

WAR (AND PEACE) IN SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA:
BETWEEN INTERNAL AND EXTERNAL RESPONSABILITY.
SIERRA LEONE AS A CASE STUDY

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Abstract

Since the nineties, African armed conflicts have raised an intense debate on their nature and root causes. Between the two dominant views that have arisen -‘tribalistic’ on the one hand or, on the opposite extreme, natural resources exploitation- as almost the only valid interpretations, there have also emerged alternative appealing explanations that have underlined the multiplicity of causes and actors (both internal and external). Sierra Leone’s war is a perfect example that can be used to analyze the influence of the various historical, social, political and economic aspects in the origins of the conflict, as well as the amazing mixture of actors that took part in the development and perpetuation of this African war.

1. Introduction

Primordialist views have often come out in trying to explain armed conflict in Sub-Saharan Africa. These analyses considered violence to be a mere internal issue, based either on atavistic confrontations or old tribal suspicions and, all in all, on actors unable to deal with differences by using dialogue. Opposite views have also emerged in favour of interpreting violence as simply a matter of diamonds, oil or coltan, where international actors consciously plan interventions according to their interests. This last thesis has been widely accepted by mass media and even some sectors of the civil society and the academia.

The interpretation of war in Sub-Saharan Africa, especially after the end of the Cold War, must take into account the different spheres and dimensions which include the local, regional, international and transnational levels. These levels are deeply rooted into the historical, social, economic and political context of each conflict. Thus, since the nineties, many contributions have emerged in reaction to one view or the other. These theories and arguments fall somewhere between the two extremes, carving out a space for a more complex debate.

Sierra Leone provides a case study in which all levels can be observed. It is not by chance that the main academic contributors to the debate on armed violence in Africa

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(Kaplan, Richards, Collier, and Keen, among others) have persistently used this former British colony as a case study. This is at least surprising after comparing Sierra Leone with other African countries that have been suffering violence since much longer or have suffered worse human consequences, such as DRC, Angola or Sudan. A brief but deep analysis of Sierra Leonean history, as well as of the main actors and conflict dynamics can help to discern some of the main questions around the issue of war in Africa. With this aim, this paper is divided into three sections: the first section is an analysis of the main debates surrounding African armed conflict; the second section looks at how Sierra Leone fits into these debates; finally, the paper conclusions.

2. Characteristics and debates on armed violence in Sub-Saharan Africa

The end of the Cold War involved an almost instant transformation. Prompted by its newly appointed Secretary-General, Salim Salim, the Organisation for African Unity (OAU) approved a declaration in July 1990 which recognised the need to promote popular participation in government and to guarantee human rights. By 1991, the great majority of African regimes had declared their commitment to the principle of multiparty electoral democracy (Clapham, 1996: 192)¹ On the other hand, other African countries suffered an important collapse of postcolonial state in the context of new or old armed conflicts. This situation took place mainly in Angola, Burundi, Chad, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Liberia, DRC (previously Zaire), Rwanda, Sierra Leone, Somalia, Sudan and Uganda (Meredith, 2005).

The well-known human and socioeconomic effects of those wars were devastating. According to the UNDP (2002), more than one and a half million people died as a consequence of the wars in Africa during the nineties, while thousands of millions were also displaced. Moreover, a recent report published by IANSA, Oxfam International and Saferworld (2007), stated that violence during this period led to the withdrawal of at least 300,000 millions of USD in Africa.

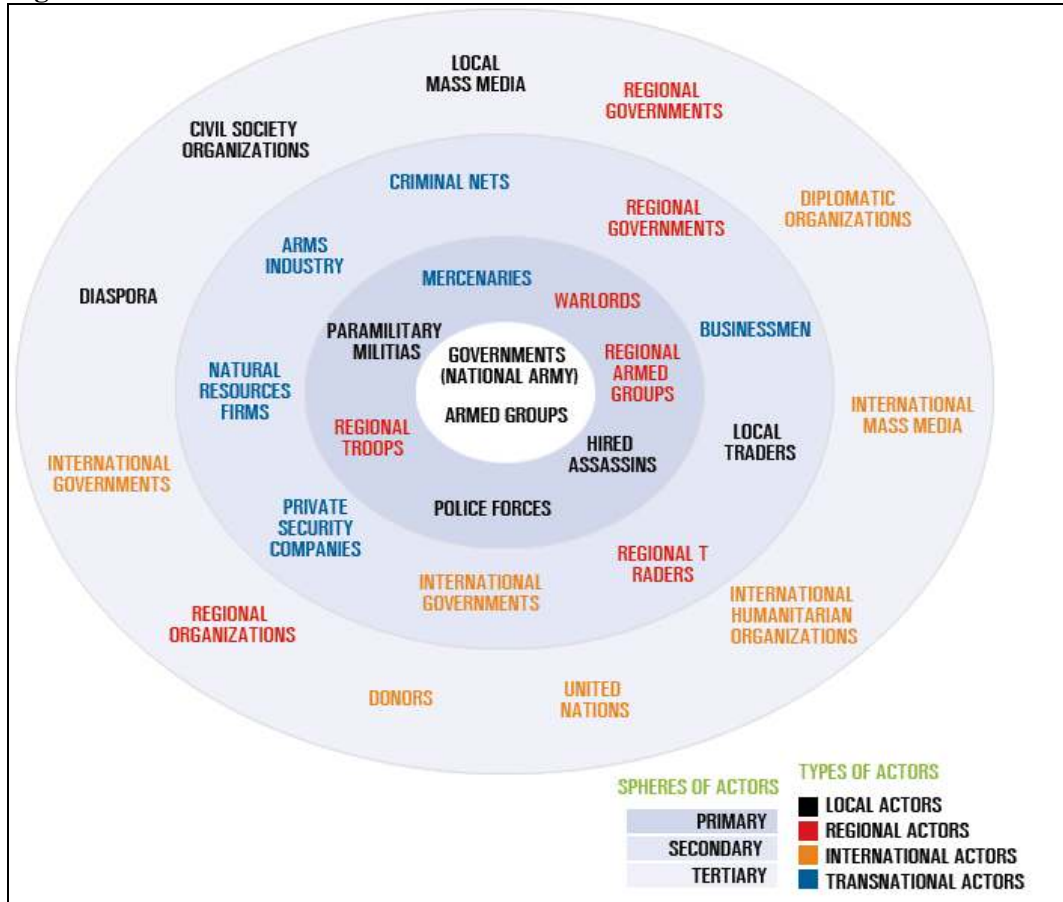
‘Network wars’ and knotted actors

There exist some common characteristics in the analysis of most of the African armed conflicts. First of all, they are mainly *internal* or *intrastate* (they take place within internationally recognised borders); *localised* (violence does not affect the whole country); and *regionalised*² and *internationalised* (causes as well as consequences must be duly understood within the greater regional and international context).

