SIERRA LEONE
A SEARCH FOR PEACE AGAINST THE ODDS

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1. INTRODUCTION

When a small band of rebels crossed into Sierra Leone from neighbouring Liberia in March 1991 under the banner of the Revolutionary United Front (RUF) with the declared objective of toppling a corrupt regime, many Sierra Leoneans may have underestimated the terror that would engulf the country for years. Within eight years, the conflict had left an estimated 50,000 dead, 10,000, including women and children, with hacked off limbs, two million in forced exile or displaced, 10,000 women raped and 10,000 children forcibly enlisted in rebel armies. The country quickly disintegrated into fiefdoms governed by competing rebel groups.

The RUF invasion sparked off a series of political upheavals, with power changing hands six times in a country ill at ease with itself since the departure in 1985 (and death) of its President, Siaka Stevens. As leader of the then opposition All People’s Congress (APC) Stevens had narrowly won elections in 1967, but in the confusion that ensued, the military stepped in before he could assume power. Stevens fled to Guinea, where he organized a guerrilla band to ensure his comeback, but his planned military invasion was forestalled one year later when the soldiers staged a coup d’état and installed him as Prime Minister. He soon established a one-party state, a system then prevalent in Africa, and proceeded to rule the West African state of 5.6 million with an iron hand, declaring it a republic in 1971 with himself as president. Effectively silencing the southern-based opposition Sierra Leone People’s Party (SLPP), he became one of the most corrupt leaders in Africa. An American with a long working experience in the country made the following observation:

Siaka Stevens ... inaugurated kleptocracy ... a reign of thieves. His Cabinet Ministers looted respective departments, selling official assets and passing the lion’s share up to Stevens. The government gradually destroyed its own capacity to function, and by the time Joseph Momoh was president in the late 1980s, it could no longer pay civil servants and teachers, or even print its own money.

On the eve of his 1985 departure, now old, frail and dying, Stevens masterminded a transfer of power back to the military, hand-picking Brigadier-General Joseph Siadu Momoh as his successor. Momoh swiftly charted his own political course, stunning many by first executing his civilian Vice President and a member of Stevens’ old guard, Francis Minah, on charges of plotting to seize power. Momoh declared a “New Order”, which meant in theory a departure from the corrupt practices of the past, but in practice a continuation of crony politics. It immediately became clear that he lacked the political will or acumen needed to rescue the crumbling economy and quell growing public dissent.

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1 For an overview and analysis of events to the end of 1996 see Richard Carver, *Sierra Leone: From Cease-fire to Lasting Peace?* (WRITENET for UNHCR/CDR, January 1997) (UNHCR/CDR REFWORLD Databases)
3 *Crosslines* [Geneva], Joseph Opala, “Why Sierra Leone Matters”, No. 34 (September-October 1999)
Moreover, after barely six years in office, Momoh found himself with a more dangerous crisis at hand, that of combating the RUF rebellion. Burdened with an ill-equipped army, he suffered a series of defeats at the hands of the RUF, leading to a succession of coups d’état, beginning in 1992, when the 27 year old Valentine Strasser, a returnee from the West African intervention force in Liberia, installed the National Provisional Ruling Council. Strasser’s priority was to end the war, or at least so he said. But he, too, quickly realized that the army, now ridiculed as “sobels” (soldier-rebels, for their collaboration with the rebels) was a culprit in the crisis.

Strasser himself was overthrown in January 1996 by his second in command, Julius Maado Bio, who accused him of planning to manipulate elections and perpetuate himself in office. In February 1996, over RUF objections, Bio yielded to the holding of the first multi-party elections in three decades. A former UN executive, the sixty-four year old Ahmed Tijan Kabbah, emerged as winner. Kabbah negotiated a peace deal with the rebels in Abidjan in July 1996, but this did not halt the spreading anarchy.

In May 1997, another junior army officer, Major Johnny Paul Koromah, imprisoned on earlier charges of plotting to overthrow the government, emerged from his cell and seized power in the name of the Armed Forces Revolutionary Council (AFRC). Kabbah was rescued by Nigerian soldiers and flown to neighbouring Guinea in preparation for a comeback, just as Stevens before him 30 years earlier.

Meanwhile, events were fast unfolding even without the presence of the RUF’s leader Foday Sankoh, then under house arrest in Nigeria. The soldiers invited the RUF to join them in government, thus confirming allegations that the army had long been the rebels’ partners against the democratically elected government. However, consolidation of their coup d’état in the face of regional and international protests was unlikely and in February 1998 Nigerian-led ECOMOG troops dislodged the AFRC and their RUF allies from the capital. Kabbah was reinstated.

Faced with inevitable collapse, Kabbah, a president without an army, upheld the 1995 Strasser contract with the South African security firm Executive Outcomes which took over from another mercenary firm, Gurkha Security Group. Building on their experience in Angola, where they fought against UNITA, the group halted RUF advances for a fee of US$ 15 million, and a monthly stipend of US$ 1,225,000 together with mining concessions. The role of mercenaries in the conflict led to a heated controversy when Sandline, a British firm specializing in offering services to mercenary groups, was accused of backing the government through arms sales, causing uproar in British political circles at a time when London was attempting to use its influence to save a former colony. Under scrutiny for allegedly breaking a UN arms embargo on Sierra Leone, Sandline maintained that the embargo was intended for the military junta, not Kabbah’s legal government.

The indiscriminate nature of RUF atrocities and the army’s collaboration left the population vulnerable, particularly in RUF strongholds of the eastern and southern regions.

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6 The Independent [London], “Cook Fails to Clear Arms-Row Officials”, 17 July 1998
7 The Independent [London], “Sandline: We Didn’t Break Embargo,” 11 May 1998
With nowhere to run, the kamajors, traditional organizations of hunters and farmers believing in supernatural and ancestral powers, from the Mende tribe which makes up 30 per cent of the population, emerged as the most powerful and best known of the various self-defence units that were later to be transformed into Civil Defence Forces (CDF). The bedrock of the SLPP’s support had historically been the Mende, and fearing tribal backlash (since Sankoh is a Temne, the Mende’s traditional political rivals), Kabbah hesitated in arming the kamajors. But the military need and for that matter the political importance of these largely peasant hunters was now evident since they were people’s “only defence” against marauding rebels and soldiers. Heavily relying on the Nigerians with no reliable military allies, Kabbah finally placed the kamajors under ECOMOG command in April 1999.

In January 1999, the rebel alliance launched a counteroffensive, coming close to taking Freetown. “It’s over”, an RUF commander declared. It was far from over. The RUF were repelled by Nigerian-led West African troops, but only after leaving 6,000 people dead and 200,000 homeless in the horror. Sankoh’s fate remained uncertain for a time. Extradited from Nigeria, he was tried and sentenced to death for treason in October 1998. Twenty-four out of the thirty-seven convicted along with him were executed. By July 1999, he was a free man, placed in charge of the country’s diamonds with vice presidential rank after the conclusion of a new peace deal.

2. ORIGIN AND SOME FACTORS INFLUENCING THE WAR

The roots of the ongoing conflict can be traced to a number of factors, among them the political legacy of chronic corruption and therefore neglect, transnational actors’ quest for the country’s mineral wealth, and sub regional strategic and economic interests. As will be indicated, these factors have made the conflict intractable, since solutions must address, and be linked to, the interests of transnational forces with varying interests.

2.1 The Nature of the Sierra Leonean State

The country’s post independence predatory political set-up may have offered a needed, but less than convincing rationale for the anarchy and subsequent RUF military successes. But it led to a paranoid struggle for survival within the political establishment, thus creating fears that the army would rise again as a competitor for power. Hence, distrust of the military, which had been influential in the power game since independence, led to its being eroded as a potent force and to the formation of the Special Security Division (SSD) as a separate force to counterbalance the Army’s influence and serve as a safety valve against military political interventions.

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8 Human Rights Watch, Sierra Leone: Sowing Terror (New York, July 1998)
9 BBC Focus on Africa [London], “Sierra Leone: A Kind of Peace”, October-December 1999, p. 49
12 Human Rights Watch, Getting Away with Murder, Mutilations and Rape (New York, June 1999)
Consequently, at the time of the 1991 RUF invasion, there was little resistance. Towns and villages quickly fell to the rebels.14

Furthermore, the Liberian war had turned the few soldiers stationed at Liberian-Sierra Leone border points into partners in the share of war booty, benefiting from the sale of looted goods and other spoils of war from Liberia, now a disintegrated state. This combination of circumstances provided the opportunity for easier infiltration and the subsequent invasion.

