

Canadian
Forces
College

Collège
des
Forces
Canadiennes



THE UN MISSION IN SIERRA LEONE AND THE MYSTIQUE OF BLOOD DIAMONDS

Lieutenant-Commander J.K. Killi

JCSP 39

Master of Defence Studies

Disclaimer

Opinions expressed remain those of the author and do not represent Department of National Defence or Canadian Forces policy. This paper may not be used without written permission.

© Her Majesty the Queen in Right of Canada, as represented by the Minister of National Defence, 2013

PCEMI 39

Maîtrise en études de la défense

Avertissement

Les opinions exprimées n'engagent que leurs auteurs et ne reflètent aucunement des politiques du Ministère de la Défense nationale ou des Forces canadiennes. Ce papier ne peut être reproduit sans autorisation écrite.

© Sa Majesté la Reine du Chef du Canada, représentée par le ministre de la Défense nationale, 2013.

CANADIAN FORCES COLLEGE – COLLÈGE DES FORCES CANADIENNES
JCSP 39 – PCEMI 39
2012 – 2013

MASTER OF DEFENCE STUDIES – MAÎTRISE EN ÉTUDES DE LA DÉFENSE

**THE UN MISSION IN SIERRA LEONE AND THE MYSTIQUE OF BLOOD
DIAMONDS**

By Lieutenant-Commander J.K. Killi

Par le capitaine de corbette J.K. Killi

This paper was written by a student attending the Canadian Forces College in fulfilment of one of the requirements of the Course of Studies. The paper is a scholastic document, and thus contains facts and opinions, which the author alone considered appropriate and correct for the subject. It does not necessarily reflect the policy or the opinion of any agency, including the Government of Canada and the Canadian Department of National Defence. This paper may not be released, quoted or copied, except with the express permission of the Canadian Department of National Defence.

Word Count: 18 010

La présente étude a été rédigée par un stagiaire du Collège des Forces canadiennes pour satisfaire à l'une des exigences du cours. L'étude est un document qui se rapporte au cours et contient donc des faits et des opinions que seul l'auteur considère appropriés et convenables au sujet. Elle ne reflète pas nécessairement la politique ou l'opinion d'un organisme quelconque, y compris le gouvernement du Canada et le ministère de la Défense nationale du Canada. Il est défendu de diffuser, de citer ou de reproduire cette étude sans la permission expresse du ministère de la Défense nationale.

Compte de mots : 18 010

CONTENTS

Contents		i
Abbreviations		ii
Acknowledgements		iv
Chapter 1	INTRODUCTION	1
Chapter 2	HISTORICAL BACKGROUND	13
Chapter 3	THE EMERGENCE OF THE RUF AND THE CIVIL WAR	33
Chapter 4	UNAMSIL ANALYSIS	45
Conclusion		65

ABBREVIATIONS

ACRM	Anti-Corruption Revolutionary Movement
AFRC	Armed Forces Revolutionary Council
APC	All People's Congress
AU	African Union
DDR	Disarmament, Demobilization, and Reintegration
DPKO	Department of Peacekeeping Operations
ECOMOG	ECOWAS Cease-fire Monitoring Group
ECOWAS	Economic Community of West African States
EO	Executive Outcomes
GNU	Government of National Unity
IDP	Internally Displaced Persons
IMATT	International Military Advisory and Training Team
KPM	Kono Progressive Movement
NCBWA	National Congress of British West Africa
NCDDR	National Commission for Disarmament, Demobilization, and Reintegration
NCSL	National Council of Sierra Leone
NPFL	National Patriotic Front of Liberia
NPRC	National Provisional Ruling Council
NRC	National Reformation Council
OAU	Organization of African Union
PNP	People's National Party

RUF	Revolutionary United Front
SAP	Structural Adjustment Program
SCSL	Special Court for Sierra Leone
SL	Sierra Leone
SLA	Sierra Leonean Army
SLPIM	Sierra Leone Progressive Independent Movement
SLIM	Sierra Leone Independent Movement
SLPP	Sierra Leon People’s Party
SSD	Special Security Division
UK	United Kingdom
UN	United Nations
UNAMIR	United Nations Assistance Mission in Rwanda
UNAMSIL	United Nations Assistance in Sierra Leone
UNIOSIL	United Nations Integrated Office in Sierra Leone
UNOMSIL	United Nations Observer Mission in Sierra Leone
UNOSOM	United Nations Operation in Somalia
UPP	United People’s Party
US	United States
UNSC	United Nations Security Council
UNSCR	United Nations Security Council Resolution
WAYL	West African Youth League

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

My deep appreciation goes first to my family members from Kenya who offered me material, intellectual or moral support in various ways. This effort would have been impossible without their love and unwavering support across the miles. I sincerely thank Joyce, Justin, Jimmy, Jill, and also Emmy who helped tabulate information, Sharleen, Sylviah, and Jack. I love them all very deeply. I would like to thank my thesis supervisor Dr. Walter Dorn who consistently encouraged my effort. The library staff provided me with endless hours of assistance in finding and documenting my research materials for which I am thankful. I owe a special debt of heartfelt gratitude to Ms. Marie Cotter who kindly and tirelessly proof-read countless drafts and provided thoughtful suggestions. I am grateful to the Canadian Government and the Canadian Forces College for the opportunity they offered me to undertake a Master of Defence Studies – I hope that both Kenya and Canada will benefit from this enormous and generous investment. Finally, I remain indebted to the Kenya Air Force Commander Major General Joff Otieno as well as the Kenya Chief of Defence Force, General Julius Karangi for allowing me the opportunity to attend this worthy and timely course at the Canadian Forces College, Canada. I feel sincerely indebted to you all.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Diamonds; highly sought after the world over, and dangerously exquisite. Sierra Leone possesses some of the most lucrative diamond mines in the world, and in the 1990s was the focus of illicit diamond trade and tremendous bloodshed. They are called “blood diamonds” not for their colour, but for the blood that has been spilled in the attempt to seize control of the trade in these gems and the resultant profits. The 1990s were devastatingly tumultuous for Sierra Leone as stakeholders wrestled for control of the diamond trade. Thousands of young Sierra Leoneans were kidnapped and trained to become brutal fighters. As the world gradually understood the true situation, there was fear that global demand for diamonds would diminish, and the brutal conflict would sully the reputation of the Sierra Leonean government. Diamonds became inextricably linked with violence and civil war in Sierra Leone.¹

The conflict witnessed in Sierra Leone was not only a local confrontation but drew in other external regional participants in the struggle to control the diamond trade and the financial gain. In the 1990s, Sierra Leone’s neighbours, by way of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), sought to stabilize this troubled country through diplomacy and peacekeeping in order to bring democracy and civil rule. These neighbours however could not agree on who should lead Sierra Leone. Liberian President Charles Taylor was a strong supporter of the Sierra Leone rebel leader, Foday Sankoh from the 1990s. The main interest of the Revolutionary United Front, (RUF), was to control the mines of diamonds and the benefits

¹ “Blood Diamonds, The African Conflict”, accessed on 23 March 2013, <http://www.mymultiplesclerosis.co.uk/interesting-documentary/blood-diamonds.html>

accruing through black market deals.² In the categorization of countries in terms of poverty index, Sierra Leone ranks as one of the most impoverished in the world today, yet it was once the producer of the highest quality diamonds in the world. Those who controlled the mines in the 1990s made it impossible for the country's citizens to benefit from diamond profits. This was in essence an important underlying cause for the tension; the people who controlled the diamond mines controlled the revenue. Civil war in Sierra Leone destroyed the nation from 1991 to 2002 primarily over the lust for wealth accruing to a small number of people from the nation's resources including diamonds. This was the main reason the UN found it necessary to form the United Nations Assistance Mission in Sierra Leone (UNAMSIL) earlier in 1999 to help bring economic and political stability and sanity to this nation.³

The international community, compelled by the necessity to return control of the diamond trade to the democratically elected regime of Sierra Leone, agreed to involve the neighbouring states to help remove the RUF out of areas that produced the most resources. When the RUF in various parts of Sierra Leone kidnapped UN troops in 2002, it caused embarrassment to the entire UN body and particularly the UN mission in Africa. Many troops were indiscriminately made victims of the RUF including those from Nigeria which had historically supported the Sierra Leone government. Significantly, in 1997, the Sierra Leone president, Ahmed Tejan Kabbah was deposed. Concurrently, the RUF leader, Sankoh was detained while in Nigeria, and was eventually returned by the Sierra Leonean Army (SLA). Other serving UN

²“Sierra Leone - Another African Diamond War”, accessed 21 Jan 2013, <http://www.markswatson.com/WebSite/diamonds.htm>.

³“Mining in Sierra Leone-Overview”, accessed 21 Jan 2013, <http://www.mbendi.com/indy/ming/af/sl/p0005.htm>.

members were similarly kidnapped by the RUF including Kenyan and British contingent soldiers.⁴

The Diamond Factor

It was estimated that more than 2 million carat weight in diamonds were mined the year preceding the civil strife in Sierra Leone, yet corresponding profits were not recorded in the national revenue during the same year. Some dealers were believed to have been involved in illicit trade including well-known companies such as the Rex Diamond, De Beers and Diamond Works as well as other minor mining firms active in Sierra Leone. Most of these dealers had clear vested interests of gains arising from the civil war. The international community, through the UN sought democracy for this country and a democratic regime placed in power. The rebels, in the meantime, sold their ill-gotten diamonds to firms in the West through black market sales. Several major mining companies had recruited private security firms such as “Executive Outcomes” (EO) in the Sierra Leonean strife. Private security firms had been employed previously in this region of Sierra Leone where minerals and oil deposits were found, to safeguard against RUF attacks and influence on the mines and minerals. These hired security firms were frequently criticized by the press as “white colonizers” while most agencies quietly embraced the kind of security offered by these hired troops to handle troublesome or risky situations.⁵

Diamonds were an important source of export revenue the Sierra Leonean government, and an equally attractive source of financing for the RUF. Although trade in smuggled diamonds with the RUF was outlawed in the late 1990s, this activity continued unabated and with little

⁴ “Sierra Leone - Another African Diamond War”...

⁵ *Ibid.*

interference from the West which was ostensibly concerned with stability. The democratically elected Sierra Leonean government, when brought to power would be expected to honour the agreement on the lucrative business with the strong mining companies. With their vested interests in diamond industry, the government and the mining firms pushed the UN to restore order during this period. By so doing, it redirected the benefits accruing from this diamond trade to the government coffers.⁶

Diamonds, without doubt, are valued for their strength and beauty, but were (and are) over-valued well beyond their reasonable monetary worth and certainly not worth loss of life. In order to keep diamond mining production lucrative and to control the price of diamonds worldwide, DeBeers regularly stockpiled diamonds. In a 2000 report in the New York Times, for example, approximately \$4 billion worth of diamonds were reportedly stockpiled in order to control supply and artificially keep the price of these gems high⁷. This was mainly achieved in Belgium through the global center of diamonds known as the “Diamond High Council”, which was located in an area in which there was a significant Russian mafia presence⁸. The Russian mafia allegedly laundered drug money with diamonds. In turn, the US had been one of the world’s biggest markets of diamonds where more than \$10 billion worth of illicit diamonds found their way from the major producing countries in Africa, namely-Congo, Angola, Liberia and Sierra Leone to America, prior to the UN intervention. According to media reports of the day, the US government was aware of the origin of the extremely lucrative but outlawed commodity. Additionally, there was concern by those involved in the illicit diamond trade that American law would allow a licensing system requiring dealers to publicly state the source of

⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷ Julie Flaherty, “A Diamond Stockpile That Is Not Forever”, The New York Times on the web, July 30, 2000, accessed June 20, 2013 <http://partners.nytimes.com/library/financial/personal/073000personal-diamond.html>

⁸ “Sierra Leone - Another African Diamond War”...

their stones. US dealers insisted on requiring proof of legitimate diamond trading. Wealthy diamond purchasers, who had come to own millions of dollars in diamonds ironically were the same public personalities who would raise awareness about abuses of human rights in the developing world.⁹

It could be said that many of the wars fought in Liberia, Congo, Angola and Sierra Leone, were generally over diamonds as well as other minerals. Many western media reports blamed traditional and cultural animosities for the conflicts. While this was partially true, the media could similarly be accused of being willfully blind to the other causes of the situation.¹⁰ To be sure, money, minerals and to some extent, drugs played a role in these conflicts, however avaricious warlords were also guilty of creating conflict to secure their own financial gain. Arguably, the West raised concern only when the flow of diamonds became curtailed or when powerful companies complained loudly to the UN.

A UN report made pointed allegations against global diamond dealers in the late 1990s and identified names of dealers. These dealers openly disregarded UN sanctions by engaging with dangerous diamond suppliers while political leaders, for example in Sierra Leone, oversaw the transactions. The political leadership was aware of the illegal diamond trading activity, though was unmotivated to take any action because they benefited financially and politically.¹¹

Most of the wealth from the diamond trade in Sierra Leone accrued to the small number of warlords and political elite rather than redistributed to the country's population. One of the organizations that came to ameliorate the situation in Sierra Leone was the UN in form of the

⁹ John L Hirsch, *Sierra Leone: Diamonds and the Struggle for Democracy*, (Boulder, Colorado: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2001), 27.

¹⁰ "Sierra Leone - Another African Diamond War"...

¹¹ *Ibid.*

United Nations Assistance Mission in Sierra Leone (UNAMSIL). UNAMSIL was the latest in a series of UN missions to Sierra Leone during the period of escalation, that is, 1991 to 2002.

Some have argued that UNAMSIL became defenceless before the RUF onslaught on the Sierra Leonean population in 2000, when nearly 500 UN peacekeepers were captured by the RUF and stripped of their weapons and rendered vulnerable and ineffective.¹² The UN, whose emblem has earned respect worldwide, was targeted for anger, ridicule and criticism among the local population. Sierra Leone was not the first conflict situation in which UN troops were severely tested. Within the ten years preceding the Sierra Leone conflict, there were Somalia, Cambodia, Bosnia and Rwanda situations where similar accusations were levelled against the UN on the premises of weakness or failure. In fact the accusation went further to insinuate that the UN was unwilling to take action against the tormentors of the innocent population. The darkest days for UNAMSIL, however, are found in the events of April and May 2000 when the RUF outwitted and overpowered the UN troops.¹³ This turn of events almost brought the integrity of the mightiest global body under threat.