Secondly, all kind of actors, each with a different agenda and purpose, participate in the dynamics of war. This ‘net of actors’ is made up by *primary actors*, those who are directly engaged in armed violence (governments, armed groups or guerrillas, militias, paramilitary forces, warlords, organised criminal gangs, police forces, mercenaries, violent fundamentalist groups, regional armed groups, regional troops, etc.); *secondary actors*, those who although not directly participating in the confrontation are widely interested in its continuation (criminal nets, regional governments, businessmen, local and regional traders, international governments, private security companies, business with interest in natural resources, arms industry, etc.); and *tertiary actors*, those who try to intervene, with or without a mandate to do so, in order to manage the confrontation

(Diaspora, civil society organisations, local and international mass media, regional and international governments, regional and international organisations, diplomatic organisations, international humanitarian organisations, multilateral organisations such as United Nations, donor agencies, etc.).

Figure 1. - Actors and armed violence in Sub-Saharan Africa



Source: the author

Finally, the economy of war is strongly globalised and decentralised. Violence depends on external resources, as units of combat are financed through looting and even humanitarian aid. Illegal arms trade and natural resources exploitation are critical in the mobilisation of resources to fuel conflict. This is just possible by maintaining violence, so that the dynamics of war are incorporated into the formal economy (Kaldor, 1999: 9). In a suggestive way, Duffield (2001: 190-193) has pointed out that these ‘new wars’ must be understood as ‘network wars’ that work through and around the States. Conventional actors have been replaced by other kinds of actors who do not operate in an isolated way but set up alliances or networks according to their interests.

On tribes and diamonds

Even if the contributions to the debate on the root causes of African armed conflicts have been prolific, most can be divided into one of three ‘narratives’: a) the *new barbarism*, b) *underdevelopment* as a cause of war and c) the *political economy of war*.

a) New barbarism

A first narrative and in fact starting point in the debate is what Paul Richards (1996) labelled as “New barbarism”, with regard to Robert Kaplan’s thesis in his *The Coming Anarchy* (1994). In this essay, Kaplan explained African armed conflicts as chaotic and irrational confrontations, where demographic pressure, environmental collapse, and societal stress are critical:

“West Africa is becoming the symbol of worldwide demographic, environmental, and societal stress, in which criminal anarchy emerges as the real "strategic" danger. Disease, overpopulation, unprovoked crime, scarcity of resources, refugee migrations, the increasing erosion of nation-states and international borders, and the empowerment of private armies, security firms, and international drug cartels are now most tellingly demonstrated through a West African prism” (Kaplan, 1994: 4)

Of the numerous critiques raised in reaction, most underscored that basing conflict on ethnicity is an extremely dubious argument since it stems from racial discourse and cultural determinism: cultural differences are considered causes of conflict, antagonism and violence.³

All in all, this controversial approach reinforced the cliché of the “wild and violent Africa”. According to Duffield (2001:109), Kaplan created an external version of the ‘new racist’ doctrine. Moreover, Kaplan’s enormous influence –at that time he was the personal assessor to President Clinton- has conditioned since then many mass media, political and military agendas.⁴ While Kaplan’s thesis must be considered as decisive in the debate on African armed conflicts, its racial undertones have otherwise impacted negatively.

b) Underdevelopment and violence

A second narrative considers underdevelopment as the main cause of African ‘new wars’. While one stream emphasizes internal factors, such as the increase of poverty, environmental degradation, the rise of social exclusion and marginality, elite corruption or the militarization of societies, a second stream focuses on external factors, such as the legacy of colonialism, external dependence, the impact of Structural Adjustment Programmes (SAP) and the external debt, or the growing marginality of Africa in the global economy. Both approaches, however, uphold the idea that enhanced modernisation, improved literacy, and increased investment in basic services are all elements that diminish violence occurrence.

Nevertheless, this point of view, adopted primarily by those working in the realm of international cooperation, ignores a number of factors that contribute to violence. Yet the increased popularity of this approach has set the promotion of development up both as a right in itself and as a necessary ingredient for international stability. This is what Duffield (2001) has branded again as “the emergence of the liberal peace”, regarding the merger of development and security. This approach has also culminated in the promotion of ‘prevention’ by international NGOs and donors as one of the main priorities in addressing conflict.

c) Political economy of war

A third and last narrative, called ‘the political economy of war’, supports the idea that African armed conflicts are the direct answer of certain elites to its unequal integration into the world’s economy.⁵ According to this view, the neopatrimonial state built up since independence started suffering a crisis of accumulation and governance after the end of the Cold War that prompted a crisis of legitimacy.⁶ In this sense, elites started looking for new sources of authority, privileges and material benefits whether through processes of democratisation or consolidating economies of war (control of natural resources, arms dealing, manipulation of humanitarian aid, etc.).

In the axis of this issue is located the ‘greed and grievance’ debate, mainly advertised by the World Bank theorists Paul Collier and Anke Hoeffler (2004). This discussion tries to ascertain whether personal will of enrichment (greed) or historical, political and socioeconomic injustices (grievances) has more importance in the origin of those contexts of violence in Africa.⁷ Although both approaches offer relevant contributions to understanding violence, Collier and Hoeffler, as well as Keen (at least during the nineties) or Renner, among others, sacralised economic agendas as the main (and sometimes unique) cause of war in Africa. According to them, and quoting Clausewitz, “these civil wars could be better understood as the continuation of ‘economics’ by other means” (Francis, 2006: 82).⁸

3. Sierra Leone as a case study

Sierra Leone’s war is central to understanding African armed conflicts. This is partially due to the intense debate that since the mid-nineties has taken place around the root causes of the conflict. Using the three aforementioned narratives, this section will explore the specific characteristics, actors and underlying dynamics of Sierra Leone’s decade long conflict.

Background to the conflict

During the ten year war in Sierra Leone an estimated 50,000 to 75,000 people were killed and half of the country’s 4.5 million people were forced to flee their homes.⁹ The conflict began immediately following independence in 1961 when the two main political parties, the Sierra Leone’s People Party (SLPP) and the All People’s Congress (APC), started fighting for power. In 1967, Siaka Stevens (APC) was elected Prime Minister, gradually institutionalising a strong patron-client system. Stevens had to face several coups attempts and a growing opposition. In 1985 he handed over the government to his handpicked successor, the commander Joseph Momoh, who tried to launch some progressive measures that did not have any effect (Alie, 2005; Gberie, 2005; Keen, 2005).

In March 1991 rebels from the Revolutionary United Front (RUF) crossed the border from Liberia, allegedly with support from both the leader of the National Patriotic Front in Liberia (NPFL), Charles Taylor and a small number of troops sent from Burkina Faso. The RUF leader, Foday Sankoh, announced the beginning of a ‘war liberation’ in order to “liberate the suffering masses of Sierra Leone from the yoke of decades of crushing misery, deprivation and suppression”.¹⁰ While facing this rebellion, President

Momoh had to flee the country after believing a coup was in the making when 26 years old, Captain Valentine Strasser, and other junior officers of the Sierra Leonean Army (SLA), went to the State House to complain about the poor conditions for soldiers at the front. The presidency landed in the lap of Strasser who established the National Provisional Ruling Council (NPRC).