This political legacy of neglect pervasive across Africa would provide the RUF with a standing army from the mass of unemployed, underprivileged youths believing in the promise of better days ahead with the gun: “I was fighting for my rights, for free education, free accommodation and a job”, said one of the now disarmed fighters, who added that “Papay” Sankoh (the Liberian slang for a fatherly figure used by NPFL - National Patriotic Front of Liberia - rebels in referring to their leader, Charles Taylor) had promised these “rights”.15 “We did not manage ourselves well after the British departed”, said a disenchanted elder, “but what we have now is something worse - the revenge of the poor…”16

Sankoh is a product of this legacy, and as he now says: “The people of Sierra Leone wanted war and God heard their call. I am like Moses. God sent me to lead the revolt.” Joining the colonial army in 1956, he was arrested for denouncing the transfer of power from senior officers to Siaka Stevens: “That was a big failure on the part of the army, to call upon someone who betrayed the cause of the people”, he says. Jobless and saddled with economic problems, he became a full-time commercial photographer: “So when I was released from prison in 1976 and I had no job, I decided to go to photography full time.”18 Similar stories are told of many of the RUF’s leaders, including key commanders such as Sam Bockarie, Sankoh’s field commander, who was recruited from the slums of Abidjan, and Morris Kallon who worked illegally as a carpenter in the United States for decades.19

2.2 Diamonds and the Liberian Connection

However, it is difficult to imagine how the RUF would have built its military machine, its organizational framework, without Liberia and links to Charles Taylor’s NPFL, links which date back to Benghazi, Libya, where Taylor and Sankoh met to plot their rebellions. From Libya, they moved on to Burkina Faso in preparation for their respective offensives. With Burkinabe and Ivorian help, the NPFL launched its military onslaught in December 1989. Needing a corridor for his own offensive, and seeing the NPFL’s success as key to the fulfilment of his plans, Sankoh became active in Taylor’s military planning and decision-making in Gbarnga, then the Front’s stronghold. As Taylor consolidated his military position in the country and confined

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15 *The Economist* [London], “Sierra Leone’s Uncertain Path to Peace”, 11 December 1999
17 *NRC Handelsblad* [The Hague], Koert Lindijer, “Sierra Leone Is Relegated to Gangsters”, 2 December 1999
18 *New African* [London], “I Don’t Want You to Join the Police and Become a Criminal”, November 1999
government troops to the capital, Sierra Leone became easy prey, thanks to the largely invisible border between the two countries.

The RUF, then dominated by NPFL rebels, began its campaign by attacking border towns and targeting government supporters, traditional chiefs, and businessmen from the predominantly Muslim Fulah ethnic group.

From the onset, there was little enthusiasm for the war, now that the horrors of next-door Liberia had driven through hard lessons of rebel wars and the human degradation tied to them. “From the taxi driver to the government minister, nobody seemed to have a clue of what the fighting was all about. Nobody knows what the rebels wanted”, one journalist noted.

The changed political environment in Liberia, with the NPFL now in power, translated into greater RUF military and organizational strength, with Taylor’s son, Charles Taylor Jr., placed in charge of RUF arms and diamond transactions as military supplies poured in through Burkina Faso, and were paid for with diamonds. The riches of the RUF were to increase, since, according to a member of a 1999 donor assessment mission to Liberia, that country was now a safe haven for international swindlers in the absence of bona fide investors. This trade has attracted entrepreneurs from the former Soviet Union keen on taking advantage of the enormous profits to be made. Cheaply manufactured drugs such as amphetamines, smuggled into the country via Liberia and Guinea, and cocaine brought in by fast-moving French catamarans and North Korean fishing boats, along with Burmese heroin, passed through the country bound for European and American markets. Most of the cocaine used by fighters is believed to come from Nigeria. After the Lomé peace deal in July 1999, and with heightened insecurity along the Liberia-Sierra Leone border due to attacks by Liberian dissidents, Monrovia’s importance as a transit point for illegal diamonds receded, giving way to Freetown, where illicit diamond buyers sought cheap diamonds brought in by the rebels. By late November, hundreds of Liberians, encouraged by their rebel allies in charge of mines, stormed the diamond-rich Kono district in search of diamonds.

These links have turned the country’s mining sector, its main foreign exchange earner, into a virtual appendage of the Liberian economy. An estimated US$ 350 million to US$ 450 million worth of smuggled diamonds leave Sierra Leone via Liberia annually, the amount varying with security conditions. A Canadian research group, Partnership for Africa, in a report released early January 2000, established the conflict’s international dimensions. While Sierra Leone’s official diamond export stood at 8,500 carats in 1998, 770,000 carats of smuggled diamonds left the country.

23 NRC Handelsblad [The Hague], Koert Lindijer, “Bandits Remain Bandits, also when They Rule”, 25 November 1999
24 Agence France Presse [Freetown], “Sierra Leone Rebel Commander Tells of Mutilation”, 16 December 1999
25 Reuter, “Diamond Dealers Flock to Sierra Leone”, 7 October 1999
26 Concord Times [Freetown], “Liberians Take Over Kono”, 22 November 1999
that year. But it is the dramatically high figures linked to Liberia, which exported more than 31 million carats, and Côte d’Ivoire (with no diamond mines) marketing 1.5 million, that told the real story. The report accuses Belgian authorities (who have purchasing offices in Abidjan and Monrovia and not Freetown) and the diamond industry of turning a blind eye to the criminal nature of the diamond trade in Sierra Leone and other diamond producing African states. This lucrative business environment has brought in Ukrainian mafiosi, a South American death squad leader and South African neo-Nazis to Monrovia.

According to The Washington Post, rival mining companies, security firms and mercenaries from Africa, Europe, Israel and the former Soviet Union have poured in weapons and trainers, backing the government or the rebels in a bid to win cheap access to the diamond fields. Another indication of the influence on the war exercised by diamonds was evident in 1999 when the RUF launched surprise raids against Nigerian soldiers, said to have been preoccupied with diamond digging, killing many and moving on to Freetown in their offensive.

2.3 The Crisis in Sierra Leone as Seen in Regional Context

On a regional level, the country quickly became a pawn in the play of economic and strategic interests, as was also true in the case of Liberia with Nigeria’s shifting alliances in the civil war, backing one faction against the other when its perceived interests were at stake. (This was evident by Nigeria’s shift of support from the Krahns to Taylor at the close of the conflict.)

While Nigeria, and to a lesser extent Ghana and Guinea remained the Sierra Leonean government’s prime backers, Burkina Faso and the Ivory Coast adopted pro-RUF positions, reminiscent of their roles in Liberia when they backed the NPFL against Anglophone countries. With the UN arms embargo against Liberia maintained, Burkina Faso was now a transit point for arms shipment to the RUF, with The Washington Post confirming that a plane alleged by ECOMOG to have transported arms to the rebels via Monrovia indeed belonged to the Burkinabe Government. The U.S. State Department saw a parallel between the Ivory Coast’s role in Sierra Leone and its backing of UNITA in Angola and support for the NPFL in Liberia.

Thus it can be seen that regional alliances and perceptions formed in the Liberian crisis again resurfaced in Sierra Leone, with the strategic and economic interests of individual states determining how they saw the conflict, and thus affecting internal

29 The Times [London], Sam Kiley, “The Attitude of the West to Sierra Leone Is as Dim-Witted as It Is Callous…”, 15 July 1999
32 The Washington Post, 16 October 1999
alliances. Apprehension of spillover of the war in a volatile region shaken by the Liberian conflict weighed heavily in the search for a solution, as will be indicated.

The fear of Liberia as the conduit for arms trade sustaining other conflicts in West Africa was to gain prominence. Previously ignored by regional leaders, the proliferation of arms, along with increased activities of international criminal syndicates in the region, came into focus during the ECOWAS December 1999 summit, with heads of state pressing for steps to curb cross border crimes such as arms and drug trafficking, and money laundering.

Further indications of their concerns came later in December when Liberian officials found themselves denying reports in the local press about money-laundering, while bank officials admitted illicit money transactions. But the proliferation of arms within the region was serious enough for regional approval of a small arms control mechanism within member states. Whether political and economic interests will be ignored in the implementation of control remains to be seen, however.

Although Nigeria assumed the role of a regional sheriff, its intervention in Sierra Leone, as in Liberia, was subjected to various interpretations, among them that it was an excuse to keep ambitious generals away from home, a rationale for the siphoning off of funds, or an expression of the desire to impress the antagonistic West that, after all, Africans were capable of solving African problems. Nigeria’s lack of moral standing, which led to its global demonization, also compromised its intervention against what many saw as like-minded individuals determined to follow Nigeria’s pattern of using violence to gain power. Both the RUF and the NPFL were to capitalize on this widely accepted demonization of Nigeria to advance their causes, repeatedly challenging Nigeria’s moral authority to frustrate their political ambitions.

3. PEACE TALKS AND PEACE AGREEMENTS

Looking back it is evident that failure to conclude peace with the RUF has been the prime excuse for successive military coups. Nevertheless, the initial hopes of a negotiated settlement emerged following a military coup d’état, the Strasser military take-over in 1992. Between 1992 and 1994, the UN, OAU and the Commonwealth stepped up efforts to facilitate talks between President Strasser’s National Provisional Ruling Council (NPRC) and the RUF. Strasser’s overthrow, in its turn, presented opportunities for a settlement with his successor, Julius Maado Bio, promising the RUF safe conduct for peace talks in Abidjan.
The RUF leader, Foday Sankoh, is keen to claim a long established enthusiasm for peace, blaming the NPRC for not initiating negotiations earlier: “When Strasser overthrew Momoh, I was the first to send him a message… ‘Let us stop this war; let us come together.’

The answer I got from Strasser was jet bombers, artillery, mercenary attacks”, he complained eight years later. Nevertheless, the success of the South African security group Executive Outcomes in halting RUF advances and denying them diamond areas played a significant role in forcing negotiations.

After the overthrow of Strasser, elections as an exit from the conflict became the new orthodoxy, and with internal and external pressures for early elections mounting, Bio yielded to the decision taken in August 1995 by a national consultative conference that elections should take place in February 1996. Although the RUF was invited to the conference, it refused to participate, reiterating warnings and threats of disrupting the polls and not recognizing any government elected. Angry and determined to halt the process, soldiers attacked the homes of the conference’s chair, James Jonah, and Kabbah, the SLPP candidate. The attacks were unsuccessful in daunting the will of the population to restore civilian rule. Following two rounds of elections, resulting in victory for Kabbah in the presidential contest, the RUF announced a cease-fire, declaring it would meet with Kabbah, but only as the representative of the 600,000 voters who had elected him, not as president. The two opposing groups had already met, in Abidjan, two days after the first elections, 28 February 1996. Later in the year the cease-fire was extended, but this did not stop the anarchy and butchery consuming the country.

