra Leone as a hybrid regime in disregard of the sentiments of the 70% of Sierra Leoneans who view their country as a "full democracy", it may look unserious to place Sierra Leone at par with Liberia (as a "Flawed democracy") on the democracy chart in the face of the opaqueness of the electoral system in Sierra Leone plus the poor rating by Sierra Leoneans in Australia. Consequently, a middle-way between flawed democracy and hybrid regime, say a 'semi-hybrid regime', might sound more appropriate.

5.2.2 Historical context of Tribal democracy in Sierra Leone

Sierra Leoneans in Australia complain about the political dominance of some particular tribes as well as tribalized electioneering and governance. Consequently, they view tribalism as anathema to democracy and a potential trigger of future conflict. There is a historical context to this political condition. Sierra Leone was established as a dumping ground for Britain's freed slaves. The first batch of 600 settlers were shipped to Sierra Leone in April 1787 and disembarked on a new settlement to be named as Freetown, the present-day capital city of Sierra Leone (Dowden, 2009). These settlers and their descendants came to be known as the Krio. With education and economic support from the British colonizers, the settlers thrived and became a distinct stock in the midst of the poor/uneducated indigenous populations. However, unlike the case of the Americo-Liberians who played the role of domestic colonizers in Liberia after their independence, the Krio did not wield a domineering political power in Sierra Leone after independence from Britain. Ethnic politics played out between the indigenous populations themselves. The two largest ethnic groups in Sierra Leone are the Mende and the Temne. The two dominant political parties which have been ruling the country alternately since independence are (the Mende-dominate) Sierra People's Party (SLPP) and (the Temne-dominated) All People's Congress (APC). At independence in April 1961, with a Mende man Sir Milton Margai as the first Prime Minister of the country, the Mendes emerged at the helm of political leadership in Sierra Leone. The government of Margai, a founding member and Leader of the SLPP, who had been the Head of government since 1954, has generally been viewed positively (Alie, in Ayissi & Poulton, 2000). Upon Milton Margai's sudden death in April 1964, his brother Albert Margai succeeded him in office. Analysts trace the menacing phenomenon of tribalistic governance in Sierra Leone to the regime of Albert Margai. Siaka Stevens, leader of the APC, who ousted Alber Margai as Prime Minster in a general election in March 1967, laid these charges against his predecessor:

> While stuffing his henchmen into the power-centres of politics, he was cramming every vacancy in the civil service and armed forces with fellow-tribesmen. Margai's retreat into tribalism more divisive and a sectionalism more acute than any previously practised even by the SLPP was the worst thing that had happened to Sierra Leone since Independence. When we needed unity most, Margai set us at each other's throats. When we most needed to set tribalism aside, Margai exploited it with frantic ruthlessness... Large numbers even of his tribesmen rejected his divisive policies and voted for us. (Tarawilie, in Sierra Leone Live, 2021, p. 1).

However, Siaka Stevens' 18-year-rule (1967-1985) has not been judged to be less tribalistic, sectionalistic, divisive and ruthless than that of Albert Margai (Ducasse-Rogier, 2004). After declaring a one-party state in 1978, Siaka surrounded himself with his relatives, tribesmen and cronies in every corner of private and public life (Mitsumoto, 2014; Young, 2012; Richards, 1996). With every public position of considerable significance being occupied by his Temne tribesmen, Siaka's rule became a microcosm of tribalistic governance. The tribalistic style of governance continued under the Presidency of Joseph Momoh's who succeeded Siaka in 1985 (Dowden, 2009). Tribal politicians in post-independence Sierra Leone concentrated power in the hands of certain tribes, disenfranchising rival tribes, and turning state assets into tribal property. It was under the state of economic collapse fostered by tribalistic style of ineptitude governance that the civil war (1991-2002) erupted (Momoh, Kamara, Koroma, 2023).

In line with the dominant impressions in the literature downplaying the role of tribalism in causing the civil war in Sierra Leone, only 16% of respondents blamed the war on tribalism, though 84% believe that tribalism might slide the country back into civil war. Respondent SLM51-A asserted: "No, no. Ours was different from what happened in Rwanda. We didn't have tribes rising against each other like that." However, looking at the ethnically-polarized nature of the regimes that preceded the war, it would not be adequately intelligible for one to dismiss tribal resentment as an incentive for the war merely because, in the confusion that ensued, tribalism disappeared from the surface. Any such approach that totally ignores or even de-emphasizes the tribal factor in the formative stage of the war must be ahistorical in one sense or another. In other words, if poverty and economic hardship engulfed the nation and unleashed socio-political chaos because tribal patronage had entrenched inept and corrupt administration in power, then obviously, tribalism cannot be plausibly absolved as a causal factor in the war.