Although the kidnapping events of 2000 were extremely unsavoury, it made the UN realize its own weaknesses and gaps that needed to be corrected, which led the UN to reinvent itself. It is argued that it was that single most important factor behind the upturn in UNAMSIL's fortunes that led to the resurgence of UN peacekeeping in the country, a step whose implications have transcended the boundaries of Sierra Leone.¹⁴ This is when UNAMSIL, which evolved from the United Nations Observer Mission in Sierra Leone, UNOMSIL, fully took charge of the

¹² Funni Olonisakin, *Peacekeeping in Sierra Leone: The Story of UNAMSIL* (Boulder, Colorado: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2008), 53

¹³ *Ibid.*

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

security situation in Sierra Leone¹⁵. It is noteworthy that the violent RUF resistance against UNAMSIL and the eventual capture of its troops occurred at the time of ECOMOG/UNAMSIL changeover. Changeover periods are usually dangerous stages in hostilities as they create security gaps and vulnerabilities. This marks the occasion when UNAMSIL, for a period, fell prey to the RUF combatants.

The Thesis Statement

The purpose of this paper is to demonstrate the overall success of UNAMSIL's efforts in Sierra Leone, its many pitfalls and present a balanced view of how it dealt with a country torn apart by the promise of diamonds and other precious stones.

It will further demonstrate the British forces played a stabilizing role in Sierra Leone. Following the 2004 conclusion of the national disarmament and rehabilitation process, the mission came to an end in 2005 and stability was restored. Through Disarmament, Demobilization, and Reintegration (DDR), 72,000 combatants, 6,800 of whom were children, were demobilized. UNAMSIL contributed to bringing power to the elected leaders in Sierra Leone.

UNAMSIL was active in Sierra Leone from 1999 to 2005. This paper will argue that UNAMSIL helped to restore national security and political stability to this nation in its mission between 1999 and 2005. From 1991 to 2000, this country lacked peace and security. This is the period when the ECOWAS, as a regional bloc, gathered its energy to address the fate of Sierra Leone in the face of the marauding RUF rebels. UNAMSIL and ECOMOG were deployed but in

¹⁵ To provide added clarification, UNOMSIL, 1998 to 1999, was a small observer force intended to support efforts to disarm, demobilize, and reintegrate rebel fighters. UNAMSIL, 1999 to 2005, was a much greater peacekeeping force with a larger mandate to establish law and order and helped oversee the end of Sierra Leone's civil war.

the seven years that followed, the security situation in Sierra Leone did not improve. The UN stepped in alongside the British forces, and managed to create peace and stability in Sierra Leone, within a five year period.

In the attempt to prove this thesis, an analytic method of analysis will be employed. The analytic method will enable this argument to bring out a clearer picture that will attempt to unveil the Sierra Leonean conflict situation which eventually turned out to be an enigma.

Chronology of events

Chronologically, Sierra Leone has gone through many facets of experiences; from a rich and peaceful nation prior to the eruption of violence to a ravaged, war-torn country during and after the conflict. The Sierra Leonean conflict escalated in 1991 as some disgruntled elements of RUF launched a vicious attack from the neighboring Liberian border with a view to overthrowing the government of Sierra Leone. This created a sudden and urgent need to repulse the rebels and was achieved through the combined effort of both the ECOMOG and the Sierra Leonean army. This synergy gradually died down when, a year later, the army itself overthrew the government.¹⁶

This turn of events however did not make things any better for Sierra Leone as the rebels continued with their sustained attacks on the government. This was happening against the backdrop of change of power. In February 1995, an Ethiopian national, Mr Berhanu Dinka was appointed by the United Nations Secretary-General as a Special Envoy. Mr. Dinka was a UN representative working alongside the Organization of African Union, the OAU, together with

¹⁶ “Sierra Leone-UNAMSIL-Background”, accessed on 3 Feb 2013, <http://www.un.org/en/peacekeeping/missions/past/unamsil/background.html>

ECOWAS in an attempt to settle Sierra Leonean conflict and possible restoration of civilian rule through negotiation.¹⁷ This effort bore fruit in February 1996 as parliamentary and presidential elections were held as the military handed back the power to the victor, Kabbah. However, this relief failed to materialize as the RUF would not recognize the results following their failure to participate in the elections; thus the conflict continued.

The following list briefly highlights the chronological events between independence and the close of UNAMSIL in 2005:¹⁸

Summary of Sierra Leone's chronology of events

1961	Independence is declared, Sir Milton Margai becomes head of government.
1967	Siaka Stevens wins elections, coup d'état ensues, Stevens is restored in the counter-coup a year later.
1985	Siaka Stevens steps down, hands over power to General Joseph Momoh
1989	Civil war breaks out in neighboring Liberia.
1990	A referendum planned for a multi-party rule in Sierra Leone.
1991	Liberian rebels and SL dissidents invade SL, Rebel leader Foday Sankoh takes credit, and ECOWAS is deployed to counter RUF rebellion.
1992	Captain Strasser ousts General Momoh and sworn in as head of state.
1995	Berhanu Dinka is appointed as special UN envoy. Strasser recruits mercenary firm, Executive Outcomes.
1996	Strasser is overthrown. Kabbah wins in run-off elections. The Abidjan Accord is reached.
1997	Sankoh is arrested in Nigeria. Johnny Koroma assumes power. Junta and ECOWAS agree on a cease-fire
1998	ECOMOG overwhelms the Junta, takes over Freetown. Kabbah is reinstated. He charges Momoh and others for treason. Kabbah appoints and promotes Khobe as the Chief of Defence of SLA. British government withdraws its High Commissioner from Sierra Leone. UNOMSIL is established, F.G Okello becomes the SRSG and head of the mission. Sankoh returns from detention in Nigeria as a prisoner. Sankoh is sentenced to

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁸ Funni Olonisakin, *Peacekeeping in Sierra Leon: The Story of UNAMSIL...* 135-140

	death.
1999	AFRC/RUF forces overwhelm ECOMOG in Freetown, children abducted, mutilation, torture and murder is widespread. UNOMSIL personnel are evacuated; Kabbah's government goes into exile while ECOMOG undertakes a counter attack. ECOMOG threatens airstrikes to Liberia and Burkina Faso for arming SL rebels, Kabbah and Sankoh sign a ceasefire agreement in Lome. The Lome Peace Accord is signed between RUF and SL government. Sankoh and Paul Koroma return to Freetown, UNAMSIL is established as UNOMSIL is dissolved, (UNSC Resolution 1270).
2000	UNAMSIL's mandate is revised. UNAMSIL takes over from ECOMOG. ECOMOG completes its withdrawal. About 500 UN peacekeepers are kidnapped. Sankoh is apprehended, British government evacuates her citizens, British troops re-take Freetown, provide defence and logistic support to peacekeepers. Major General Vijay Jetley's internal report causes controversy. Kenya's Major General Daniel Opande replacing Jetley. The Abuja ceasefire agreement is signed.
2001	The UNSC bans Liberian diamond exports, strengthens the arms embargo and bans key Liberian regime members from international travel, (UNSCR 1343).
2002	UN and the Sierra Leone government formally agree to establish a special court. UNAMSIL reaches 17,500 troops. Kabbah wins and sworn in as president. The inauguration of SL Truth and Reconciliation Commission starts.
2003	SL Special Court indicts former RUF leaders; Foday Sankoh, Issa Sesay, Morris Kallon and Sam Bockarie and AFRC leaders Johnny Paul Koroma and Alex Timba Brima and the CDF leader Sam Hinga Norman. Charles Taylor is indicted for involvement in the SL conflict. Augustine Gbao RUF leader is also indicted. Sankoh dies in Freetown. Tanzania's Daudi Mwakawago is appointed SRSG, and heads UNAMSIL unto its conclusion.
2004	The DDR process concludes. Over 72,000 combatants demobilized.
2005	United Nations Integrated Office in Sierra Leone (UNIOSIL) is established (UNSCR 1620). Termination of the UNAMSIL.
2006	UNIOSIL begins its work, and builds capacity to hold free and fair elections in 2007. Taylor is flown back to Monrovia, sent into custody at the Special Court in Freetown. The UNSC authorizes his extradition to The Hague for trial.
2007	Taylor's trial begins at The Hague. Presidential and parliamentary elections are held in Sierra Leone. The UN Peace building commission activates the Peacebuilding Fund intended to fill critical gaps in financing peacebuilding activities.

CHAPTER 2

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

*War is, at first, the hope that one will be better off; next, the expectation that the other fellow will be worse off; then, the satisfaction that he isn't any better off; and finally, the surprise at everyone's being worse off.*¹⁹

Karl Kraus

This background is important for this paper, especially at the backdrop of the escalated insecurity that rocked Sierra Leone, climaxing in the 1990s giving rise to the need for UNAMSIL. It is therefore useful to understand the history of Sierra Leone from earlier days, through the struggle for independence and following independence, leading to the notorious period of the civil strife in 1991-2003.



Figure 1 : Map of Sierra Leone.

Much is said of Sierra Leone, a small West African state that covers an area totalling about 72,000 square kilometres (28,000 square miles), lying south and east of Guinea and northwest of Liberia, (Fig. 1).²⁰ A country of stunning beauty, Sierra Leone has a 402-kilometer Atlantic coastline on its southwest border. Remarkably, though, a small country just the size of

New Brunswick Canada has a rich history dating back

to the slavery and the exploration days and earlier, though little history is available to support this. It was a Portuguese navigator Pedro da Cintra, while mapping the West African coastline,

¹⁹ Lansana Gberie, *A Dirty War in West Africa, The RUF and the Destruction of Sierra Leone* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press 2005), 1.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, xv.

who discovered one of the world's largest natural harbors. Eventually, it was called "*Serra Lyoa*" (Lion Mountain) because the sound of the thunder reverberating across the neighborhood reminded him of the roars of lions.²¹

Present day Sierra Leone is a multi-cultural society with over sixteen distinct tribes that form this country, although three of them stand out in particular prominence. Virtually, all the tribes contribute in some way to the national culture, both the politically influential and the politically marginalized.

The three major tribes in order of predominance are the Mende, the Temne and the Limba successively in that order, a position that has been maintained as a status quo to date. Their predominance is mainly due to their relatively significant sizes and influence. Most of these communities immigrated into Sierra Leone in the fifteenth century mainly from the northern direction, though some are believed to be indigenous inhabitants of the region.²²

It is during this pre-colonial period that the first European explorers arrived in this region. First were the Portuguese who established a base in Cape Verde, an island group in the Atlantic Ocean, and reached out to the hinterland for the purpose of purchasing ivory, gold and slaves from the Soso and the Fula people of Sierra Leone, who were then the dominant Sierra Leonean trading agents. At the time, the Portuguese were the unequalled merchants in the region.

The British, eager to break the Portuguese trade monopoly, arrived in the area at the mid-sixteenth century and were joined by a small number of French, Dutch and Danes. Within the same period, many British merchants and rulers, like Sir John Hawkins and Sir Francis Drake,

²¹ J. Peter Pham, *Child Soldiers, Adult Interest: The Global Dimensions of the Sierra Leonean Tragedy*, (New York: Nova Science Publishers, 2005), 3.

²² *Ibid.*, 2.

kept visiting Sierra Leone, ostensibly for economic exploitations.²³ This being the pre-diamond era, the economic activity was chiefly slave trade. This led to a number of inter-marriages between the burgeoning population of British commercial agents and the members of the local ruling clans. The result was a growing Anglo-African population, known as mulatos, who gradually amassed wealth in the mercantilist trade, taking over from their fathers and becoming masters of virtually sovereign territories along the West African coast. With time, they became influential agents of European interests and prime coastal beneficiaries of the Atlantic slave trade.²⁴

The British maintained a keen interest in Sierra Leone for years. In the early nineteenth century, the peoples of the region-whites, blacks, and mulatos-were beset with many difficulties ranging from tropical diseases and food shortages to constant attacks by the Temne tribe, who felt they were fraudulently dispossessed of their land, currently Freetown, by the British to settle the freed slaves. Some of the victims, facing imminent extinction, escaped and made a living on the coast by working for slave traders. This caused uproar in Great Britain as it was the period Britain herself was advocating for the abolition of slave trade. In 1808, Britain resolved the issue by declaring the settlement a Crown Colony and made it a home to freed slaves from Jamaica and North America.²⁵ Although there existed some tension between the settlers and the freed slaves, the two groups eventually integrated into one society, the *Kriodom*, named after its *Krio* people.²⁶

²³ *Ibid*, 3.

²⁴ *Ibid*, 3.

²⁵ Lansana Gberie, *A Dirty War in West Africa, The RUF and the Destruction of Sierra Leone...18*.

²⁶ J. Peter Pham, *Child Soldiers, Adult Interests...12*.

The term *Krio* has an unclear origin, with one version associating it with a Yoruba word *kiriyo*, (to walk about and be satisfied). In practice, the black freed slaves had a habit of roaming from house to house while visiting each other after church service. Their children, similarly, had the habit of going out of their houses often. But more intriguing, *creole* is a Spanish American term given to the children borne to immigrant parents (one of whom is invariably white) in Sierra Leone to distinguish them from their parents who had been white settlers, mostly from Britain or freed slaves who originated from Nova Scotia (Canada), and Jamaica.²⁷ These former slaves were either freed from slavery or escaped from servitude in the US. Ever since 1792, when the first group of Nova Scotians arrived in Sierra Leone up to the present day, the Krio people have since evolved into what is now a fully integrated community. This group continued to face numerous and sporadic attacks from the somewhat indigenous Temne people in 1789, under King Jimmy, completely burned the Granville Town settlement to the ground. The colonial administration was not *Ad idem* with the Temne community as it did not seem to impress them through the use of the infamous chieftom administration of the late 1780s.²⁸

In 1791, in Britain, the management of the newly chartered enterprise called *Sierra Leonean Company*, a large business entity which had a lot of influence in Sierra Leonean political affairs, sent a new representative, Alexander Falconbridge, to oversee the enterprise in Sierra Leone. This is when the disintegrating groups of the former settlers were traced and re-grouped before being resettled in Freetown by Falconbridge. The shrinking settler group was, over time, reinforced with newly arriving freed slaves and occasionally, some white women who were likely wives or girlfriends of the slaves, although history has often, from a misogynist

²⁷ *Ibid.*

²⁸ J. Peter Pham, *The Sierra Leonean Tragedy: History and Global Dimensions*, (NY, Nova Science Publishers, 2006), 6.

perspective, depicted them as prostitutes.²⁹ This marshalling and organizing of the settlement went on over years under the stewardship of the successive leadership of the Britain based Sierra Leonean Company in Sierra Leone.

