

Sierra Leone after the end of the armed conflict

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Desde Março de 1991, a Serra Leoa viveu uma experiência de permanentes conflitos violentes envolvendo populações civil, experiência esta que desembocou numa verdadeira guerra civil, com a destruição em larga escala de infra-estruturas e propriedades, a morte de milhares de pessoas, um número muito maior de feridos, e mais de metade da população deslocada. Três acordos de paz foram assinados – em 1996 (Abidjan), 1997 (Conakry) e 1999 (Lomé), respectivamente. Porém, nenhum deles trouxe a paz. No presente artigo, o autor localiza as razões e a natureza do conflito, e os acontecimentos que levaram o governo e os líderes rebeldes a declarar o conflito terminado, em Janeiro de 2002. Na parte final analisa a situação resultante na Serra Leoa desta «declaração de fim de guerra».

Since March 1991, Sierra Leone has experienced continuous civil strife culminating in a protracted civil war, leading to widespread destructions of infrastructures and property, and the death of thousands of people, many more injured and over half of the population displaced. Three peace accords were signed in 1996, 1997 and 1999 in Abidjan, Conakry and Lomé respectively. However, these agreements did not bring peace. In this paper, the author situates the reasons and the nature of the conflict, the events leading to both government and rebel leaders declaring in January 2002 the end to conflict. Finally, he looks at Sierra Leone following the formal declaration of an end to the war.

Dès mars 1991, la Sierra Léone a vécu une expérience de continuel conflits violents qui impliquaient des populations civiles. Cette expérience a débouché sur une vraie guerre civile, avec destruction à grande échelle d'infrastructures et propriétés, la mort de milliers de personnes, un nombre encore plus grand de blessés, et plus de moitié de la population déplacée. Trois accords de paix ont été signés – en 1996 (Abidjan), 1997 (Conakry) et 1999 (Lomé), respectivement. Cependant, aucun d'entre eux n'a produit la paix. Dans l'article qui suit, l'auteur localise les raisons et la nature du conflit ainsi que les événements que ont conduit le gouvernement et les chefs rebelles a déclarer le conflit comme terminé, en janvier 2002. Dans la partie finale il analyse les résultats de cette «déclaration de fin de guerre» en Sierra Léone.

Introduction

On the 23 March 1991, a group of rebels calling itself the Revolutionary United Front (RUF) invaded the southeastern corner of Sierra Leone, close to the Liberian border. The insurgents used Liberia as a launching pad, and with the help of socially excluded groups who were opposed to the authoritarian and kleptocratic policies of the ruling All People's Congress (APC) aided by an «international brigade»¹ who had fought in the Liberian civil war embarked on a prolonged struggle to unseat the APC government of President Joseph Momoh. The RUF's initial demand was to return Sierra Leone to a democratic pluralist system, but this demand changed after the APC was toppled by a military coup in April 1992, led by a 27 year old army Captain, Valentine Strasser. These officers felt that the rebels could be defeated if only good leadership could prevail at the centre. However, as the conflict spread throughout the country, and as demands grew for a return to civilian rule, the National Provisional Revolutionary Council (NPRC), as this regime was called, sought a settlement with the rebel forces. Before a settlement could be achieved, largely due to pressure from the international community and domestic democratic forces, elections were held which saw the return of the Sierra Leone People's Party to power under the leadership of Ahmed Tejan Kabba. Whilst Kabba sought a peaceful accord with the leadership of the RUF, not all the major articles of the 1996 Abidjan Accord were implemented. In particular, Kabba refused to «reward» the rebels with a place in the Government of national unity. Meanwhile, the problem of an indisciplined and restive army continued to plague the Kabba administration. There were a number of reports of coup attempts, and at the time of the May 1997 coup, which toppled the Kabba Government, there were a number of officers under arrest charged with treason. The coup plotters unleashed widespread violence on the civilian population, this time on residents of the overcrowded capital Freetown. The junta had little or no support from the civilian population, and met passive resistance from the population, as well as strong opposition from the Kamajors (the nucleus of the civil defence force created by Kabba), and the Nigerian-led Economic Community of West African States Monitoring Group (ECOMOG), which was in Sierra Leone aiding the Government to end the rebellion.

Among the reasons the junta put forward for overthrowing the civilian regime, was the role played by the Kamajors, who were seen as usurping the power of the military. The civilian Government was confronted with an army whose command structure had broken down, and one, which had been highly politicised by succes-

¹ Consisting mainly of Liberians, Bukinabese and other Africans.

sive regimes and riddled with corruption. In order to safeguard its security, the Government gradually transformed an arm of civil society (the Kamajors) into a quasi-national army. This further alienated the army from the new regime, and the policy of reducing the size and privileges of the army set the theatre for civilian-military confrontation.