5.2.3 Current state of tribal democracy in Sierra Leone

In summary, party politics in Sierra Leone became "characterised by ethnic and regional divisions after independence" (Keen, 2005, in Matsumoto, 2014, pp113-14), and this has continued even today (Jalloh, 2024; Jalloh, 2023; Momoh, Kamara, Koroma, 2023). It is heart-rendering that the pre-war state of tribal polarizations of leadership and governance has been reinstated as the political norm. The two largest ethnic groups in the country, the Temne and the Mende, occupy the Northern part and the Southern part of the country respectively. The two main political parties, the All People's Congress (APC) and the Sierra Leone People's Party (SLPP), are dominated by the Temne and the Mende respectively. Other tribes in the North and South may be active in these two political parties, but even those minority tribes who are affiliated with these two parties see themselves only as tenants in the political dominions of their domineering Temne and Mende fellows (Momoh, Kamara, Koroma, 2023). The internet is awash with articles and write-ups condemning what was dubbed the politics of "Northernization of Sierra Leone" under the government of

former President Earnest Bai Koroma of the APC (2007-2018). Under Koroma's government "the vast majority (95%) of the cabinet positions" were "held by people from the northern and western regions who make up about 47% of Sierra Leone's population …" (Moriba and Edwards, 2009, pp 89-90). For grievances due to ethnic-power greed and marginalization by Koroma's regime, the APC government was voted out of power in favour of the SLPP in 2018. The SLPP was re-elected in 2023. Unfortunately, the SLPP under President Julius Bio is currently deemed to be performing no better than the APC did - all the evidence points to a vendetta policy of *Southernization* under Bio's regime, with 73% of cabinet ministers and 65% of deputy ministers being Mendes, even though Mendes constitute only about 30% of the country's population (Sierra Leone Telegraph: 3 April 2021). Mass dismissal of public workers perceived to be supporters of the opposition party has been a tit-for-tat convention for both the SLPP and APC whenever there is a change of party in government (WARM, 2023; Bangura, 2023).In Sierra Leone, elections are fought and won on the bases of ethnic and regional loyalties rather than any ideological merits (Afrobarometer, 2023). One can only win an election within one's own ethnic stronghold. The South and East of the country are the political preserve of the Mende-led the SLPP while the North and West are reserved for the Temne-led the APC. An attempt by one party to woe votes from another party's ethnic base or region is seen as a provocation that should be violently repelled. Ethnic votes result in the formation of tribal-biased cabinet and political appointments (WANEP-WARM, 2023; Bangura, 2023). It is the winner-takes-all politics and, as "inter-party cooperation is practically nonexistent" (BTI, 2024, p. 4), national interest is sacrificed on the altar of inter-ethnic bigotry.

In Sierra Leone, tribalism works against the evolution of good democracy because it thwarts the emergence and development of party pluralism. Because the two main political parties are polarized along the Temne-Mende ethnic dividing lines, attempts to form a third political party has often generated intra-ethnic antagonisms and hostilities since such a third party has to draw its membership from, thereby causing a political split within, one of the two main ethnic groups. Fear of reprisals from fellow tribesmen deter potential proponents of a third political party. Even when such third parties are formed, they die prematurely due to unwillingness of fellow tribesmen to splinter from the mainstream party (SLPP or APC). Against this background, the People's Movement for Democratic Change (PMDC), splintered from the SLPP in 2007, could not thrive. For the same reason, the Alliance Democratic Party (ADP), splintered from the APC in 2015, could not achieve any significant political success (Momoh, Kamara, Koroma, 2023).