With Kabbah’s overthrow one year later, Sankoh was now invited to join the government led by the AFRC as Vice President. And despite the fact that he could not assume his post since he was under house arrest in Nigeria, his loyalists stormed Freetown to sit in government. But international outcry against the junta, and ECOMOG’s determination to topple it, meant that new rounds of talks aimed at reinstating Kabbah were necessary. ECOWAS therefore appointed Nigeria, Ghana, the Ivory Coast, and Guinea to reach an agreement with the junta for Kabbah’s reinstatement, and this led to the signing of the Conakry Agreement in October 1997. Frustrated over the junta’s intransigence, regional heads of state meeting in August in Abuja imposed new sanctions, a decision greeted by the junta as a victory since it was devoid of military action. This joy was however premature, with Nigerian Foreign Minister Chief Tom Ikimi telling the UN Security Council that sanctions and talks, in the absence of military force, would not achieve peace. Clashes between the Nigerians and the junta continued. “This is just the beginning of the battle. Our men are prepared to protect the sovereignty of this nation”, vowed a junta spokesman as the AFRC heightened its anti-Nigerian propaganda. In November,

41 New African [London], November 1999
42 Oxford Analytica, 14 October 1999
43 Amnesty International, Sierra Leone: Towards a Future
45 BBC Focus on Africa [London], April-June 1998
46 West Africa [London], Abass Bundu, “Beyond Peacekeeping”, 6-12 December 1999 p.15
the junta reneged on the Agreement and announced that they would not leave office until 2001. They put forth clearly unacceptable conditions for surrendering, which included no Nigerian soldiers or officers participating in ECOMOG. The junta’s military defeat in February 1998, celebrated by thousands in Freetown, was thought to have signalled hopes for peace, with the ECOMOG Field Commander triumphantly declaring: “That was our [objective], to flush them out. Force is the only language they understand.” The horrors that engulfed the country told a different story, indicating that negotiations, not force, was the better option. As the military stand-off continued, it emerged that the Civil Defence Forces (the *kamajors*) reinforced by Kabbah’s loyalists and later to be placed under ECOMOG command now posed a serious obstacle to the rebel alliance. The junta’s attempts to woo the *kamajors* ended in the execution of two junta emissaries in 1997.

With a military victory now unlikely, the RUF began to send signals for negotiations based on power sharing after acknowledging that the “bloodshed was no longer necessary”, and that “the cycle of wickedness must not be allowed to expand”. Granted permission by the government, the imprisoned Sankoh travelled to Togo in readiness for peace talks where he apologized for “any inconvenience my revolution may have caused”. Sankoh would later deny that his fighters committed atrocities: “Are you trying to say I am responsible for those atrocities?… It’s all government manipulation.” Nevertheless, the RUF and Kabbah signed a cease-fire agreement on 18 May 1999, thus paving the way for substantive peace talks as the Nigerians, Americans and the British mounted pressure on the government for a negotiated settlement and concessions to the rebels. This heightened interest in concessions was necessitated by the new political environment in Nigeria, following the death of General Abacha, and the move towards a fresh look at the rationale of intervention, particularly looking at its Liberian peacekeeping bill which it put at US$ 8 billion and over 700 men killed. But peace meant that the RUF’s long-standing demands, such as a supervisory role over the country’s finances, once rejected by the government, would be granted three years later with Sankoh in charge of precious minerals.

The July 1999 Lomé Agreement, like the failed 1996 Abidjan Agreement, provides for restructuring and reorientation of the army and security forces. It is however, silent on the future role of renegade soldiers of the Sierra Leone Army (SLA) and the Civil Defence Forces (the *kamajors*, etc.). This could pose a problem, as evidenced in late December 1999 when the soldiers rampaged in Freetown, robbing civilians and putting pressure on a government they oppose for a 22 months back pay which they received.

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49 BBC Focus on Africa [London], October-December 1997, p. 14
50 Liberian Daily News Bulletin, 19 April 1999
51 Idem., 13 April 1999
52 Guardian Weekly [London]
53 BBC Focus on Africa [London], October-December 1999
55 BBC Focus on Africa [London], “Sierra Leone: No War, No Jaw”, July-September 1996, p. 6
56 BBC Focus on Africa [London], October-December 1999, pp.8-9
Britain has pledged to undertake the restructuring of a 5,000 strong new army, but direct training of recruits has been undertaken by the Nigerians. The Commonwealth Police Development Task Force, which left Freetown in the aftermath of the January 1999 invasion, has resumed work on restructuring the Police. Amid RUF protests of violations of the Lomé Agreement, following a British arms shipment to Sierra Leone, London declared that it would “continue with the rebuilding of the Sierra Leone army as an inclusive national army responsible to the democratically elected government”. This was a significant pledge because confidence in national institutions, particularly the country’s security forces, had been severely eroded. Sierra Leone’s top military man was now a Nigerian.

A Briton headed its Police Force. The Liberian experience, in which former fighters were transformed overnight into soldiers, policemen, immigration officers, etc., providing the opportunity for continuing abuses, illustrates the need for a firmer control over the restructuring process.

But the Lomé Agreement, and the pronouncements that followed, signalled hopes for an end to hostilities: “Today we hail the dawn of a new era. The war has ended. The hour of peace and forgiveness and reconciliation has come”, declared Sankoh upon his arrival in the country. These words were nevertheless drowned in renewed atrocities, which generated predictions from international and local observers that the Agreement, like its predecessor, the 1996 Abidjan Agreement, would not achieve its objectives: “The signs are not encouraging; without some sort of military force to impose discipline and authority it will be difficult to keep a semblance of stability for years to come. Real peace remains elusive and democracy does not appear to top the agenda in Sierra Leone.”

Although greeted as a necessary compromise to get out of the conflict, the Agreement was widely criticized for its blanket amnesty provisions. “It is politics by terrorism”, declared the U.S. based African lobby group, National Summit on Africa. Human Rights Watch, which had campaigned against a blanket amnesty, insisted that the “atrocities [were] clearly crimes against humanity” and that the Agreement was a very shaky foundation on which to build peace. Amnesty International, denouncing the amnesty provision, warned that the atrocities “constitute the gravest violations of international human rights and humanitarian law”. U.S. Secretary of State Madeleine Albright, however, defended the amnesty provisions, insisting that “it was very

59 Ibid.
61 New African, November 1999
62 BBC Focus on Africa, October-December 1999
64 Detroit Free Press, “Peace at Any Price Puts Terrorists in Control”, 9 September 1999
66 Amnesty International, Sierra Leone: Amnesty International’s Recommendations
important to seize the moment”, while acknowledging that the agreement failed to satisfy fundamental demands for justice.  

Left with few options, Kabbah indicated he had no choice but to sign the Agreement, described as one drafted and endorsed by “desperate men”. “I shall sign it as President of Sierra Leone, but more importantly, I shall sign it for thousands of children of Sierra Leone.”

The responsibility of ensuring the Agreement’s success now rested with its main sponsors, the British, and the Americans. A much-needed boost came when Secretary of State Albright, during a high profile visit to Freetown, announced an aid package, which included US$ 55 million towards the peace process. Britain had already pledged US$ 10 million for disarmament.

3.1 Sub-regional, Regional and International Actors in the Search for Peace

The crisis was largely regarded as a regional affair until the horrors of the war captured world conscience. But as was the case with regional intervention in Liberia, halting the bloodbath initially rested on the Anglophone countries in the region, with Guinea as the only Francophone country permanently committing troops.

Moreover, regional entanglement in Liberia, where its intervention force ECOMOG was overstretched, contributed to a hands-off policy in Sierra Leone for a number of years. Thus, a bilateral arrangement costing the Nigerian Government half a million a day and a casualty rate of 30 daily, was reached with Nigeria to save the Sierra Leonean government from inevitable collapse. Moreover, according to Abass Bundu who served as ECOWAS Executive Secretary during the Liberian crisis, and later was foreign minister in the NPRC, there was a desire within Sierra Leone to “preserve the internal character of the war”.

This was to change when Kabbah called for regional intervention after his government was overthrown. Abacha was accused of maintaining Nigerian troops in Sierra Leone as a diversion from chronic problems at home, and with his sudden death, his successor, General Abdulsalami Abubakar, threatened to pull out by May 1999 citing inability to meet the expenditure. This was understandable due to the lack of international backing, as indicated by the fact that for example, U.S. contribution to ECOMOG peacekeeping fell from US$ 3.9 million in 1998 to US$ 1.3 million in 1999.

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68 The Economist [London], 11 December 1999
70 Reuter, “Rebels Clashes Disrupt Sierra Leone Disarmament”, 19 October 1999
71 Agence France Presse, “Britain Hosts International Conference on Sierra Leone”, 27 July 1999
73 West Africa [London], 12 December 1999, p.15
74 Ibid.
As the situation deteriorated with mounting humanitarian problems, ECOWAS mandated Liberia, Ivory Coast, and Burkina Faso, states with RUF sympathies, to establish links with the rebels for a possible solution.

Nigeria’s role remained pivotal, and despite threatening withdrawal during his election campaign, President Obasanjo indicated continued backing once in office, pledging more support during a visit to Sierra Leone in June 1999.

This was followed in late November by another state visit and promises of more backing at a time when the rebels’ willingness to disarm was severely questioned. However, the promises were modified when, as indicated, Nigeria announced withdrawal of its troops, although half of the planned UN troops will come from Nigeria.

