

**WARID:** Liberia (LURD, MODEL) 2000-2003

**STARDATE:** 1 August 2000

**ENDDATE:** 18 August 2003

Related Cases: Liberia (NPFL) 1989-1996  
Sierra Leone (RUF, AFRC) 1991-2000

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### **Conflict overview**

In Liberia's first civil war that started in December 1989 and lasted until 1996, Charles Taylor and his rebel faction, the National Patriotic Front of Liberia (NPFL), brought down the autocratic regime of President Samuel Doe. In the presidential and parliamentary elections in 1997, Taylor secured both the presidency and an absolute majority in the legislature for his newly founded National Patriotic Party (NPP). However, his regime suffered from cash constraints and witnessed the fractionalization of the security sector while his enemies underwent reforms in exile. They created the new groups: Liberians United for Reconciliation and Democracy (LURD) in 2000<sup>2</sup> and Movement for Democracy in Liberia (MODEL) in 2003. These groups waged a war against the Government of Liberia (GOL) which must be understood as the "expression of the disintegration of Charles Taylor's system of domination" (Gerdes 2013: 154). The warring parties thus fought over political power in Liberia, yet without conceptualizing a concrete vision for the country's future.

On 4 August 2003, the ECOWAS<sup>3</sup> Mission in Liberia (ECOMIL) was deployed under Nigerian leadership to support the ceasefire agreement the warring parties had signed on 17 June. Nevertheless, LURD advanced further, taking Monrovia's Bushrod Island, besieging the capital and shelling it indiscriminately. This resulted in many civilian casualties<sup>4</sup> and fueled calls for international intervention; it also dealt a serious blow to morale within government. On the night of August 6, ECOMIL troops impounded a 30-ton weapon consignment from

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1 Christina Stobwasser prepared one of the two pre-versions of this case description.

2 LURD was founded as a coalition of different foreign-sponsored rebel groups in April 2000. In essence, it was the renewed merger of the former United Liberation Movement for Democracy in Liberia factions ULIMO-K and ULIMO-J. Indeed, while 60% of its fighters had fought with one of the factions, the command structure of LURD was 90% ULIMO (Gerdes 2013: 157; ICG 2002: 5).

3 Economic Community of West African States.

4 The fight for Monrovia claimed about 1,000 lives (Gerdes 2013: 167).

Libya which had been intended for the government forces.<sup>5</sup> This effectively ended the war, leaving Charles Taylor militarily defeated. Taylor stepped down as president on 11 August and went into exile in Nigeria, thus meeting the rebels' key demand. On 18 August 2003, Vice-President turned President Moses Blah signed a Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) with the leaders of LURD and MODEL.<sup>6</sup> Even though the Uppsala Conflict Data Program (UCDP) assesses that the war has ended with the CPA on 18 August 2003, case-specific literature indicates that this agreement was preceded by a military victory of the rebel forces **[WARENDUC=1; WARENDOS=4]**.<sup>7</sup> The war lasted for 37 months **[WARDUR=37]**.

The UCDP's best estimates indicate 2,427 battle-related deaths between 2000 and 2003. Additionally, the UCDP records 2,888 additional deaths resulting from one-sided violence by government forces between 2000 and 2003 for the dyad under investigation. Considering this, the UCDP estimates that a total of 5,315 people were killed in the conflict **[FATALUC=5000]**.<sup>8</sup> Case-specific literature maintains that establishing a viable death toll remains a difficult task being that the main victims were civilians and there were rarely reports about troop casualties (ICG 2003: 8). This is due mainly to the LURD's hit-and-run strategy of avoiding open combat (ICG 2003: 3). UN figures indicate that during both civil wars in Liberia, i.e. between 1989 and 2003, over 250,000 people died of war-related circumstances (UN 2003a: 6, Para. 26; UN Economic and Social Council 2003: 7, Para. 8). For the first war, the UN circulated casualty figures of 150,000 to 200,000 deaths (Ellis 1999: 15). One may derive that 50,000 people were killed in the second Liberian war. However, the UN's figure for the first war is likely exaggerated on account of the erroneous usage of an initial casualty figure (i.e. not only fatalities). Reviewing these numbers along with the war's progression, Ellis (1999: 312-316) arrives at his own estimation of 60,000-80,000 dead as a cause of the first war. If we extrapolate figures for the second war from the first – assuming that 30% of the figure arrived at by the UN is a more accurate estimate –, we arrive at 15,000 fatalities in the second Liberian civil war **[FATALOS=15000]**.