Tribalism also holds democracy hostage in the name of security. The pre-war political stratagem of 'Lumpen youth' whereby the people in power used a network of tribal gangs of rascal youth to intimidate and harass political opponents has continued in post-war era on a much larger and deadlier scale. All political parties and candidates maintain security teams comprising ex-combatants drawn from their own ethnic group (WANEP-WARM, 2023; Momoh, Kamara, Koroma, 2023). On the eve of the June 2023 elections, a protester shouted into the microphone of the CNN: "We are tired with the austerity, we're tired with the problems, the killings, the brutality, tribalism, nepotism, all kinds of things. You know, no democracy, no freedom of speech. The people are tired." (Busari, 2023, p. 1)

In view of the foregoing, it is no wonder that both domestic and international monitors of the situation in Sierra Leone are virtually unanimous in warning that the speedy rise in political violence orchestrated by political manipulation of ethnic differences has placed the nation on a steep backward march from the initial post-war gains in peace and nation-building (BTI, 2024; ACLED, 2023; WARM, 2023). Writing under the heading "The Myth of a Peaceful Sierra Leone", The Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project (ACLED) report on Sierra Leone (2020, p. 10) stated: "By early 2020, Sierra Leone found itself at levels of political violence that were higher than at any time since the end of the war. Some months in 2018 and 2019 show levels of political violence that are comparable with periods during the civil war." Afrobarometer (2023) found that ahead of the general elections in 2023, the proportion of Sierra Leoneans who identified with their tribe more than their country was on the rise while tolerance for tribal, religious and political differences was in sharp decline.

It is important to note that no matter how the situation in Sierra Leone deteriorates, the opinion of citizens depends on their ethno-political inclinations. For instance, regarding the state of tribalistic governance in Sierra Leone, Respondent SLM51, the local chairman of the APC in one Australian city, bemoaned:

> In the previous government under the APC, which lasted for about 10-11 years, there was more diversity in leadership, from officials from various tribes. However, the current administration is seen as favoring one main tribe in its appointments, leading to perceptions of tribalism being on the rise.

When the same question was put to his SLLP counterpart, Respondent SLM45-B, he asserted:

> Under the previous administration, government appointments were based on ethnic bias. However, the current administration has worked hard to improve the situation, to ensure ethnic balance and equity in the distribution of government resources and appointments.

With this type of blame-game going on among politicians, one is left wondering when the common citizens will ever be allowed to unite in advocating an objective way forward.

6. Conclusion

This article concludes that Liberians and Sierra Leoneans in Australia see tribalism as holding democracy hostage back home, thereby thwarting hopes for consolidated, lasting peace and stability in these post-war countries. The literature reviewed provides overwhelming evidence supporting the sentiments expressed by Liberians and Sierra Leoneans in Australia on this topic. Tribalism is viewed as a brake on development in these countries where one's position in public life, economic and political opportunities are determined by one's tribal affinity rather than the objective criteria of democracy. The challenge to democracy in these countries is not so much about the prevalence of tribal diversity, but the cynical exploitation of tribal differences by political demagogues. Political parties are symmetric with tribal identities, and electoral constituencies are nothing more than tribal enclaves. Voting along ethnic lines ultimately translates into government along ethnic lines. To stem tribal democracy, two measures need to be adopted. Tribal voting in national elections should be stopped. This can be done by means of legislative enactment obliging political parties to impose candidates from different tribes/regions of the country so that people are voting for the political ideology represented by the candidate and not because of his/her tribal identity. Crude imposition of candidates from another tribe/region may encounter resentment and intransigence from the people. Thus, such imposition must necessarily be preceded with a persuasive educational program that will win the conviction, consent and support of the people. Perhaps the biggest challenge is that these measures can only be so feasible if there are political will and support for their adoption and execution.

7. Limitations of the Study

This study employed non-probability sampling techniques, which may limit representativeness. In addition, the author's lack of firsthand experience in Liberia and Sierra Leone may have influenced his interpretation of the data. While acknowledging these limitations, I am confident that the study's methodology and critical analysis ensure the trustworthiness and validity of the findings.

8. Recommendation for Further Research

One of the most thought-provoking opinions of the research participants is the suggestion that to detribalize the political landscape, political parties must be obliged to field electoral candidates outside of the candidates' own tribal constituencies. It would be exciting to see a future study exploring how this constituency-detribalization might be facilitated in Liberia and Sierra Leone.

Biography

Issah Hassan Tikumah: Originally from Ghana, Issah Tikumah has previously undertaken research work conducting interviews with community leaders, schoolteachers and administrators in Colleges of Education in Northern Nigeria. He has taught at Ahmadu Bello University in Nigeria; The University of Cape Verde; and Jean-Piaget University. Tikumah has a number of books - including novels and essays – and journal articles to his credit. His latest publications include *The Australian Model of Multiculturalism for Anti-tribalism Education in African Schools: Focus on Liberia and Sierra Leone* (2025) – journal article; *Sociological Thinking as an Educational Antidote to Tribalism in Africa* (2024) – journal article; *The Colonial Creation of Tribalism in Africa (?)* (2023) - journal article; *Africanism: Commonsense for Beginners* (2017), which compares Ghana with Australia from a socio-cultural perspective; *Refugees' Rebellion* (2015), a comedy based on his experiences in a refugee camp; and *Baptism of Orphanhood* (2013), an autobiography. For his critical writings, he was expelled from Nigeria in 2010. Tikumah has received several international scholarly nominations, including: ICORN Guest-Writer (2012); and Elsbeth-Wolffheim Scholar (2013).