Liberia, too, began to assess its role in the conflict, primarily, as previously stated, due to international isolation and chronic problems within its shattered economy. Political pressure on President Taylor mounted even within Liberia, as pro-democracy groups campaigned against the continued presence of RUF and AFRC leaders in the country. Liberia’s Permanent UN Representative informed the government that criticism of its meddling in Sierra Leone was mounting within the UN with damaging effects. Taylor responded by promising a fresh look at his role in the crisis.

Guinea, a consistent opponent of the rebels, provided sanctuary for Kabbah’s cornered government during its brief exile and served as an operational base for many humanitarian organizations fleeing the anarchy in Sierra Leone. But by March 1999, United States Agency for International Development (USAID) reported that most expatriate staff, including many UN agencies, had returned to Freetown. As mentioned earlier, Guinea’s support of successive governments against the rebels has made it a target of the RUF. Pledges of solidarity within ECOWAS were strong on words and weak on action, but as the war intensified in 1999, Mali, and the Gambia sent in ECOMOG reinforcements. The Libyan leader, Colonel Muammar Qadhafi, long accused of backing the RUF, informed President Kabbah that he had ceased support of the rebels with the signing of the 1996 Abidjan peace agreement.

Images of war carnage, characterized by children with amputated limbs, eventually convinced the global conscience that a solution was beyond the capacity of a conflict-wrecked and divided region. Hence the UN’s dispatch of a 6,000 man peacekeeping force rekindled hopes of a final settlement, since, Annan told the Security Council,

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77 The Progress [Freetown], “President Obasanjo Assures Sierra Leoneans on Security”, 5 November 1999
79 The Inquirer [Monrovia], “Ambassador Tolbert Wants MRU Summit”, 6 June 1999
80 The News [Monrovia], “Taylor Leaves for Togo Tomorrow”, 3 June 1999
81 See United States, Agency for International Development, Office of United States Foreign Disaster Assistance (OFDA), Sierra Leone Complex Emergency: Fact Sheet # 16 (Washington, 19 May 1999)
82 Agence France Presse [Freetown], “Sierra Leone President Says Libya No Longer Supports Rebels”, 18 June 1999
Sierra Leone now “posed a threat to peace and stability in the region”. The Security Council agreed that changes in the “mandate and strength” of UN troops were necessary to deal with the vacuum left by the withdrawing Nigerians. Sankoh’s threat of not allowing UN or ECOMOG deployment in RUF-held areas in the absence of functioning cease-fire monitoring committees was regarded as “unacceptable”.

The direct UN engagement also signalled an end to Nigeria’s dominance in the conflict, and in late December 1999, the Nigerian Government announced withdrawal of troops as UN troops were entering.

Concerned about the general security implications, Kofi Annan called for an additional 4,000 troops to replace the Nigerians who, he revealed, “could not accept two peacekeeping forces under separate commands and working under separate conditions in the same country”. The Nigerians indicated that February 2000 would end their direct role in Sierra Leone. By 29 December, three Nigerian battalions had left, to be followed by the troops of Ghana, and Guinea.

3.2 Role of Civil Society

Sierra Leone’s civil society distinguished itself for its opposition to the rebels and military rule, and has been the driving force behind persistent demands for democratization as preconditions for peace. Civil society’s resistance to continued military rule took a dramatic turn during the AFRC-RUF political alliance, culminating in a campaign of non-co-operation with the junta and its rebel allies. Organized by church leaders, students, and women’s organizations, the campaign was a threat to the junta’s consolidation of power. It was a well rooted, popular campaign, and because civilians have shown their distaste for military rule, they have been systematic targets for some of the most unimaginable atrocities.

The reign of terror that characterized the junta’s rule set the stage for the mushrooming of civil groups opposed to the junta, with two of them, the women-led National Salvation Front and the Movement for the Restoration of Democracy, threatening underground military action if the junta did not surrender. Threatened by rising opposition the junta responded by organizing its own supporters to present a façade of popular backing. But it soon appeared that such orchestrated backing would crumble under increasing nation-wide protests, which were ruthlessly put down by machete and gun-wielding soldiers and rebels. When the junta was finally dislodged from Freetown, many civilians took their vengeance, executing suspected junta backers and looting their homes, in the midst of horrific tales of rape and mass murder.

At a much earlier stage, in August 1995, religious groups, traditional leaders, political parties, students and representatives of refugees from Liberia and

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84 Ibid. and Idem., “Sierra Leone: Sankoh Threatens to Block Peacekeepers’ Deployment”, Weekly Round-up No. 52, 30 December 1999 (electronic format <www.reliefweb.int>)
85 Concord Times [Freetown], “Ecomog Final Pullout in February”, 28 December 1999
86 Liberian Daily News Bulletin, 29 December 1999
89 BBC Focus on Africa [London], Lansana Fofana, “The Visitation”, April-June 1999, p. 29
Guinea met in Freetown as a national consultative conference and delivered a resounding blow to continued military rule by opting for elections, only to be answered by intensification of the reign of terror on the part of the RUF and the soldiers.

Due to the absence of an internal framework for democratic demands, civil groups launched a number of initiatives within the region aimed at halting RUF’s external backing, beginning with a meeting between the country’s religious leaders and President Taylor in April 1999. Their pleas against Liberian RUF backing ended in peace promises from Taylor. He admitted that the crisis was hurting Liberia’s economy due to international isolation, but hinted that power sharing with the rebels provided the best option since, like him, they waged the war for political conquest. Student leaders similarly embarked on a regional campaign aimed at ending RUF support, meeting with Taylor and urging the Liberian government to end its ties with the RUF.

The Religious Council of Sierra Leone and representatives of other civil organizations became key players in narrowing the gap between the rebels and the government during the Lomé peace talks. In late November 1999, the Council of Churches and the UNDP announced a campaign against small arms.

The emergence of civil society as the single most effective block against military rule became vital in resolving the conflict in a society now devoid of credible institutions. Visiting the country in November 1999 UN Deputy High Commissioner for Refugees Frederick Barton announced a co-operation package with civil organizations, geared towards long-term, sustainable projects. He said the UNHCR was considering departing from the “care and maintenance mode” and adopting new experiments questioning traditional solutions. Praising civil political actors for their “incredible courage” against the military in a country “where there has been a lack of vision for may be the entire 20th century”, Mr Barton credited civil society with “pulling the [1996] elections, albeit imperfect” and for “putting pressure” on the junta to step down.

With the spectre of accommodating the RUF-AFRC inevitable, dissatisfied civil organizations launched a campaign of mass protests in Freetown to denounce the concessions. The beleaguered government, itself initially opposed to sharing power, but now pushed by its backers into yielding, declared that it would “continue to respect the wishes of all peace loving Sierra Leoneans”. But the protests, led by many civil and human rights groups shut down all services and paralyzed the city. It was a massive indication of popular sentiments against the junta and rebel allies.

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90 Liberia Daily News Bulletin, 17 April 1999
91 Agence France Presse [Lomé], “UN Says Rebels Have Removed Roadblocks Outside Capital”, 2 June 1999
93 Agence France Presse [Abidjan], “UNHCR Announces New Tactics to Deal with Donor Shortfall”, 4 November 1999
94 Agence France Presse [Freetown], “Sierra Leone Government Says It Will Respect Will of Majority”, 18 June 1999
3.3 **Obstacles and Prospects**

It is now widely acknowledged that prospects for peace are tied to disarmament and demobilization, the strength of the external links of the rebels, and the perennial quest for power, along with the question of control and command of rebel organizations which, as will be indicated, appears to be fluid.

The emergence of the UN as the best hope for ending the conflict, particularly after the announced withdrawal of key West African states that have kept the rebels at bay, carries high expectations, but is also fraught with uncertainties. Thus, a worried Kofi Annan has requested an additional four battalions “as soon as possible”, to fill the security vacuum in key areas such as Freetown and Lungi International Airport. But despite expectations of difficulties ahead justified by rebel vacillations on disarmament, UN officials remain confident, and have pledged their commitment to complete the task of “disarmament and demobilization of all the rebels and fighting forces”.

An Indian commander of the Ghurka military police, upon arrival in the country, told journalists they had the mandate to resist rebel attacks and to ensure compliance with disarmament and demobilization.

Such confidence was not however shared by everyone, including the UN Security Council, which warned it could only assist “where conditions permit”. The Washington-based U.S. Committee on Refugees warned that the “situation is likely to get worse before getting better”, since, it added, rebel leaders were likely to “accelerate efforts to derail the peace process”. The Committee further recommended rapid UN deployment beyond government-held and diamond areas, and the use of force to counter RUF challenges.

An added dilemma was the evolving rift within the RUF which widened in November when Bockarie accused Sankoh of destroying the rebel organization and threatened to report him to Taylor for a reprimand. Thus, signs from the RUF on disarmament have been conflicting, with Sankoh pledging peace when the occasion requires, and describing the peace accord as “a scrap of paper” when it suits him. This ambivalence was manifested in Makeni where Sankoh assured his fighters there would be no forcible disarmament. Days later, Sankoh sent new signals calling for gradual disarmament which, he argued, would ensure peace.