Background

By the time the RUF invaded Sierra Leone in March 1991, the APC had ruled Sierra Leone for the preceding 23 years, initially under the leadership of Siaka Stevens, and since 1984, by Stevens' chosen successor, kinsman, and Army Commander, Major-General Momoh, in a stage-managed election of the Congress (Zack-Williams, 1985). The choice of Momoh as successor to Stevens, (by-passing his Vice President and heir-apparent S. I. Koroma) upset sections of the party hierarchy, and did not present a strong platform from which an apparent phlegmatic leader can rule with supporters of the wounded former First Vice President breathing down his throat. Partly for this reason, Stevens decided to retain the position of Secretary General of the ruling Party. As we have pointed out above, Momoh's regime was removed from office in 1992 by NPRC. After much domestic and international pressure for a return to democratic pluralism, the NPRC prepared the country for the return to civilian rule, but before they could hand over to the elected Government, Strasser was toppled by his second-in-command Brigadier Julius Maada-Bio (Zack-Williams, 1999; Zack-Williams & Riley 1993).

In March 1996, the NPRC handed the reigns of Government to the civilian regime of Ahmed Tejan-Kabba, who was promptly removed from office in May 1997 by a group of rebellious army officers calling themselves the Armed Forces Revolutionary Council (AFRC) under the leadership of Major Johnny Koroma. The AFRC soon merged with the rebel RUF who had been terrorising the country's rural areas since 1991. The coalition formed a «Peoples' Army», and then demanded the release of the leader of the RUF former Corporal Foday Sankoh. The AFRC / RUF regime was ousted from the capital by a reinforcement of Nigerian led ECOMOG forces. However, on 6 January 1999, after much warning and destructive activities in the Provinces, the rebels returned to occupy a large part of the capital. Wonton violence, Killing, burning, looting, maiming and abducting of young women and children marked their brief period of occupation. The result is that after two weeks of rebel Pogrom, over a quarter of a million people in the capital had been rendered homeless, thousands killed and even more people were wounded many losing limbs. In what follows I want to look at the events leading up to the civil war, the search for peace and the prospects for permanent peace.

Patrimonialism and the politics of decline

In order to understand the factors, which impelled a social movement to invade the southeastern corner of Sierra Leone with the aim of toppling the APC government, one has to look at the recent political-cum-economic history of the country. APC accession to power marked the beginnings of «*the decline of politics and the politics of decline*» (Zack-Williams, 1985: 202), as the economy began its long declivity in the midst of widespread corruption and rent-seeking activities.

The main causal factor for the current crisis and the subsequent civil war could be traced to the corrosive effects of the personalised authoritarian rule by the APC under the leadership of Siaka Stevens, which led to the destruction of civil society, and all forms of opposition and any semblance of democratic accountability. This was paralleled with the introduction of a whole network of client-patron relationship, recently described as «*the shadow state*» (Reno, 1995). The activity of the shadow state and its reproduction are premised on state access to sufficient revenue in order to placate clients. Here lies the *force majeure* of «*the politics of decline*» in Sierra Leone. Now, by unleashing the full force of the oppressive state apparatus on civil society, as well as imposing forced savings on the peasantry (via the state controlled Sierra Leone Marketing Board), the APC destroyed the enterprise and will of the people to be governed. The result is that peasant producers withdrew from the formal domestic market and the educated classes, and the petty bourgeoisie migrated to greener pastures. Soon an informal economy and society is constructed, posing further threat to the legitimacy of the governing class. The latter's reaction is «*to patrimonialise state offices and resources...along ethnoclientelist and personalist lines*» (Kandeh, 1992: 30), thus stocking up further social and political discontent. (Zack-Williams, 1990; 1998; & 1999) The destruction of democratic accountability was paralleled with economic decline.

Fighting in Sierra Leone

In 1984, the ageing leader handed over power to his Force Commanded, Major General Momoh. Realising the unpopularity of his predecessor, Momoh tried to distance himself from his sponsor's policies through what he called his *New Order Administration*. In November 1986, Momoh concluded a long-term structural adjustment facility with the Fund, as part of the new Economic Recovery Programme. In return for the usual macro-economic conditionalities, (such as devaluation, reduction in the size of the bureaucracy, removal of subsidies on essential commodities, deregulation of rice importation, ending of the State controlled Marketing Board's monopoly on the importation of rice, the Fund provided the Government with standby credit to the tune of SDR 40.53 million. (Zack-Williams, 1990).