One of the most controversial aspects of the war was Strasser's invitation to the South African private security company Executive Outcomes (EO) to help the government fight the RUF, which was closing in on the capital and controlling much of the country's diamond areas. EO expanded its operations into the countryside, retaking a number of key diamond areas from the RUF and also began to collaborate with a rural pro-government militia, the Kamajors (Alie, 2005; Musah, 2000; Francis, 1999). In January 1996 Brig-Gen Julius Maada-Bio deposed Strasser from power in a palace coup just one month short of general elections. A few months later, Ahmad Tejan Kabbah, who had been working for the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) for 20 years, won the country's first relatively free and fair election.¹¹ In September, a peace agreement was signed in Abidjan, Cote d'Ivoire, between the Kabbah government and the RUF, stipulating that EO had to leave Sierra Leone by January 1997.¹²

In May 1997, Major Johnny Paul Koroma ousted Kabbah in a military coup. Kabbah fled to Guinea. Koroma, who was over promoted by the army expansion under Strasser, suspended the constitution, abolished political parties and established the Armed Forces Revolutionary Council (AFRC), which included members of the Sierra Leonean Army (SLA) as well as the RUF. Nine months later, Nigerian-led West African troops (ECOMOG) backed by logistical and intelligence support from the British private security company Sandline International and the Kamajors stormed Freetown, toppling the AFRC/RUF junta, which retreated to the countryside. At the beginning of 1999, a mixture of RUF rebels and former SLA troops launched an assault on Freetown,¹³ known as 'Operation No Living Thing', seizing parts of the city from ECOMOG. The peacekeepers retook control of the capital, but not before at least 6,000 people were killed and many neighbourhoods laid in ruins.¹⁴

This surprisingly situation led to the Lomé peace accord, signed between the government and the RUF. A clause provided a blanket amnesty following years of atrocities that included rape, mutilation and the killing of civilians. The accord also provided for the establishment of a unity government that included members of the RUF and former AFRC junta. Sankoh became the country's Vice-President and the Minister for Mineral Resources, including diamonds (Gberie, 2005; Koroma, 2004). The United Nations Security Council decided to expand the size of the United Mission in Sierra Leone, UNAMSIL, from 6,000 to 11,100 and revised its mandate to provide security at key locations, including government buildings and sites used in the country's disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration programme.

Lomé, however, did not mean the end of the war. In May 2000, more than 500 UN peacekeepers were abducted by the RUF. Sankoh was accused of obstructing the peace process and imprisoned. British troops also arrived at Freetown to provide support for the UN forces. Finally, in January 2002, President Kabbah officially announced the end of the war.

Characteristics and singularities of the armed conflict in Sierra Leone

a) An internal but internationalised war

As almost all African wars after the Cold War, Sierra Leone's armed conflict had an internal or intrastate character. Nonetheless, this label hides its greater regional and international context. In fact, most of its causes, dynamics, actors and consequences can only be explained by taking its regional and international characteristics into consideration.

Regionally, countries such as Guinea, Côte d'Ivoire, Burkina Faso and especially Liberia were absolutely decisive both in the origins of the conflict and also in its perpetuation. These governments, motivated by their political and economic interests, decided to support the different actors and even to promote the emergence of new ones during the conflict. The interlocking nature of and spill over from the war led to the view that political communities were locked into a regional security complex, hence the response and the interventions in domestic civil wars developed a regional approach to the containment, management and resolution of all these conflicts. The so-called 'Fire next door' phenomenon, where states and peoples are bound together into military, political and ethno-religious security threats (Francis, 2001: 103) is perfectly represented in the different wars that took place in the Mano-River subregion from the late eighties onwards.¹⁵ Likewise, some authors, regarding Sierra Leone and Liberia's relationship, have stated: "the interlinkages between these two wars are so substantial that the fates of Liberia and Sierra Leone are locked together like a pair of dead ringers. Neither country is likely to achieve sustainable peace if warlike conditions still exist in the other." (Boas, 2001: 717).

With regard to the international sphere, participation of international and transnational actors was decisive in the evolution of the conflict. However, it was not only important in the diplomatic or humanitarian management of the conflict, but also in the perpetuation of the conflict dynamics. Either the economic and political interests of certain countries or the great influence of Sierra Leonean Diaspora gave the conflict a huge decentralised nature.

b) Actors within networks

Sierra Leone's war exemplifies what Duffield has labelled "network wars". Both the Government and the RUF, the two chief primary actors in the war, were linked to nets comprised of various actors with similar interests and objectives. In order to understand the relationship amongst all actors it is useful to analyse them through the aforementioned scheme: primary, secondary and tertiary actors.

As far as the primary actors are concerned there existed two important 'alliances'. The first alliance was integrated by those actors interested in defending the 'status quo': Governments of Momoh, Strasser, Maada Bio and Tejan Kabbah, supported by the Civil Defence Forces (CDF),¹⁶ Guinean troops, Liberian ULIMO (United Liberation Movement of Liberia) forces,¹⁷ regional ECOMOG troops and mercenaries from Southern Africa and Eastern Europe. The second alliance working to counter the state forces, was mainly led by the RUF and from 1997 on by the AFRC and its replacement, the West Side Boys. These actors were helped by regional governmental forces from

Côte d'Ivoire and Burkina Faso, but especially by the Taylor's NPFL, who after 1997 achieved Liberian presidency.

This alleged "clash between coalitions" cannot hide a critical aspect of the war: all the armed actors shared the same interests, and soldiers were increasingly referred to as 'sobels' or '*soldiers by day, rebels by night*'. As Gberie (2005: 82) points out, the 'sobels phenomenon' became perhaps the most important element in the war. Indiscriminate attacks on civilians and even negotiated lootings between the army and the RUF characterised the dynamics of the conflict. According to Keen (2005: 107): "this did not happen by chance: soldiers and rebels increasingly came from the same social base; and both the insurgency and the counter-insurgency were shaped by a weak, unrepresentative and corrupt state and an underdeveloped economy that starved its youth of opportunity". Violence adopted an extraordinary functionality for all the actors that even developed "a strangely co-operative conflict":¹⁸

"Rather than consolidating the advance against the rebels that had been achieved, many governments' troops often seemed strangely anxious to reverse it. Some Sierra Leoneans began to talk of the war as a 'sell-game', a reference to football matches where bribery fixes the result in advance" (Ibid.: 119)

With regard to the secondary actors, the role of certain Governments was crucial to sustain the dynamics of both alliances. While Guinea had important historical links to various Sierra Leonean Governments, Nigeria became involved in Sierra Leone for three main reasons: first, the ECOMOG mission helped Nigerian leader General Sani Abacha to ward off the threat of severe international sanctions against his regime; second, some of Nigeria's generals personally benefited from revenues; and third, the mission represented Nigeria's historic quest for hegemony in its own subregion (Adebayo, 2002: 92). On the other hand, Liberia's, Libya's and Burkina Faso's engagement had largely to do with their leaders' personal ambitions. Although benefits extracted from diamond mines were an important incentive for the three of them, creed and hegemonic aspirations, rather than exclusively greed, also explain their involvement (Kandeh, 2005). While Taylor had publicly announced his desire to fight Momoh's regime for his participation in the ECOMOG troops in Liberia (Adebayo, 2002: 82), Gaddafi pretended to spread his 'Green book'¹⁹ as well as to punish Liberian and Sierra Leonean governments for his refusal to participate in the 1982 AUO summit that took place in Tripoli.²⁰ This is why Gaddafi started training in Libya in the eighties Taylor, Sankoh and Compaoré armed movements (Gberie, 2005).²¹