As Britain went through political changes, so too did Sierra Leone. In 1806, Britain officially abolished the slave trade and legislated severe punitive actions against anyone contravening the anti-slavery rules. Britain, realizing that Sierra Leonean Company was becoming bankrupt, suggested that Britain assumes responsibility of the colony, taking over from the Company. In 1808, a Crown government was introduced in Sierra Leone and this was a political turning point for Sierra Leone's history. The royal flag was raised as the Sierra Leonean Company one was lowered and the Crown Colony was born.

The new structure of the colonial government established by the Crown, however, became an endless discomfort to the Krio Community. The Krio people, who had tasted and enjoyed the benefits of self-governance earlier on before the Crown administration was established, were not incorporated into the new political structure under the Crown administration. No Krio member ever occupied any position of political authority for close to fifty years of Sierra Leone's existence as a Crown colony.³⁰ The new system of government in Sierra Leone introduced new structures that were hitherto non-existent like the Governor's office. This called for the legislation of new or amended laws and rules that would facilitate the running of the new British Province, the Crown Colony. This political transition in Sierra Leone did not happen in a short period but in a couple of decades. This process included writing of laws and restructuring the legislature that would then draft and pass these laws into a constitution.

²⁹ *Ibid*, 8.

³⁰ *Ibid*, 16.

The current constitutional history of Sierra Leone dates back to 1863 when the then existing legal system was revoked by the British parliament and a new constitutional charter for the colony was promulgated. This arrangement, by and large, was designed for the purpose of governing the expanded colony more efficiently, as opposed to letting the citizens govern themselves.³¹ It is said that this constitution remained unaltered from 1863 to 1924, a period during which some fifteen Krio people, most of whom were merchants, served in the legislative council. It is during this time that they gained a forum for their views and at the same time gained experience in government.

In 1893, the colonial authorities in Sierra Leone conceded to the pressure of citizens of Freetown to have a municipal corporation with the right to form a municipal council. This is when the Sierra Leonean black populace developed awareness of political inclusion and participation. The municipal councils were borne and the leadership beneficiaries came from the elite of the society who participated under the umbrellas of numerous political parties and associations that mushroomed following the political evolution. The Krio people also articulated their maturing political views through an active press which by 1900 had recorded up to about forty different types of newspapers.³²

It is suggested by history that in the intervening by the British in 1880s, Sierra Leonean interior gained an increased strength due to the “Scramble for Africa”, a very tight rush among European nations for territories in the continent of Africa. France was the strongest competitor for the British in the West African scramble. To forestall the French incursion into what Britain had come to consider as their own domain, there were renewed efforts by the British government

³¹ *Ibid.*

³² J. Peter Pham, *Child Soldiers, Adult Interests...*17

to finalize a British/French agreement. In 1890, the British government told its representative (Governor) in Sierra Leone to make friends with the local chiefs along the boundary area and sign laws and agreements prohibiting them to sign treaties with any other powers without express permission from Britain.³³

As a result, sometime in 1890, the Governor with other British officials traversed across what is currently Sierra Leone, collecting signed agreements from the chiefs. Not known to the chiefs, many of the agreements were actually treaties for the British and French cooperation over their territory and not for cessation as purported. An agreement between the French and British administrations was reached and signed later in January 1895, allowing sharing of the region into British Sierra Leone and French Guinea, where the real boundary was surveyed and drawn later. According to Fyfe Christopher, the delimitation was basically arbitrary and not based on any mutual consensus on political lines but on geographical features like rivers, ridges, parallels or watersheds. One section called Samu, for example, was split and their villages and farms fell astride the two countries³⁴

In general terms, this amorphous way of heaping villages and people together by the colonial powers, of disparate native peoples into geographical units with little regard to their cultural peculiarities, contributed largely to the tensions that have rocked Africa to date. The resulting heterogeneous groupings felt independent and wanted to govern themselves as a nation yet they were not one people but clustered arbitrarily and could be perennial traditional enemies. Take the Sierra Leonean ethnic case for instance where the three main tribes, namely; Temne. Mende and Creole did not get along well and each considered itself a power block between

³³ History of Sierra Leone- wikipedia, the free encyclopedia: accessed on 11 Feb 2013, http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_Sierra_Leone.

³⁴ J. Peter Pham, *The Sierra Leonean Tragedy: History and Global Dimensions*... 19.

which tension was strong, and Sankoh belonged to the Temne group.³⁵ This same circumstance exists in many other parts of Africa. For example, the Rift Valley of Kenya provides a striking parallel. The Rift Valley was penciled in as an administrative province, enclosing about ten communities of inhabitants which are highly heterogeneous in most ways. Borders were imposed by the colonizing government, sometimes arbitrarily based simply on the charted latitudes and longitudes on the map, and without regard to ethnic or cultural issues and sensitive divides. As a result, animosities became widespread and will continue long into the future.

In 1885, a British order authorized the laws to be made for the colony and the territory around it, corresponding to present day Sierra Leone. It was proclaimed a British Protectorate in 31 August 1896.³⁶ Many of the Chiefs whose territories were included in the Protectorate were displeased with the arrangement and. A few Chiefs agreed to cession and signed treaties, but it is likely they did not fully understand the terms.

Rather than a territory by Britain the reality was that the Sierra Leone Protectorate was a unilateral acquisition, and without full agreement by the people and their leaders. As a result, the Chiefs in Sierra Leone responded with armed resistance to the inelegant and arrogant British power grab. The title of King was eliminated, replaced by a "Paramount Chief", and in any case could be removed at the pleasure of the Governor. British "District Commissioners" assumed all judicial roles and powers; and household taxes were levied where none previously existed.³⁷ When tax collection was attempted in 1898, the people resisted both in the north and the south by the Temne and the Mende respectively. The resistance of these two peoples was quite different.

³⁵ History of Sierra Leone- wikipedia, the free encyclopedia: accessed on 11 Feb 2013, http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_Sierra_Leone.

³⁶ *Ibid.*

³⁷ *Ibid.*

The Temne Chief and his forces waged a guerrilla war which caused the British considerable difficulty. The Temnes' tactics of harassment surprised the British at first but later the British gained momentum. The British eventually were able to eliminate the barriers. And overcome the defences.³⁸ On the other hand, the conflict with Mende tribe began as a planned mass uprising, but was defeated by the British within two months due to a lack of Mende strategic structure and direction.³⁹ The two uprisings are known collectively as the "Hut Tax War of 1898".

Following the Hut Tax War armed resistance to colonialism by the tribesmen no longer existed. Certainly, dissent remained, however it took different means other than violence. Dissent came mostly from European-educated professionals, and in large measure, the Creoles as a result of losing favour with the government. A new constitution was introduced in 1924, which incorporated elected representatives and a number of political parties for the first time, for example, the National Congress of British West Africa (NCBWA) and the West African Youth League (WAYL).⁴⁰ The creation of various political parties signaled political agitation and polarization in Sierra Leone. Furthermore, the resistance in Sierra Leone also encompassed non-political issues including an active trade union movement.

Tribal chiefs were given the role by their British masters to act as functionaries, provide policing, and collect taxes. Those chiefs who demonstrated reluctance to perform these roles were replaced by more compliant leaders, but diluting the respect they had once held with their

³⁸ J. Peter Pham, *Child Soldiers, Adult Interests...21*

³⁹ History of Sierra Leone- Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia: accessed on 11 Feb 2013, http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_Sierra_Leone,

⁴⁰ History of Sierra Leone- Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia: accessed on 11 Feb 2013, http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_Sierra_Leone,

people. This placed the chiefs in an awkward position in which they were made to carry out tasks they were coerced into performing, and earned no additional respect.

Sierra Leone was divided, in 1924, into different political systems, a Colony and a Protectorate, with separate constitutions. The conflicts that have rocked Sierra Leone for years is therefore a perpetuation of what started in this period when the country was divided into two different political systems that saw each other as enemies, and peaked in 1947. The two systems “faced off” during the proposals for the governance which had to come under one administration. The protectorate was dominant in this regard.

Tension between the two systems hit the peak in 1947 when a single political system for the two systems was proposed, although the Protectorate dominated the proposals. The Creoles opposed the proposals in fear that their effect would diminish powerful political status. Sir Milton Margai, the shrewd leader of the SLPP aligned the Protectorate with the powerful paramount chiefs against the stubborn Krio.⁴¹ The rebellion against the tribal chiefs in the 20th century culminated in 1955 when Protectorate-wide riots took place. This was to be suppressed by the slaughter of the rioting peasants by the army. The reforms concentrated on a reduction of forced labour, and the chiefs no longer enjoyed their highly coveted political positions, and their influence was reduced.

Run up to Independence

Recognizing a need to provide a framework that would lead to decolonization, Sir Milton oversaw the creation a constitution whose dawn would bring together the two administrative systems of Sierra Leone. The new constitution was promulgated through the proclamation of the

⁴¹ *Ibid.*

governor, Sir George Beresford. It had features and clauses that significantly favored the imminent self-government of Sierra Leone. They included the introduction of an unofficial majority in the legislative council while correspondingly decreasing the ex-officio members. There was also an addition of Protectorate representatives. In 1953, the legislative council was expanded through the additional representatives from the counties.

Sir Milton became the chief minister of Sierra Leone in charge of the cabinet which mainly consisted of local Sierra Leoneans. Following the election of 1957, the Sierra Leone People's Party (SLPP) was victorious and won a majority in parliament.⁴²

Further constitutional changes took place in November 1956 that would be effective come the anticipated elections of 1957. The previous constitution allowed only literate adults who met certain property conditions to vote, but the revised one relaxed the franchise to include a wider electorate. The ensuing elections saw Margai's SLPP win twenty five seats out of the thirty nine contested seats.⁴³ Following the post-election caucus separation, the SLPP secured a comfortable majority win of forty five out of fifty one partisan seats. The position of premier was created in 1958 and the chief minister Margai became the pioneer holder of the office. He then headed the cabinet of African ministers from which the ex-officio members were withdrawn.

This period saw several political parties mushroom rapidly and this gave a new challenge to premier Margai. The new parties included the United People's Party (UPP), which was led by a Freetown Krio lawyer, Cyril Rogers Wright, Sierra Leon Movement (SLIM) was led by Professor Edward Wilmot Blyden III of Fourah Bay, Kono Progressive Movement (KPM) led by Tamba M'Briwa, SLIM and KPM later merged to form the Sierra Leone Progressive

⁴² *Ibid.*

⁴³ J. Peter Pham, *The Sierra Leonean Tragedy: History and Global Dimensions...* 27

Independent Movement (SLPIM). Sir Albert Margai, Milton's younger brother abandoned his party, the SLPP, and joined Siaka Stevens to form People's National Party (PNP). Siaka Stevens himself then continued on to form the All People's Congress (APC) after falling out of PNP.⁴⁴ With a view to having an all-inclusive coalition, Sir Milton formed a United National Front that brought together all the parties. He offered the party leaders ministerial positions in which Albert Margai of PNP and Roger Wright of UPP were offered ministerial jobs.

Sir Milton, in 1960, led negotiations for Sierra Leonean independence with the British government.⁴⁵ Following these negotiations, Siaka Stevens feared there was a defence conspiracy with Britain, declined to sign a declaration of Independence. Although independence was to be granted, Stevens felt that failure to hold elections before independence was granted would lock him out of politics. Following this stand, he was asked to leave the PNP. He left and formed the APC.⁴⁶ Sierra Leone finally got its independence on April 27, 1961, from the British power and Sir Milton became the first Prime Minister. A general election followed in 1962, and the SLPP won with a majority and Sir Milton re-elected. The economy grew as income was realized from mining, minerals, and the extractive industry.

Sir Milton was a unique leader because of his modesty and integrity. He was a mature leader devoid of corrupt tendencies. Neither did he lavishly display his power nor status. His government closely followed the principle of "rule of law" and the "policy of separation of powers". Unlike his neighboring counterparts; Ghana's Kwame Nkrumah or Guinea's Sekou

⁴⁴ History of Sierra Leone- Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia: accessed on 11 Feb 2013, http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_Sierra_Leone.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

⁴⁶ J. Peter Pham, *The Sierra Leonean Tragedy: History and Global Dimensions*...28.

Toure, Sir Milton Margai was pro-British and devoid of the contemporary African rhetoric.⁴⁷

With a multiparty system in place, elective representation was in place in the political set up. Sir Milton thereafter steered Sierra Leone in a peaceful direction without significant strife. His government appointments were made with a clear vision with a view to satisfying the diverse population where power was shared with the paramount chiefs and the political entities within the provincial administration.

Sir Milton was succeeded by his brother, Sir Albert, upon his death in 1964. Despite temporary opposition mounted by Foreign Minister John Karefa over his accession to the leadership of the SLPP, Sir Albert retained his position at the head of the party. Karefa had believed he was better suited for the position. Many believed Karefa-Smart was closest to the departed Sir Milton Margai and that his seniority in parliament spoke for itself. Siaka Stevens, a Krio, also saw Sir Albert's take over as a perpetuation of Mende's hegemony as the Margai family was from the Mende ethnic group.⁴⁸ Sir Albert dismissed many of the former senior officials in his brother's government fearing potential traitors would be a threat to his administration. This caused his popularity to plummet. Moreover, Sir Albert became increasingly authoritarian and rigid, thus exacerbating the dislike of the people and the government towards him. For example, Sir Albert was inclined towards a single party structure and harboured an intense and ill-disguised loathing for the opposition party, as he detested the legacy emanating from the colonial days concerning paramount chiefs with executive powers.

Most actions during Sir Albert's rule made him unpopular in contrast to his brother's period in power. This caused wide-spread demonstrations and riots over his leadership which

⁴⁷ Lansana Gberie, *A Dirty War in West Africa, The RUF and the Destruction of Sierra Leone ...*20

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*,26

culminated in the 1967 unrest in Freetown. Sir Albert was seen to be corrupt, biased toward his own Mende tribe, and manipulative. This proved overwhelming for Sir Albert, and he called another general election to test his support.⁴⁹ This was probably one of the few positive attributes Sir Albert possessed in his leadership.

