

# Manipulative Rhetoric and Post-war Reconstruction in President Johnson-Sirleaf's First Inaugural Address

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## Manipulative Rhetoric and Post-war Reconstruction in President Johnson-Sirleaf's First Inaugural Address

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### Abstract

Following the devastating consequences of Liberia's fourteen-year civil war for the people and the country at large, the task of mobilising the people and reinforcing their commitment to the cause of nation (re)building rests not only on the leader's vision but also on how expressly the vision is shared with the followers. Thus, this paper examines how President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf tailors certain rhetorical strategies in her first inaugural speech of 16th January 2006 to tuning up the Liberian people's mindset to embrace her vision and imbibe the attitude necessary for the attainment of social and political goals in post-war Liberia. The article observes that as compelling as such strategies are in serving particular pragmatic functions in the present discourse, they, unarguably, fit in with the prefabricated style of political discourses.

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Johnson-Sirleaf graduated from the College of West Africa (Monrovia), a United Methodist high school. She began her inaugural address with a period of silent commemoration for those who died in the civil war, then promised change: This occasion, held under the cloudy skies, marks a celebration of change and a dedication to an agenda for a socio-economic and political reordering; indeed, a national renewal. Today, we wholeheartedly embrace this change. We recognize that this change is not change for change sake, but a fundamental break with the past, thereby requiring that we take bold and decisive steps to address the problems that for decades have stunted our progress, undermined national uni

