

and Mandingo, found both in Liberia and Guinea; and the Gio, Mano, and Kru, who live on both sides of the border with the Ivory Coast. Although vastly outnumbered, the Americo-Liberians held power. One political party, the True Whig Party, prevailed; others were declared illegal.

In 1980, Master Sergeant Samuel Kenyon Doe, a member of the Krahn, overthrew the government of William Tolbert, Jr., the last Americo-Liberian president. The coup was popular at first, Joyce says, “but Doe’s decade of leadership was marked by mistakes and atrocities.”

Doe’s worst mistake, Joyce contends, was “ethnicizing” the armed forces, replacing the Americo-Liberians who had dominated the upper ranks with Krahn people. “The armed forces . . . behaved more like a faction than a national army,” Joyce says. “Doe divided ethnic groups as never before.” After a failed

coup attempt in 1985, his armed forces slaughtered thousands of ethnic rivals.

The nation descended into chaos. The National Patriotic Front of Liberia—largely composed of indigenous Gio and Mano people, and led by Charles Ghankey Taylor, an Americo-Liberian—was the first group to rise against Doe. It swept through the interior and was poised in 1990 to take Monrovia. But a West African peacekeeping force, composed of troops from Nigeria, Ghana, and four other nations, was then deployed to secure the capital. Despite its presence, a breakaway rebel leader, Prince Yeduo Johnson, and his followers captured Doe and tortured and executed him.

Since then, despite at least seven peace accords, fighting among the eight warring factions has continued. “Many observers,” writes Joyce, “believe that the violence will continue until only one warlord is left standing.”

The End of the Iranian Dream?

“Dateline Tehran: A Revolution Implodes” by Robin Wright, in *Foreign Policy* (Summer 1996), Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 2400 N St. N.W., Washington, D.C. 20037–1153.

Seventeen years after the revolution, the Islamic Republic of Iran has fallen on hard times. Indeed, argues Wright, author of *In the Name of God: The Khomeini Decade* (1989), “the Islamic regime can no longer hope to survive over the long term under the economic and political system established after the 1979 revolution.”

Iran’s population has almost doubled since the revolution—from 34 million to nearly 65 million. Oil revenues have dropped about two-thirds, driven down by falling prices. The country’s oil industry is badly in need of modernization, Wright says, as is industry in general. While the regime poured billions of petrodollars into the military during the 1980–88 war with Iraq, it left industry to stagnate. Today, up to two-thirds of Iran’s factories run at limited capacity because they lack raw materials, spare parts, and new equipment. Unemployment has climbed to 30 percent, and among those aged 15 to 24, it is twice that.

“Three groups vital to the regime’s survival—the young, the middle class, and the *mostazafin*, the oppressed in whose name the revolution was undertaken—have soured on the revolution,” Wright says. Many *bazaaris*

(merchants), while traditionally religious, are also disenchanted. Taxi drivers in Tehran “often refuse rides to the clergy, and some even run fingers across their throats to show contempt,” Wright observes. The mullahs are the butt of many jokes.

Abdol Karim Soroush, the country’s leading philosopher and an early supporter of the revolution, has argued, Wright says, for “an Islamic democracy not imposed from the top but chosen by the majority of the people, both believers and nonbelievers.” He also contends that the clergy should have no special rights. “Soroush has such a large following that leading Iranian officials now openly attack his ideas in public speeches,” Wright notes.

Iranian president Ali Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani, elected after Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini’s death in mid-1989, made efforts at economic and other reform during his first four-year term, but has been thwarted since by a conservative Majlis (parliament), led by Speaker Ali Akbar Nateq-Nouri. He is one of three conservatives seeking to succeed Rafsanjani next year. None of the candidates, Wright adds, are talking about the kinds of changes needed to reverse Iran’s slide.