On September 27, 1961, Sierra Leone became a member of the United Nations (UN). This event was seen as very symbolic as the world body found it imperative to decolonize the continent of Africa including Sierra Leone, place where freed slaves had returned to. There was a lot of enthusiasm and optimism regarding this event. As one American scholar and diplomat observed about Sierra Leone, the newly independent state:

... Sierra Leone can emerge as a showcase of West Africa, progressive in its politics and forward-looking in its policies. Its Prime Minister, Sir Milton Margai, is strongly opposed to communist infiltration. Building on a solid agricultural base, the economy has profited from diamond deposits and growing interests in its promising industries, which range from fish to oil. Sierra Leone is more than a symbol of freedom; it is an embodiment of the aspirations of Africa.⁵⁰

Tragically, this promise evaporated in the ensuing decades and made Sierra Leone an example because of the many unfortunate outcomes in “post-colonial Africa, dysfunctional politics, environmental exploitation, economic misery and fratricidal conflicts.”⁵¹ Conflict has been at the center stage up to the recent years. Coups and counter-coups, bloody conflicts and brutal violence are among the misfortunes that have befallen Sierra Leone for years since independence.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*

⁵⁰ J. Peter Pham, *The Sierra Leonean Tragedy: History and Global Dimensions...* 29

⁵¹ *Ibid.*

The onset of Coups and Counter-Coups

Stevens and his political vehicle, the APC, had narrowly won parliamentary seats by a small margin, beating SLPP in the SL elections of 1967 thus becoming the country's Prime Minister. The Sierra Leone Army at this time was highly politicized and this had led to its unprecedented deployment throughout the country to *maintain internal security*. This made Brigadier Lansana, the Army commander and Sir Albert's confidant, to repossess power from Stevens, though bloodlessly, in a span of hours of Stevens' victory. Brigadier Lansana placed Stevens, among others, including the Governor-General, a Krio, under house arrest in Freetown. The Brigadier at the same time was announcing on radio that martial law had taken effect, insisting that the assumption of office by the Prime Minister was premature and should wait till the paramount chiefs got elected and took up seats in the House of Representatives.⁵²

Shortly after Lansana seized power through the bloodless coup, Juxon-Smith led another military group of officers and arrested Lansana as he retook control of SL government. The new team identified itself as National Reformation Council (NRC), chaired by the coup leader, Juxon-Smith. However, the NRC regime did not last in power, as it was removed, yet again by a group of Army officers referred to as the Anti-Corruption Revolutionary Movement under the leadership of Brigadier John Bangura, a move that saw many NRC officers and members get arrested.⁵³ Rule of law and a democratic atmosphere was restored and the government once more was handed back to the civilian rule where Stevens resumed power as the Prime Minister.

⁵² J. Peter Pham, *Child Soldiers, Adult Interests*...38.

⁵³ Lansana Gberie, *A Dirty War in West Africa, The RUF and the Destruction of Sierra Leone*...27.

As Stevens bounced back, he exhibited significant confidence and became ambitious as the people of Sierra Leone cheered his multi-party championing. Stevens, Limba by tribe, intended to bring the SL tribes together under socialist ideologies, a move that gave his people more hope. The tenders awarded by the previous regimes came under his scrutiny and had them revised in less than ten years of his rule, terming them as “useless pre-financed schemes.” Both SLPP and NRC of Sir Albert and Juxon suffered this onslaught by Stevens’ rule as he considered their policies an economic deprivation to SL. Stevens did not see anything good about the projects of his predecessors and even worship buildings constructed by the same predecessors were brought down. He initiated his own development projects in the provinces where paramount chiefs saw their status elevated for political leverage. Relying heavily on the Army for advice, Stevens embarked on establishing a coalition government, an all-inclusive government, one that would hoodwink the masses into believing that it was a government of all the people.⁵⁴

The numerous coups and attempted ones that Stevens had witnessed or survived placed his administration under duress to develop shrewdness and boldness thus isolating him with his former close associates. Fearing further military dissatisfaction, he retained General Bangura as the SLA commander as he was perceived to be likeable, while at the same time frustrating SLPP in the political arena thus successfully minimizing political competition. The one party cabinet, (APC), heightened the already existing political animosity despite the restoration of civilian rule in the country, a situation that forced Stevens to declare a state of emergency in 1968. Though SLA commander had reinstated Stevens into power, Stevens lost trust in him given Bangura’s overwhelming popularity in the Army. This led to Bangura’s arrest in 1970 on fictitious charges

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*,28

of treason and intent to lead a coup against Stevens' regime. He was sentenced to death by hanging in March 1971.⁵⁵ Among the soldiers arrested alongside Bangura was Foday Sankoh who got seven years imprisonment.

Following APC's misrule and misuse of militia, the SLPP heavy opposition declined to participate in the 1973 elections under the new constitution and Steven's new presidency. This gave APC a landslide victory, a situation that further infuriated the opposition members making them stage a failed coup in 1974 that saw the coup leaders face death sentence.⁵⁶ This gave Stevens an easy presidential second term win in the 1976 elections since there was no opposition. This development was followed in 1977 by widespread student protests condemning Stevens' administration. The riots that ensued disorganized SL politics and other administrative programs for a brief moment but the military and Stevens' own "Special Security Division (SSD)" quickly stepped in to save Stevens' regime. As the country became ungovernable following the frequent disruptions, another general election was held in 1977, this time with the opposition participating where SLPP (15) lost to APC (84). Parliament, owing to APC's overwhelming dominance, once again passed another constitution in 1978, easily making Sierra Leone a single party state, causing yet another country-wide protests which, again, were easily quashed by SLA and SSD.

So to this end, although Stevens was widely credited for reducing ethnic tension in the country, he had lost people's favour mainly due to criticism for rampant malpractices in the political and economic fields. He reportedly achieved the de-polarization of ethnicity through incorporation of all tribes in his APC administration, which culminated in the 1982 first single-

⁵⁵ J. Peter Pham, *The Sierra Leonean Tragedy: History and Global Dimensions...* 43.

⁵⁶ Lansana Gberie, *A Dirty War in West Africa, The RUF and the Destruction of Sierra Leone...*28.

party elections.⁵⁷ Since there were massive irregularities in well over a half of the constituencies, disputes arose, necessitating a re-run of elections in thirteen constituencies in June 1982. The inclusion of a former SLPP leader, Salia Sheriff and a balance of the two major tribes, Temne and Mende, signaled a good intention to make APC a more nationalistic party

After eighteen years at the national helm, Stevens ended his national leadership in 1985 but maintained his party chairmanship. He had preferred and named the SLA commander, Major General Joseph Momoh to take up leadership from him through APC party ticket. Momoh, who also came from Stevens' Limba group, had maintained true allegiance and loyalty to his mentor, Stevens, who gave him the military command. Following a general consensus to have Momoh take over from Stevens, a referendum saw him elected on 1st October 1985, followed by a swearing in ceremony in January and elections in May, 1996.⁵⁸ Popularity rating of President Momoh was very high among the citizens of Sierra Leone. This was because of his close ties with the popular SLA and also his strong determined condemnation against corruption. However, this situation did not endure for long as Momoh's failure to change the cabinet to have a national face gave him a bad reputation as a "Stevens perpetuation".

Occasioned by rising cases of adverse practices like corruption, Momoh's administration came under scrutiny and to counter this vice, he started sacking of cabinet members and formalized his anti-corruption crusade by introducing a "code of conduct" for all government officials. In 1987, Momoh suspected his Vice president with other senior members of the government of conspiring to overthrow his government. They were arrested but only the Vice

⁵⁷ Godfrey Mwakikagile, *Military Coups in West Africa Since the Sixties* (NY: Nova Science Publishers, 2001), 188.

⁵⁸ J.Peter Pham, *Child Soldiers, Adult Interests...52*.

President alongside five others was sentenced to hang in 1989. Pressure continued to mount on Momoh to implement political and economic reforms that would restore democracy in Sierra Leone. Too much to bear, Momoh gave in to the pressure and instituted a commission in 1990 to review the existing single-party constitution. The APC heavy parliament approved the commission's review that recommended, among other issues, a return to multi-party system that was to take effect from 1st October 1991.⁵⁹ Momoh's trustworthiness rapidly eroded as most of APC's members started falling out with him citing seriousness on his commitment to practical reforms. While others regrouped to resuscitate SLPP, some created new parties in order to face off with APC in the subsequent elections.⁶⁰

So, one would pose the question: what ailed this nation? As will be discussed in the next chapter, Sierra Leone still had hurdles to overcome. Many violent activities were to follow, activities that link the past of Sierra Leone to the present like the emergence of civil unrest, rebel groups, brutal violence and other inhuman behaviors. Some superstitious observers believe it is a curse owing to the wrongs committed in the earlier years, a factor that played a very significant historical role as it links the past and its ills to the present. Others attribute the ills to ineptitude in political leadership while some think external powers played a remote control role. Others, however, attribute the misfortunes to the immense wealth of natural resources, especially diamonds. It seems a contradiction that a source of wealth would also be a central source of conflict. Unfortunately, the highly valued and sought after diamonds have also become a source of conflict in Sierra Leone. This last factor, which came to be the most implicated in the widespread atrocities that rocked Sierra Leone, remains the centre of gravity in the events that

⁵⁹ History of Sierra Leone- Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia: accessed on 11 Feb 2013, http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_Sierra_Leone.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*

characterized this country in the later part of the twentieth century. Diamonds got the name “Blood Diamond” owing to the role it played in the conflict that saw human blood spilt in Sierra Leone. This will come out more clearly in the chapter that follows.

CHAPTER 3

THE EMERGENCE OF THE RUF AND THE CIVIL WAR

Much is made of the year 1991; however that year did not mark the beginning of hostilities and civil war in Sierra Leone as such. As was shown in the previous chapter, animosities already existed amongst the peoples in the region. Rather it nationalized the feelings of animosity. It also intensified and focused those pre-existing animosities. Eventually, the animosities were the catalyst for unrest, instability, and violence.

Sierra Leone only enjoyed an uneasy period of peace from the run up to the independence until just after the independence. The rest of the time in Sierra Leone was marred by some form of unrest. There were many factors that contributed to the conflicts, but one stands above the rest. This is the sense of disaffection of Sierra Leoneans by the continuous autocratic rule of the APC between 1968 and 1992.

Another factor in the conflict in Sierra Leone was the poor governance during the time the All Peoples Congress Party (APC) was in power, between 1968 and 1992, which espoused a one-party rule and dismissed for the most part democratic principles. Organized opposition to the party was quickly crushed. Exacerbating this situation, the government was unable to provide literacy education or employment for youths who were vulnerable to recruitment by the RUF.⁶¹

⁶¹ ACBF Executive Board “Studies in Reconstruction and capacity building in post-conflict countries in Africa: Some Lessons of Experience from Sierra Leone” May 2004. page iv.
[http://www.afdb.org/fileadmin/uploads/afdb/Documents/Generic-Documents/PCBSS_Working_Documents/Sierra%20Leone%20-%20Main%20Report%20\(Revised\).pdf](http://www.afdb.org/fileadmin/uploads/afdb/Documents/Generic-Documents/PCBSS_Working_Documents/Sierra%20Leone%20-%20Main%20Report%20(Revised).pdf)

Steven's reaction to this economic turn of events was to raid the diamond sector by bringing in financially influential men who possessed external resources. These included Jamil Said Mohamed, an Afro-Lebanese businessman who sat at Cabinet meetings.⁶² He was later accused by Steven's successor, Joseph Momoh, of plotting to overthrow him. Momoh, who had witnessed many political upheavals, was haunted by mistrust as coup paranoia gripped the nation. Upon Jamil's death, another influential figure, a Russian-born Israeli, Shaptai Kalmanovitch, stepped in with his Israel linked empire, the firm dealing in finance and construction, the LIAT. Though Shaptai won many government contracts, his main interest was commonly known to be diamonds and perhaps drugs. His friction with the Israeli authorities, however, caused his untimely departure from Sierra Leone and another Israeli, Nir Guaz, succeeded him under the umbrella of SCIPA group of companies. On arrival, Nir established an office dealing in diamond within Kanema and the central part of Freetown when diamond smuggling became rife, but abandoned the lucrative cash cow Sierra Leone in 1991 as the storm of the civil war gathered momentum. This state of governance left the Sierra Leonean economy in tatters as the nation became heavily indebted due to over-dependence on external aid and decline in export and world market forces which caused a considerable anxiety among the people of Sierra Leone.⁶³

The people of Eastern and Southern Provinces suffered considerably from the neglect and violence perpetuated on them and this caused APC leadership a great deal of challenge from these affected areas. Both Kono and Kanema in the east were major sources of diamonds yet

⁶² History of Sierra Leone. Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia: accessed on 11 Feb 2013, http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_Sierra_Leone page 16.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, 18.

they were characterized by poverty and a poor regional track record of development causing general dissent.

Another major factor seen to have contributed significantly towards Sierra Leone civil war is what was going on in neighboring Liberia. Taylor, leader of the Liberian rebels, known as the “National Patriotic Front of Liberia” (NPFL), the instrumental factor in the formation of the RUF, a belligerent rebel group that later undermined peace in SL for years.⁶⁴ This movement was formed and commanded by Sankoh, a former SLA corporal who hailed from the northern part of Sierra Leone and a Temne by tribe. This rebel leader, Sankoh is believed to have been born in the northern Temne district in 1937. He spent most of his youth in Kailahun district where he is said to have gained rudimentary education that allowed him to read, though not very well. He joined the Sierra Leonean Army (SLA) and was trained as a signals operator and photographer. While serving in SLA from 1960-1964, he participated in the UN peacekeeping mission that served in the former Belgian Congo. Instead, he seems to have borrowed from the Congo rebel movement and improved on its techniques.⁶⁵

Sankoh, who received military training in and out of Sierra Leone, also studied guerrilla tactics in 1988 in Libya.⁶⁶ This is where they met with Taylor thus becoming comrades in crime. Taylor’s main target was the ECOMOG forces serving in Sierra Leone, who according to Taylor were an impediment to rebel activities in Liberia. Sierra Leone was at the time economically too feeble and struggling with its own governance and political difficulties to thwart the NPFL and assist Liberia. The same weakness in Sierra Leone favored Sankoh and his RUF in securing

⁶⁴ Charles Taylor was arrested by the Special Court for Sierra Leone for his involvement in 2003.

⁶⁵ J. Peter Pham, *Child Soldiers, Adult Interests*...85.

⁶⁶ Sankoh was arrested in 2000, and died of complications arising from a stroke while awaiting trial in 2003.

control of the diamond-rich eastern part of SL.⁶⁷ This state of weakness in SL was aggravated by the growing skepticism about president Momoh's level of seriousness in running his country, coupled with the rumors doing rounds in SL then about APC's plans to arm itself in anticipation of violence against the opposition ahead of elections.