World Bank estimates put Liberia's population at 2,742,000 in 1999 **[PREWARPO=2700000]**.<sup>9</sup> Thus, the war intensity amounts to 0.19% or 0.56%, depending on the fatality figure used **[INTENSUC=0.19; INTENSOS=0.56]**.

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5 In May 2002, the UN Security Council imposed an arms embargo as well as other sanctions on Liberia (ICG 2002: 1)

6 For a conflict overview, see: Gberie 2005; Gerdes 2013; ICG 2002; UN 2003a.

7 Gerdes 2013: 168; [http://www.pcr.uu.se/digitalAssets/125/125018\\_1dyadicdataset1-2014.xlsx](http://www.pcr.uu.se/digitalAssets/125/125018_1dyadicdataset1-2014.xlsx) (1 Jan 2015)

8 [http://www.ucdp.uu.se/gpdatabase/gpcountry.php?id=94&regionSelect=2-Southern\\_Africa#](http://www.ucdp.uu.se/gpdatabase/gpcountry.php?id=94&regionSelect=2-Southern_Africa#) (18 Oct 2014).

9 [api.worldbank.org/v2/en/country/lbr?downloadformat=excel](http://api.worldbank.org/v2/en/country/lbr?downloadformat=excel) (1 Jan 2014).

### **The military balance at the end of the war**

The Taylor government was severely shaken by the shelling of Monrovia carried out by LURD forces. Additionally, it suffered from severe cash constraints and was unable to pay its fighters. Finally, the seizure of a huge weapons consignment from Libya by ECOWAS troops sealed the government's defeat [**VICTORY=1**].<sup>10</sup>

Cunningham et al. (2009) indicate that the LURD did not control any territory during wartime while the MODEL – the smaller faction that only joined the fray in April 2003 – did. Indeed, when the MODEL started its advance from Côte d'Ivoire into Eastern Liberia, it was able to occupy vast timber-rich areas in the southeast. As this region is mostly inhabited by ethnic Krahn, the group that also dominated the MODEL, the faction was greeted with civilian sympathies. Youths joined en masse and there are indications that the rebels provided some social services (Gerdes 2013: 172; Harris 2012: 146). LURD, by comparison, largely employed a hit-and-run strategy that was not aimed at controlling large territories, and it was unable to hold territory for a long period of time (ICG 2002: 3; ICG 2003: 3). The frontlines were highly volatile. As such, we concur with Cunningham et al. in assessing that one of the rebel factions controlled parts of the disputed territory by the end of the war [**REBTERR=1**]. Nevertheless, Taylor still controlled the larger part of Liberia in the summer of 2003 [**MORETERR= -1**].

According to Cunningham et al. (2009), the LURD's fighting capacity was 'moderate' compared with the government forces, while MODEL's was 'low'. Even though government troops largely outnumbered LURD fighters, case-specific literature concurs with the assessment made by Cunningham et al. (Gerdes 2013: 170; ICG 2003: 6). Taylor had to grapple with desertion of his forces, both from the AFL and his paramilitaries. Apart from this, discipline and training were lacking and morale suffered from the fact that the government was behind on salary payments (Gerdes 2013: 157; ICG 2003: 6-7). LURD, in contrast, enforced military discipline through corporal punishment for misbehavior. The provision of order ensured control and legitimacy. Thus, violence against civilians was restricted and more targeted than it had been in the first war; this is not to deny that serious human rights violations were nevertheless committed (Gerdes 2013: 168, 170).<sup>11</sup> Moreover, both rebel factions enjoyed external support: MODEL was armed and financed by Côte

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10 Gerdes 2013: 167-168; ICG 2002: 1.