In 1987 Momoh declared a State of Economic Emergency under which the Government assumed wide powers to crack down on corruption, gold and diamond smuggling, as well as the hoarding of essential commodities and the local currency. These policies were designed to counter the thriving parallel market, to which the formal banking sector had lost millions of *Leones*. Momoh went further in applying the conditionalities than his predecessor². Indeed, after the Fund had unilaterally abrogated the agreement in 1990 due to the Government's inability to continue payment of arrears, Momoh embarked upon a «shadow programme», i.e. conditionalities without the loan to cushion the worst effects. However, it was not long before these policies started taking their toll, as prices of basic commodities soared to astronomical heights and inflation ate into savings and wages. Momoh's position in the Congress was never as omnipotent as compared to Stevens. Momoh was «an imposed candidate» for the Presidency and leadership of the party; he did not have any solid political base within the party; above all he was not as shrewd an operator as his predecessor in manipulating the various factions that constituted Congress' shadow state. For many neutrals, Momoh was too phlegmatic, was a very indecisive, weak leader who allowed his ministers free reign to be corrupt. There were members of the «old brigade» who still saw him as «an ethnic upstart». Among these was his deputy, and former SLPP stalwart, Francis Minah who allegedly used Momoh's growing unpopularity as the basis to organise for a putsch, which resulted in Minah's execution for high treason. It is important to note that Minah hailed from Pujehun District, one of the areas that would define the front line of the civil war. Minah had also been involved in the notorious Ndogboyosi conflict, «a rural rebellion in the mid-1980s against the All People's Congress Government of Siaka Stevens» (Riley and Max-Sesay, 1995: 122).

Nonetheless, Minah's execution incensed many people from the Southern Province who felt that it was all a plot by Northern zealots who wanted to deprive them of power, as Minah was expected to succeed Momoh to the Presidency. In one swoop, Momoh became alienated from two of the most powerful ethnic groups in the country, the Temnes from the northern and central areas of the country and the Mendes from the south. Together, these two groups account for about 60 percent of the total population. Momoh's insensitivity reached new heights when he called for «ethnic coporatism» in one of his broadcasts over the Sierra Leone Broadcasting Service. He urged all his subjects to form themselves into ethnic cabals. Indeed, by this 1990 broadcast, to the *Ekutay* Annual Convention at Binkolo, Bombali District, Momoh confirmed what many political pundits had by now often alluded to: mainly that power had shifted from Parliament and the Cabinet to the *Ekutay* (Zack-Williams, 2001a). The consequence of the growing influence of the *Ekutay* in the affairs of state was to further worsen ethnic relations, and to speed economic decline.

² Stevens was always aware that full implementation may unleash social forces beyond his control.

By 1991 the first UNDP Index for Human Development put Sierra Leone at 165th out of 165 countries. Momoh's control of state affairs soon started to slip away; and in the Eastern Province, of Kono District in particular, continued to retain its notoriety as the «Wild West of West Africa», with a semi-permanent lawlessness in the diamond mining areas.

By the early 1990s, the «democratic wind of change» had prevailed across the continent: donors had instituted a return to democratic multi-party politics as a *sine qua non* for official loans; Francophone Africa had popularised the system of National Convention as a *rites de passage* to democratic transformation. Yet, in Sierra Leone, the phlegmatic leadership assumed an ostrich-like posture in the face of popular demands for democratic pluralism, led by the Sierra Leone Bar Association, the university community, as well as school children and the unemployed³. Momoh's response to demands for multi-party elections was to quickly despatch the hawkish Secretary General of the Congress, E.T. Kamara. He warned in particular, people in the South and Eastern Provinces that any talk of multi-party democracy will be dealt with by the full force of the law, since all such discussions were illegal under the single-party state. The theatre was now set for social contestation.

The RUF and state contestation

Whilst Momoh was busy trying to preserve the *ancient regime*, civil war broke out in neighbouring Liberia, which soon engulfed much of Sierra Leone. A group of rebels including veterans of the Liberian civil war but of whom the majority were of Sierra Leonean parentage, who had formed a «revolutionary foco» in the 1980s, decided to strike at the southeastern corner of the country. The reason why this group of Libyan influenced international brigade chose this moment to oust the Momoh regime is not clear. Ellis has argued that Charles Taylor the Liberian warlord felt aggrieved that the Economic Community of West African States Monitoring Group (ECOMOG) prevented him from taking control of the Liberian capital, Monrovia. In particular, Taylor was angry at the duplicity of Sierra Leone government, whilst trying to act as peace-maker but at the same time allowing ECOMOG to use its airport to bomb territories controlled by Taylor. Thus, Taylor «swore to avenge the interference in Liberia's internal affairs...Taylor's reaction was 'to do a RENAMO' on Sierra Leone» (Zack-Williams & Riley, 1993:93). Taylor's surrogates and allies, the RUF, under the leadership of Foday Sankoh, a former disgraced corporal in the Republic of Sierra Leone Military Forces invaded Sierra Leone's Eastern Province causing widespread destruction and terror in the breadbasket of the nation.

³ These would all be key social actors in the impending civil war.