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95 Africa Online, “Annan Calls for Expanded UN Presence in Sierra Leone”, 28 December 1999
96 *West Africa* [London], 29 November - 4 December 1999
97 *Concord Times* [Freetown], “Ghurka Commander Tells RUF - ‘Don’t Let Us Use Force’”, 9 December 1999
99 United States Committee on Refugees, “Sierra Leone’s Path to Peace: Key Issues at Year’s End”, 15 December 1999 (press release) (electronic format <www.refugees.org>)
100 *Concord Times* [Freetown], “Trouble in RUF: Maskita Threatens to Breakaway”, 12 November 1999
101 *The Economist* [London], 11 December 1999
102 Agence France Presse [Freetown], “ECOMOG Deploys in Makeni”, 15 November 1999
Although the Lomé Agreement may have brought the contestants for power together, suspicion, mistrust and bitterness loom, presenting serious hurdles for peacebuilding and conflict resolution. In the words of Fodey Sankoh: “How can I trust him [Kabbah]. He conspired with Abacha and others to detain a man he had signed a peace agreement with.” These suspicions are reinforced not by specific disagreements over reforms, but by the scramble for power and resources and fears of reprisals in a winner-takes-all game, a problem made more pronounced by the rebels’ determination to control the country’s resources.

Sankoh again: “We shall not allow our wealth to be mortgaged by the SLPP. We have to stop the looting of our national resources. We have to have proper arrangements with foreign companies. They have looted our resources for so long. The money should not go into the wrong pockets, but to the country for national development.”

These suspicions contributed to the slow pace of disarmament as the deadline for completion of the process, 15 December 1999, passed, with Sankoh claiming a plot to kill him: “

All they want to do is to take arms from us and then arrest and detain us. But they cannot force anybody to disarm. If they try it, they will regret it.” As allegations of weapons concealment flared, ECOMOG troops reported foiling attempts to infiltrate arms into Freetown in late December. Suspicions led to a stalemate, as rebel groups demanded that opponents take the lead in demobilizing and disarming. These misgivings prompted a disappointed government spokesman to suggest new approaches in the disarmament process “due to mistrust among the parties.”

Moreover, Sankoh’s influence over the fighters, in the absence of concrete guarantees of the satisfaction of their material needs, has been in doubt since he joined the government. “A lot depends on whether the RUF has got what it wants and whether they are able to control their fighters”, one observer notes. This can be seen in the policy of persuasion, not orders, adopted by Sankoh: “My concern as your leader is to change your minds from war to green revolution and that will have to go side by side with democracy. The only way to fight now is through the ballot box.” In fact it was only Charles Taylor’s intervention, following Sankoh’s visit to Liberia “for consultations” that facilitated the release of workers with the medical charity Médecins sans Frontières, held by the recalcitrant RUF commander Bockarie. However superficially attractive, the danger in Sankoh’s approach is that combatants might choose to simply disobey, now that their leader is a member of the hated Freetown elite. This seems indeed to have been the case between late November and

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104 New African [London], November 1999
106 New African [London], November 1999
108 Concord Times [Freetown], “ECOMOG Foils Rebel Plans to Infiltrate Arms into Freetown”, 20 December 1999
109 Concord Times [Freetown], “RUF Fighters Refuse to Disarm”, 9 December 1999
110 Reuter [Freetown], “Sierra Leone Will Miss Disarmament Deadline”, 14 December 1999
111 BBC Focus on Africa, October-December 1999
112 Reuter [Freetown], “Sankoh Takes Peace Message to North Sierra Leone”, 12 November 1999
113 Agence France Presse [Geneva], “MSF Hostages Released; Flown to Freetown”, 16 December 1999
the end of December, when officials reported that out of 45,000 fighters, a mere 3,636 (1,785 RUF, 1,257 AFRC, and 594 Civil Defence Forces) had been disarmed.\textsuperscript{114}

Comparing with experiences in Rwanda, UNHCR High Commissioner Sadako Ogata has underlined the difficulty of demobilizing fighters with access to neighbouring states as springboards for attacks in their home countries, now a common occurrence in African conflicts.

The regrouping of the RUF-AFRC rebels in Liberia following their January 1999 defeat in Freetown resulted in the escalation of the war with devastating effects. Hundreds of rebels returned from Liberia where they had been living as normal refugees, indicating the difficulty in distinguishing between what Mrs. Ogata calls “victims of civil wars and actors of civil wars”.\textsuperscript{115} Fears of dissident activities along their borders prompted Liberia and Sierra Leone to announce joint border patrols for 2000.\textsuperscript{116}

Thus, to a significant degree, prospects for a solution are linked to the rebels’ external backing. Now burdened with a collapsed economy and increasing isolation, Charles Taylor’s continued backing for the RUF is uncertain, and if it is cut off, the rebels may find it difficult to obtain the resources for continued war, since Liberia provides the needed corridor for operations vital for sustaining the war. The country’s failure to qualify for U.S. debt relief, which led to the resignation of its ambassador to Washington in November 1999, is an example of the pressure on the regime.\textsuperscript{117} They applied increasing pressure on Mr. Taylor to urge Mr. Sankoh toward peace and dangled the carrot of a resumption in international aid to Liberia. Eventually, Mr. Taylor co-operated, affixing his signature to the peace treaty”, observed an American diplomat.\textsuperscript{118}

The ties between the NPFL and the RUF, posing obstacles for short and long-term solutions, are however of mutual benefit, as shown when Liberian dissidents, determined to overthrow Taylor, launched border attacks in August 1999, which drove the RUF to cross into the country in defence of the Liberian Government.\textsuperscript{119} Although the Liberians blamed Guinea, the dissidents claimed they were dissatisfied rebels dispatched to fight in Sierra Leone.\textsuperscript{120} But Liberia’s role as a reservoir for mercenaries fuelling the conflict has been advantageous to all warring sides. Fleeing Armed Forces of Liberia (AFL) soldiers, many of them Krahns and Mandingoes, two tribes haunted by the NPFL, fought for various governments in Sierra Leone. As the RUF advanced its military campaign, they formed the United Liberation for Democracy in Liberia (ULIMO), ostensibly to defend themselves, but clearly to enter


\textsuperscript{115} Collins, Carole J. L., “UNHCR Confronts Refugees Challenge”, \textit{Africa Recovery} Vol. 10, No. 4 (January-April 1997)

\textsuperscript{116} \textit{Liberian Daily News Bulletin}, 22 December 1999

\textsuperscript{117} Pan African News Agency, “25 Member Donor Team Arrives in Liberia”, 15 November 1999

\textsuperscript{118} \textit{The New York Times}, “Sierra Leone Awaits Return of Rebel Leader; Weeks After, Much Is Uncertain”, 18 August 1999

\textsuperscript{119} \textit{The New Democrat} [Monrovia], “RUF Fighters on the Rampage in Lofa”, 6-8 October 1999

\textsuperscript{120} \textit{The New York Times}, “Liberia Says Guinea Is Firing Across Border to Back Rebels”, 17 August 1999
the power contest. By 1992, they were in Monrovia fighting alongside ECOMOG in dislodging the NPFL from the city and thwarting Taylor’s efforts to militarily seize power.

The proposals for benefits for disarmed combatants, such as the UN’s package of US$ 150 per ex-fighter and the prospect of vocational education, may be practical (as in the case of Mozambique), but the task is convincing rank and file rebels to abandon lucrative diamond mining and looting.121 A similar UN package was proposed for Angola, but with the rebel UNITA then earning US$ 1 million a day, which went into arms purchase, the drawbacks were many.122 A British observer notes that Sankoh’s elevation presents a platform on which “his Mafia cronies from the Ukraine can be expected to enjoy special privileges, including diplomatic immunity as they peddle Sierra Leone’s diamonds which will raise them some 100 m. pounds a year”.123 Whether the US$ 1 million American offer to establish a certification system geared towards undermining the illegal diamond trade will be a deterrence is uncertain without full disarmament.124 But State Department officials believe that the legal diamond industry, wary of a consumer backlash in view of the havoc diamonds are causing, is eager to establish a way of identifying legally traded diamonds.125

The rebels’ participation in government would now seem to remove any rationale for continued smuggling of diamonds and hence the continuation of the war, although there are speculations that Sankoh may simply yield to temptation and resume business as usual.126 And the desire for peace has meant in many instances succumbing to Sankoh’s will, as one observer noted: “[his] political power swells by the day, puffed up by everyone’s effort to keep him sweet”.127

4. THE HUMANITARIAN PICTURE

4.1 Problematic Humanitarian Aid

With a collapsed economy and disintegrating socio-economic infrastructure, there is a heavy reliance on dwindling humanitarian aid upon which short and long-term stability depends for Africa’s largest refugee-producing country.128

Sierra Leone is fast becoming a casualty of diminishing donor generosity, a situation worsened by plummeting contributions to UN emergencies, which ranged from 75 per cent of requests in 1996 and 66 per cent in 1997, to 54 per cent in 1998.129 In 1999, aid agencies reported that just 60 per cent of the US$ 800 million needed for UN

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121 The New York Times, 18 August 1999
123 The Times [London], 15 July 1999, p. 26
124 Reuter, “Albright Promises Cash to Help Sierra Leone”, 19 October 1999
125 The Washington Post, 19 October 1999
127 The Economist [London], 11 December 1999
operations in sub Saharan Africa was raised. The humanitarian gravity in the sub region, which accounts for a good number of Africa’s conflicts, which rose in number from 15 in 1994 to 55 in 1999, comes to light when the figures are compared. Of the 21.5 million people of concern to the UNHCR globally, 6.3 million are in Africa, 3.3 million of them as refugees, with Liberia and Sierra Leone, having a combined population of less than 8 million, accounting for 685,000 refugees. Out of the US$ 302 million requested for these millions of African refugees, Mrs. Ogata warned during an African summit, only US$ 127 million was received, compared to US$ 225 million donated for 850,000 Kosovo refugees. As donor apathy grows, so do fears of inability to feed the growing numbers of West African refugees on a continent where 20 per cent of its 120 million people now live in countries plagued with conflicts. A despairing UNHCR official criticized donors for the disproportionate amount of aid provided for UN missions in some parts of the world, while neglecting others, mainly Africa. Kofi Annan agreed, warning UN Security Council members that many Africans have resigned themselves to the Council’s indifference when it comes to the continent.

