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Title: Liberia's warlord insurgency
Author: [Ellis, Stephen](#)
Book title: [African guerrillas / ed. by Christopher Clapham. - Oxford: James Currey](#)
Year: 1998
Pages: 155-171
Language: [English](#)
Geographic term: [Liberia](#)
Subject: [civil wars](#)

Abstract: On 24 December 1989 some 100 insurgents claiming allegiance to the National Patriotic Front of Liberia (NPFL) attacked a border town in Nimba County from neighbouring Côte d'Ivoire. This was the start of a war which was to last for more than seven years and spawn a confusing number of factions, of which at least seven were still in business by early 1997. In July 1997, victory in a national election by the NPFL leader, Charles Taylor, marked a clear end to the most violent phase of the struggle. In this chapter, the author examines the origins of the war (in many respects, the origins of the violence which overtook Liberia lie in the coup which overthrew the True Whig government in 1980, making Samuel Doe the first of the country's modern warlords); the causes of fragmentation (Liberia's collapse was hastened by the decisions and actions of a handful of key players, the most important of whom was Charles Taylor); and the international dimension (the war in Liberia has been instrumental in a larger redefinition of commercial and political space throughout West Africa). The author also discusses the role of social breakdown in the processes giving rise to civil wars. Ref.

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