The rest of the secondary actors are related to the 'arms-diamonds-violence triangle'. In the local level it is important to highlight those Lebanese and local traders (mainly Temne and Mende) that enriched themselves with the war dynamics (Keen, 2005: 129). In the international and transnational sphere were also important countries such as Egypt, Israel, Bulgaria, Belgium and China, which stand out for purposefully violating the stipulated arms embargo (Gberie, 2005: 115; Koroma, 1996: 180); the diamond company 'De Beers' which was also very active in conflict in Angola;²² many personal names, mostly related to Charles Taylor;²³ and even al-Qada networks, which negotiated arms for diamonds' contracts directly with the RUF field commander, Sam Bockarie, alias 'Mosquita'²⁴ (Global Witness, 2003). This was the most powerful and influential network of Sierra Leone's war, the most economically interested in perpetuating the war.

Finally, tertiary actors are mainly those countries and organisations that intervened, not without controversy, in the conflict. Tony Blair's UK Government is probably the most relevant participant. The UK's Ambassador to Sierra Leone at the time, Peter Penfold, was a critical diplomatic figure since the beginning of the conflict. Besides, the British military intervention at the end of the war was absolutely critical to put an end to the RUF existence. In fact, Gberie (2005: 176) considers that "it was the robust presence of the British troops that prevented the total collapse of the UN mission and a relapse into violence". This active role was due to the UK's economic interests²⁵ as well as its historical responsibility to the former colony. Moreover, British public opinion was supportive of an intervention.

The Clinton administration also played an important role. With Somalia and Rwanda's failures on their shoulders, Washington thought that the achievement of a peace accord was the most effective option. Jesse Jackson, at that time US African Envoy and Charles Taylor's personal friend, pushed for the start of negotiations in Lomé between the Sierra Leone's Government and the RUF:

"He had President Clinton telephone Sankoh for an encouraging chat, and hailed the agreement as a personal diplomatic triumph. Jackson went on to compare Sankoh to Nelson Mandela, averring that both were freedom fighters" (Gberie, 2005: 158).

As far as Germany and France are concerned, both had a secondary yet a significant role. The German ambassador in Sierra Leone, Karl Prinz, got an uncomfortable role for the different military Juntas. Prinz overtly criticised the various military Juntas for human rights violations and was thus, expelled from the country (Ibid.: 162). Meanwhile, France, which had narrow links with Taylor, avoided any condemn in view of the arms trade in some of its former colonies: "Côte d'Ivoire and Burkina Faso have been supplying mercenaries and acting as channels for arms. I'm sure those governments are not acting alone. The French are aware, and they have the ability to stop the war because of their influence over those nations" (pers. comm. to Keen, 2005: 168).

With regard to the inter-governmental organisations, both ECOWAS and the United Nations did not play a decisive role in the resolution and mediation of the conflict. Apart from the military intervention, both organisations were subjected to their members' interests. This led to a constant redefinition of the conflict's approach as well as to a middling participation in the different peace processes. Humanitarian organisations (mainly UN agencies and international NGOs) tried to face the dreadful humanitarian consequences of the violence despite the lack of resources (Hoffman, 2004). Nevertheless, some authors have highlighted that "patterns of aid, apart from falling short of needs, could also feed into violence" (Keen, 2005: 160).²⁶ In this sense, it has also been underlined:

"(...) humanitarian aid helped significantly to shape incentives in relation to the war – both for the 'insiders' (meaning those who received significant aid) and for the 'outsiders' (those who did not). Aid produces important distortions in both the economy and the 'information environment'. In many ways, these compounded the selective silences of international aid organisations, silences whose damaging effects have been noted. Whilst stopping humanitarian aid altogether conflicts with the right to relief, a greater awareness of the relationship between relief and violence would have been helpful" (Ibid.: 170)

‘winners’ and ‘losers’, although not in the traditional sense. However, it is worthwhile to analyse the multiple local strategies that civilians developed in order to face these dynamics.

c) The invisible actor: from resistance to peace-building

Civil population has been considered as a mere victim of the Sierra Leone’s war, emphasising its incapacity whether to react to violence or develop mechanisms of conflict resolution. International mass media have firmly contributed to this perception of victimisation. Nonetheless, the origin of Sierra Leone’s conflict should be understood as a protracted history of social resistance. Despite the different attempts of Siaka Stevens’ regime to neutralise any symptom of social organisation, the role of students, local newspapers and the Diaspora were crucial in setting up the opposition to the APC regime (Pham, 2004).

With the beginning of the war in 1991, the main opposition initiatives came up as a direct reaction to the Military Juntas, especially the AFRC/RUF. As a matter of fact, the emergence of the CDF militias (later on co-opted by Kabbah’s regime as paramilitary forces) has to do with the civil resistance to the RUF and other groups strategies. If resistance to sobels upcountry had an ethnic component, resistance in the city was organised by independent mass media in what has been termed “guerrilla journalism” (Gberie, 2005: 68).

During the NPRC regime, failed talks led some sixty groups from the religious, civil society and other non-governmental sectors—including the Council of Churches in Sierra Leone, the Sierra Leone Labor Congress, and the Sierra Leone Teachers’ Union—to band together in early 1995 to form the National Co-ordinating Committee for Peace (NCCP). During its brief existence, the NCCP successfully organised a number of workshops and other educational forums with the goal of creating a groundswell of public opinion that would force the warring parties to the negotiating table (Pham, 2004).

After the AFRC coup, the nationwide resistance resulted in the creation of the Movement for the Restoration of Democracy (MRD), which incorporated almost all the pressure groups and civil organisations plus the Kamajors and the northern-based Kapras, a very anti-RUF group.²⁷ Sierra Leoneans abroad also condemned and agitated against the coup. One week after the takeover, 1,500 people demonstrated in Washington against the AFRC and called for US military intervention to overturn it. Through the Sierra Leone e-mail discussion group Leonenet, the group Citizens for the Restoration of Democracy was formed and sent a letter to the United Nations Secretary General supporting the Nigerian-led intervention force in its determination to overturn the coup (Gberie, 2005: 110-111).²⁸

The opposition to the AFRC/RUF regime had a tragic outcome in August 1997. The National Union of Sierra Leone Students (NUSS) announced a massive nationwide demonstration against the Junta that received the support of the Labour Congress, the Sierra Leone Association of Journalists (SLAJ), The Women’s Movement for Peace (led by the current Foreign Affairs Minister, Zainab Bangura) and other civil society organisations. The Junta’s army attacked the peaceful demonstrations killing some students (Ibid.: 111). Something similar happened on May 8th 2000 when the Civil

Society Movement (CSM) announced new massive demonstrations against the RUF which had held hostage 500 peacekeepers. Once the peaceful demonstration arrived to the then Vice-President of the country and RUF leader, Foday Sankoh, his personal guards opened fire killing 22 people (TRC, 2004: 260).