The Council’s key members conceded in December as Canada’s UN ambassador, Robert Fowler, noted that that the Council “has contrived to avoid its responsibility for monitoring peace in Africa for political and financial reasons. The result is hands off of responsibility for prevention and mediating and resolving of conflicts to the OAU and other regional bodies with little regard of their respective capacities in the areas.” But the American UN ambassador, Richard Holbrooke, admitting that the U.S. carries part of the blame, attributed Washington’s reluctance to frequent violations of peace agreements in African conflicts. That the U.S. Government, owing US$ 1.7 billion for general UN operations, is reducing its peacekeeping share from 31 per cent to 25 per cent, indicated the downward trend in humanitarian generosity among key donors even as the Sierra Leone intervention was underway. “If meetings alone could solve problems, I believe all Africa’s problems would have been solved by now”, responded a disappointed Kofi Annan.

Expressing concern that the Lomé Agreement was crumbling, President Kabbah warned that the failure of donors to release funds was endangering disarmament, although the UN representative in Sierra Leone responded that donors were waiting for rebel commitment to disarm before releasing an estimated US$ 260 million earmarked for the disarmament process. (This might be compared to East Timor with a peacekeeping budget of US$ 458 million and 11,000 troops. There was merit in his fears. The European Union’s response to the humanitarian catastrophe, for

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132 United Nations, High Commissioner for Refugees, Country Updates...
133 Dow Jones Newswires, “UN Refugee Chief Chides West for Lack of Aid to Africa”, 7 July 1999
134 CNN, “New Year Brings New Promise to Africa”, 3 January 2000
135 Agence France Presse [Abidjan], “UN Cuts Food to African Refugees”, 16 October 1999
136 Associated Press, “At a Daylong UN Security Council”, 16 December 1999
137 Los Angeles Times, “UN to Send 6000 Troops to Sierra Leone”, 23 October 1999
138 Associated Press, 16 December 1999
139 Agence France Presse [Freetown], “Kabbah Says International Community Jeopardizing Disarmament”, 16 December 1999
140 Associated Press, 16 December 1999
instance, was described as poor. The World Food Programme (WFP) reported a similar scenario and, estimating 1.8 million refugees and internally displaced persons in Liberia, Sierra Leone, and Guinea, said it was operating at 35 per cent of its capacity in October 1999, receiving a mere 20 per cent of the US$ 106 million it needed for programmes in the West African sub region. Earlier in August 1999, its officials in Conakry warned that they were “running out of food stock”, therefore urging a speedy implementation of disarmament and demobilization to enable refugees to return, since many had refused to return in the absence of disarmament. In mid December, even as UN troops were being deployed, Annan reported that only US$ 9.9 million of the targeted US$ 50 million for disarmament had been received, with an additional US$ 15 million for community and integration projects.

So, a grim picture remains in the absence of a speedy solution for West Africa’s conflicts. The prevailing feeling, backed by factors on the ground, is that the fate of the peace process is tied to donor generosity, a point emphasized by the UN Deputy Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs, Carolyn McAskie: “Donors are very seized of the need to assist the WFP to have food available for ex-combatants. Otherwise we run the risk of destabilization.” But insecurity, key among donor concerns, persisted long after the Lomé celebrations, with Kofi Annan declaring that “harassment and assault on humanitarian personnel” was prevalent despite commitment by all sides to “provide safe and unhindered access for humanitarian interventions”. The UN’s Humanitarian Assistance Co-ordination Unit (HACU) reported that insecurity in RUF controlled areas had “severely jeopardized humanitarian operations”. The UN’s Special Representative appealed for the immediate release of abducted children, while United Nation’s Mission in Sierra Leone (UNAMSIL) announced that “large numbers of people, including children”, were in detention. By late November HACU staff, after a tour, reported high incidents of abductions and physical attacks against civilians and the displacement of about 1,000 persons. Celebrations that greeted ECOMOG forces in November in Makeni after the town had been subjected to a reign of terror faded when the West African troops withdrew in December, and with them humanitarian agencies who complained of looting of their properties and rebel harassment.

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142 Agence France Presse [Abidjan], 4 November 1999
143 Reuter [Conakry], “Sierra Leoneans Face Food Shortages in Guinea”, 3 November 1999
146 Pan African News Agency, 9 December 1999
149 Concord Times [Freetown], “NGOs Withdraw from Makeni”, 1 December 1999
Even where assistance is available, getting it to the population remains a challenge. In December, UN declared the security situation “volatile”, although it added that there were signs of improvement. “Regrettably”, noted the UN Special Representative Bernard Miyet, “the humanitarian crisis … continues and the delivery of humanitarian assistance has been seriously hampered by the outbreak of violence”. USAID also reported in similar terms:

Half of the population living in rebel-held areas, two thirds of the country, remains isolated and inaccessible to humanitarian agencies. Limited information available about these areas indicates desperate conditions, including reports of starvation. The living conditions of most people in Sierra Leone remain precarious. Persistent insecurity continues to limit and interrupt humanitarian access and activities even in government held parts of the country.

The situation was far from improving by mid November when agencies admitted they were having limited access to areas due to “pockets of insecurity, lack of awareness and insufficient human capacity”, pointing out that “lack of funding was severely limiting [their] adopted integrated approach”. And as donors remain reluctant to commit funds, neighbouring states are bearing the brunt, with Guinea now listed as having the largest number of refugees in Africa.

To allay fears and keep the peace process on track, a number of donor agencies visited projects in parts of the country, with the UN Deputy Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs, Carolyn McAskie, noting that there is a difference between donor decisions and reality on the ground, an indication of what constitutes donor priorities versus actual needs at the moment. Nevertheless, donor indifference is also linked to the periodic setbacks a number of agencies have suffered in their operations due to insecurity. In August 1999, several UN and other humanitarian agencies catering for Sierra Leone refugees and displaced persons were attacked and looted in Lofa, near the border with Liberia, in the presence of representatives of key donors, among them the U.S. and the Netherlands. The fighting led to the evacuation of about 10,000 Sierra Leonean refugees closer to the capital, Monrovia.

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150 Africa Online, “UN Reports Progress in Implementing Sierra Leone Peace Accord”, 13 December 1999
151 United States, Agency for International Development, Office of United States Foreign Disaster Assistance (OFDA)
153 Reuter [Conakry], 3 November 1999
155 Reuter, “Liberian Gunmen May Hold up to 100 Hostages”, 13 August 1999
156 Agence France Presse, “UNHCR Transfers Final Group of Sierra Leone Refugees”, 26 October 1999
Thus, Sierra Leone, with a shattered economy, key economic institutions in rebel hands, and a collapsed social infrastructure, is now almost entirely dependent on humanitarian aid. USAID has completed the reconstruction of 563 out of the 948 houses destroyed by retreating rebels in some parts of Freetown. About 10,500 out of the 32,000 displaced have now been resettled. At the close of the year, Japan donated US$ 7 million for refugees in the sub region.

4.2 The Human Rights Situation from May 1997 to the Present

Gross human rights violations, indiscriminate killings, amputations, torture and gang rape, etc. reached their climax in the period just prior to the 1996 elections. But a campaign of terror against vulnerable rural inhabitants had begun with the war in 1991. Abuses linked to all sides in the war, with the RUF carrying bulk of the blame, have been randomly targeted, mainly hitting children, women, politicians, and pro-democracy activists. No one is targeted. They just kill randomly. If you are a government supporter, they get you randomly, only fast”, noted one victim. Children are among the worst hit by the terror. In interviews conducted in demobilization camps, many narrated horrific tales of forced execution or amputation of family members as an induction rite, and abductions into the rebel army.

Human Rights Watch in a 1999 report detailed a catalogue of abuses unimaginable even by African standards. They included setting houses ablaze with their occupants locked in, slave labour, sexual abuse, etc. This wave of abuses continued throughout 1998 into 1999 despite the much hailed Lomé Peace Agreement, with the MSF reporting large numbers of people under constant threat of attacks and needing protection. Five months after the immunity granted under the Lomé Agreement there were reports of more terror against civilians and accusations against ECOMOG and the government for not protecting victims. Promises of peace were greeted with more killings, extortion and looting. RUF house to house searches were widespread, forcing aid agencies to pull out of areas like Kambia due to persistent insecurity. Residents appealed to Sankoh, now Vice President, to help end their ordeal, but there was no end in sight. Understanding the war’s savage dimensions has been difficult for many. Kofi Annan, coming face to face with the rebels’ legacy during a visit to the country in 1999, wrote:

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161 Africa News Service, [untitled news item], 13 September 1998
162 NRC Handelsblad, 2 December 1999
163 Human Rights Watch, Getting Away with Murder...
164 Médecins Sans Frontières, Sierra Leone: A Report: Mutilations of Civilians in Sierra Leone, 26th April to 23rd May 1999 (Brussels, 1999)
165 See Human Rights Watch, Testimonies from Civilian Victims of Recent Abuses (New York, 6 December 1999) and Sierra Leone Rebel Abuses Spreading (New York, 6 December 1999)
In more than 30 years of work for the United Nations - including recent visits to sites of genocide in Rwanda and to victims of “ethnic cleansing” in Kosovo - nothing had quite prepared me for this. I visited a rehabilitation center for “amputees”. The word suggests an operation under anaesthesia to save a patient’s life. But this was the opposite. These had been healthy people until they were forced to lie spread-eagled - and on the ground - while their limbs - and other parts of their bodies - were hacked off, sometimes with blunted farm implements. Many had not survived. I saw an 86 year old woman who had lost her feet this way. I held in my arms a 2-year old girl whose right arm had been cut off…

Retreating rebels burned down large portions of Freetown in January 1999, with 65 to 80 per cent of the houses in some areas vanishing, while greater Freetown lost 5,788 homes. In one week of fighting, 2,768 people were killed, with the country’s main hospital swamped with amputated victims as its driveway attracted dogs and vultures feeding on the dead.

