Founding of Liberia 1847

The founding of Liberia in the early 1800s was motivated by the domestic politics of slavery and race in the United States as well as by U.S. foreign policy interests. In 1816, a group of white Americans founded the American Colonization Society (ACS) to deal with the “problem” of the growing number of free blacks in the United States by resettling them in Africa. The resulting state of Liberia would become the second (after Haiti) black republic in the world at that time.

*Joseph Jenkins Roberts, First President of Liberia*

Prominent Americans such as Henry Clay, Daniel Webster, and John Randolph were among the best known members of ACS. Former President Thomas Jefferson publicly supported the organization’s goals, and President James Madison arranged public funding for the Society. The motives for joining the society were vast as a range of people from abolitionists to slaveholders counted themselves members. On the other hand, many abolitionists, both black and white, ultimately rejected the notion that it was impossible for the races to integrate and therefore did not support the idea of an African-American colony in Africa. Still, the ACS had powerful support and its colonization project gained momentum.

In 1818 the Society sent two representatives to West Africa to find a suitable location for the colony, but they were unable to persuade local tribal leaders to sell any territory. In 1820, 88 free black settlers and 3 society members sailed for Sierra Leone. Before departing they had signed a constitution requiring that an agent of the Society administer the settlement under U.S. laws. They found shelter on Scherbo Island off the west coast of Africa, but many died from malaria. In 1821, a U.S. Navy vessel resumed the search for a place of permanent settlement in what is now Liberia. Once again the local leaders resisted American attempts to purchase land. This time, the Navy officer in charge, Lieutenant Robert Stockton, coerced a local ruler to sell a strip of land to the Society. The Scherbo Island group moved to this new location and other blacks from the United States joined them. The local tribes continually attacked the new colony and in 1824, the settlers built fortifications for protection. In that same year, the settlement was named Liberia and its capital Monrovia, in honor of President James Monroe who had procured more U.S. Government money for the project.

*Lieutenant Robert Stockton*

Other colonization societies sponsored by individual states purchased land and sent settlers to areas near Monrovia. Africans removed from slave ships by the U.S. Navy after the abolition of the trans-Atlantic slave trade were also put ashore in Liberia. In 1838 most of these settlements, with up to 20,000 people, combined into one organization. The settlers attempted to retain the culture they had brought from the United States and for the most part did not integrate with the native societies. Today, about 5 percent of the population of Liberia is descended from these settlers.

The U.S. Government had provided Liberia some financial support, but Washington expected Monrovia to move toward self-sufficiency. Commerce was the first economic sector to grow in the colony. However, French and British traders continually encroached upon Liberian territory. As it was not a sovereign state, it was hard-pressed to defend its economic interests. The U.S. Government lent some diplomatic support, but Britain and France had territories in West Africa and were better poised to act. As a result, in 1847, Liberia declared independence from the American Colonization Society in order to establish a sovereign state and create its own laws governing commerce.

Despite protests by the affected British companies, London was the first to extend recognition to the new republic, signing a treaty of commerce and friendship with Monrovia in 1848. Because of fears of the impact this might have on the issue of slavery in the United States, Washington did not recognize the nation it had played a role in creating. In the meantime, a mass exodus of African-Americans to Liberia never materialized. Though President Abraham Lincoln was open to promoting the idea, several abolitionists in his cabinet opposed it, some for moral considerations and others for the more practical reason of retaining sufficient labor and military forces for the future. The United States finally established diplomatic relations with Liberia in 1862, and continued to maintain strong ties until the 1990s.

The United States recognized the Republic of Liberia on September 23, 1862, when the American Minister to England Charles F. Adams was empowered to conclude a treaty of commerce and navigation with the Republic of Liberia.

*Modern Flag of Liberia*

U.S. Recognition of Liberia, 1862.

The United States recognized the Republic of Liberia on September 23, 1862, when the American Minister to England Charles F. Adams was empowered to conclude a treaty of commerce and navigation with the Republic of Liberia. The treaty was signed by Adams and the President of Liberia on October 25, 1862.

The state that became Liberia originated in 1822 when the American Colonization Society founded a settlement for freedmen and recaptured slaves. In 1847 the settlement constituted itself as a republic and subsequently was recognized by several European states.

Diplomatic Relations

Establishment of Diplomatic Relations and American Legation in Liberia, 1864.

Diplomatic relations and the American Legation at Monrovia were established on February 23, 1864, when American Commissioner and Consul General Abraham Hanson presented his credentials to the Liberian government.

Elevation of Legation to Embassy Status, 1949.

The American Legation at Monrovia was elevated to Embassy status on May 6, 1949, when Ambassador Edward R. Dudley presented his credentials to the Liberian government.

Liberia

From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia

Liberia (/laɪˈbɪəriə/ (listen)), officially the Republic of Liberia, is a country on the West African coast. It is bordered by Sierra Leone to its northwest, Guinea to its north, Ivory Coast to its east, and the Atlantic Ocean to its south and southwest. It has a population of around 5 million and covers an area of 111,369 square kilometers (43,000 sq mi).English is the official language, but over 20 indigenous languages are spoken, reflecting the country's ethnic and cultural diversity. The country's capital and largest city is Monrovia.

Liberia began in the early 19th century as a settlement of the American Colonization Society (ACS), which believed black people would face better chances for freedom and prosperity in Africa than in the United States. Between 1822 and the outbreak of the American Civil War in 1861, more than 15,000 freed and free-born people of color who faced social and legal oppression in the U.S., along with 3,198 Afro-Caribbeans, relocated to Liberia. Gradually developing an "Americo-Liberian" identity, the settlers carried their culture and tradition with them; the Liberian constitution and flag were modeled after those of the U.S., while its capital was named after ACS supporter and U.S. President James Monroe. Liberia declared independence on July 26, 1847, which the U.S. did not recognize until February 5, 1862. On January 3, 1848, Joseph Jenkins Roberts, a wealthy, free-born African American from the U.S. state of Virginia who settled in Liberia, was elected Liberia's first president after the people proclaimed independence.

Liberia was the first African republic to proclaim its independence, and is Africa's first and oldest modern republic. It was among the few countries to maintain its sovereignty during the Scramble for Africa. During World War II, Liberia supported the United States war effort against Germany, and in turn received considerable American investment in infrastructure, which aided the country's wealth and development. President William Tubman encouraged economic and political changes that heightened the country's prosperity and international profile; Liberia was a founding member of the League of Nations, United Nations, and the Organization of African Unity.

The Americo-Liberian settlers did not relate well to the indigenous peoples they encountered, especially those living in the more isolated "bush". Colonial settlements were raided by the Kru and Grebo from their inland chiefdoms. Americo-Liberians promoted religious organizations to set up missions and schools to educate the native populace. Americo-Liberians formed into a small elite that held disproportionate political power; indigenous Africans were excluded from birthright citizenship in their own land until 1904.

In 1980, political tensions from the rule of William R. Tolbert resulted in a military coup during which Tolbert was killed, marking the end of Americo-Liberian rule in the country and beginning over two decades of political instability. Five years of military rule by the People's Redemption Council and five years of civilian rule by the National Democratic Party of Liberia were followed by the First and Second Liberian Civil Wars. These resulted in the deaths of 250,000 people (about 8% of the population) and the displacement of many more, with Liberia's economy shrinking by 90%. A peace agreement in 2003 led to democratic elections in 2005, in which Ellen Johnson Sirleaf was elected president, making history as the first female president in the continent. National infrastructure and basic social services were severely affected by the conflicts as well as by the 2013–2016 outbreak of Ebola virus, with 83% of the population living below the international poverty line as of 2015.