Other writers, in particular Richards, see the RUF as a «group of revolutionaries inspired by the notion of a Third Way (between Soviet-style one Party Rule and The Western-based democracy) as advocated in Gaddafi's Green Book... and trained in guerrilla warfare in Benghazi» (Richards, 1995:1). Richards points out that the war is a product of the protracted, post-colonial, crisis of patrimonialism. Abdullah (1997; 1998; Abdullah & Muana 1998) takes up the theme of the «revolutionary vanguard» and the influence of Ghadaffi's *Green Book* and Kim IL Sung's *Juche* ideas. He also points to the coming together of «town and gown» as the children of the petty bourgeoisie were drawn into prolonged dialogue with lumpen elements in the Pote, where illegal drugs were used, cementing a strong counter-culture. The RUF, which provided this link appealed to the socially excluded youth and all those in society, who felt alienated by APC rule. The confidence the RUF had in the revolutionary potential of the Sierra Leonean youth and in its own revolutionary *weltanschauung*, meant that it expected them to rally to the movement. Instead, many young people, girls and boys were kidnapped into the movement, and the wanton violence unleashed upon.

Political leadership and the conduct of the war

Momoh was unable to bring peace to the country, and both Government and rebel forces were accused of serious human rights abuse (Amnesty International, 1998). Momoh failed to exploit the nationalist cause created by rebel wanton violence against civilians. By mid-1991 the economy took a turn for the worse as agricultural production plummeted to an all time low of \$10 million (Zack-Williams & Riley, 1993). The war continued to take its toll not only on civilian lives, but also on the exchequer: by early 1992 over 10,000 people had been killed, 300,000 displaced, 200,000 in refugee camps in Guinea, and 400,000 trapped behind enemy lines. Meanwhile, Momoh tried to use the security situation as a pretext to delay calling general elections, which in turn infuriated opposition leaders. Troops despatched to the war front had to fight with obsolete weapons. More significantly, the cost of the war effort meant that the military could no longer be protected from the worst effects of the economic crisis, which had engulfed the nation. The senior officer corps of the army, who had invested a lot in the corrupt system of the Stevens-Momoh dynasty, was relatively well protected from the crisis. These are the people who had illegally built houses on state land to be rented out to foreign embassies and companies to be paid in foreign exchange. In other words, the «top brass» in the army indulged in the spoils of a decadent regime. Since this did not trickle down to the junior officer corps this provided the basis for a split within the officer corps of the army. In addition, the policy of sending young and potentially rebellious officers to the war front had the effect of further alienating young officers from those officers who were seen as occupying position of opulence.

In April 1992, Momoh was removed from office by a group of relatively young and unknown officers, led by an army Captain, Valentine Strasser who had escaped death after being severely injured in hand to hand fighting with the RUF forces. In his first interview after ousting Momoh, Strasser spoke of fighting the enemy with «obsolete guns that will not fire», and how his friend died by his side. He was brought to the capital with shrapnel in his leg to be operated on without anaesthetic, as none was available at the main hospitals. To add insult to injury, the authorities refused to send Strasser and other injured soldiers overseas for treatment because the country could not afford it. It seems that this was the turning point, when these young officers, who were influenced by the way Flight Lieutenant Rawlings had brought some discipline into Ghanaian economy and society, decided to strike.

Strasser condemned the opulence and corruption of the Momoh administration and its inability to prosecute the war successfully. He promised to bring peace to the nation, though his period as leader saw growing rebel incursion all over the country. As part of its anti-corruption crusade, the NPRC set up a number of commissions to inquire into the assets of ex-Ministers and senior civil servants. The NPRC used populist rhetoric of redemption, anti-corruption and personal sacrifice. Strasser was referred to as «the redeemer», and as in Ghana, economic orthodoxy was combined with the limited politics of redistribution. After an initial period of political isolation following the execution of 28 civilians and military officers, an accord was struck with the IFIs, and in exchange for loans, Strasser implemented the programmes negotiated by his predecessor with the IMF. The stabilisation programme produced widespread unemployment, as over 30,000 workers were made redundant, though the figure was ameliorated by the rapid expansion of the army mainly through conscription of «street children» and other lumpen elements.

War, Peace & Democracy

The popularity of the regime waned as domestic and international pressure for a return to civilian rule mounted. On the war front the rebels continued to hit at targets in the interior of the country, including occupying for a time the rich diamond fields of Kono District, and on one occasion they were reported to be outside the limits of the capital city. By this time it had become clear that the Sierra Leone army was no match for the guerrilla rebel forces. In early 1995 the military government obtained help from the British Army Gurkhas, who were soon embroiled in an ambush in which their Canadian commander, Colonel Robert MacKenzie was killed (Riley, 1996). Shortly after, they left the country, the South African based Executive Outcomes (EO) (Harding, 1997), who helped to shift the balance in favour of the NPRC, by driving the rebels out of the diamond field, replaced them. Nonetheless, EO remained a major drain on the Sierra Leone exchequer at a cost of US\$1.7 million

a month (Riley, 1997). The scaling down of the fighting as a result of a cease-fire, and demands from the IMF to reduce payment to the organisation, led the civilian Government to re-negotiate its agreement with Executive Outcomes, and their early departure. The departure of Executive Outcomes saw the emergence of new fighting force an adjunct of «civil society», the Kamajors, or Mende traditional hunters.