All non-violent initiatives witnessed during the war, whether spontaneous or organised can be accredited to the many civilian organisations such as trade unions, journalists associations, academics or local NGOs. Similarly, organisations such as Campaign for Good Governance (CGG), Network Movement for Justice and Development (NMJD) or Human Rights Committee (HRC) took important part both in the Abiyan (1996) and Lomé (1999) peace agreements. This participation, however, was more controversial than influential, since these groups ended up as secondary players accepting everything suggested by the international actors.²⁹ With regard to the diplomatic efforts, it is necessary to highlight the role of two groups: inter-religious groups and women organisations.

Inspired by the example of the Interfaith Mediation Committee (later the Inter-Religious Council) of Liberia, the country's religious leaders formed the Inter-Religious Council of Sierra Leone (IRCSL) in early 1997.³⁰ The leaders of many of these religious groups had been active in the Abidjan peace talks in 1996 and saw the formation of the new umbrella group as the natural institutional continuation of their cooperation in using religious influence to facilitate a peaceful resolution of the conflict. During the AFRC/RUF junta, the IRCSL worked to carry out a campaign of protest and civil disobedience against the regime. Not surprisingly, given its role in mounting non-violent civil resistance to the AFRC/RUF regime, religious individuals and institutions were targeted for attack during the bloody January 1999 offensive.³¹ Immediately after the offensive, Ugandan diplomat Francis Okelo, then serving in Sierra Leone as the Special Envoy of the United Nations Secretary General, invited the IRCSL to try to open a dialogue between President Kabbah and RUF leader Foday Sankoh. The new IRCSL co-chair Moses Kanu, who like his predecessor was also secretary general of the Council of Churches in Sierra Leone, took up the challenge and, after several meetings with Kabbah, led a delegation that was allowed to meet with Sankoh in a military installation near Freetown in March 1999. During nearly two months of difficult talks, the IRCSL played a significant behind-the-scenes role, facilitating communications between the parties during the interrupted impasses. Its role was recognised by the parties, which gave the IRCSL the leading role in the soon to be created Council of Elders and Religious Leaders that was supposed to set up to mediate eventual disputes arising from the peace agreement. The Council was never established due to the collapse of the accord (Adebayo, 2002; Hayner, 2007; Pham, 2004).

As for women organisations, the Sierra Leone Truth and Reconciliation Commission states: "Women played a major role in the peace process that led to the end of the conflict. After enduring years of destruction and chaos, women began to play constructive roles as peacemakers and mediators" (TRC, 2004: 702). From 1994 on, women both from the rural and urban areas, from all classes and ethnic affiliations came together to organise massive protests all over the country. At that time, the Sierra Leone Association of University Women (SLAUW) proposed that the country's various women's groups should meet regularly to exchange information and, as appropriate, collaborate toward common objectives, leading to the establishment of the Sierra Leone Women's Forum (SLWF) (Pham, 2004).³² Out of these networking meetings, a new

group, the Sierra Leone Women's Movement for Peace (SLWMP) was formed and became a member of the Forum:

“The SLWMP’s founders operated on the premise that women were natural peacemakers with unique skills that they could bring to bear to resolve the civil conflict. Led by its president, physician Fatmatta Boie-Kamara, the SLWMP led a “peace march” of women professionals, students, traders, and even soldiers, singing and dancing through the streets of Freetown in January 1995. While the demonstration did not directly affect the course of events in the war, it was a major milestone in Sierra Leonean politics, representing the first time that women’s groups, long a fixture on the nation’s social landscape, had taken a political stance” (Ibid).

Women's groups took an active part, alongside other civil society organisations, in the National Consultative Conference that met in August 1995 at the Bintumani Conference Centre on Freetown's Aberdeen peninsula. Known as Bintumani I and II, these meetings were critical to ending Strasser's regime as well as to call on elections in 1996. In the period leading up to the election, the various components of the Forum worked to educate voters, especially women, about democracy and governance. They also called upon candidates to address women's concerns, including access to education, healthcare and business opportunities, as well as the need to reform provisions of family and inheritance laws that still reflected the biases of a patriarchal culture. When the RUF increased its campaign of violence and intimidation as the voting neared, the SLWMP organised branches in all accessible parts of the country to intensify democracy-promotion activities (Pham, 2004). A particularly strong voice was that of a body called Women Organised for a Morally Enlightened Nation (WOMEN), led also by Zainab Bangura (TRC, 2004: 386). Other important women organisations were the Mano River Women's Peace Network (MARWOPNET), Women's Movement for Peace, Forum of African Women Educationalists (FAWE) and The Women's Forum.

With Ahmad Tejan Kabbah's election in March 1996, the role of the women's groups decreased. The Forum had only an extremely limited role in the drafting of the Abidjan Accord, while the SLWMP dissolved in acrimonious disputes between its members over the justice (or injustice) of the agreement. The chaos following the May 1997 AFRC/RUF coup effectively ended the independent role of the women's movement; thereafter the activities of the surviving groups were indistinguishable from those of other civil society organisations (Pham, 2004).

After the January 6th invasion, women also participated in the National Consultative Conference that was convened by the National Commission for Democracy and Human Rights headed by Dr. Kadi Sesay, which was charged with collating civil society's views on the peace talks in Lomé. The interventions by the women tipped the balance in restoring peace in Sierra Leone. In 2000, a group of elderly women belonging to various churches and mosques in Freetown, requested and were granted an audience with Foday Sankoh. He treated them badly and with disdain on arriving at his residence. The women, angered by Foday Sankoh's attitude, showed him their displeasure. The meeting that the women had had with Foday Sankoh contributed to mobilize the entire population for the Civil Society's May 8th, 2000 march, which culminated in the arrest of Foday Sankoh who had fled after his men opened fire on the protesters. Christiana Macfoy of Women's Forum told the BBC that:

“We are tired, we are not only tired, we are fed up. We have reached the end of the road as far as taking all these atrocities that are being committed. And it is the women who are bearing the brunt of it”. (TRC, 2004: 703)

However, while women played a major role in the cessation of hostilities, they have been usually ignored and under represented at peace negotiations and in the attendant peace-building institutions that come into existence thereafter. As the TRC reports notices, this was exactly the case in Sierra Leone:

“Although two women representatives were involved in the Lome process, the only woman whose signature was appended to the Lome Accord was Miss Coleman, who did so as a representative of the Organization for African Unity (OAU). It is sad to note that no Sierra Leonean woman was a signatory to the accord and none were included in the constitution of the various commissions established for the promotion of good governance agreed upon in the peace accord, such as The Commission for the Consolidation of Peace, Commission for the management of Strategic Resources, National Reconstruction and Development and Council of Religious Leaders” (TRC, 2004: 703)

Narratives and debates on the causes of war

Ruling out Kaplan’s primordialist thesis as inherently racist, criticism of the other two narratives does exist. Although the underdevelopment theory focuses mainly on economic causes, it cannot be ignored its important contribution to understanding the causes of violence. In contrast, the political economy of war thesis (natural resources dispute as the most important cause of conflict) has defended premises sometimes as simplistic as the one safeguarded by the new barbarism. Furthermore, the political economy of war has been widely accepted and advertised by the media as well as some institutional and academic sectors. For example, two of the leading conflict theorists, Collier and Hoeffler (2004), have obstinately insisted in understanding diamonds as almost the unique cause of Sierra Leone’s war. While diamonds played a crucial role in fuelling the war, one cannot ignore the multiple causes that led to the beginning of the violence in 1991.

