

THE INTERNAL DYNAMICS OF REBEL GROUPS

POLITICS OF MATERIAL VIABILITY AND
ORGANIZATIONAL CAPACITY

RUF, SIERRA LEONE

*Thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of
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for the strugglers and survivors who fight for peace

ABSTRACT

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This thesis examines the internal dynamics of the Revolutionary United Front of Sierra Leone over the course of the civil war waged from 1991-2002. It does so in two parts, looking first at the RUF's organizational capacity—its ability to emerge and survive as a group; and second, at its material viability—the logistics and procurement of food, weapons, and other resources required to sustain war.

The RUF has become a paradigmatic case for the study of war and rebel groups in Africa. Although much has been written on the group and its violence, comparatively little is known about the inner-workings of the organization and how a largely forcibly recruited group of ill-equipped thousands managed to pose a viable threat to the state for over a decade. Through a fine-grained, case-based analysis, this study applies research on the microdynamics of violence in civil war to the structural and logistical mechanics that underpin it. Doing so contextualizes debates about resource wars, collective violence, and mobilization and onset within the RUF's own strategies for controlling these aspects of war-making.

New primary material, including rebel archive documents, describes the extensive military and civilian governance structures through which order and cohesion were established and enforced. Tracking the success and failure of these mechanisms helps explain the disconnect between rebel rhetoric and behaviour. A detailed examination of the RUF's material capacity applies this organizational analysis to the group's strategic priorities for survival. It reorients the resource war debate toward what actually fuels fighting on the ground. Food has long been overlooked as the primary requirement for group survival, and ammunition the basic element of military viability. These 'low politics' of survival explain the nature of the war and underscore the importance of shifting factors, such as territorial control, in shaping rebel behaviour. Finally, the 'high politics' of international arms trades and global diamond markets illumine changes in the RUF's firepower and personalization of power, returning to the organizational failings that ultimately led to the group's dissolution.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

In this process there are many things for which I am grateful, but only two for which I am wholly indebted. Foremost, this thesis would not have been possible without the patience, skepticism, generosity, and trust of my informants. Their faith in my ability to analyse and translate their war stories is infinitely humbling and inspiring. Second, the project itself would not exist were it not for my supervisor, Professor David Anderson, who pulled me aside one day and suggested I do a DPhil. He has steadfastly supported me in the consequences of that gesture—tolerating my walkabouts, channeling my enthusiasm into productivity, and timing his sage advice just right.

My studies at Oxford were generously funded by Georgetown University's Healy Scholarship. Fieldwork was made possible through the invaluable US Fulbright Program. For both, the fellowship office of my *alma mater* provided staunch sponsorship. Special thanks goes to the inimitable Professor John Glavin, who may not always know what to do with me, but who has never left my corner. St Cross College and the Department of Politics and IR have provided institutional support and valuable studentship funds to help me stay on track. The African Studies Centre has served as a second home—and primary intellectual residence—in Oxford, and I am immensely grateful to have been embraced by such a diverse, insightful, and critically engaged community of scholars.

I would like to thank my students, who in teaching have made me a better thinker. My friends and colleagues, who have always offered a stimulating debate or pint—usually at the same time. Dr Ami Shah, who first nudged me toward Sierra Leone, and who said it was okay if I got only one interview. Patricia, Jackson, Sundifu, and the countless people who put a roof over my head, rice on my plate, water in my bucket, dug out my 'jeep', or pointed me in the right direction—life in Sierra Leone was possible because of you. The people who have loved and laughed; helped or hurt me along the way—both have made me stronger and for that I am grateful. Franziska and Natacha for knowing, quietly and from afar, what it is to study violence. The cosmic connections and primordial anchors that hold me when I am suspended between continents. And Team Family—especially Mom, Dad, Julia, Grandma, and Grandpa: that you are proud of me is all that I could ask for; for I am immensely proud to be of you.

This is a dark story, but one I have written because the world is full of good people.