11 For instance, all armed factions in Liberia practiced abduction and forced recruitment. However, based on interviews with ex-combatants, Bøås/Hatløy (2008: 45) suggest that, during the first and second civil war, about a third of all combatants were forcibly recruited, thereby contesting claims by NGOs that this was true for almost all Liberian fighters.

d'Ivoire and LURD received assistance from Guinea. With support likely coming from the US, Guinea provided financial support as well as safe havens, military training and advice and weapons [REBFIGHT=0].<sup>12</sup> As the GOL suffered a military defeat, only the rebels could have continued fighting by the end of the war [CONFIGHT=1].

Upon his defeat, Charles Taylor had to leave for exile to Nigeria on 11 August 2003, fulfilling the rebels' one and only demand. Nevertheless, Taylor was neither killed nor captured at the end of the war, nor were the political leaders of the LURD or the MODEL [LEADER=0].<sup>13</sup>

In sum, the military balance at the end of the war reflects an advantage for the rebels [WARBAL=0.33].

### **The post-war military balance**

The Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) of 18 August 2003 demanded for the immediate cessation of hostilities between the warring parties from the GOL, the LURD, and the MODEL, along with the disengagement of their forces (CPA 2003: Part II, Art 5). After this, forces were to be withdrawn to cantonment sites for disarmament and further training and reintegration (CPA 2003: Part III, Art. 6). The peace agreement assigned this disarmament, demobilization, rehabilitation and reintegration (DDRR) process to an international stabilization force, i.e. to the UN Mission in Liberia (UNMIL) – the CPA envisioned this to include the ECOMIL contingent that was already present. The disarmament process, which started in December 2003, was officially concluded on 31 October 2004. In a ceremony on 2 November, the rebel forces and the militias fighting for the GOL were officially disbanded [SEPFORCE 2003-2004=0, SEPFORCE 2005-2012=d.e.].<sup>14</sup> As of 1 December 2004, a total of 101,449 combatants had been disarmed and demobilized, 27,000 weapons had been collected along with over six million rounds of small arms ammunition and almost 30,000 other munitions.<sup>15</sup> The reintegration and rehabilitation component focused on educational and social reintegration (Kieh 2012: 221).<sup>16</sup> 95% of all ex-combatants preferred vocational training or formal education as reintegration and rehabilitation measures while only 0.65% opted for employment (Aboagye/Bah 2005: 114-115).

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12 Gerdes 2013: 171-172, ICG 2003: 1, 14.

13 In 2006, then Liberian President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf obtained Taylor's extradition to the Special Court for Sierra Leone where he was tried for his involvement in Sierra Leone's civil war. He was eventually sentenced to a 50-year term in prison (Gerdes 2013: 176).

14 UN 2004b: 5, Para. 21.

15 Aboagye/Bah 2005: 111, 113; Bøås/Hatløy 2008: 33; UN 2004b: 5, Para. 23.

16 Bøås/Hatløy (2008: 49) find no evidence to suggest that combatants were ex-communicated by their families or communities, thus depriving them of the possibility to return after the war.

Unlike DDRR processes in other post-conflict states, the Liberian CPA did not envision the integration of troops from the warring factions into the new army and police force of the state.<sup>17</sup> Instead, it opted for a comprehensive security sector reform (SSR) by which the Armed Forces of Liberia (AFL) were to be disbanded<sup>18</sup> and rebuilt from scratch;<sup>19</sup> the Liberia National Police (LNP) as well as other security and some paramilitary units (e.g. the Special Security Services (SSS)) were to be restructured.<sup>20</sup> According to the CPA, recruits for the new AFL could stem from GOL forces, the LURD, the MODEL or from among civilians – the new AFL was to respect the national balance and not exhibit any political bias (CPA 2003: Part IV, Art 7-8). However, applicants were required to undergo a vigorous screening process with regard to their medical, educational and professional aptness as well as their human rights record. This vetting process was conducted by the private military company DynCorp International (Aboagye/Rupiya 2005: 264). The requirements for education and human rights performance<sup>21</sup> were so high that the overall rejection rate was 82% (52% failed the initial reading exam). Thus, former combatants were effectively barred from participation (Gerdes 2013: 174-175; ICG 2009: 11). The military restructuring was hindered by a need to demobilize and verify the severance pay eligibility of over 13,000 irregular forces and soldiers from the AFL (Cook 2007: 18). The first recruits for the new AFL – which was to consist of 2,000 troops – did not start training until 2006 and the army was hardly functional by 2013 (Gerdes 2013: 224-225). Likewise, the police reform aimed at “ridding [the police] of elements enrolled through Taylor’s good offices and grand regime security agenda after the 1997 elections” (Aboagye/Bah 2005: 118). We therefore conclude that neither of the former warring parties substantially participated in the state’s armed forces or police after they had been disarmed and disbanded [STATEFOR 2003-2004= -1, STATEFOR 2005-2012=d.e.]. We have no reliable data on the strength and armament of the warring parties prior to their official disbandment [TROOPS 2003-2004=n.d., ARMS 2003-2004=n.d., TROOPS 2005-2012=n.r., ARMS 2005-2012=n.r.].