The Mendes of the southeast constitute the largest ethnic group accounting for some 30% of the population of Sierra Leone and traditionally provide the bulk of support for the Sierra Leone People's Party, the country's oldest political organisation, which had been in the political wilderness since the 1967 elections. The Kamajors had distinguished themselves in 1994 in a series of encounters around Bo (the country's second largest town) with elements of the rebel RUF. In these clashes, the Kamajors were able to demystify some of the fetishism and claims of invincibility made by rebel forces, at a time when the army had appeared incapable of confronting the RUF. As a result the influence of the Kamajors grew, as they swapped «home-made rifles, machetes, and other crude weapons...for more sophisticated weaponry» (Riley: 288).

By early 1994, the shine had rubbed off «Strasser the redeemer»: there was the scandal of members of the junta being caught in diamond smuggling; Sierra Leoneans were getting tired of the youthful antics of the young officers and their inability to end the war and many saw the transition to civilian rule as a prerequisite for ending the war. The immediate post-1994 period was marked by a heated debate between, on the one hand, those like the military that argued that it was important for peace to be negotiated before presidential and parliamentary elections. They pointed out that free and fair elections would not be possible under war conditions. On the other hand, there were those led by civic organisations such as Women For a Morally Engaged Nation (WOMEN), and donors who held that a speedy return to democratic pluralism was a *sine qua non* for peace in the country. They argued that the military authorities were prevaricating on the issue of returning the country to democratic rule. In their view Captain Strasser was trying to swap military uniform for a civilian presidency a la President Rawlings of Ghana.

In January 1996, two months before the planned presidential and parliamentary elections, schism emerged within the NPRC, which resulted in Strasser being replaced by his deputy, Brigadier Julius Maada Bio. This heightened public concerns about the intention of the junta. With the civil war still raging, the transition to democratic rule reached its climax with the elections of February and March 1996. Ahmed Tejan Kabba, leader of the Sierra Leone People's Party (SLPP), was declared winner of the Presidential election with almost 60 per cent of the votes after a run-off with the leader of the United National Peoples' Party (UNPP) John Karefa Smart who polled just over 40 per cent of the votes. In Parliament the SLPP won 27 of the 80 seats, and the main opposition the UNPP gained only 17 seats. Twelve seats were reserved for the Paramount Chiefs from the twelve districts. Though the SLPP did not have a majority they could count on the support of the Paramount Chiefs.

The new Government was faced with three major problems. First, to bring the war to an end and to begin the task of national reconciliation, second, to embark on policies of national reconstruction, including relocation of the population that had been displaced by the war. Finally, to secure discipline within the Armed Forces. The President in his inaugural speech referred to the three «R»: reconstruction, reconciliation and rehabilitation. In particular, Kabba was very conscious of the politicised and undisciplined Armed Forces that he had inherited from the NPRC. Recruitment into the Army for the previous three decades had been based on ethnic and political patronage, and the army was regarded as an instrument of the ruling party, insulating it from the people even if this party became unpopular, the army ensured it remained in power indefinitely. The events after April 1992 had destroyed the command structure of the army.

In order to achieve his stated goals, Kabba formed a National Coalition Government to include the major parties in Parliament, as well as a rapprochement with the rebel leader, Foday Sankoh. The reaction of Sankoh was to reject Kabba's approach, by insisting on power sharing with the new Government, if the latter was prepared to implement: «a people's budget» to include free and compulsory education, affordable housing, clean water, and sewage system in every village. Finally, Sankoh demanded the withdrawal of all foreign troops including those of the Nigerian-led ECOMOG, and Executive Outcomes from the country, and the absorption of some of his fighters into the national army. The Government rejected Sankoh's demands, in particular his call for power sharing. Instead the Government set up the National Unity and Reconciliation Commission based on the model of South Africa's Truth Commission, to investigate and identify the causes of injustices against individuals and communities by the government. The Government also emphasised its determination to crack down on corruption among public servants following the disappearance of 500 Sierra Leonean passports, including diplomatic passports.

The Government's immediate concern was for peace with the RUF, as well as finding funds (estimated at \$40 million) to facilitate the smooth demobilising and rehabilitation into civilian life of soldiers and ex-RUF fighters. The search for peace was now being conducted on two fronts: by the Organisation of African Unity (OAU), and the Commonwealth, though the rapprochement with the RUF continued as both sides agreed a cease-fire, and the reciprocal release of prisoners, including thousands of children who had been abducted by the RUF.