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ACRONYMS

AFRC	Armed Forces Ruling Council
APC	All People's Congress
CDF	Civil Defence Forces
CMRRD	Commission for the Management of Strategic Resources, National Reconstruction, and Development
DDR	Disarmament, Demobilization, and Reintegration
ECOMOG	Economic Community of West African States Monitoring Group
ECOWAS	Economic Community of West African States
EO	Executive Outcomes
EPRDF	Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front
FBC	Fourah Bay College
GoSL	Government of Sierra Leone
IDU	Internal Defence Unit
IMF	International Monetary Fund
INGO	International non-governmental organization
ISU	Internal Security Unit
JSU	Joint Security Unit
LUDF	Liberian United Democratic Front
LURD	Liberians United for Reconciliation and Democracy
MODEL	Movement for Democracy in Liberia
MP	Military Police
MPLA	People's Movement for the Liberation of Angola
NDMC	National Diamond Mining Corporation
NGO	Non-governmental organization
NPFL	National Patriotic Front of Liberia
NPRC	National Provisional Ruling Council
PA	People's Army
RUF	Revolutionary United Front
RUF/P	Revolutionary United Front Party
RUSO	Revolutionary United Sisters' Organization

SBU	Small Boys Unit
SCSL	Special Court for Sierra Leone
SGU	Small Girls Unit
SLA	Sierra Leone Army
SLPP	Sierra Leone People's Party
SLST	Sierra Leone Selection Trust
SLUSH	Sierra Leoneans United to Save Humanity
SPLA	Sudanese People's Liberation Army
SSD	Special Security Division
STF	Special Task Force
TPLF	Tigrayan People's Liberation Front
TRC	Truth and Reconciliation Commission
ULIMO	United Liberation Movement of Liberia for Democracy
ULIMO-K	“ ” (under Alhaji Kromah)
ULIMO-J	“ ” (under Roosevelt Johnson)
UN	United Nations
UNAMSIL	United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone
UNITA	União Nacional para a Independência Total de Angola (National Union for the Total Independence of Angola)
UNOMSIL	United Nations Observer Mission in Sierra Leone
WACs	Women's Auxiliary Corps (alternatively, Women's Armed Corps)
WSB	West Side Boys

DRAMATIS PERSONAE

Julius Maada Bio	Sierra Leone Head of State, NPRC, 1996
Sam Bockarie	<i>Mosquito</i> ; Battle Group Commander/Interim Leader of the RUF, 1996-1999 (d. 2003)
Samuel Doe	President of Liberia, 1986-1990
Augustine Gbao	RUF Overall IDU Commander (imprisoned, Rwanda)
Samuel Hinga-Norman	Vice-president, Deputy Minister of Defence, Leader of <i>kamajors</i> and CDF, 1995-2002 (d. 2007, in detention)
Ahmad Tejan Kabbah	President of Sierra Leone, SLPP, 1996-1997, 1998-2007
Morris Kallon	RUF Overall MP Commander, Second-in-command to Issa Sesay (imprisoned, Rwanda)
Johnny Paul Koroma	Sierra Leone Head of State, Chairman of the AFRC, 1997-1998 (presumed dead)
Rashid Mansaray	Co-founder of the RUF, Second-in-command, 1990-1993 (d. 1993)
Dennis Mingo	<i>Superman</i> ; RUF Battle Group Commander (d. 2001)
Joseph Momoh	President of Sierra Leone, APC, 1985-1992 (d. 2003)
SAJ Musa	Second-in-command of AFRC (d. 1999)
SYB Rogers	Chairman of the RUF War Council (d. 2001, in detention)
Foday Sankoh	<i>The Pa/Pappy</i> , <i>The Lion</i> ; Leader of the RUF (d. 2003, in detention)
Issa Sesay	Interim Leader of the RUF, 1999-2002 (imprisoned, Rwanda)
Siaka Stevens	President of Sierra Leone, 1971-1985, APC (d. 1988)
Valentine Strasser	Sierra Leone Head of State, 1992-1996, Chairman of NPRC
Mohammed Tarawallie	<i>Zino</i> ; Second-in-command, 1993-1996 (presumed d. 1996)
Charles Taylor	<i>The Father/Pa</i> ; Leader of the NPFL, President of Liberia, 1997-2003 (imprisoned, The Hague)
Benjamin Yeaten	Chief of Security to Charles Taylor

MAP OF SIERRA LEONE



Source: UN Department for Peacekeeping Operations, Cartographic Section (2004)

MAP OF THE MANO RIVER REGION



Source: Conciliation Resources, 'Consolidating Peace: Liberia and Sierra Leone'

PART I

FRAMING AND CONTEXT

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

You don't learn anything from the bang-bang.