Sankoh, who received overwhelming support from Charles Taylor of the Liberian movement, NPFL, was instrumental in the protracted civil war in Sierra Leone. Taylor believed Sierra Leonean government assisted the government of Liberia against NPFL. Taylor had met Sankoh in Ghana in 1987 and in Libya in 1988 and decided to support Sankoh's long-term ambition to challenge APC rule. The Libyan leader Colonel Muammar Gaddafi had a strong role in aiding Sankoh's revolutionary project in Sierra Leone. It was astutely observed:

Sankoh's rage and sprite, however, would never have threatened society beyond perhaps the occasional case of anti-social conduct – which the police, however weakened and by inadequate resources and institutional corruption, were well equipped to handle – had it not been for the geopolitical adventurism of Libya's Colonel Gaddafi and the mix of mix of enthusiasm and opportunism of few university radical “radicals”.⁶⁸

The Sierra Leone civil war conflict, which began in 1991, was directly linked with Liberia's Charles Taylor who wanted to eliminate or reduce the opposition offered to his movement by the ECOWAS in Sierra Leone. Taylor was also developing interests in Sierra Leone's diamonds as well as it became evident later in the conflict. Taylor's NPFL heavily supported the Sankoh-led inexperienced RUF to hit the ECOWAS bases in Sierra Leone. On March 23, 1991, a few groups of RUF (whose ideology, purpose, and motivations are discussed later in this chapter) with the support of NPFL units and Burkinabe mercenaries attacked two border towns in Kailahun district from the Liberian

⁶⁷ Tunde Zack-Williams, *When the State Fail:...* 20.

⁶⁸ *Ibid*, 21.

territory. The ill-prepared SLA received two casualties plus a dozen civilian casualties on day one of the conflict. Since the incident occurred without any warnings, it was considered as just an ordinary cross-border skirmish between RUF and NPFL.⁶⁹ This, however, was not the case as it marked the onset of what would be a ten-year bloody conflict. As it turned out, many more towns in the region would fall in the hands of the RUF rebels.

This was not an attack in isolation, as another Sierra Leonean group backed, again, by NPFL and other foreign fighters, was launching an attack in the southeastern region. The entire Southern Province was under the rebel control in a matter of weeks, which saw tens of thousands of Sierra Leoneans flee into Guinea while others remained as Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs). This two-pronged invasion was aimed at creating a pincer effect around the two principal urban centers of Bo and Kenema in the Southern and Eastern Provinces of Sierra Leone.

This invasion caught SLA unaware due to its small size and limited capacity. The only combat capable unit was the politicized SSD whose strength amounted to barely eight hundred troops and concentrated in Freetown. In contrast, the rebels, through the NPFL allies in Liberia, enjoyed a substantially huge acquisition of arms that could have originated mainly from countries friendly to Taylor and Sankoh, like Burkina Faso or Libya. Initially, weapons used in this attack consisted chiefly of M-16 and AK-47 rifles. Consistently, these arsenals increased in quantity and quality and with time RUF received additional weapons including armored personnel carriers and artillery pieces.⁷⁰ This

⁶⁹ J. Peter Pham, *The Sierra Leonean Tragedy: History and Global Dimensions...*83.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 84.

indicates that there is more than meets the eye in the Sierra Leonean conflict. On one hand, it shows how unprepared the SLA was, while on the other hand, it shows how powerful Charles Taylor of NPFL was at the time, to the extent that he could manage more than one conflict in two different countries at the same time.

The rebels managed to control nearly one-fifth of Sierra Leone after capturing several towns between Southern and Eastern Sierra Leone. This included highly fertile district, Kilahun which produced about two-thirds of the national agricultural exports. This control of a significantly massive and important part of Sierra Leone, the rebels could then use these regions as the training bases as well as entry points to the rest of the country with little resistance. Having secured this substantial amount of ground, the rebels at this point identified themselves as RUF, a group that was hitherto unknown. It was then a small group of not more than a hundred people. The invasions, however, consisted of NPFL members, Burkinabe and other African mercenaries, led by Sankoh.⁷¹ The movement's initial agenda was vaguely of populist nature whose aim was to overthrow the corrupt APC regime. This, however, never came to materialize, which negated their pledge to bring looting and other economic ills to an end and redistribute the national resources in an equitable manner amongst Sierra Leoneans. All these grievances and pledges were encapsulated in the group's anthem which also brings out the group's ideological structure; thus:

RUF is fighting to save Sierra Leone
 RUF is fighting to save our people
 RUF is fighting to save our country
 RUF is fighting to save Sierra Leone

Go and tell the President, Sierra Leone is my home
 Go and tell my parents, they may see me no more

⁷¹ *Ibid.*

When fighting in the battlefield I'm fighting forever
Every Sierra Leonean is fighting for his land

Where are our diamonds, Mr. President?
Where is our gold, NPRC?
RUF is hungry to know where they are
RUF is fighting to save Sierra Leone

Our people are suffering without means of survival
All our minerals have gone to foreign lands
RUF is hungry to know where they are
RUF is fighting to save Sierra Leone

Sierra Leone is ready to utilize her own
All our minerals will be accounted for
The people will enjoy in their land
RUF is the savior we need right now⁷²

The security situation in Sierra Leone took a new but more horrific twist the moment RUF rebels started to kidnap young children pressing them into service.⁷³ It is estimated that almost 20,000 children of ages of 8 to 15 years were turned into brutal killers while some were used for sexual servitude since they were of little combat value in the battlefield.⁷⁴

Going back a little bit in time, Sankoh had been accused of complicity in the abortive coup attempt by Brigadier Bangura in the early 70s and his subsequent seven year imprisonment caused his animosity toward the APC regime. Sankoh was also resentful towards Momoh who succeeded Bangura as he accused him of betraying his commander.⁷⁵ When Sankoh was released from prison in 1979, he was a bitter man and harbored vengeful intentions so he eventually found his way to Libya where he encountered Charles Taylor. They began guerrilla

⁷² *Ibid.*

⁷³ There were strong allegations that the RUF captured children in a specific area, drugged and brainwashed the children using the words in their anthem to entice them. They would show them Rambo movies, fill them with cocaine, marijuana, cheap liquor and would tell the children that their parents had betrayed them and the country and therefore they were the children's enemies. They would then order them to go and kill their parents.

⁷⁴ Blood Diamonds, The African Conflict: accessed on 23 March 2013, <http://www.mymultiplesclerosis.co.uk/interesting-documentary/blood-diamonds.html>.

⁷⁵ J. Peter Pham, *Child Soldiers, Adult Interests...* 85.

training with other Sierra Leoneans in Benghazi Libya in 1988. This was to mark the start of a complex of series of their links. Consequently, some of Sankoh's RUF men fought alongside Taylor's NPFL against Liberia's government of Samuel Doe. Conversely, when it was Sankoh's rebels turn to invade Sierra Leone in 1991, NPFL "Special Forces" unit were conveniently available to spearhead the operation.

So, as RUF conflict raged on, most youth in Sierra Leone scrambled for the alluvial diamond mining and the Promised Land. The wordings contained in the RUF anthem attracted many into the RUF's ideal of freedom fighters promising free health care, free education and an equitable distribution of diamond revenues. This partly enhanced recruitment into the RUF. As the movement gained momentum, RUF command resorted to un-orthodox ways of recruitment- abduction of children to serve as child soldiers. Children would be abducted during their errand runs, on their way to school, looking after livestock, at home and in the market places. Girls and boys, alike, would face this risk of abduction as there was nowhere to hide. Depending on their ages, all the abductees would be given various combat training sessions on weapon handling and other physical tactics, but all the girls and some younger boys would get an additional role of being sex objects for the rebels. RUF is estimated to have had up to eleven thousand (11,000) children, later referred to as "child soldiers" by the end of Sierra Leone conflict. They were used mainly as guards at the diamond and weapon sites. Many of them later reintegrated with the society and gradually transformed into productive citizens. Today, about 2,000 are believed to be serving in the SLA.⁷⁶ RUF used child soldiers widely employing horrifying means of indoctrinating barbarism into the young recruits. Many of the kidnapped children were coerced into serving as cruel members of the group, and those chosen to be fighters were taken through

⁷⁶ Myriam Denov, *Child Soldiers: Sierra Leone's Revolutionary United Front* (NY: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 97.

horrifying experiences, against the will of their innocent minds. RUF rebels would occasionally perform harrowing acts on their victims like incising their skins with sharp objects, hence engraving the word “RUF”. They would reportedly rub or insert some drugs on the open wounds, purportedly to instill bravery in them. Some of the children abducted by the rebels would be so young, at times 5 years of age. The rebel fraternity believed the young soldiers were unwavering and effectively notorious for their unquestionable obedience and enormous cruelty.⁷⁷ This practice inevitably instilled fear and cruelty in the minds of such young and innocent minds.

As if to respond to the occasional capture and killing of their members by the SL security, RUF resorted to a new horrifying acts of amputating members of the government security who got captured ostensibly to pass the message that “You don't hold your weapon against your brother.” This horrible operation was executed by very ruthless RUF soldiers using crude methods while asking the victims if they “needed long or short sleeves.” In a single day, RUF would amputate close to a hundred people, both adults and children⁷⁸. Their main intention was to render the victims incapable of mining diamonds anymore, an act that would see the government run short of labor thus denying the government troops the much needed support accruing from diamond sales. Pro-government elements were also dismembered for the purpose of disabling them from handling weapons against the RUF. Furthermore, the Sierra Leonean slogan during the campaigns during that period indicated that people “had power in their hands”, therefore RUF saw power in people's hands and decided to get rid of the power through chopping. Rebels reportedly resorted to cannibalism as well, so the cruel acts of human mutilation were seen to be part of the cannibalism process. These amputees were kept in various

⁷⁷ *Ibid.* 98.

⁷⁸ J. Peter Pham, *Child Soldiers, Adult Interests...* 137.

camps set by the government where they received treatment, food, water and other forms of funding by the government.

RUF's notorious persistence on cruelty overwhelmed the government of Sierra Leone and caused various economic disruptions including government production and sales of diamond. This caused general public discomfort thus creating an opportunity for the National Provincial Ruling Council (NPRC) to stage a coup in April 1992. Though SLA eventually managed to push RUF towards the border of Liberia in 1993, the rebels re-grouped and bounced back, making the fighting to resume. At this point, Sierra Leone government realized that RUF was becoming resilient, thus decided in 1995 to hire a private military, the South African Executive Outcomes (EO). It performed its security duties of guarding the diamond mines but developed interest in the diamonds as well as mounting offensive operations against the RUF. This gave SLA time and resources to concentrate on pursuing the rebels who eventually retreated back towards the Liberia border once again. The newly elected civilian regime of Sierra Leone was installed in March 1996 and RUF at the same time succumbed to mounting pressure and agreed to sign the Abidjan Peace Accord. At this time, owing to conflicting interests on diamond, coupled with mounting pressure on the Sierra Leone government by the UN, Sierra Leonean government ended the contract it had entered with the Executive Outcomes thus allowing the RUF to have a free rein and hostilities resumed.

As it had been a tradition in Sierra Leone regarding power take-over, yet another coup by a few discontented Sierra Leonean military officers took over the government through a coup in May 1997. The newly established governing outfit was named as the Armed Forces Revolutionary Council (AFRC). The rebels, excited about the new development, decided to join

AFRC during the Freetown capture, an operation that offered no opposition. But public protests ensued soon after Koroma, the new leader, announced the war was over. ECOMOG, which had taken a pause, immediately acted upon international outcry and recaptured the city of Freetown on behalf of SL government. At that point in time however, ECOMOG found it challenging to contain the areas surrounding the town. Their prolonged stay in Sierra Leone allowed them to, not only manage to repulse the RUF forces, but also have a hand in plundering diamonds.⁷⁹

Arising from the international concern, diplomatic arrangements were made to pacify RUF and SL government through negotiations. So in January 1999, these efforts bore fruit and the idea of a peace accord was hatched. Lome Peace Accord was therefore reached and signed on the 27th March 1999. This agreement granted Sankoh the second highest position in the government, vice presidency. It also made him the controller of the diamond mining as a reward following his willingness to stop fighting and allow UN to deploy peacekeepers. UNAMSIL was therefore able to deploy in order to oversee the disarmament process. This was alongside cease fire and end of hostilities agreement. However, RUF compliance with the disarmament process was inconsistent with the peace agreement; a situation that made the rebels to advance to Freetown and over ran it in May 2000. The overwhelmed UNAMSIL and SL government under Kabbah was assisted by the British forces.⁸⁰ The revised UN mandate (Chapter VII) together with Guinea Air Force assisted the British led “Operation Palliser” and eventually managed to repulse the RUF. Kabbah officially announced the end of SL hostilities on 18th January 2002 and Sierra Leone came out of the decade plus civil war. The SL peace declaration paved way for

⁷⁹ *Ibid*, 132.

⁸⁰ Wikipedia contributors. British Military Intervention in the Sierra Leone Civil War". Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia 2013. Accessed June 23, 2013.
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/British_military_intervention_in_the_Sierra_Leone_Civil_War

a series of peacekeeping processes, chiefly conducted or overseen by the UNAMSIL, the main world body charged with the responsibility of international peacemaking and peacekeeping.

CHAPTER 4

UNAMSIL ANALYSIS

Making peace had been a long road: the Lome Peace Accord, which took effect after signing in July 1999, created a hybrid government, the Government of National Unity (GNU), and was seen to be more successful than the collapsed Abidjan accord. A genuinely significant turning point for Sierra Leone, it gave a sigh of relief to most Sierra Leoneans who had desired peace, albeit elusively, for decades. RUF members who were still intoxicated with violence, however, did not want peace to prevail without power fully in their hands. It was an uneasy deal. Even the peace accord seemed almost elusive: recurrence of violence was a possibility, as evidenced earlier following the Abidjan Peace Accord where RUF reneged on the agreement terms through mistrust between SL government and the RUF.⁸¹

This state of truce did not however last, as trading of accusations and counter accusations soon followed and dominated the scene where Sankoh eventually accused Kabbah for breaking ceasefire agreement while he himself kept arming his RUF group, hence the collapse of the Abidjan Accord.