Cynthia J. Arnson and I. William Zartman (2005) have developed an interesting approach to understand Sierra Leone’s conflict. According to them, the causes of the conflict can be understood as being a point on a ‘need, creed, and greed’ continuum. The interesting question is how all these factors (need: historical grievances, political claims; creed: identity feelings; and greed: natural resources) relate to each other in causing and sustaining conflict:

“(…) grievances occur over deprivation of basic needs of some sort, claims of rights based on identity react to discrimination, and greed over resources relates to opportunity” (Zartman, 2005: 262).

In understanding the intersection between ‘need, creed, and greed’ each cause must be examined independently. Grievances or *need* result from different internal and external factors. Intentionally, the exclusionary system consolidated by the different Sierra Leonean governments, specifically the one headed by Siaka Stevens resulted in grievances. William Reno (1995) has prominently labelled this system a ‘Shadow State’ where a coalition between the political elite and Lebanese businessmen used state

powers (including the army)³³ to gradually enrich themselves and deprive others (Alie, 2000; Chabal y Daloz, 1999; Clapham, 2001; Gberie, 2005; Keen, 2005; Richards, 1996; TRC, 2004). For these regimes, the country's diamond reserves became the basis of the patrimonial order, criminalising the industry and establishing a 'shadow state' which was both minimalist and highly autocratic (Gberie, 2005: 29).

However, this widely accepted factor as one of the main root causes not just in Sierra Leone but in most of the African wars, cannot avoid three other important elements of social division:

- a) Centre-periphery cleavage: Shaped by the British colonisation, this cleavage led to underdevelopment in the rural areas while Freetown benefited and resulted in youth deprivation in massive migration from and socioeconomic deterioration of the rural sector (Alie, 2000; Gberie, 2005).
- b) Inter-generational cleavage: The traditional ruling system reinforced by the British colonialists as a means of 'indirect rule', gave full power to traditional leaders, customarily older men (known as 'Paramount Chiefs'). Youth and women were affectively excluded from government resulting in a situation of constant abuse (Alie, 2000; Fanthorpe, 2001; Keen, 2005).³⁴
- c) Ethnic-regional cleavage: While frequently underestimated, ethnic and regional divisions are primary in understanding current and past political dynamics in the country. Although it seems clear that "ethnic and religious hatred are the least relevant to understanding the RUF invasion" (Kandeh, 2005: 95),³⁵ historical rivalry between the main ethnic groups, Temne and Limba from the north (related with APC) against the Mende in the south (mainly SLPP supporters), should also be taken into consideration as they turned into exclusion policies for those that were not holding political power. This had "important consequences for national unity" (Alie, 2000: 26).

As far as the external causes are concerned, the impact of colonisation could be considered as one of the main factors. Rather than constructing a unified Sierra Leonean state, the colonial government effectively created two nations in the same land. The colonial capital Freetown, known as the Colony, and the much larger area of provincial territory, known as the Protectorate, were developed separately and unequally:

"The colonial government formalised the common law practised in the Colony yet neglected the development of customary law in the Protectorate, thus producing two separate legal systems that persist to the present day. The impact of colonial policies and practices, including those relating to citizenship, ownership of land, land tenure rights and conflict of laws, was far-reaching. People in the Colony enjoyed vastly superior social, political and economic development and access to vital resources such as education. The divide between the two entities bred deep ethnic and regional resentment and destabilised the traditional system of Chieftaincy." (TRC, 2004: 957)

In addition, the British rule also contributed to the heightening of economic differences between southern and northern populations; it helped the educational development in the southern districts with the objective of consolidating complicities with the elites of these areas (Alie, 2000: 23); it promoted a new system of traditional rule, awarding the local chiefs with heritable power and allowing for slaves practices (Alie, 2000: 28;

Fanthorpe, 2001; Keen, 2005: 10); moreover, it nourished corruption among elites as an instrument of control (Koroma, 1996: 234; Kpundeh, 1995). On the other hand, the imposition of Structural Adjustment Programmes (SAP) and its negative effects sparked off, and in some cases, fuelled conflict and hastened the collapse of the state in countries such as Sierra Leone (Francis, 2006: 85). Thus, under pressure from the IMF and the World Bank, the Stevens and Momoh regimes “pursued a set of measures that tended to exacerbate the economic and social crisis” (Keen, 2005: 26).³⁶

All these internally and externally created grievances were critical for the emergence of the RUF during mid-seventies (*creed*). The 1977 countrywide student demonstrations “marked the political coming of age for a generation of young Sierra Leoneans who were becoming increasingly radicalised by social injustice, localised deprivation, and political disenfranchisement” (Kandeh, 2005: 88).³⁷ This growing political consciousness culminated in a gradual demand of political openness and the end of corruption: “Youths, particularly university students, came to see themselves as agents of political change and as the last bastion of societal opposition to a corrupt and oppressive APC government” (Ibid: 89).

Nevertheless, Government response to student political activism and social unrest was to impose a one-party system of government and outlaw student union governments. APC informants infiltrated college campuses and there were mass expulsions and suspension of students. Some of these students, under the leadership of the activist named Alie Kabba, flew to Ghana and then to Libya under the patronage of Gaddafi to receive ‘military and ‘ideological’ training at the so-called al-Mahthabh al-Thauriya al-Alamiya World Revolutionary Headquarters somewhere in the Libyan desert. The students recruited mostly urban drifters and secondary school students. Foday Sankoh, whose entrenched grudge against the APC was well-known, was among the recruits (Gberie, 2005: 50). Yet the student leaders soon realised that they were confusing their irritation with ideology and that they had no serious organisational base so that they decided to give up the idea.³⁸ However, Foday Sankoh did not back down and after some difficulties he met Charles Taylor in Ghana in 1987 and then in 1988 in Libya. Taylor already had the NPFL and was helped by Sankoh and other in his attempt to overthrow Samuel Doe then President of Liberia in exchange of support to launch the war in Sierra Leone (Ibid: 50-52). In its inaugural document, “Footpaths to Democracy”, the RUF stated:

*“We are fighting for a new Sierra Leone. A new Sierra Leone of freedom, justice and equal opportunity for all. We are fighting for democracy and by democracy we mean equal opportunity and access to power to create wealth through free trade, commerce, agriculture, industry, science and technology. Wealth cannot be created without power. Power cannot be achieved without struggle. And by struggle, we mean the determination, the humanistic urge to remove the shame of poverty, hunger, disease, squalor, illiteracy, loafing and hopelessness from this African land of Sierra Leone blessed with minerals, forests, rivers, and all that is required to restore the dignity, prestige and power of the African as an equal competitor on the world stage. This is what we are fighting for and this is why we are fighting to save Sierra Leone. For, a society has already collapsed when majority of its youth can wake up in the morning with nothing to look up for.”*³⁹

However, according to David Pratt (in Keen, 2005: 47), “the radical intellectual roots of the RUF were extinguished in its first year of operation”. Most of the educated radicals

who criticised RUF strategies were executed early in the war. As Jimmy D. Kandeh (2005: 86) has pointed out, greed-fuelled factors led to the gradual criminalisation of the RUF insurgency (*greed*), most notably: 1) elite greed and opportunism; 2) the elimination of former university students from the organisation; 3) the *sobelization* (the transformation of armed regulars into brigands) of the national army; and 4) the involvement of external patrons and rogue businessman. As Alie (2005: 53) noted, what was labelled as a 'war of liberation' in 1991 degraded in content and ambition to a 'battle of annihilation', culminating in the disastrous 'Operation No Living Thing' in January 1999.