Basil Davidson¹

This thesis examines the internal dynamics of rebel groups through a case study of the Revolutionary United Front of Sierra Leone. The Sierra Leone civil war is one of the most studied armed conflicts in Africa, and the RUF one of the most heavily scrutinized of all rebel groups.² The thesis presents new data, drawn from archival sources and field interviews, to address a question that remains a central puzzle in understanding the longevity and resilience of the RUF: how was this insurgent organization, populated largely with forced recruits and lacking meaningful internal or external support, able to sustain a decade of armed conflict, twice resurging from the brink of extinction to mount fresh assaults? Using new primary sources in combination with what is already known about the RUF from previous studies, this research provides a detailed examination of the internal dynamics of the RUF as a military organization and, through that, a new understanding of the character of the Sierra Leone war.

The findings have relevance for our approach to the wider comparative study of rebel movements, suggesting that a closer examination of the interior functions and processes of rebel groups, when treated as military organizations, can reveal important aspects of the retention and control of fighters. The organizational element of rebellion has been largely

¹ Basil Davidson, as quoted in Rieff, "Under Western Eyes."

² For historical surveys of the war, see: Abdullah, "Bush Path to Destruction"; Richards, *Fighting for the Rain Forest*; Keen, *Conflict and Collusion*; Gberie, *A Dirty War in West Africa*; On combatants and armed groups, see: Peters, *War and the Crisis of Youth*; Hoffman, *The War Machines*; Humphreys and Weinstein, "What the Fighters Say"; Kandeh, "The Criminalization of the RUF Insurgency in Sierra Leone"; Utas and Jörgel, "The West Side Boys"; On gender, see: Coulter, *Bush Wives and Girl Soldiers*; Cohen, "Female Combatants and the Perpetration of Violence: Wartime Rape in the Sierra Leone Civil War"; MacKenzie, "Securitization and Desecuritization"; On child soldiers, see: Denov, *Child Soldiers*.

overlooked in the key paradigms.³ Most research on contemporary conflict focuses on the individuals that comprise rebel groups,⁴ or macro-level factors that lead to war.⁵ In contrast, this study builds on a growing body of research that looks between these levels, to give an ‘insider’s’ account of the war and the rebellion.⁶ It does so by looking at the Sierra Leone war through the lens of the group as a whole, across the country and over time. It identifies the basic components of a group’s ability to survive and fight—its organizational capacity and material viability—and examines how the RUF achieved them. The internal dynamics of the group in war lie at the centre of this analysis.

Organizational capacity describes the ability to emerge and survive as a group, controlling members’ behaviour toward communal ends. It speaks to prominent questions of motivation and mobilization—why people rebel⁷—but focuses more closely on the establishment of group norms and a militarized social order, and how they are enforced through organizational structure and policing. The second component, material viability, comprises the procurement and provision of food, weapons, and other supplies, such as medicine and radios, that sustain basic survival for members and for the military unit. Notably, diamonds and financial resources do not fight wars; however, how they are translated into military strength is central to understanding the group’s material capacity.⁸ Equally important, is how it feeds its members, which bears closely on territorial control and the relationship with the civilian population.⁹

The RUF’s significant proto-governmental realm, away from the frontlines and fighting, has attracted little attention.¹⁰ But it is how the war machine was sustained socially, materially, and administratively. The memos and ministries of the RUF—whether read as the banality of war-making (to borrow from Arendt), or as the aspirations that would not be televised (to

³ Notable exceptions are, Clapham, *African Guerrillas*; Reno, *Warfare in Independent Africa*.

⁴ In the Sierra Leone case, see e.g., Abdullah, “Bush Path to Destruction”; Humphreys and Weinstein, “Who Fights?”; Peters and Richards, “Why We Fight”; on Liberia, Utas, *Sweet Battlefields*.

⁵ Collier, Sambanis, and World Bank, *Understanding Civil War*; Fearon and Laitin, “Ethnicity, Insurgency, and Civil War”; Sambanis, “Do Ethnic and Nonethnic Civil Wars Have the Same Causes?”; Stewart, “Root Causes of Violent Conflict in Developing Countries”; Williams, *War and Conflict in Africa*.

⁶ Weinstein, *Inside Rebellion*; Wood, *Insurgent Collective Action and Civil War in El Salvador*; Mampilly, *Rebel Rulers*; Metelits, *Inside Insurgency*; Berger, “Southern Sudan’s Red Army”; Staniland, “Explaining Cohesion, Fragmentation, and Control in Insurgent Groups”; Lidow, *Violent Order*.