Art. 21 of the CPA established an all-inclusive transitional government, the National Transitional Government of Liberia (NTGL). It could exercise authority throughout the

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17 <http://www.ssresourcecentre.org/countries/ssr-country-snapshot-liberia/> (3 Jan 2015).

18 In fact, the CPA stipulated that the army should be “restructured”. However, in the implementation process, this was taken to mean “disbanded and rebuilt”.

19 Thus, no one was retained from either Samuel Doe’s Armed Forces of Liberia or the network of militias and death squads that were part of Charles Taylor’s military apparatus (ICG 2005: 17).

20 Security sector reform was essentially a foreign task, with the US being responsible for recentralizing military power in the AFL and UNMIL for conducting the restructuring of the LNP (Gerdes 2013: 175).

21 Potential recruits had to be at least eighteen years old, pass a written high school proficiency test (the requirement of a high school diploma could not be maintained) and an initial physical test (one-mile run, sit-ups and push-ups) and be screened for HIV, tuberculosis and illegal drug use.

unitary state of Liberia and was to take office on 14 October 2003 and hand over power to the newly elected government in January 2006. The GOL was to remain in office until 14 October 2003, led by Vice-President Moses Blah (CPA 2003: Part VIII, Art. 20-21). As there is no information pointing to the contrary, we assume that the warring parties likewise continued to occupy their fiefs [**TERRCON 2003=0; TERRWIN 2003=0**]. On 19 September 2003, the UN Security Council (2003b) mandated the UNMIL as a peacekeeping and stabilization force in Liberia. It was tasked with “assist[ing] in the maintenance of law and order throughout Liberia” (art. 1), “protect[ing] civilians under imminent threat of physical violence” (art. 2j) and the “reestablishment of national authority throughout the country” (art. 2p). This seems to indicate that the NTGL itself was not able to maintain control over the country after it had taken office. Moreover, after their official disbandment on 2 November 2004, the warring factions did not dispose of armed forces any longer, which effectively barred them from (re)asserting territorial control [**TERRCON 2004-2005=d.e.; TERRWIN 2004-2005=0**]. During the Disarmament Process, a number of former LURD combatants occupied the Guthrie rubber plantation.<sup>22</sup> Other former combatants engaged in illegal gold mining and poaching in Sapo National Park.<sup>23</sup> However, case-specific literature suggests that these combatants were trying to make a living for themselves rather than effectuating territorial control for the former factions. As scheduled by the CPA, presidential and parliamentary elections were celebrated in October 2005. Ellen Johnson Sirleaf from the Unity Party (UP) – not affiliated with either warring party – won the presidential elections while Taylor’s former NPP as well as a LURD faction managed to scrape together a few seats in the Senate and the House of Representatives (Gerdes 2013: 192-194, 204-205). They were not able to win back territorial control after the elections [**TERRCON 2006-2012=d.e., TERRWIN 2006-2012=0**]. Neither of the warring parties can be considered more vulnerable in their respective territory. Later, this item became irrelevant as neither side controlled territory [**VULNERAB 2003=0, VULNERAB 2004-2012=n.r.**].