On the economic front, the economy continued to perform poorly, as agricultural and mining production stood at a standstill following rebel attack on farmers and mining personnel and installations all over the country. The poor economic performance led in September 1996 to the IMF demanding drastic cut in payment to Executive Outcomes before the country could receive \$200 million in foreign exchange funding for post-war reconstruction. This resulted in a new agreement

with EO, and much-reduced fees for their services. In the same month there was an attempted coup, leading to the retirement of 26 officers and 155 non-commissioned officers from the army. In December 1996, just a month after the conclusion of a peace accord with the RUF, 18 people were arrested after the revelation of a coup attempt. Despite these clear evidence of dissatisfaction within the army, as a result of demands made by the IFIs, in January 1997 the Government decided to cut the subsidised rice supplies to the army police and prison services. In that same month, rice importation from South Asia alone cost the country some \$30 million, and with this being sold in the open market for Le23,000 a bag, the price of Le1,000 to military personnel points to the size of the subsidy this group enjoyed. Heavily subsidised rice, has always been the hallmark of military life since the days of Siaka Stevens. The same month the cut in subsidies was announced there was yet another coup, as a result of which 5 officers were arrested, including Captain Paul Thomas, one of the leaders of the May 25 coup.

The growing indiscipline within the ranks of the army made the Government more dependent on the Kamajors, who by now had assumed the status of an ethnic praetorian guard. This was particularly the case after the departure of Executive Outcomes and the failure of the United Nations to send peacekeeping troops to supervise the Peace Agreement⁴. This growing dependence of the Government on the Kamajors for security, worsened the army-Kamajor relations, and this was reflected in the growing number of clashes between the two forces. The Kamajors saw the army as ineffective, corrupt and unpatriotic, as reflected in the rise of the *Sobels* and their inability to make any significant impact on the RUF. Sobels (soldier / rebels) were renegade elements of the national army who would loot private property and work the diamond fields during the night and then return to soldiering activities during the day. The army was accused of trying to undermine the first Southern dominated Government in thirty years, and was seen as an offshoot of both the APC and the NPRC. In short, the Kamajors saw the army as a threat to the country's new democracy.

On the army's part, the Kamajors were a major threat to national unity and a tool in the sectional divide, a group seeking to challenge the army's monopoly of the means of violence. For example, in March 1996, the civilian Government ordered the Kamajors and the army to flush out rebels who had attacked civilians. The army felt that their role «*as custodians of state security and defenders of the constitution*» was being challenged by the Kamajors. As such the army saw the Kamajors as a danger to the state. The Kabba administration became increasingly dependent on the Kamajors for security⁵. The major link between the Government and the Kamajors was Deputy Minister of Defence, Samuel Hinga Norman, who is also leader of the Kamajors.

⁴ These were known as the Neutral Monitoring Group, under Article 11 of the Abidjan Accord.

⁵ Kabba was only following in the footsteps of Steven's in utilising an ethnic praetorian guard to consolidate power. See Zack-Williams, 2001a.

Within a short period of time, the stature of the Kamajors rose from «ethnic hunters» to quasi-national army. The growing confidence in dealing with rebels impelled the Kamajors to confront other civic associations, particularly in the North, but also in Matotoka, Bo, Kenema and Zimmi. Corporal Gborie, who announced that the military had seized power in May 1997, accused the Kabba administration of «crying down the army», and of «tribalism». Inevitably, one of the first acts of the junta was to outlaw the Kamajors, who in turn indicated their desire to mobilise 35,000 of their number for a march on Freetown to oust the renegade soldiers.

Structural obstacles in peace building

A sense of economic and political insecurity among the population, the unresolved civil war, the Kamajor-Army conflicts, the loss of privileges by the Army and their perceived sense of insecurity, following calls to prune the army by the IFIs, were all major factors behind the insurgencies of May 25, 1997; January 1999; and May 2000. It is important to note that in the last instance the army would intervene in politics largely for military reasons (First, 1972). Charges of corruption against ousted regimes whilst this may be true; yet, it is a rationalisation central to all dawn broadcasts following a military take-over. In the end the military tends to intervene to remove a civilian government when perceived corporate interests are threatened. In the case of Sierra Leone, because of the clientelistic mode of accumulation, junior officers of the armed forces often develop a sense of political and economic marginalisation, a perception that often leads them to exaggerate their support among the public.

Bad policy on the part of the ousted regime helped to create this illusion of the popular need for the military to intervene. In the case of the Kabba regime there were quite a few poorly conceived policies, some of which we have already discussed. The first relate to security. The dependence on the Kamajors for security meant that the security of «Kamajor country» (South and Eastern Provinces) were guaranteed, but at the expense of the security of the capital. This lapse in security meant that for the first time the rebels were able to enter the capital after prisoners were released by members of the AFRC, and an alliance was forged with the RUF to form a «People Army». Similarly, Kabba's failure to bring officers accused of plotting to overthrow his Government to justice helped to foster an image of a weak and indecisive leader. This perception of a weak leader was not helped by the abruptly ending of the trial of an ex-Foreign Minister who had been accused of selling the country's passport to British-Hong Kong nationals. Furthermore, the generous terms and conditions that were offered to the disgraced former president Momoh astonished many Sierra Leoneans. These included: a very generous pension of Le900, 000 a house with ser-

vants, a car with a driver and bodyguards. Momoh's triumphalist manner and speeches helped to whip up anti-Government sentiments. He claimed that he was not allowed to face the people in general elections before the army ousted him, and he used the opportunity to declare his return to active politics.