References

[1] Afrobarometer. (2023a). Liberians support democratic governance and oppose non-democratic alternatives. *Afrobarometer* https://www.afrobarometer.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/03/News-release-Liberians-support-democratic-governance-Afrobarometer-ma-bh-21mar23-1.pdf Accessed 27 May 2024

[2] Afrobarometer. (2023b). Ahead of election, should Sierra Leoneans be worried about social cohesion? *Afrobarometer* Dispatch No. 619 Dispatch No. 619 23 March 2023 | https://www.afrobarometer.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/03/AD619-Ahead-of-election-should-Sierra-Leoneans-be-worried-about-social-cohesion-Afrobarometer-23march23-1.pdf Accessed 27 May 2024

[3] Afrobarometer. (2018). Liberians endorse democracy but are dissatisfied with the way it's working in their country. *Afrobarometer* Dispatch No. 257 21 November 2018https://www.afrobarometer.org/publication/ad257-liberians-endorse-democracy-are-dissatisfied-way-its-working-their-country/

[4] Afrobarometer (2015). Sierra Leonean perceptions of democracy. https://www.afrobarometer.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/11/srl_r6_presentation1_democracy_11112015.pdf
Accessed 28 May 2024

[5] Afrobarometer. (2008). Popular opinions on democracy in Liberia. *Afrobarometer Briefing Paper* No. 73 October 2009.
           https://www.afrobarometer.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/02/AfrobriefNo73.pdf

[6] Armed Conflict Location and Event Data Project (ACLED) (2020). When emerging democracies breed violence: Sierra Leone 20 years after the civil war. https://acleddata.com/2020/12/16/when-emerging-democracies-breed-violence-sierra-leone-20-years-after-the-civil-war/

[7] Bangura, Y. (2023).Sierra Leone's Voter Registration Data Discredits the Midterm Census Data: What are Implications for the Presidential Election of June 2023? *CODESRIA Bulletin Online*, No. 6, May 2023 Page 1
https://journals.codesria.org/index.php/codesriabulletin/article/view/4717/5033

[8] BTI transformation Index. Sierra Leone Country Report 2024 https://bti-project.org/en/reports/country-report/SLE

[9] Bøås, M. and Utas, M. (2014). The Political Landscape of Postwar Liberia: Reflections on National Reconciliation and Elections. *Africa Today* , Vol. 60, No. 4 (Summer 2014), pp. 47-65. Indiana University Press Stable URL: https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.2979/africatoday.60.4.47

[10] Boese, A. V. (2019). How (not) to measure democracy. *International Area Studies Review* Vol 22, Issue 2. https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/full/10.1177/2233865918815571

[11] Bureau Of Democracy, Human Rights, And Labor. (2023a). Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: Liberia https://www.state.gov/reports/2023-country-reports-on-human-rights-practices/liberia/ Accessed 28 May 2024

[12] Bureau Of Democracy, Human Rights, And Labor (2023b) Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: Sierra Leone https://www.state.gov/reports/2023-country-reports-on-human-rights-practices/sierra-leone/ Accessed 28 May 2024

[13] Busari, S. (2023). Tensions mount as Sierra Leone prepares for high-stakes elections. *CNN* June 23, 2023**.** https://edition.cnn.com/2023/06/23/africa/sierra-leone-election-walk-up-intl/index.html Accessed 27 May 2024

[14] Carothers, T. and Hartnett, B. (2024). Misunderstanding Democratic Backsliding. *Journal of Democracy*. Vol 35, Issue 3, pp. 24-37 https://www.journalofdemocracy.org/articles/misunderstanding-democratic-backsliding/

[15] Economist Intelligence Unit (2022). *Democracy Index 2022.* https://www.eiu.com/n/campaigns/democracy-index-2022/

[16] EU Election Observation Mission on Sierra Leone 2023 Final Report https://www.europarl.europa.eu/cmsdata/279777/Sierra-Leone-EEAS-Final-report.pdf