In this context, diamonds became indispensable for the RUF, as well as the rest of armed groups. The UN Panel of Experts, appointed after the abduction of UN peacekeepers by the RUF in 2000, to investigate 'the link between trade in diamonds and trade in arms and related material' that helped sustain the RUF war, found conclusively that diamonds constituted 'a major and primary source of income for the RUF' in 'sustaining and advancing its military ambitions' (in Gberie, 2005: 190). This strategy was decisively sustained by all kind of actors that helped to bring the diamonds out of the country.⁴⁰

4. Conclusions

There is no single (or simplistic) verdict in determining what or who caused armed violence in Sub-Saharan Africa after the end of the Cold War. Together with all the intertwined actors, interests and agendas in the history of the conflict, it is essential to take into account the historical processes, psychological aspects of power or even anthropological elements underlying the complex local networks and traditional powers. Therefore, it is possible to conclude that there do not exist simplified narratives to explain conflict both in Sierra Leone and in Africa.

Likewise, assessing the role of both internal and external actors, we can neither accept Kaplan's primordialist (and harmful) views nor those demagogic approaches that regard natural resources or international historical intervention as the unique cause of conflict. Furthermore, most analyses of violence in Africa, demote civilians to victims of war, ignoring their capacity to develop any kind of strategy as well as organised or spontaneous initiatives to face violence. Whereas, as outlined above, the participation of women's organisations has been vital in leading these processes.

With the advent of the 'liberal peace', Africa has become a central cause of concern for the international community. Inter-governmental organisations, donors or international NGOs have developed a new way of intervention based on development strategies in order to exile violence from Africa. Despite this positive attitude, most of these actors have forgotten the deep-rooted dynamics that underlie in the continent. With the huge international investment as part of the so-called 'Post-war reconstruction process', six years after the official end of the war Sierra Leone has gained some important achievements. Despite these gains, disparity and inequality within the country has worryingly increased. Two major groups are systematically disadvantaged because of discrimination: women and girls, and youth. The health system is extremely weak and the education sector is also facing serious challenges. As a recent DFID report underlines, the country is currently unlikely to meet any Millennium Development

Goals (MDG) and is seriously off track on several, particularly those related to child and maternal health. According to the last UNDP Human Development Report, Sierra Leone's maternal and child mortality rates are the worst in the world.⁴¹

This does not mean that reconstruction measures are absolutely inefficient, but it highlights a need to consider local approaches to peace and conflict resolution. Next to all the "reconstruction" "rehabilitation" or "reintegration" processes developed in Africa, Western societies should also develop some strategies in order to understand properly the voice and the options of African societies.

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ENDNOTES

¹ Although some of these countries were able at first to put an end to armed conflict situations and even to start democratic processes, such as Mozambique or South Africa, other countries relapsed in violent situation (Central Africa Republic, Republic of Congo or Guinea-Bissau).

² This approach makes sense while observing conflict in the different African regions, such as the Great Lakes, the Mano River subregion, the Horn of Africa or Central Africa.

³ This postulate was somehow previously defended by Samuel Huntington's *The Clash of Civilizations*. See HUNTINGTON, S. (1998), *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of the World Order*, Simon & Schuster, New York

⁴ Some authors assure that this view has had an important impact on international politics as well as certain policies such as the closing borders to immigration.

⁵ This thesis is also helpful to other cases out of the African continent, such as Afghanistan or Colombia, among others.

⁶ See CLAPHAM, C. (1996), *Africa and the International System. The Politics of State Survival*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge or THOMPSON, A. (2004), *An Introduction to African Politics*, Routledge, London/New York, Second edition

⁷ BERDAL, M. and D. MALONE (eds.) (2000), *Greed and Grievance: Economic Agendas in Civil Wars*, Lynne Rienner, Boulder, CO

⁸ Anyhow, the political economy of war narrative has greatly contributed to discover African countries' place in the other side of world economy, which refers to international criminal networks or bear witness to international and transnational actors such as the diamond industry or private security companies.

⁹ According to some UN agencies there were as many as 2 million internally displaced persons in Sierra Leone at the end of 2000, as well as several hundred thousand refugees in neighbouring countries.

¹⁰ See RUF/SL, *Footpaths to Democracy: Toward a new Sierra Leone* (The Revolutionary United Front of Sierra Leone, no stated place of publication, 1995).

¹¹ Kabbah got 59.4 percent of the votes in a second round. The SLPP won 51 of the 80-seat legislature. Kabbah appointed Hinga Norman as deputy minister of defence and agreed to keep on foreign security companies. His close relationship with the Kamajors angered the army.

¹² Public opinion had turned against EO because of the high fees it charged (US \$1.8 million per month) and its activities in the country's diamond areas. However, EO's affiliate company, Lifeguard, stays on in Sierra Leone through security contracts with several mining companies.

¹³ According to Keen (2005: 222), despite continuing World media emphasis on 'the RUF rebels', it was actually these troops who formed the majority of those attacking Freetown in January 1999, with S.A.J. Musa in leadership role.

¹⁴ Thousands of other people were abducted by rebel forces. Many were used for forced labour, as sex slaves or terrorized into joining the rebel army.

¹⁵ Some organisations have pointed out the DDR failure as one of the main elements of instability in the subregion. See SAVE THE CHILDREN (2005), *Fighting Back, Child and community-led strategies to avoid children's recruitment into armed forces and groups in West Africa*, Save the Children, London, in www.savethechildren.org.uk; SAVE THE CHILDREN (2005), *Girls formerly associated with armed groups and armed forces who did not go through formal demobilisation: Save the Children UK's experience in West Africa*, London; or HUMAN RIGHTS WATCH (HRW) (2005), *Youth, Poverty and Blood: The Lethal Legacy of West Africa's Regional Warriors*, London, in www.hrw.org.

¹⁶ The CDF was a platform where the different traditional militias such as the aforementioned Kamajors in the South-eastern region or the Gbethis in the North were organised.

¹⁷ ULIMO was an anti-Taylor militia formed in Freetown in early 1991 and consisting of Krahn and Mandingo, the ethnic groups that President Samuel Doe had relied on and that later suffered massacre at the hands of Taylor's NPFL (Keen, 2005: 37).