Before UNAMSIL was brought to being, there existed an observer mission; United Nations Observer Mission in Sierra Leone, UNOMSIL, which was operationalized in July 1998. It was charged with the responsibility of overseeing the DDR process following the Abidjan agreement as well as the general state of security, law and order in SL. This included overseeing the international humanitarian law among other UN sanctioned tasks. The United Nations

⁸¹ John L Hirsch, *Sierra Leone: Diamonds and the Struggle for Democracy...117*.

Security Council (UNSC), driven by possible relapse into violence, authorized the termination of UNOMSIL and the establishment of UNAMSIL on 22 October 1999. The new UN mission, UNAMSIL, initially comprised 6,000 peacekeepers and was larger and to be more effective than the earlier observer mission, UNOMSIL. Although it was plagued by a number of mishaps and crises, UNAMSIL achieved considerable success in Sierra Leone. The initial UNAMSIL mandate was drawn in 1999 although a revision of it came to being the following year after weaknesses were detected in the first one.⁸²

UNAMSIL Mandate

As UNAMSIL prepared to commence what would turn out to be a six-year mission, the UNSC prepared a mandate in 1999 to guide this mission as required by the security situation in Sierra Leone. According to Sierra Leone-UNAMSIL-Mandate, it stated that:

“UNAMSIL was established by UNSCR 1270, on 22nd October, 1999. Operating under Chapter VII of the UN Charter, UNAMSIL was mandated to carry out the following tasks:

1. Assist with the implementation of the Lome Peace Agreement;
2. Assist the government in the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR) program;
3. Ensure the security and freedom of movement of UN personnel;
4. Monitor adherence to the ceasefire of 18 May 1999;
5. Facilitate the delivery of humanitarian assistance;
6. Support the operation of UN civilian officials; and

⁸² ”Effectiveness of United Nations Missions in Africa, Comparative Assessment of UNAMSIL, MONUC and UNAMID”: accessed on 26 March 2013 <http://www.dtic.mil/cgi-bin/GetTRDoc?AD=ADA524127>

7. Provide support, when requested, with regard to elections as constituted in the constitution of Sierra Leone (United Nations 1999)”⁸³.

The 1999 mandate was reviewed by the UNSC on 7 February 2000 and gave it an extension of another six months and strengthened UNAMSIL by increasing the number of peacekeeping personnel to 11,100. Following notable omissions in the initial mandate, a number of challenges faced UNAMSIL, including the hostage crisis, which led to the shift of operational concept from peacekeeping to peace enforcement operations. Peacekeeping is a process of monitoring and/or enforcing an agreement by warring parties to end conflict under the auspices of *Chapter VI* of the UNSC, while peace enforcement, *Chapter VII*, involves aggressive and even offensive actions by UN to physically set apart armed warring groups, a function Chapter VI does not have. This necessitated the mandate revision, through a new resolution.⁸⁴

Mandate revision was contained in UNSCR 1289 of 2000 which came into force and gave UNAMSIL express authority to protect Sierra Leonean population who were facing a threatening security situation. The following tasks were found in the new mandate:

1. “To provide security at key government installations, important intersections, and airports;
2. To facilitate the free flow of people, goods, and humanitarian aid on designated roadways;
3. To provide security at the DDR sites;
4. To coordinate with and assist Sierra Leone law enforcement bodies in carrying out their duties;

⁸³ Sierra Leone-UNAMSIL-Mandate: accessed on 26 March 2013
<http://www.un.org/en/peacekeeping/missions/past/unamsil/mandate.html>

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*

5. To safeguard weapons and ammunition recovered from ex-combatants, and assist in the disposal of same".⁸⁵

As mandated by the UNSC, UNAMSIL attempted to fulfill the additional tasks in a bid to facilitate its security and that of its personnel for safety and free movement in carrying out the mandated tasks of securing civilian protection from physical harm in aid to SL government.

UNAMSIL gradually expanded in strength and in March 2001, it saw an increase of personnel to 20,500. The rebels kept monitoring this development and coupled with economic sanctions against them, RUF saw danger in the offing. Their fear was real as UNAMSIL was prepared, under the new mandate, to use force against RUF in the event of rebel attack. The possibility of achieving this success by UNAMSIL however remained remote up to the time it was re-enforced by Pakistan forces, Russian air support and the British training team. This is when the new mandate took a new turn.⁸⁶

It is worth noting here that UNAMSIL was born out of the Lome Peace Accord which recommended a formation of an impartial combined peacekeeping mission, comprising ECOMOG and UNOMSIL, capable of disarming the fighters. However, RUF still overwhelmed the two groups and Secretary General Kofi Annan envisaged a stronger force, a formidable force that would include sizeable contingents drawn from UN member countries willing to contribute, including the ECOMOG participants. The Lome Accord did not include peace enforcement in the agreement and this was an impediment to UNAMSIL at its infancy, as the mandate did not include forceful means in executing their duties. This gave ECOMOG the sole responsibility of maintaining peace through enforcement as permitted by its earlier mandate. This allowed the

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*

⁸⁶ "Effectiveness of United Nations Missions in Africa..."

ECOMOG to use its mandated force in carrying out and assisting in UNAMSIL duties. Although some are of the view that the United Nations Operation in Somalia (UNOSOM) and the United Nations Assistance Mission in Rwanda (UNAMIR) were failures, the UN learned from them many lessons regarding the intricacies on its capabilities in performing peace enforcement tasks but coalitions of states were better suited for such measures. The process of the UN to form a formidable force capable of repulsing the rebels was painfully slow. RUF exploited these gaps to their advantage and as will be discussed later in this chapter, the main vulnerability in the 2000 hostage situation is seen to have been UNAMSIL's failure on the outset to apply the mandated force in pursuit of its duties and worse still, the situation persisted causing more crisis.⁸⁷

As learned from UNOSOM experience, it was prudent to apply the mandated force continuously from the beginning of the mission and in a determined manner. This posture would send a clear warning to the belligerents that human rights must be respected and its abuse is not advisable. The application of this force in self-defense by UNAMSIL would serve as deterrence to the rebels that threatened the safety and human rights peacekeepers. While explaining this new concept to the UNSC, the Secretary-General stressed the need for a strong UN force thus; "...large and capable," that "should operate on the basis of robust rules of engagement." UNSC on the other hand authorized UNAMSIL, thus...; "...take the necessary action to ensure the security and freedom of movement of its personnel" in discharging its mandated duties.⁸⁸ Mandated authorization of force notwithstanding, cases of UNAMSIL personnel allowing themselves to be disarmed, among other ills committed by rebels, were prevalent from January 2000.

⁸⁷ "Into the Breach," *Standard Journal of International Relations*. Accessed on 26 March 27, 2013. http://www.stanford.edu/group/sjir/3.1.04_galic.html

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*

Similarly, it may be argued that troops from contributing countries joining UNAMSIL had diverse training standards and poor equipment. Although no substantial proof can be cited to support this claim, it can be found in expressions by officials of the UN, both in SL and even New York⁸⁹. In the case of SL, most contributing countries to UNAMSIL were those whose armies had little or inadequate exposure and training. Peacekeeping forces rarely included those from economically endowed countries with better equipment and training, except in specific expertise, like police, trainers or logisticians and in small numbers. This, however, was unlikely necessary as it may have been counterproductive to have militaries from differently developed nations keeping peace in the countries holding older, more traditional values and ways of life. Operational tactics and understanding might well be incompatible if the hosting and contributing countries are of different technological inclinations and hold different cultural ideals. In UNAMSIL evaluation, it is important to take cognizance of the fact that its disadvantage was partly occasioned by heterogeneity of procedures, composition, levels of training and preparedness among many. These considerations, according to a UNAMSIL official, give rise to "the inherent weakness of UN peacekeeping as it is presently structured."⁹⁰ It is important at this point to note that what the spokesman referred to as a weakness is only in terms of the structure and may be an operational strength in form of training, experience and equipment.

Many reasons have been advanced in a bid to justify UNAMSIL's failure to defend itself against the actions of the marauding rebels that led to the hostage saga. Attitude issues of leadership fraternity have often been cited as part of the explanation. Jetley, the UNAMSIL Force Commander from 1999 to 2000 stressed "restraint and caution" when during interviews, a position that contradicted his boss, the Secretary General who insisted on decisive actions against

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*

RUF. Jetley however did not openly express this contradictory view in public but instead indicated that he was indeed for assertiveness and aggressiveness while addressing peacekeepers on the RUF menace. This negated Annan's "robust rules of engagement." Responding after the capture and disarming of the Kenyan Unit, SRSO Adeneji said; "Should they turn this into a fight they knew they were going to lose . . . or do they let the RUF have the equipment, knowing we will get the weapons back anyway?"⁹¹ This justification seemed indicate that there was no consistency with the important but necessary force in instilling respect for UNAMSIL by the rebels. However, the early signs of passiveness by UNAMSIL made the rebels even bolder and this led to the hostage crisis that caused the attack on peacekeepers and plundering of equipment such as guns and vehicles, among others. This became a lesson to the UN never to leave gaps that might be exploited by the adversary like the case of RUF and the capture of UNAMSIL troops.

The Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration (DDR) program was another area that presented UNAMSIL with a lot of challenges. First was Sankoh's reluctance to have his troops disarmed as agreed in the Lome agreement, hence heavily slowing down the DDR program, one of the resolutions enshrined in the 1999 Lome Peace Agreement. UNAMSIL hinged its success in DDR on the cooperation of faction leaders but was not initially mandated to compel Sankoh to positive action. The other two aspects of DDR, notably demobilization and reintegration were a success for UNAMSIL as will be shown, which made the overall DDR exercise a success. But DDR should not have been the ultimate goal in the peace process. The root causes of the conflict were not addressed at all thus rendering DDR a pre-emptive exercise. Furthermore, UNAMSIL alongside other stake holders, formed a "National Commission for

⁹¹ *Ibid.*

Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration (NCDDR)”, a body that guided DDR process on policy matters.⁹² It was very natural to make UNAMSIL accountable for the DDR’s implementation performance, with the other actors in the mission area taking subordinate positions. For this reason, the importance attached to disarmament in peace process is not debatable. The coordination of demobilization and reintegration by the UNAMSIL was seen by many to be lacking. But, one may ask, what was the yardstick for success in DDR? The exercise was enormous and complex for a single body like UNAMSIL and in the short time within which the results were expected. If expectations created are not fulfilled in any peacekeeping, the war will not end with peace and disarmament, even if DDR exercise is one hundred per cent successful. This is to say, although the mission eventually achieved its desired objective regarding DDR, the expectation by many observers was too ambitious.⁹³

The DDR process was further hampered by lack of information dissemination to the ex-combatants. Ex-combatants were always reluctant to register for DDR for two reasons; they were highly suspicious about the sincerity on the part of the UN and second, they first wanted to know what they would get in return. In fact most of the RUF members were reportedly uneducated and thus did not know what United Nations was, some thought it was another country like Sierra Leone. This partially explains RUF’s attitude towards UNAMSIL together with the influence that Sankoh wielded over the RUF.

Following the pullout of ECOMOG in 2000, RUF had a field day in harassing UNAMSIL personnel. Within six days of the last ECOMOG troops’ departure from Sierra Leone, an aggressive campaign to capture UN peacekeepers was conducted by RUF in May

⁹² Anatole Ayissi and R.E Poulton, *Bound to Cooperate: Conflict, Peace and People in Sierra Leone* (Geneva: United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research, 2000), 103.

⁹³ *Ibid.*

2000 which saw 500 personnel. UNAMSIL personnel were detained by RUF following an attack on a DDR site in Makeni area. Unfortunately, these hostage crises heightened even after the Lome agreement had earlier concluded where cessation of hostilities was agreed upon in 1999.⁹⁴

The presence of foreign forces had boosted the confidence of the locals, the government of Sierra Leone and even UNAMSIL itself. But when the security situation worsened in 2000, the British rescued their personnel and gradually withdrew from Sierra Leone, leaving a very fragile situation due to the dropping morale and hope among the peacekeepers and the people of Sierra Leone. This made the hope for peace dwindle as stability was further threatened. There was a significant indication that majority of the people in Sierra Leone felt more secure with international presence, but this concern was not adequately addressed as the big nations like UK and US got concerned with their national interests. The US for example had supported the idea of deploying an independent ECOMOG force under Nigeria to operate alongside UNAMSIL, but withdrew that support, in the pretext that; "...if more troops were simply to be incorporated into the existing UNAMSIL force, however, would anything really be accomplished? The enlargement of UNAMSIL in preparation for ECOMOG's departure had done little to help mitigate the pre-crisis situation. Similarly, an even larger force, serving under the same type of mandate, with the same ill-trained troops, even if fortified by some well-trained troops, seemed to hold little hope".⁹⁵ However, there was a rising inclination towards frustrating and threatening DDR process arising from breakdown of trust among the rebels and also declining confidence in UNAMSIL's capability to contain the security situation. This was further worsened by what seemed to be fear of arrests and retribution by the rebels upon surrendering and allowing DDR to

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*

take place. This became a precursor to the events that followed in which some ex-combatants returned to the bush worsening the security situation and raising doubts on UNAMSIL's ability.⁹⁶

But the situation following the tragic event of May 2000 improved as the population regained a measure of respect for UNAMSIL and peacekeepers in general. The derogatory terms associated with the UN presence disappeared. Disrespectful terms like "U-nasty" and "Beachkeepers", for UNAMSIL and peacekeepers respectively, went out of use and UNAMSIL was once again on the road to gaining support. The DDR program accelerated following UNAMSIL's change of command, from General Vijay to General Daniel Opande from Kenya in November 2000, which was then seen to be more coordinated and this made it much easier dealing with pliable but dangerous people like Issa Sesay. Sesay felt comfortable with UNAMSIL, after he was accepted as a friend of that organization. He facilitated the DDR after Sankoh had been arrested. Sesay was a young and vibrant RUF leader who was very enterprising diamond smuggler. He was among the 72,490 combatants that were disarmed by January 2002. Interviews conducted in Freetown in late 2002 confirmed that former RUF combatants universally praised both General Opande and Adeneji for their conciliatory approach.⁹⁷ Although some observe that RUF leaders seemed to have been duped (as Issa Sesay eventually got a life imprisonment), this inevitably suggested that this was what they had been waiting for as they finally agreed to cooperate with the DDR program.⁹⁸

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*

⁹⁷ Lansana Gberie, *A Dirty War in West Africa, The RUF and the Destruction of Sierra Leone ...* 171.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, 172.