Furthermore, Many Sierra Leoneans were disappointed at the composition of Kabba's Cabinet and style of Government. It was felt that he would have brought young, dynamic people who had not been contaminated by the politics of kleptocracy. Instead, the Cabinet consisted of discredited former SLPP politicians. Whilst his own honesty and integrity was not being questioned, it was felt that he was «only paying lip-service to the welfare of the people; phlegmatic and carefree to the security and financial irregularities in Government» (West Africa, 1997a: 868.) One commentator observed that: «the pluralist politics of democratic exchanges had deteriorated to an acrimonious and divisive process of exchanges and in division in Parliament» (West Africa, 1997b: 1118) This politics of attrition was symptomatic of the «character assassination by Government stalwarts of prominent and influential figures in opposition» (ibid: 1118) leading to the suspension from Parliament of John Karefa Smart, the opposition leader. Opposition parties blamed Kabba in particular for not doing enough to prevent his suspension. Finally, there was growing indiscipline within the ruling party. There was much talk of Kabba «the northern» being replaced by a Mende from the South later on in 1997.

One feature of the civil war is the prominent role played by child combatants. Many of these were abducted by both sides and in the case of the RUF after a period of socialisation into violence, including violence against their community and relations; they were employed into various areas of military life. Girls and young women were turned into sex slaves of military commanders (Zack-Williams, 2001b). The active role played by children posed a major problem not just for peacekeepers, but also for the government's demobilisation and reintegration programmes and a major the Special court, which has been set up to deal with abuse of human rights. It has now been established that minors will not be brought in front of the Court.

Lome and after

In July 1999, a peace accord was struck between the government and the leadership of the RUF. Under this agreement, the RUF leader became effectively Vice President of the country and he was made Chair of the Commission for the Management of Strategic Resources, Reconstruction and Development (CMRRD), which him in charge of all the country's mineral resources, in addition, a number of his field commanders were awarded cabinet positions. Furthermore, rebel leaders were granted blanket immunity from prosecution for human right violations. The

Accord was imposed upon the democratically elected President Ahmed Tejan Kabba who was summoned to Lome to sign the Accord by Western leaders led by United States Special Presidential Adviser on Africa, the Rev. Jesse Jackson. Western leaders who had become concerned about the blood-letting in that country, but who had no intention of sending in troops into Africa's futile wars following the US debacle in Somalia, thought that any deal that would bring peace to that troubled land was good enough for them. Furthermore, Kabba had failed to seize the initiative to impose a settlement on the rebel leadership at a time when their morale was low and the Government could have negotiated from a position of strength, following the destruction of the rebel's Headquarters at Zogoda in 1996 by the Kamajors. However, by the time of the Lome Peace Conference, the RUF had regrouped and seized the initiative to occupy some two thirds of the country land space. At the time of the Lome Accord, the Government controlled only the capital and major towns, such as Bo and Kenema, with the mining areas and the rich agricultural lands under rebel control. The Accord led to major out cry among human right defenders, including Mary Robinson, UN Ambassador. There were demands for justice for the tens of thousands of those killed, raped and the thousands of the amputees in the country.

The favourable settlement, which was accorded the RUF, emboldened Sankoh to continue his nefarious activities of swapping diamonds for weapons, as he made an unannounced visit to South Africa, which took the Government of Sierra Leone and the international community by surprise, before he was declared *persona non grata*. Also documents found in his house at the time of his arrest in May 2000, showed that Sankoh was still prepared to sell the country's diamonds through informal networks. Finally in May 2000, as the last Nigerian ECOMOG troops left the country, Sankoh decided to make a final push to seize power as his followers unleashed a military take over. The population of the capital took to the street marching on Sankoh's house where his guards opened fire, killing scores of unarmed demonstrators. In the ensuing mayhem Sankoh was able to escape only to be captured a few days later, in Babadori some seven miles from the capital, trying to seek help from the Nigerian embassy to flee the country. Meanwhile, the crisis had attracted British Paratroops who had been despatched to the capital under the guise of evacuating British and Commonwealth citizens from the troubled country. The paratroopers were able to rescue Sankoh from a lynching mob, but they also brought reassurance to the anxious population, but not before a group of British troops were ambushed by remnants of the AFRC, who had been engaged in widespread banditry outside the city limits. In an attempt to release their comrades, the troops were able to clear the area of the «Westside Boys» (as these bandits became known), thus ending the siege to the city, thus paving the way for UN troops (who had been humiliated by the Westside Boys, when a number of UN peacekeeping force was abducted together with their weapon and armoured cars) to effect the demobilisation process.