¹⁸ RUF and governmental troops agreed on the looting of certain areas. Sankoh even declared: "Don't worry about the Sierra Leone military. They are my colleagues. I will talk to them" (Ibid: 114).

¹⁹ The *Green Book* is a document which extols an assortment of ideas of naïve humanism, anti-capitalist rhetoric and charismatic rule (Gberie, 2005: 49).

²⁰ The United States, which regarded Gaddafi as a terrorist, lobbied to have as many leaders boycott the Tripoli summit as possible (Ibid.).

²¹ To a lesser extent, Côte d'Ivoire's President, Houphouët-Boigny, was also part of this group.

²² See GLOBAL WITNESS, *All the Presidents' men*, March 2002, or *A rough trade*, December 1998, in: www.globalwitness.org

²³ Among Taylor's closest business partners who made a fortune out of the RUF insurgency were Talal El-Ndine (a Lebanese businessman and Taylor's clandestine paymaster), Fred Rindle (a retired South

African army officer), Leonid Minin (a Ukrainian with many aliases), Victor Bout (a native of Tajikistan and former KGB operative who also uses many aliases), Gus Van Kouwenhoven (a Dutch national with hotel, logging, and diamond interests in Liberia), and Ibrahim Baldeh Bah (a Senegalese national with close ties to Taylor, Blaise Compaoré and the RUF) (Kandeh, 2005: 101). According to Musah (2000: 106), Fred Rindle and Nico Shafer (who worked for the former Colombian cocaine baron Pablo Escobar) are also reported to have set up an international consortium with Taylor.

²⁴ Bockarie became the acting RUF leader when Sankoh was detained in Nigeria. It appeared that there was a serious rift between Bockarie and Sankoh due to his different view of the RUF leadership. In December 1999, the dispute erupted in a gun battle between Sankoh's loyal supporters and Bockarie's (Gberie, 2005: 162-163).

²⁵ London maintained historical economic links with British companies such as *Branch Energy*, *Golden Prospects*, *West African Fisheries*, *Marine Protection Services*, *J&S Franklin* or *Barclays* and *Standard Chartered* banks.

²⁶ See Keen (2005), chapters 9 and 10.

²⁷ This nationwide resistance at first appeared to be undermined by the apparent fragmentation of the country along political party/ethnic lines (Gberie, 2005: 108-109).

²⁸ Many of these agitations were launched in North America, and were largely inspired by John Leigh, Sierra Leone's outspoken Ambassador in the United States and High Commissioner in Canada, and James Jonah, the country's urbane Permanent Representative at the UN (Ibid.: 111).

²⁹ Most of the civil society organisations supported the amnesty for RUF members.

³⁰ Muslim groups that joined the IRCSL included the Supreme Islamic Council, the Sierra Leone Muslim Congress, the Federation of Muslim Women Associations in Sierra Leone, the Council of Imams, and the Sierra Leone Islamic Missionary Union. Constituent Christian members of the IRCSL included the three Roman Catholic dioceses in Sierra Leone (the Archdiocese of Freetown and Bo, and the Dioceses of Kenema and Makeni), the Pentecostal Churches Council, and the Council of Churches in Sierra Leone, which represented eighteen Protestant denominations.

³¹ The RUF abducted a number of religious figures who were unfortunate enough to find themselves behind rebel lines. Among those taken hostage was Freetown's Roman Catholic archbishop, Joseph Henry Ganda, an ethnic Mende with close personal ties to his fellow tribesman, President Kabbah. According to his own subsequent account, Ganda somehow managed to escape his captors after a week and found refuge with an ECOMOG unit. Some of Ganda's fellow hostages were less fortunate: when the ECOMOG counteroffensive forced the rebels to abandon their provisional headquarters, the fighters decided to get rid of some of their prisoners. An Indian nun of Mother Teresa's Missionaries of Charity, Sister Aloysius Maria, and an Italian priest, Father Girolamo Pistoni, were shot by the rebels; Pistoni miraculously survived with a chest wound by twisting quickly when he was fired upon. Two other Missionaries of Charity, Kenyan Sister Carmeline and Bangladeshi Sister Sweva, were killed, although the circumstances of their deaths left unclear whether the rebels had executed them or they had died as a result of ECOMOG fire (Pham, 2004).

³² The SLWF began with representatives of groups such as the Young Women's Christian Association (YWCA), the Women's Association for National Development (WAND), the National Organization for Women (NOW), and the Women's Wing of the Sierra Leone Labour Congress, and gradually expanded to include members of Freetown's women traders' associations and religiously based women's groups as well as newly minted groups such as the National Displaced Women's Organization.

³³ Stevens created extra-legal institutions and channels which CAME to supersede the formal state institutions. Distrusting the army, Stevens starved it of much-needed resources and created a shadow army, the Internal Security Unit (ISU) (later renamed the Special Security Division, SSD), with Cuban assistance in 1973 (Gberie, 2005: 29).

³⁴ In much of Sierra Leone, *de facto* citizenship remains a privilege for those domiciled in old villages registered for tax collection. Youths, itinerant workers, and other low status individuals inevitably find themselves in attenuating orders of precedence in access to basic rights and properties. The loss of identity implicit in this process no longer finds a compensating movement in modern education and employment (Fanthorpe, 2001: 363).

³⁵ Nevertheless, Keen (2005: 99) exposes that many Mende began to complain that there was a conspiracy to weaken or even destroy them, making a connection between the army's continuing northern bias, Sankoh's northern origins (he was born in Tonkolili District), and the devastation of the south and east. According to a Keen's personal testimony: "There was a hidden agenda in the APC to reduce the population of the Mende tribe". On the other hand, a Nathaniel King's (2007) survey shows 'tribalism/nepotism' as the second most pointed response to the causes of the war. Finally, the TRC (2004: 957) report states that the link between the conflict and ethnicity lies in the way in which certain

factions turned ethnicity into an instrument of prejudice and violence against perceived opponents or those who did not 'belong'. People of Northern origin were found to have been targeted in the Southern and Eastern regions during the latter part of the war. The Kamajors committed disproportionate levels of violations against such ethnic groups as the Temne, Koranko, Loko, Limba and Yalunka. Other reported instances of 'targeting' included RUF violations against, variously, the Lebanese, Fullahs, Mandingos, Nigerians and Marakas.

³⁶ As in much of Africa and elsewhere in the developing World, these measures included devaluations and cuts in state spending (Keen, 2005: 26).

³⁷ Ismail Rashid (1997) thinks that the culture of resistance emerged in a context of nonconformity, student radicalism, reggae's music and drugs.

³⁸ Some of the student leaders got funding to finish their university education in Ghana, and the rest of the revolutionary enthusiasts returned to Sierra Leone and settled back to whatever they were doing before (Gberie, 2005: 50).

³⁹ See RUF/SL, *Footpaths to Democracy: Toward a new Sierra Leone.*

⁴⁰ The United Nations estimated the RUF's diamond exports being 'from as little as 25 million USD per annum to as much as 125 million USD per annum' (Ibid.: 190).

⁴¹ See UNDP, 2007. *Sierra Leone Human Development Report 2007*, UNDP.