[17] Fakondo V (2008) Tribalism in Sierra Leone politics: Tribalism/ethnicity overshadowed politics in Sierra Leone, *Sierra Express Media*. Retrieved on November 12, 2008, Available at: http://www.sierraexpressmedia.com/articles/id438.html (accessed 27 February 2024)

[18] Ignatieff, M. (2024). When Democracy is on the Ballot. Journal of Democracy. Vol 35, Issue 3, pp. 17-23 https://www.journalofdemocracy.org/articles/misunderstanding-democratic-backsliding/

[19] Jalloh, A. A. (2024). President Bio's dangerous game of tribalism threatens Sierra Leone's unity. Sierra Leone Telegraph: 14 April 2024https://www.thesierraleonetelegraph.com/president-bios-dangerous-game-of-tribalism-threatens-sierra-leones-unity/

[20] Jalloh, M. (2023). Tribalism in Sierra Leone : How little have we learned from the past. *Cocorioko: The Voice of the People* (July 31, 2023) https://cocorioko.net/tribalism-in-sierra-leone-how-little-we-have-learned-from-the-past/

[21] Momoh, H. B; Kamara, F. B; Koroma, C. B. (2023). The 2023 Elections in Sierra Leone: Identifying Potential Conflict Flashpoints and Spoilers. DOI**:** https://doi.org/10.30574/gscarr.2022.11.3.0140

[22] Moriba M and Edwards MC (2009) Tribalism and its consequences: A cancer affecting the corpus of educational leadership in many West African countries. In Wiseman, A. W. (ed) (2009). *Educational leadership: Global contexts and international comparisons. Vol. 11 doi: 10.1108/1479-367(20090000011006* (accessed 29 February 2024)

[23] Mulgan, R. G. (2017). Defining 'Democracy', *Political Science* Vol 20, 1968 – Issue 2, Published online: 02 May 2017 https://doi.org/10.1177/003231876802000201 retrieved 12/12/23

[24] Oduor, R.M.J. (2019). Liberal Democracy: an African Critique. *South African Journal of Philosophy*, Vol.38 No.1, pp.108-122. https://doi.org/10.1080/02580136.2019.1583882

[25] Osman, O. (2022). Rethinking the Liberian Predicament in Anti-Black Terms*:* On Repatriation, Modernity, and the Ethno-Racial Choreographies of Civil War. *Journal of the Theoretical Humanities*, Vol 27, 2022 - Issue 3-4 https://doi.org/10.1080/0969725X.2022.2093933

[26] Reuters. (19.11.2023). Liberia President George Weah concedes election defeat to Joseph November 19, 20232 https://www.reuters.com/world/africa/joseph-boakai-brink-liberian-presidency-vote-count-nears-completion-2023-11-17/

[27] Sierra Leone Live (March 30, 2021) On the History of Corruption and Tribalism in Sierra Leone https://sierraleonelive.com/on-the-history-of-corruption-and-tribalism-in-sierra-leone/ Accessed 28 May 2024

[28] Shilue, J. S. (2012). Citizenship or "Autochthony" in Post-Conflict Liberia? The Perils and Challenges of Ethnic/Religious Connections Forged by War and History.
https://www.manchester.edu/docs/default-source/academics/by-major/philosophy-and-religious-studies/journal/volume-5-issue-1-2-fall-2011-spring-2012/citizenship-or-autochthony-in-post-conflict-liberia.pdf?sfvrsn=56668962_2

[29] Uhlin, F. (2021**).** Liberal democracy from beneath? A study of norm internalization in post-war Liberia**.** Lunds University Department of Political Science, Peace and Conflict Studies. https://lup.lub.lu.se/student-papers/search/publication/9046861   22/12/2023

[30] Wanep Alert and Response Mechanism (WARM) (2023). Policy Brief on Sierra Leone. 2023 General Elections: Challenges and Opportunities for Democratic Consolidation.

https://wanep.org/wanep/wp-content/uploads/2023/05/Sierra-Leone-PB5.pdf

[31] Washingtonpost. (October 6, 2017). Liberia's democracy is failing its people. https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/democracy-post/wp/2017/10/06/liberias-democracy-is-failing-its-people/

[32] Zenna, F. (2023). The Impact of Tribalism on Liberian Politics and the Need to Rise Above Tribalism to Patriotism**.** *The New Dawn October 17, 2023*https://thenewdawnliberia.com/the-impact-of-tribalism-on-liberian-politics-and-the-need-to-rise-above-tribalism-to-patriotism/