Judging UNAMSIL

Although most evaluations on peacekeeping missions all over the world are seen to be biased towards evaluating “failures”, there are instances where success can be apparently evident. Most authors on peacekeeping operations devote little attention to what really constitute success, rather, they generally define success in terms of the mission’s mandate and UNAMSIL is not an exception in this phenomenon. Some may view UNAMSIL a failure but many would wonder what the basis of their argument is. Mandates are frequently vague as they do not fully address the depth, scope and the details of the operation’s mission. It has been argued on several occasions that a lot has to be considered in depth when judging a mission. This scenario has consequently created room for a big debate as difficulties arise in assessing whether the designs of the mandate have been achieved. Secondly, the mandate approach often ignores the real situations that arise in the field, yet not in the mandate. There are common purposes peacekeeping operations share regardless of mandates.⁹⁹ This creates a very limited basis for comparison across operations, hence limited capacity for a generalized conclusion.

In the UNAMSIL peacekeeping assessment, it would be logical to say that it was a success, being judged by its ability to keep the peace, considering the limiting hostile environments and actions by the protagonists. On this criterion therefore, after many failures, UNAMSIL eventually passed the test of judging its success of peacekeeping operations as it was able to deter or stop violent conflict in their area of deployment.¹⁰⁰ According to the 25th report

⁹⁹ Paul L. Diehl, *International Peacekeeping* (Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1993), 33.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid*, 34.

of the Secretary-General of 2005, UNAMSIL heavily supported the implementation of the benchmarks that created a calm and stable situation in Sierra Leone. UNAMSIL also facilitated the International Military Advisory and Training Team (IMATT) under the British whose outcome was commendable. The SLA could operate by 2005 with no operational support from UNAMSIL, a sign of mission success. At no time were there any security issues that required UNAMSIL intervention after the state security forces took over responsibility in 2004.¹⁰¹ Even going by the mandate criterion, success in peacekeeping operations encompasses a combination of the mandated tasks, like the first UNAMSIL mandate UNSCR 1270.

Despite the pitfalls at the beginning of its mission, UNAMSIL ultimately achieved an overall success as per the mandated tasks. It began its mission with the first task of facilitating the Lome peace agreement¹⁰² once it was signed on 18 May 1999. The mission, although it failed after Lome Accord, went ahead with the next task of overseeing the DDR program, which at the end registered a substantial level of success in spite of sporadic acts of violence and resistance by the rebels. Although the weaknesses of UNAMSIL such as surrendering of weapons to the rebels and the capture of hostages could have been avoided, these acts of hostilities by the rebels should not be attributed to the failure of UNAMSIL. In fact, Sierra Leone at the end managed to consolidate authority after a successful handover of authority by UNAMSIL. At the same time, judiciary gained strength and even administered justice in the customary law courts in which up to 200 chairpersons at chiefdom level were appointed nationwide and a minimum of one magistrate per district was operational.¹⁰³ In his book, *International Peacekeeping*, Paul F. Diehl observes that, the kind of disputes and the configuration of the actors at play determine the level

¹⁰¹ United Nations Security Council. *Twenty-fifth report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone*. 2005, page 16. <http://unipsil.unmissions.org/portals/unipsil/media/documents/scrpt/sgrs115.pdf>

¹⁰² Sierra Leone-UNAMSIL-Mandate: ...

¹⁰³ Twenty-fifth report of the Secretary-General on the...5

of violence under all circumstances. He further asserts that: "...even the best designed and the best implemented peacekeeping operation is going to run into problems under those circumstances."¹⁰⁴ UNAMSIL peacekeeping operation occasionally found itself in such circumstance, thus occasionally somewhat exonerating itself from blame.

Due to the aforesaid, UNAMSIL encountered challenges in its unabated pursuit of the mandated tasks for Sierra Leoneans.¹⁰⁵ Though with some considerable difficulty, UNAMSIL tried very hard to monitor the ceasefire agreement of 18 May 1999, while at the same time facilitating humanitarian assistance. The success of the peace operation was witnessed throughout the turmoil in Sierra Leone albeit with a variety of challenges. While supporting the UN civilian officials, UNAMSIL provided support to all the stakeholders in regard to the elections that successfully took place on 14 May 2002 with Paul Koroma clinching the presidency with a landslide majority.¹⁰⁶ UNAMSIL further facilitated the Sierra Leonean government to make progress in controlling the diamond sector in which up to 2,300 licenses of diamond mining were issued in 2004, as opposed to only 800 licenses of 2001. With the support of UNAMSIL, the national revenue accruing from diamond exports rose to \$127 million in 2004 from a mere \$10 million in 2000, thanks to the measures taken to curb illicit diamond trade like Kimberley Process Certificate scheme.¹⁰⁷

The mission saw the mandate revised in 2000; in accordance with UNSCR 1289, a decision necessitated by the changing security situation in the mission area. In a nutshell, the additional resolutions in the revised mandate empowered the peacekeepers authority to use

¹⁰⁴ Paul L. Diehl, *International Peacekeeping* ...34.

¹⁰⁵ Funni Olonisakin, *Peacekeeping in Sierra Leone*: 62.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid*: ...112.

¹⁰⁷ The twenty-fifth report of the Secretary-General on the...6

necessary force in the execution of its mandate. This followed a humiliating series of killings and abductions of the UN personnel by the RUF combatants. In this situation, the UN policy and decision makers chose to enhance the UN personnel safety by allowing the peacekeepers to defend themselves by using a reasonable amount of force on the rebels. Here, one can see that the measure of success or failure was based on the operational jeopardy facing the UN personnel and its integrity. Whereas the mission might have registered success in other sectors, a blind eye was turned away from it and focused the attention on the abductions. An example of such an incident is found in Somalia (UNOSOM II) in 1993, when the bodies of US soldiers were dragged along the streets of Mogadishu. Because of this and other incidents, the mission was termed a failure, even though a series of other successes in the same mission were achieved.¹⁰⁸ Therefore, the barometer for success is highly subjective and can be seen from different perspectives in a given situation. UNAMSIL's assessment was viewed under similar circumstances, and was viewed in small pictures other than seeing the big picture. UNAMSIL was better positioned to manage the peace process effectively a year following the hostage crisis. The result of not using mandated force in the hostage crisis of 2000 served as a dramatic example in Sierra Leone. There was nothing that drove home the point better to the DPKO than the capture of the 500 UN peacekeepers which led to the embarrassment of UNAMSIL. The UK-led rescue of the captives forced UNAMSIL to then employ the fullest force which was required by the mandate.¹⁰⁹ There were practical obstacles that might have hindered UNAMSIL's peace operations thus denying it visible success at the outset of the mission. Although Sierra Leone faced a series of conflicts since the invasion of the Liberian rebels in 1991, the UN was slow to respond to the conflict until 1995 when the situation had escalated

¹⁰⁸ Paul F. Diehl and D. Druckman, *Evaluating Peace Operations* (Boulder: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2010), 1.

¹⁰⁹ "Into the Breach," *Standard Journal of International Relation*, ...

beyond immediate containment. As if that was not enough, the UNAMSIL was given an expanded mandate (revised mandate), while the means was very inadequate. This amounted to too much responsibility with a limited authority (few equipment and troops who were poorly trained). It was also observed that the UNSC's initial decision to deploy UNAMSIL to fill the vacuum left by ECOMOG was rushed. Also noted was the Lome Peace Agreement which was meant to appease the rebels by West African leaders and the global community and this initially made UNAMSIL unable to carry out some of its mandated tasks and hence unable to realize the intended ceasefire. UNAMSIL enjoyed successes as a result of developments in late 2000 and into 2001, such as the revision of the Lome mandate, and the Abuja Accord, pressure from Nigeria, (including Obasanjo convincing Sessay to give up arms) and the resolution of the hostage crisis among other events, which in effect ended the war.¹¹⁰ The Abuja Ceasefire agreement was instrumental in culminating real harmony RUF and the Sierra Leonean government on 10th November 2001. The two parties reaffirmed their commitment to abide by the agreement in establishing a sustained peace, stability and security in Sierra Leone. They further reaffirmed to commit themselves to the Lome Peace Agreement of 1999 as a spring board for a real and meaningful lasting peace to Sierra Leone.¹¹¹ To show that the Lome Peace Agreement was still alive, the Abuja Peace Agreement reiterated in part: "...Desirous of adopting effective confidence-building measures so as to create a conducive environment for fresh application of the Lome Peace Agreement which constitutes the most appropriate framework for the resolution of the conflict in Sierra Leone; welcoming the emergence of a new

¹¹⁰ United Nations Missions in Sierra Leone (UNOMSIL and UNAMSIL), accessed 30 March 30, 2013, <http://www.un.org/en/peacekeeping/missions/past/unamsil/mandate.html>

¹¹¹ Sierra Leone Web-Abuja Ceasefire Agreement, 10 November 2001, accessed on 6 June 2013, <http://www.sierra-leone.org/ceasefire1100.html>

leadership within the RUF and noting its stated commitment to work towards the restoration of peace to Sierra Leone.”¹¹²

There were a series of events, besides the aforementioned, that led to this achievement and they have been summarized in the following six main developments:

1. “There was an increasingly significant role of Guinean armed forces, separate from UNAMSIL, occasionally acting in tandem with the *Kamajors*, in fighting the RUF;
2. International efforts to regulate Sierra Leone’s diamond trade were stepped up, most notably the imposition of UN sanctions which required verification by UNAMSIL;
3. International efforts to obstruct Liberian President Charles Taylor’s attempts to support the RUF were also stepped up, notably diamond, arms and travel sanctions imposed by the UN;
4. The greater levels of funding and troops (up to nearly 20,000) were given to UNAMSIL after its various crises, as well as the adoption of a clearer enforcement mandate;
5. The participation of British forces in destroying the rogue factions;
6. The changes that took place within the RUF leadership after Sankoh was replaced by the more moderate Sesay.”¹¹³

The war was officially ended in early 2002, with important milestones achieved by UNAMSIL, including the disarming and demobilization of over 75,000 former rebels,¹¹⁴ and the

¹¹² *Ibid.*

¹¹³ United Nations Missions in Sierra Leone (UNOMSIL and UNAMSIL), accessed 30 March 2013, <http://www.un.org/en/peacekeeping/missions/past/unamsil/mandate.html>

¹¹⁴ Funni Olonisakin *Peacekeeping in Sierra Leon*: ...140.

UNAMSIL-facilitated repatriation and resettlement of over 500,000 refugees and displaced persons by the UNHCR. UNAMSIL helped to plan and oversee elections, and assisted in bringing law and order by reforming the police force. It also played a role in the rehabilitation of infrastructure such as building roads and schools that brought government services closer to the population. Moreover, UNAMSIL set up the Sierra Leone judicial system, the “Sierra Leonean Special Court” to handle cases dealing with war crimes and the illegal diamond trade. By the time UNAMSIL withdrew, good progress had been made, and the country had recorded a substantial amount of peace in just five years. Personal experience (2002-2003) of the author of this paper adds more evidence to UNAMSIL’s achievements. There was so much freedom and security in the streets of Freetown and in the country-side after the DDR, a situation that was hard to imagine before 2002. The elections were conducted in a very peaceful manner and environment with UNAMSIL’s facilitation for the conduct and peace. Sierra Leoneans could go out for election celebrations and other parties without fear of threats. Ex-combatants similarly enjoyed the prevailing peace and could even mingle with UNAMSIL peacekeepers during off-duty for social functions including Issa Sessay and his former officials.¹¹⁵

The twenty-fifth report of the UNSC states: “... With the support of UNAMSIL... the government of Sierra Leone has advanced towards accomplishing the benchmarks for stabilization in the country and for the withdrawal of the residual UNAMSIL...”¹¹⁶ It also states UNAMSIL as having assisted in human rights protection, an area that was badly tainted in the process of conflicts. Although the climax of UNAMSIL’s achievements was realized towards the

¹¹⁵ The author of this paper served as a military officer in UNAMSIL in 2002-2003 and witnessed the election and DDR.

¹¹⁶ The twenty-fifth report of the Secretary-General on the...16.

end of the mission, it is worth noting that many achievements were recorded in between the mission, culminating in the 2005 withdrawal.

During the final stages of UNAMSIL, it became obvious that the mission had achieved so much, going by the twenty-seventh report of the Secretary-General which concluded the success of UNAMSIL in a clear manner. By 2005, UNAMSIL had restored stability in the political sphere, security situation, inter-mission cooperation, implementation of the drawdown plan, functionality of the Special Court for Sierra Leone, facilitation of the United Nations Integrated Office in Sierra Leone (UNIOSIL) establishment (and inter-operated with it) and implementation of the transition plan for 2005.¹¹⁷ The report states in part: “As UNAMSIL departs from Sierra Leone, it leaves behind a country that has great potential to achieve lasting stability, democracy and prosperity.”¹¹⁸ It also points out the state of human rights which tremendously improved and tolerance, cohesion and reconciliation made great progress. There was a sustained economic improvement while its relationship with neighbors had reached the level of mutual and international satisfaction. As UNAMSIL had taken the country to a level of self-sustaining, UNIOSIL was thus created with the mandate to give support to the government in its post-conflict peace building efforts. This would ensure that no situation undermined the hard-won peace and stability UNAMSIL had achieved in its six-year presence in Sierra Leone.¹¹⁹ The Secretary-General however noted the challenges and went ahead to say: “Given the uniqueness of UNAMSIL, I cannot but feel a deep sense of satisfaction as I submit this last report on the mission. The trials and tribulations faced by the mission during the crisis of 2000, the measures taken to reverse its fortunes, and its achievements between 2001 and today [12 December 2005], are indeed remarkable. The Mission’s recovery from the 2000 ordeal offers a wealth of lessons

¹¹⁷ Twenty-seventh report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone, 1-5.

¹¹⁸ *Ibid*, 11.