The CPA called for the establishment of an international peacekeeping force under Chapter VII of the UN Charter to separate the belligerents and establish a safe corridor for humanitarian aid (CPA 2003: Part II, Art. 3-4). As early as 4 August 2003, the ECOWAS Mission in Liberia (ECOMIL) was deployed under Nigerian leadership to support the ceasefire agreement from 17 June (Gerdes 2013: 167). From 1 October 2003 onwards,

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22 See “Liberia: Rebels dig in at rubber plantation“, IRIN News, 10 Aug. 2004, <http://www.irinnews.org/report/50985/liberia-rebels-dig-in-at-rubber-plantation> (22 May 2015).

23 See: “Liberia: Poachers, miners, squatters leave Sapo National Park“, IRIN News, 5 Sept. 2005, <http://www.irinnews.org/report/56153/liberia-poachers-miners-squatters-leave-sapo-national-park> (22 May 2015).

ECOMIL became part of the UNMIL, which had been mandated by UN Security Council Resolution 1509 in September 2003 (Gberie 2005: 63). Its full mandated strength of 15,000 troops was realized in late June 2004. Additionally, 1,115 police staff were part of the UNMIL (UN 2004a: 2, Para. 5-6). The UNMIL remained present in Liberia until the end of period under investigation [**PEACKEEP 2003-2012=0**].

The USA has historically been an important partner for Liberia. Consequently, “Liberians hope that if an insurgency overwhelmed UNMIL or emerged after the peacekeepers left, the U.S. would quash it” (ICG 2009: 6). However, as already indicated by the absence of US engagement during the first war and the Taylor government, “Liberia has slipped very low down on the U.S. foreign policy radar screen”, which has been interpreted by many Liberians as “overt hostility” (ICG 2002: 9). Thus, the ICG (2009: 6) suggests that “[i]f history is a guide, however, an expectation that the U.S. would come to Liberia’s rescue is misplaced. Several times over the last two decades Washington has refused to put its own troops at risk there, when a small intervention might plausibly have stopped the civil war in its tracks” [**P5ALLY 2003-2012=n.r.**].

Overall, the post-war military balance changed from a considerable advantage for the side governing at the beginning of war to a slight advantage for the rebels. After the elections that brought Johnson Sirleaf to power, the military balance was equal [**POSTBAL 2003= -0.17, POSTBAL 2004= -0.25, POSTBAL 2005-2012=0**]. The combined value of POSTBAL and WARBAL indicates a slight advantage for the rebels from 2004 onwards [**BALANCE 2003=0.08, BALANCE 2004=0.04, BALANCE 2005-2012=0.17**].

## Economy

Liberia’s gross domestic product (GDP) per capita has roughly tripled since the end of the war.

Table 1: GDP per capita in Liberia in current USD<sup>24</sup>

Year	Population	GDP per capita
2003	3124222	131
2004	3184643	147
2005	3269786	166
2006	3384791	178
2007	3522294	210
2008	3672714	231
2009	3821440	302
2010	3957990	327

24 <http://api.worldbank.org/v2/en/country/idn?downloadformat=excel> (1 Jan 2014).

2011	4079697	377
2012	4190435	414

### **The scale of compromise after the war**

The CPA established a power-sharing government comprising the three warring parties as well as the civil political parties and civil society. It was to assume governmental duties from the GOL on 14 October 2003 and remain in office until a democratically elected government replaced it in January 2006 (CPA 2003: Part VIII, Art. 20-21).<sup>25</sup> Each of the warring parties was assigned four ministries; the political parties and civil society were to occupy six ministries, though of rather minor importance (CPA 2003: Annex 4).<sup>26</sup> The transitional legislature – the National Transitional Legislative Assembly (NTLA) – was largely dominated by civilian representatives. While each of the armed groups was allocated twelve seats, 40 delegates stemmed from civilian political parties, the 15 counties and ‘special interest groups’ [GOVERN 2003= -1, GOVERN 2004-2005=0].<sup>27</sup> In October and November 2005, Ellen Johnson Sirleaf won the first post-war elections (Gerdes 2013: 191-192). She hardly included the former warring parties or the civil opposition in her cabinet, rather giving positions to elites who had supported her in the campaign (Gerdes 2013: 234). Johnson Sirleaf was re-elected in 2011 while those closely associated with the former warring parties increasingly lost relevance: in the parliamentary elections of 2011, members of conflict party elites only accounted for 16 seats, down from the 21 seats they held after the 2005 elections. Considering that both legislatures had 94 seats, members of the former warring parties assumed a relevant, though far from dominant, position [GOVERN 2006-2012=d.e.].<sup>28</sup> There was no veto right for the warring parties in the post-war period [VETO 2003= -1, VETO 2004-2005=n.r., VETO 2006-2012=n.r.; VETOSAT 2003-2012=n.r.].