The town of Makeni became a slaughterhouse, with one ill-equipped hospital unable to count the number of amputees pouring in for treatment. A BBC reporter, after a tour of the town, noted that compared to horrible scenes in places like apartheid South Africa or bomb explosions she had covered, none had so reminded her of the abattoir. “Never before have I seen so much blood.”

The use of cocaine by combatants was common, with more doses for combatants depending on the intensity of their mission, as kidnapped children swelled the ranks of the rebel army. Rigid discipline within the RUF meant summary execution for those refusing to obey orders, such as slaughtering their parents, or attempting to escape.

In an attempt to detail the atrocities committed, the medical charity Médecins Sans Frontières listed destruction of villages, pillaging of harvests, mutilation and execution of civilians. Amnesty International, in its 1999 report, recounted numerous abuses, including summary executions of suspected government supporters. Reprisals and vendettas became widespread as pro-government militias, the kamajors, took their share in the abuses, summarily executing 50 suspected rebels in Kenema. Tribal killings as in neighbouring Liberia have not been a common factor, but the attacks on individuals opposed to the rebels, particularly political leaders with SLPP (governing party) loyalties, have been persistent. In the town of Port Loko, a paramount chief was publicly beheaded along with civilians suspected of government sympathies. Of the 19 journalists killed in Africa in 1999, 9 were in Sierra Leone.

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168 Human Rights Watch, Getting Away with Murder...
171 Agence France Presse [Freetown], “Sierra Leone Rebel Commander...”, 16 December 1999
173 Médecins Sans Frontières
175 Liberian Daily News Bulletin, 4 January 1999
These widespread brutalities caused uproar within the human rights community when the Lomé Agreement granted a blanket amnesty to the rebels. Finding it difficult to defend the amnesty but aware of the need for compromise in exchange for peace, the UN and human rights groups insisted the amnesty should not apply to serious atrocities. The global outcry led to clarifications, with the UN announcing that the amnesty granted in the Lomé Agreement applies only on Sierra Leone soil, implying that those alleged to have committed atrocities could be arrested elsewhere and tried.\[176\] American Secretary of State Albright hinted at a similar possibility while defending the amnesty provisions: “Ultimately, the only way reconciliation really can come is if people have a sense that justice has been done and those who perpetrated the terrible crimes are punished individually.”\[177\] The UN Commissioner for Human Rights, Mary Robinson, signing the manifesto on human rights in Sierra Leone, said its mandate includes exploring the war’s atrocities and violence against women and children and that such “were intolerable for the international conscience”.\[178\]

Despite the euphoria generated by the Lomé Agreement, it appears that the rebels’ amnesty was providing a groundswell of assumptions of impunity. Human rights groups reported “harsh regimes” in RUF-controlled areas, and frequent abductions in parts of the country.\[179\]

Kofi Annan reported continued human rights violations and “assault against humanitarian personnel”, warning that this was “unacceptable and perpetrators shall expect to be held accountable for their actions”.\[180\] Hopes that the amnesty would lessen abuses faded, with a consortium of local human rights groups calling for trials of abusers similar to the Rwandan tribunal because, they contended, there would be no peace until the main players are brought to justice.\[181\] A disappointed UN spokesman reported a “high incidence of abductions, looting, rape and physical attacks against civilians”.\[182\] The Committee for the Release of Abductees, formed after a request from RUF and the government to monitor violations, reported in late December that 2,000 children registered as missing were still unaccounted for, and that abductions were a daily affair with the plight of victims receiving “little attention”.\[183\] The incessant abuses led ECOMOG to warn that it would deal harshly with rebel commanders responsible for them because they were not covered by the amnesty.\[184\] The persistent abuses also generated doubts about the relevance of the amnesty provisions. Amnesty International noted:

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176 BBC News, Sierra Leone Worst Place for Journalists”, 24 December 1999
177 The New York Times, 8 July 1999
178 The Washington Post, 19 October 1999
179 Agence France Presse [Freetown], “UN Commissioner Signs Manifesto for Sierra Leone”, 24 June 1999
181 Pan African News Agency, 9 December 1999
182 The Progress [Freetown], “Rebel Kingpins Should Stand Trial for Human Rights Abuses”, 9 December 1999
Experience in many countries shows that to be effective and long lasting, settlement must take into account human rights abuses during the conflict. Clarifications about human rights abuses and accountability are essential components of a process of peace and reconciliation. True reconciliation cannot be achieved if the rights of the many thousands of victims … to truth, justice, and redress are ignored.\footnote{Amnesty International, \textit{Sierra Leone: Towards a Future ...}, p. 5}

4.3 Prospects for Voluntary Repatriation and Reintegration of Refugees and Internally Displaced Persons

The fundamental reason for the refugees’ fears is the fluid security conditions and an uncertain economic environment caused by conflict-ridden and collapsed economies. This key factor, perhaps previously not given the required emphasis by many, including aid agencies, has led to disruption of humanitarian services and tremendous material losses. After the Lomé Agreement, optimism about the prospects for peace and repatriation were not unwarranted, that is if the gauge was promises from the war’s architects: “I started this war so when I say it is finished I know what I am saying”, declared Sankoh in a meeting with Frederick Barton, who emerged optimistic about the prospects for an environment for the eventual return of refugees.\footnote{United Nations, Integrated Regional Information Network for West Africa, “Sierra Leone: Deputy HCR Optimistic over Refugees Return”, Update No. 586, 3 November 1999 (electronic format. <www.reliefweb.int>)}

Such assurances following peace agreements have become less credible, as was the case with the 1996-Abidjan Agreement, when refugees who returned home were forced to flee again.\footnote{See Human Rights Watch, \textit{Annual Report 1999}} And despite warnings from the WFP of food shortages in the refugee camps due to donor indifference, many refugees refused to return. “Some of them even demonstrated with their amputated limbs… to further strengthen their case for not going home before disarmament”, a WFP official said.\footnote{Reuter, 3 November 1999} Warning against involuntary repatriation based on the signing of peace agreements alone, Human Rights Watch similarly pointed out the “great risk” refugees encountered after “prematurely” returning in 1996 and 1997. The UNHCR observed in early December 1999 that though the cease-fire emanating from the Lomé Agreement may have been holding, it did not generate enough confidence for a mass return home.\footnote{United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, \textit{Country Updates ...}} Thus, security as precondition for mass repatriation has become a prime concern within the humanitarian community, and featured prominently during Barton’s 10-day tour in the region. At a Sierra Leone refugee camp in Liberia holding 11,000, he told them what they already knew, that armed conflicts were preventing many refugees from returning home. To avert this, he called for sub regional efforts at ensuring security, and stated that Liberia was now in a position to ensure regional stability.\footnote{Liberian Daily News Bulletin, 2 November 1999} Doubts persisted nevertheless, with the medical charity Merlin predicting that there “remains the potential for further regional as well as internal instability” in Liberia itself.\footnote{Merlin Update on Liberia, November 1999}
With the economy in disarray due to continued and spreading insecurity, some analysts, including the UNHCR, believe a quick end to the crisis, which would be necessary for mass repatriation, is unlikely. The Government is estimated to be losing US$ 450 million in illicit diamond trade while in need of US$ 260 million to disarm fighters. The Economist Intelligence Unit also forecast a gloomy outlook for the economy in the absence of peace, noting that “demobilization will not make the war go away as long as ex-fighters have no means to make a place for themselves in society”. Without comprehensive disarmament, and in view of continuing atrocities, the prospects of mass repatriation are slim. The spiralling poverty, resulting from decades of neglect exacerbated by the war, has made life difficult in a country rated as the poorest on earth with a life expectancy of 37 and 174 children dying out of every 1,000 live births.

The initial momentum and optimism raised hopes for a quick end to the nightmare, with hundreds of fighters reported to have assembled for disarmament at various points. For example, reports quoting aid workers said 4,000 rebels assembled in Makeni to be disarmed. However, there were more worrying signs as the year ended with low disarmament figures, with Annan calling for an increase of the UN force from 6,000 to 10,000 due to Nigeria’s announced pullout. But an initial boost, despite the high insecurity that followed, was the reopening of the main road linking Sierra Leone with Guinea which accounts for 30 per cent of Sierra Leone’s imports and exports.