¹¹⁹ *Ibid*, 12.

for current and future peacekeeping operations. The Secretariat has already started extracting the best practices from those lessons.”¹²⁰ It is worth taking cognizance of the fact that UNAMSIL was the first to operate alongside a sub-regional force, namely ECOMOG and also the first to enter into an arrangement with a member state, UK, to give support (IMATT). The Secretary-General concluded this last report on UNAMSIL by thanking everybody, especially UNAMSIL, for making the successful completion of the UNAMSIL mandate possible.¹²¹

In their book, *Evaluating Peace Operations*, Paul F. Diehl and D. Druckman pointed out that while it is important to look at the success or failure of an operation in terms of its input and output, looking at the time perspective is of paramount importance. Is it a long term or a short term effect one is being assessed against?¹²² A public opinion survey conducted in Sierra Leone in 2005 confirmed that the population felt UNAMSIL had made a strong positive impact while conducting operations in the country. Approximately 1,000 people participated in the survey. Almost 100% of the respondents agreed that there was a marked improvement in the security situation, and 71% felt that peacekeepers should remain longer. 84% felt that the DDR process was successful. 76% felt that UNAMSIL had done well in retraining ex-combatants. About half the respondents felt that that UNAMSIL “always” treated Sierra Leoneans with respect, while 5% felt that UNAMSIL had no respect for the population. 98% felt that UNAMSIL soldiers conducted themselves professionally. Shockingly, 50% of respondents cited sexual improprieties as the most significant shortcoming of UNAMSIL’s peacekeepers, while the remaining 50% could not attribute faults to UNAMSIL. In these poll results, it is evident that

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*

¹²¹ *Ibid.*, 13.

¹²² Paul F. Diehl and D. Druckman, *Evaluating Peace Operations*...15.

there were more positive than negative attributes for UNAMSIL and considering the difficulty in its initial stages of operations, the survey results are considered to be positive overall.¹²³

UNAMSIL mandate and achievements

In the final analysis, it is worthwhile reviewing the mandate of UNAMSIL vis-à-vis its achievements:

1. UNAMSIL assisted with the implementation of the Lome Peace Agreement, unlike the Abidjan Accord, which was a failure.
2. UNAMSIL assisted with, and indeed accomplished, the DDR program.
3. Although it was not initially successful, UNAMSIL was eventually able to ensure the security and freedom of movement of UN personnel.
4. UNAMSIL successfully monitored the ceasefire of 18 May 1999 following the Lome Peace Agreement.
5. UNAMSIL facilitated the delivery of humanitarian assistance by ensuring security and freedom of movement.
6. UNAMSIL supported the operation of UN officials through CIMIC operations and through other means.
7. UNAMSIL successfully supported Sierra Leone in conducting a fair election process.

¹²³ United Nations Missions in Sierra Leone (UNOMSIL and UNAMSIL) ...

The revised UNAMSIL mandate of 2000 included added tasks that are assessed below:

1. While there were initial difficulties, UNAMSIL was eventually able to provide effective security at key government installations, important intersections, and air departure points.
2. UNAMSIL facilitated the free flow of people, goods, and humanitarian aid on designated roadways by providing armed escorts.
3. UNAMSIL provided security during the DDR process by securing the sites.
4. UNAMSIL coordinated with Sierra Leone law enforcement bodies in carrying out their duties by operating alongside the national police and the Sierra Leone military.
5. UNAMSIL safeguarded weapons and ammunition recovered from ex-combatants, and assisted in disposal procedures.

In comparing the mandate and the achievements, it is evident that UNAMSIL accomplished its mandated tasks, although there were some initial difficulties with some of the tasks.

Conclusion

The core function of the United Nation (UN) is to keep peace across the globe and to maintain regional stability. Sierra Leone is a country that has profoundly benefitted from this world initiative. In spite of its turbulent background, Sierra Leone is currently able to enjoy peace, democratic governance, and is a proud participant in the international peace pursuit today, as exemplified in its interest in the current Somalia crisis, where the African Union, including Sierra Leonean forces, is now playing a crucial role.

History shows that Sierra Leone was once a hub of interest in Africa owing to its vast trading opportunities and the geographical convenience offered by its location between Britain, Europe, and North America. It was notably one of the countries in Africa most endowed with vast natural resources and especially diamonds, making it one of the richest resource countries in Africa at some point in time. The political and demographic arrangements at the time were favorable in Sierra Leone. However, Sierra Leone started degenerating into a state of near-perpetual conflict in the run up period to its independence in 1961. Among others, an important factor noted for this nation's turmoil before and after independence is what would otherwise be a blessing but turned out to be a curse: blood diamonds.

Blood diamonds were so named, not because of their color, but the blood that was shed in Sierra Leone and other states in the scramble for this attractive gem. The bloody conflicts that rocked this country from 1991 were so grave and protracted that the ensuing situation attracted the attention of the international community, and more specifically, the UN. Efforts to pacify this West African state started with the initiative by the regional bloc, the ECOWAS which deployed its military arm, the ECOMOG but no immediate success was registered. The rebels gained momentum progressively and the national army became overwhelmed along with ECOMOG.

This is when the UN stepped in and replaced UNOMSIL with UNAMSIL in October 1999 to restore peace in Sierra Leone.

The aim of this paper was to prove that, against the backdrop of all the pitfalls, UNAMSIL primarily managed to restore peace and bring the senseless conflict to a conclusive end in Sierra Leone. This paper has demonstrated that the UN peacekeeping effort by UNAMSIL is commendable as it proved to the world that countries like Sierra Leone in plummeting circumstances could be salvaged from collapse. The UNAMSIL demonstrated that several factors are required to achieve success in peacekeeping operations: a clear mandate, control of natural resources, willingness to honour existing peace agreements, adequate troops and resources, and swift intervention by the UN and regional actors.

This paper further demonstrated that overall success does not mean absence of pitfalls, nor that pitfalls always amount to an overall failure. As noted in the UNAMSIL case study, challenges are inevitable in any operation and that they always go hand in hand with achievements. It is only in the final analysis that success or failure is determined as the big picture. This is exemplified in the case of the humiliating hostage crisis of the UN personnel which did not in any way imply that the mission in Sierra Leone was a failure. Rather, it gave an impetus to the mission that allowed it to record more achievements subsequently. The challenges did not deter the mission's ultimate success. This case provides a rich example where UNAMSIL provided intervention to bring stability in the medium term, oversaw a democratic election process, and returned good government to the Sierra Leonean people successfully. Furthermore, this is a manifestation of the international community's strong capability to solve tensions with success. Negative experiences however marred UNAMSIL's performance but it has been accepted as a model of successful UN missions conducted in Africa.

This paper further demonstrated that, despite its overall success, UNAMSIL experienced setbacks that could have been avoided. The mission was fraught with challenges and difficulties to which UNAMSIL could have dealt with more effectively. In the mandate, UNAMSIL troops were not sufficiently forceful in the execution of the peacekeeping operations especially in the early days. For the most part, the rebels identified this weakness and exploited it. For example, the year 2000 hostage taking could have been avoided had UNAMSIL implemented the UN mandate more fully. In another example, the UN allowed the Sierra Leone crisis to develop to a point where it was difficult to handle in a short time. The crisis started in 1991 at the Liberian-Sierra Leone border, but the UN did not take action until 1995 when it was more clearly recognized as an international crisis other than to send in the UN approved ECOMOG intervention. The 1996 Abidjan Accord, but peace was not restored because the RUF was so firmly rooted in violence. There were 28 articles clearly articulated in the Abidjan Accord regarding how the agreement was to be implemented, however the UN did not make its presence more strongly felt by instilling mutual confidence and trust. Following the 1999 Lome Agreement a fragile and uncertain peace came to the region despite the RUF reluctance, but it was not until the 2000 Abuja Agreement that that Sierra Leone saw real peace. The UN through UNAMSIL more efficiently enforced the mandated tasks that would lead to stability.

It is not enough to say that UNAMSIL and others did a good job. It achieved many successes and suffered some difficulties. That Sierra Leone today is a more stable and peaceful country is perhaps the lasting testament of the final outcome of the work done by the UN and UNAMSIL in this country, as the Secretary-General said in his concluding remarks of his final report: "In conclusion, I would like to express gratitude to all...who have made the successful completion of the UNAMSIL mandate possible...for their significant contribution to the

establishment of the peace and stability that Sierra Leone currently enjoys.”¹²⁴ This marks the climax of this paper and is the living testimony that, indeed, UNAMSIL made a positive impact in Sierra Leone as testified by the man at the helm, the Secretary-General.

¹²⁴ Twenty-seventh report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone, 13.

Bibliography

Electronic

ACBF Executive Board “Studies in Reconstruction and capacity building in post-conflict countries in Africa: Some Lessons of Experience from Sierra Leone”. May 2004.

[http://www.afdb.org/fileadmin/uploads/afdb/Documents/Generic-Documents/PCBSS_Working_Documents/Sierra%20Leone%20-%20Main%20Report%20\(Revised\).pdf](http://www.afdb.org/fileadmin/uploads/afdb/Documents/Generic-Documents/PCBSS_Working_Documents/Sierra%20Leone%20-%20Main%20Report%20(Revised).pdf)

"BBC News - Sierra Leone Country Profile - Overview", accessed 1/15/2013, 2013,

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-africa-14094194>.

"Blood Diamonds - Sierra Leone - Wordpress.Org ", accessed 1/15/2013, 2013,

<http://www.wordpress.org/Africa/2193.cfm>.

“Blood Diamonds, The African Conflict”, accessed on 23 March 2013,

[.http://www.mymultiplesclerosis.co.uk/interesting-documentary/blood-diamonds.html](http://www.mymultiplesclerosis.co.uk/interesting-documentary/blood-diamonds.html),

"Diamonds: A War's Best Friend - CBS News ", accessed 1/15/2013, 2013,

http://www.cbsnews.com/8301-18563_162-296716.html.

“Effectiveness of United Nations Missions in Africa, Comparative Assessment of UNAMSIL, MONUC and UNAMID”: accessed on 26 March 2013 <http://www.dtic.mil/cgi-bin/GetTRDoc?AD=ADA524127>

Flaherty, Julie. “A Diamond Stockpile That Is Not Forever”,

The New York Times on the

web, July 30, 2000, accessed on June 20, 2013

<http://partners.nytimes.com/library/financial/personal/073000personal-diamond.html>

"Force Commander, Lt. Gen. Daniel Opande, Meets RUF Interim Leader | ReliefWeb " ,

accessed 1/15/2013, 2013, <http://reliefweb.int/report/sierra-leone/force-commander-lt-gen-daniel-opande-meets-ruf-interim-leader>.

“Into the Breach,” *Standard Journal of International Relations*. Accessed on 26 March 27, 2013.

http://www.stanford.edu/group/sjir/3.1.04_galic.html

“Mining in Sierra Leone-Overview”, accessed 21 Jan 2013,

<http://www.mbendi.com/indy/ming/af/sl/p0005.htm>.

“Sierra Leone - Another African Diamond War”, accessed 21 January 2013,

<http://www.markswatson.com/WebSite/diamonds.htm>

"Sierra Leone's Diamond Wars - Le Monde Diplomatique - English Edition ", accessed

1/15/2013, 2013, <http://mondediplo.com/2000/06/02sierraleone>.

“Sierra Leone-UNAMSIL-Background”, accessed on 3 Feb 2013,
<http://www.un.org/en/peacekeeping/missions/past/unamsil/background.html>

Sierra Leone-UNAMSIL-Mandate: accessed on 26 March 2013
<http://www.un.org/en/peacekeeping/missions/past/unamsil/mandate.html>

"SJIR: Into the Breach : An Analysis of the [United](#) Nations Mission in Sierra Leone ", accessed 1/15/2013, 2013, http://www.stanford.edu/group/sjir/3.1.04_galic.html.

"UNAMSIL: United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone – Mandate”. Accessed 1/15/2013, 2013,
<http://www.un.org/en/peacekeeping/missions/past/unamsil/mandate.html>.

United Nations Missions in Sierra Leone (UNOMSIL and UNAMSIL), accessed 30 March 30, 2013, <http://www.un.org/en/peacekeeping/missions/past/unamsil/mandate.html>

United Nations Security Council. *Twenty-fifth report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone*. S/20005/273, 26 April 2005.
<http://unipsil.unmissions.org/portals/unipsil/media/documents/srpt/sgrs115.pdf>

United Nations Security Council. *Twenty-seventh report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone*. S/2005/777, 12 December 2005.
<http://unipsil.unmissions.org/portals/unipsil/media/documents/srpt/sgrs112.pdf>

Books

Ayissi, Anatole N. and Poulton, Robin. *Bound to Cooperate: Conflict, Peace and People in Sierra Leone* Geneva: United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research, [2000],.

Beah, Ishmael. *A Long Way Gone: Memoirs of a Boy Soldier*. New York: Farrar Straus and Giroux, 2007.

Denov, Myriam S. *Child Soldiers: Sierra Leone's Revolutionary United Front* Cambridge, UK ; Cambridge University Press, 2010.,.

Diehl. Paul. *International Peacekeeping*. Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1993.

Diehl, Paul and Druckman, Daniel. *Evaluating Peace Operations*. Boulder: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2010.

Dorman, Andrew M. *Blair's Successful War: British Military Intervention in Sierra Leone* Farnham, England; Ashgate, c2009.

Gberie, Lansana. *A Dirty War in West Africa: The RUF and the Destruction of Sierra Leone*. Bloomington, Ind: Indiana University Press, 2005.

- Gberie, Lansana. *Rescuing a Fragile State: Sierra Leone 2002-2008*. Waterloo, Ont.: LCMSDS Press of Wilfrid Laurier University, 2009.
- Hirsch, John L. *Sierra Leone: Diamonds and the Struggle for Democracy*. Boulder: Rienner, 2001.
- Kaplan, Irving. *Area Handbook for Sierra Leone*. Washington, D.C.: Supt. of Docs., U.S. Govt. Printing Office, 1976.
- Keen, David A. *Conflict & Collusion in Sierra Leone*. Oxford, Eng.: James Currey; 2005.
- Mwakikagile, Godfrey. *Military Coups in West Africa since the Sixties*. Huntington, NY: Nova Science Publishers, 2001.
- Nass, I. A. *A Study in Internal Conflicts: The Liberian Crisis & the West African Peace Initiative*. Fourth Dimension Publishing Co.
- Olonisakin, Funmi. *Peacekeeping in Sierra Leone: The Story of UNAMSIL (Histories of Un Peace Operations)*. Lynne Rienner Publishers,.
- Pham, John-Peter. *Child Soldiers, Adult Interests: Global Dimensions of the Sierra Leonean Tragedy*. New York: Nova Science Publishers, 2005.
- Pham, John-Peter. *The Sierra Leonean Tragedy: History and Global Dimensions*. Nova Science Pub Inc.,.
- Schmumer, Tanja. *New Humanitarianism: Britain and Sierra Leone, 1997-2003*. Basingstoke [England] ; Palgrave Macmillan, 2008.,.
- Sloan, James. "Peacekeepers Under Fire: Prosecuting the RUF for Attacks Against the UN Assistance Mission in Sierra Leone " *The Law & Practice of International Courts and Tribunals* 9, no. 2 (2010): 243 - 293.