Freedom House (2014) assessed Liberia’s post-war elections as basically free and fair. This assessment is supported by case-specific literature (Gerdes 2013: 204). All former warring parties were allowed to form political parties without prejudice and to participate in the elections [ELECT 2006-2012=0].<sup>29</sup> With regard to the transition period before the elections, the GOL held an advantage in 2003 as it governed the country until 14 October 2003; after

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25 LURD employed a power-sharing rhetoric well before the end of the war. Even though individual commanders harbored presidential ambitions and had little enthusiasm at the prospect of democratization, the rebel group’s official stance was that a peace agreement should establish a power-sharing transitional government that was eventually to be replaced by a democratically elected one. In exchange, LURD expected the International Community to support the Liberian transition financially, morally and militarily (Gerdes 2013: 173).

26 The civilian bloc was hardly homogenous and could not be expected to act in unison (Gerdes 2013: 188).

27 Gerdes 2013: 187.

28 Gerdes 2013: 192-194, 204-205, 233.

29 Gerdes 2013: 192-194, 204-205.



that date, all warring parties profited from being included in the NTGL [**ELECT 2003= -1, ELECT 2004-2005=0**].

The LURD failed to articulate any political goals beyond the mere removal of Charles Taylor as president. This demand, however, served as a strong integrating factor against factional splits (ICG 2002: 2). It thus follows that neither the state's internal or external borders, nor the distribution of competences, the economic order, or any other issues were behind the armed struggle [**EXBORDER 2003-2012=n.r.; INBORDER 2003-2012=n.r.; COMPETEN 2003-2012=n.r.; ECONOMY 2003-2012=n.r.; ISSUE 2003-2012=n.r.; ISSUE2 2003-2012=n.r.**]. Even though the LURD was dominated by the Krahn and Mandingo ethnic groups, the promotion of particular ethnic or social groups was not an aim of the war [**SPECPRO 2003-2012=n.r.**].<sup>30</sup>

Two particularly contentious issues emerged during the post-war period: the compensation and reintegration of former combatants along with disputes over land ownership. Concerning reintegration programs, the lack of funding led to high levels of unemployment and frustration among ex-combatants. The crime rate and periodic threats of violence subsequently posed major problems for the police and the UNMIL, who had to contain large, violent uprisings in December 2003, October 2004 and December 2005, as well as many smaller ones. These uprisings stemmed from anger over non-payment of demobilization allowances and, in some cases, over pensions for ex-combatants and former members of the armed forces (ICG 2009: 5). Followers of all the warring factions were affected by this problem; as such, it was not an issue of contention that emerged between the warring parties but rather between the former fighters and the state. Likewise, even though land disputes were at times framed in ethnic terms – with the Mandingo ethnic group particularly affected –, they did not generally follow factional cleavages [**NEWCON 2003-2012=n.r.; NEWCON2 2003-2012=n.r.**].<sup>31</sup> As such, there were no compromises implemented during the post-war period [**BENEFIT 2003-2012=n.r.; BENEFIT2 2003-2012=n.r.**].

It follows that with the NTGL taking office, the scale of compromise changed from a complete advantage of the side governing at the beginning of war to a perfect balance between the contenders [**COMPROM 2003= -1, COMPROM 2004-2012=0**].

### **Stability of peace**

Although the security situation in Liberia remained volatile and UNMIL forces remained in place, Liberia did not experience a relapse into civil war after 2003 [**SAMEWAR=0**];

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30 Bøås/Hatløy 2008: 40.

31 ICG 2009: 8.

**DATESAME=n.r.; ANYWAR=0; DATEANY=n.r.].** Despite the armed conflict over presidential elections in neighboring Côte d'Ivoire in 2010 and 2011, the peace process set off by the CPA remained on track [**PEACMON1=112; PEACMON2=112**].

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