Difficult living conditions in increasingly volatile host countries often lead to the urge among refugees for returning home, as was the case in December when many returnees were forced to flee after repeated RUF attacks. Several orphaned children now in Guinea run the risk of abuse, and the adult population in refugee camps is undergoing serious psychological trauma, Human Rights Watch noted. Following a border attack by Liberian dissidents in August 1999, the UNHCR launched a mass evacuation of Sierra Leonean refugees. The operation involved relocating about 10,000 refugees farther away from the explosive border. Another batch of refugees was evacuated from the Guinea-Sierra Leone border due to frequent attacks. Over

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193 United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, *Country Updates ...*
194 United States, Agency for International Development, Office of United States Foreign Disaster Assistance (OFDA)
195 See *Oxford Analytica*, 22 October 1999 and *Dow Jones Newswires*, 7 July 1999
197 The Economist Intelligence Unit, “Sierra Leone Economy: Quality of Life Ranked Worst by UN”, 27 July 1999 (electronic format <www.viewswire.com>)
198 Agence France Presse [Freetown], “Kamajors Begin to Return Home”, 27 July 1999
199 Reuter [Freetown], “Curfew Eased as Security Improves”, 19 August 1999
201 Reuter, “Rebels Reopen Major Sierra Leone Highway”, 17 August 1999
202 *Concord Times* [Freetown], “Refugees Cry Foul as Rebels Flout Sankoh’s Orders”, 9 December 1999
204 Agence France Presse, 26 October 1999
500 refugees wishing to return were stopped by Liberian security in October at a border crossing previously closed due to fears of an invasion by dissidents in the area. Thus refugees, in discussions with aid agencies, refused to take further chances without disarmament.

On the other hand, there are reportedly “heavily armed” refugees in Guinea, leading to internal security fears in a region that is rapidly falling apart. This has prompted frequent clampdowns on refugees in the country. A similar or worse situation prevails in Liberia where Sierra Leone refugees face frequent attacks from the country’s security forces. The military coup in the Ivory Coast on 24 December presents a new set of uncertainties for large numbers who have sought refuge in that country, until then one of the few stable countries in the region. Additional to the nightmare of reintegrating hundreds of thousands of displaced persons and refugees in the absence of viable economic structures, the challenge ahead is dealing with the reintegration of child soldiers, estimated at between 5,000 and 10,000.

5. BRIDGING THE GAP BETWEEN RELIEF AND DEVELOPMENT

Undertaking ventures aimed at breaking the cycle of dependence is inconceivable where peasants have no confidence in state institutions where they exist, and are subjected to brutalities, looting, and extortion by competing rebel groups. In the absence of peace, and therefore stability, long-term planning for development becomes difficult, if not impossible. Perhaps it is this realization that is generating new thinking within the relief community regarding crisis management and long-term sustainable development prospects.

Efforts geared at establishing some basis of self-reliance prompted key UN agencies to launch a consolidated appeal for US$ 70.9 million for the implementation of 34 projects “based on realistic assessment of the situation at hand”. After a regional tour in August, Deputy HCR Frederick Barton hinted that the agency could begin investing in security to guarantee the resources for humanitarian work, particularly as donors are shying away from pumping in resources subjected to endless sprees of destruction and looting. Through a pilot project, said to be approved by the Liberian authorities, the UNHCR will train and deploy its own “broad-based politically balanced community police force in charge of parts of Lofa where refugees and the displaced are concentrated”. A humanitarian security force, once questions of jurisdiction and authority are resolved, would no doubt lead to confidence building in local communities so badly in need of security for their basic survival.

206 Reuter [Conakry], 3 November 1999
211 Agence France Presse [Abidjan], 4 November 1999
A security apparatus for effective humanitarian work was one of the thorny issues at the Lomé talks. Five months after the Lomé Agreement, UN deployment in rebel-held areas may after all not be problem-free, although Sankoh had earlier welcomed the deployed troops, saying “better late than never”. Access to rebel held areas, previously generally off limits to aid agencies, understandably became the prime concern for humanitarian agencies. To address this, the first phase of the accord called for opening of roads to enable access to populated areas. The importance of the concession, which is still encountering difficulty in implementation, is due to the fact that in many of the areas, the rebels had set up their own de facto regimes engaged in slave labour and extortion. In the RUF stronghold of Kailahun close to the Liberian border, 10,000 people were reportedly held hostage. The need to remove this obstacle, and to facilitate humanitarian assistance in cut-off areas, led to the formation of the Implementation Committee, responsible for monitoring humanitarian provisions in the Agreement, such as access to all parts of the country for delivery of assistance. The Committee was mandated to review complaints arising from the implementation of the Agreement. Thus, safe transport to Bo and Kenema, towns with a heavy concentration of displaced persons and refugees, became a priority issue for the committee. The limited access provided immediately after the agreement saw increased delivery of assistance to the towns, which had previously been cut off.

Many areas remained off limits to aid workers four months after peace talks. UN Deputy Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs, Carolyn McAskie, after a tour noted: “Disarmament is the biggest thing. Humanitarian agencies are still unable to reach large tracts of the north. Rebel commanders are still roaming freely with their arms and the population is not secure. Our impression is that it is a very critical moment in the peace process.” But she said she was impressed with the cooperation between NGOs and the government. Doubts about Sankoh’s sincerity, despite his touring rebel areas telling fighters to embrace peace, were now emerging. Carolyn McAskie commented: “Sankoh is saying all the right things and what we are looking for is action to back his word. The proof of the pudding will be when commanders lay down their arms. The next step will be to inform the donor community to ensure that the disarmament is fully funded.”

In spite of the difficulties, efforts at decreasing dependence are being attempted. The Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO) has begun a project aimed at assisting fishing communities in Freetown, Pujehun, Bonthe and Moyamba districts in the south. Fishing boats and other equipment, benefiting 200 families, were distributed in late November. With minimal security provided by loyal government soldiers in remote areas once inaccessible to UN agencies, small-scale agricultural projects have been undertaken. A women’s project destroyed after rebels burnt and ransacked the facilities, killing a number of family members, has been resumed with UN help. A further impetus to community-based programmes came in late December when the

213 Reuter, 19 August 1999
218 Agence France Presse [Freetown], “Relief Aid Begins Reaching Isolated Civilians”, 8 December 1999
World Bank approved a US$ 25 million package aimed at restoring social and economic infrastructure with emphasis on war-affected individuals and groups. But as Liberia has shown, bridging the gap between relief and development, long after the cessation of hostilities, is difficult in the absence of secure democratic political structures that put human rights and human dignity first.

6. CONCLUSION

The conflict has left many wounds difficult to heal. Bitterness and suspicion linger, and if the war’s chequered history is the yardstick, peace agreements alone are no guarantors of stability in a disintegrated state. The conflict has also contributed to fears of insecurity in host countries, due in part to increasing refugee numbers, many of them young people with few prospects. Presenting its bill for the Sierra Leone crisis at US$ 1 billion, Guinea has reminded the humanitarian community of the need to extend help to host countries. And with diminishing donor generosity in African crises at a time when the region is crumbling, the welfare of millions of helpless victims is at stake.

So far, there is a parallel evolving between the Sierra Leone, Liberia and Angola crises, namely the connection between control of minerals and political power.

The Lomé Agreement contained provisions similar to the failed 1991 Bicese Angolan Peace Accord, implemented without comprehensive disarmament and demobilization, with the rebel UNITA left in charge of the diamond industry, enabling it to earn US$ 1 million a day for a sustained war effort. The political-economic dimensions of such concessions become clear in view of the enormous benefits entailed. With 60 per cent to 70 per cent of Angola’s diamond areas under its control between 1992 and 1997, UNITA was estimated to have an income of US$ 3.7 billion from diamonds alone, excluding direct revenue from the coffee, timber, gold and ivory export and interests earned on foreign bank deposits. Similarly, the NPFL’s control of key resources contributed to its intransigence and final victory in Liberia. Pampering the RUF by leaving the diamond trade under its control may be a necessary evil in the quest for peace, but is it a convincing reason for the rebels to abandon war if political power eludes them?

Moreover, benefits provided for disarmed ex-fighters, which worked in Mozambique, were less attractive for the Angolans after warnings from key military officers that ex-combatants would simply use the benefits and return to banditry. In the absence of full disarmament and demobilization, there are concerns that Sierra Leone may fall in this category, since, some observers contend, “it is unlikely that former fighters will be absorbed into civil life and survive without huge injections of foreign subsidies”.

221 Brittain, p. 92
222 Oxford Analytica, 14 October 1999
223 Brittain, pp. 89-92
224 BBC Focus on Africa [London]. October-December 1999, pp. 8-9
Furthermore, the connections between the Liberian and Sierra Leone wars are difficult to ignore, and when the political and economic ties between the NPFL and RUF are considered, even more difficult to dismiss. Both rebel groups opted for peace and powersharing only after failed campaigns to seize power, which forced them to negotiate. “The guns will be silent; we have stopped atrocities”, Sankoh promised. The reality - the reluctance of the rebels to surrender arms - remains.

Then there is the fear of a replica of the Liberian scenario, in which terror becomes the most effective political tool aimed at extracting compliance from an already frightened and impoverished electorate. The Economist has no doubts: “Mr. Sankoh’s mentor, Charles Taylor, won the presidency … by threatening to take up arms again if people did not vote for him. No doubt, Mr. Sankoh will make the same threat in the election due in 2001...”

Others conclude that divisions within the country’s political establishment could be advantageous to rebels feared by the population. Whether the Angolan paradigm, (avoided in Liberia since the faction most capable of continued war won elections without protest) in which losers resume war with horrific consequences, will prevail in Sierra Leone as Sankoh unveils his political ambitions is the question. In the end, the RUF leadership may present difficulties for peacebuilding taking into account the brutal atrocities committed by the rebels who, as we have seen in Liberia, may be transformed into security and political leaders. As in the case of Liberia, the world could simply turn its back in protest, setting the stage for continued insecurity within a disintegrating sub region left to contend with the resulting economic and social decay.

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225 Agence France Presse, “Sierra Leone Rebel Leader Gets Big Welcome in the Bush”, 14 October 1999
226 Reuter, “Sierra Leone Disarmament Starts Next Week”, 16 October 1999
227 The Economist [London], 11 December 1999
228 The Economist Intelligence Unit, 22 November 1999
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