Demobilisation, resettlement and reintegration

It is clear that demobilisation and reintegration of ex-fighters is the key to effective transition from war to peace (Colletta, 1997; Colletta et al, 1996). By the end of January 2002, when both Government and RUF leaders declared an end to the war some 46,000 ex-combatants had been demobilised and have entered the reintegration and resettlement process. Plans for demobilising members of the various fighting forces, which were instituted following the Abidjan Accord in November 1996, were swiftly abandoned following the coup in May 1997 (Kingma, 1997), but were reinstated as a consequence of the Lome Accord. The UN peacekeeping force in Sierra Leone (UNAMSIL) was given the sole responsibility for disarming and demobilising ex-combatants who would assemble at designated points, after which they would be handed over to various NGOs, including UNICEF, the Red Cross and the catholic relief agency, CARITAS. Ex-fighters were able to swap weapons for cash, before being discharged to various agencies, who would then embark on a process of de-traumatisation, particularly in the case of the children, family tracing and the process of uniting them with their family. Many ex-combatants had indicated their desire to be trained in various skills and in the case children, the desire to resume a disrupted education. After the de-traumatisation each ex-combatant would then be apprenticed to trades person, including carpenters and joiners, mechanics and masons along with a an «entitlement package» which provide a safety net during the transition period from war to peace. This includes a set of tools, uniform to go with the trade and financial allowances. The trade's person receives financial inducement for participating in the scheme, whilst the new apprentice receives regular subvention for the duration of the training. The down turn in the country's economy meant that many who completed their training could not find jobs, heightening the sense of *déjà vue* among ex-fighters.

The programme has been dogged by a series of problems. First, as noted above the programme has had to be abandoned in a kind of stop-go process, due to the resumption of fighting by the various war factions. Second, the failed state, which constitutes the Sierra Leone government, became over-dependent on donors for financing the demobilisation process, and funding was not always forthcoming. By August 2001, the Paris Club had provided some \$31 million for the disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration programme. Third, serial demobilisation has been a serious problem with ex-fighters bringing out one or two weapons only to return with some more, in order to obtain more funds. It is widely known that not all the weapons have been handed in at the demobilisation centres.

These problems aside, many children who caused so much destruction in their villages and town found that on their return that their parents had disowned them. Similarly, many young fighters who had spent a considerable amount of time with the armed factions, now considered them parents-surrogates and do not want to be

united with their parents. Girls and young women who returned with their babies found further rejections, not just by parents, but also head teachers and principals refused to register them in their schools. Many returned with major gynaecological problems. Ex-combatants, especially children face widespread stigmatisation, in spite of the Government's attempt to promote a policy of peace and forgiveness. They usually referred to as rebel children, and seen by an already impoverished population as a privilege group who are being rewarded for the destruction they caused to their country. This can be a major source of potential conflicts between ex-combatants and the poor members of society, many of whom lost their property and source of livelihood as a result of rebel activities. The process of reintegration and reconciliation involves traditional leaders, significant others in society as well as traditional ideas, including libation.

Conclusion

In this paper I have tried to analyse the events leading to the civil war in Sierra Leone. In looking at the causal factors, we note that they were a reflection of the nature of state and politics in Sierra Leone. The institutional fragility of the state was alluded to and attention drawn to the inability of the governing class to secure compliance from subordinated groups to their rule. The result was that violence was an important tool for legitimisation. We also pointed to the role patron-client relationship played in political legitimisation in Sierra Leone. Those who were not part of the «shadow state» were coerced into silence or forced into exile. The latter group constitutes the vanguard of the RUF. The series of structural adjustment programme deployed by successive governments in the 1980s and 1990s had a destructive effect upon vulnerable groups and reduced the employment prospects of many secondary school leavers and university graduates impelling them into opposition of the ruling party.

In this «normal» working of the economy, many individuals were hurled into the informal economy, thereby bringing into question the legitimacy of the state. In an attempt to strengthen his grip on society Stevens instituted the one party-state, which tended to alienate a major sector of society, mainly those from the southeastern corner of the country. It is within this social sector of society that the rebel movement initially gained support.

There was a gradual increase in violence after 1991, and this reached climaxes in the May 25 1997 and January 1999 when the capital was attacked. It was this that brought the war to the attention of the international community. We noted despite the three peace accords signed by both side, yet peace never came to Sierra Leone, because the Government failed to utilise a position of strength (after the Kamajors over-ran RUF headquarters) to impose its terms on the rebels. The departure of

Executive Outcomes at the behest of the IMF meant that the Government forces soon lost the initiative as the RUF regrouped, aided by Charles Taylor in Liberia and soon occupied the mining and agricultural districts. By the time of the Lome Accord, the Government controlled less than a third of the country, as a result, a solution was imposed from outside, which in turn emboldened the RUF. We noted the events of May 2000, which brought British troops into the war led to the breakthrough for peace. The defeat of the Westside Boys meant that it was possible for the UNAMSIL to move into the interior in order to start the demobilisation, reintegration and resettlement process. We have drawn attention to the importance of the demobilisation, reintegration and resettlement process in the period of transition to peace, a process, which ended in January 2002 as Sierra Leone prepares for parliamentary and presidential election in May 2002.

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