⁷ C.f., Gurr, *Why Men Rebel*.

⁸ Hazen, *What Rebels Want*.

⁹ Oberschall and Seidman, “Food Coercion in Revolution and Civil War.”

¹⁰ See, exceptionally, Peters, *War and the Crisis of Youth*.

repurpose Gil Scott-Heron)—reveal much about life in rebel-occupied territory.¹¹ They also help explain the discrepancy between ex-combatants’ insistence that the group stood for something, and the overwhelming consensus that that ‘something’ was little more than banditry and brutality. By detailing not just the existence of internal political and military governance structures, but examining how they functioned in context, this thesis synthesizes individual-level and state-level explanations of war.

It also speaks to prominent themes in current research—such as violence against civilians, and the importance of mineral resources—without allowing those themes to predetermine the analysis.¹² In political and military context, violence is revealed as both a military necessity, and something that, once built into the RUF’s organizational fabric, the group struggled to control. Diamonds are an elusive and Janus-faced resource, seen to be exploited only in the final stage of the conflict; and then, in the mould of previous governments, leading to the personalization of power and exacerbating elite infighting.¹³ These and other historical and political continuities and similarities between the RUF and other armed groups clarify the context of the war. They also shine a brighter light on what distinguished the rebel group from its opponents.

The approach taken highlights three topics of analysis that are beginning to receive greater attention: changes over time in the military environment and within the group; internal organizational dynamics and their implications for the nature and duration of conflict; and rebel governance. The focus on change over time looks at variation not just between the different phases of the war, but also under different leaders and commanders; and in different parts of the country—with attention to rural vs. urban areas, and variations in the degree of rebel control.¹⁴ Examining internal dynamics calls for looking beneath the externalities of violence and destruction to understand the productive and self-sustaining

¹¹ Arendt, *Eichmann in Jerusalem*; Scott-Heron, “The Revolution Will Not Be Televised.”

¹² On violence against civilians, see e.g., Eck and Hultman, “One-Sided Violence Against Civilians in War Insights from New Fatality Data”; Humphreys and Weinstein, “Handling and Manhandling Civilians in Civil War”; Kalyvas, *The Logic of Violence in Civil War*. On mineral resources, see e.g., Le Billon, *Fuelling War: Natural Resources and Armed Conflict*; Ross, “What Do We Know About Natural Resources and Civil War?”

¹³ E.g. Kandeh, “The Criminalization of the RUF Insurgency in Sierra Leone”; Reno, *Corruption and State Politics in Sierra Leone*, 1995; Zack-Williams, “The Political Economy of Civil War.”

¹⁴ See also, Johnston, “The Geography of Insurgent Organization and Its Consequences for Civil Wars”; Mampilly, *Rebel Rulers*.

dimension of rebellion.¹⁵ And, finally, ‘governance’ refers not only to external governance of civilians, but also the internal governance that coheres individuals, builds order, and structures power.¹⁶ The relationship between these factors within the group is examined for how they influence the nature of the conflict and its violence.

This process- and mechanism-oriented approach is useful for exploring the disconnect between intentions and actions that ultimately led to the dissolution of the group, and the destruction of the country.¹⁷ Looking at order and cohesion side-by-side with the group’s material ability to wield violence applies a wide-angle lens to highlight the micro-dynamics of civil war.

CIVIL WAR

As alluded to above, two research agendas dominate the literature on civil war. The first focuses on the how and why of civil war onset—its root causes, combatant mobilization, and motivations to fight.¹⁸ The second, albeit with some degree of overlap, examines the dynamics of violence and warfare once armed conflict begins.¹⁹ These two overarching agendas are studied through myriad variables at both macro and micro levels of analysis. They have prevailed thematically despite significant shifts in the tenor and framing of the debates.

Throughout the second half of the 20th Century, scholars focused on large-scale historical transformation vis-à-vis social movements and revolution. However, since the end of the Cold War, and the dawn of the 21st Century in particular, research has viewed wars as rather more provincial in scope, despite a growing recognition of their globalized nature. Narratives of class struggle, anti-imperialism, and nationalist independence have been largely replaced by criminalization, crises of youth and modernity, complex emergencies, and failed

¹⁵ Alternately, on violence as productive labour in the *kamajors*, see Hoffman, *The War Machines*.

¹⁶ On civilian governance, see, Mampilly, *Rebel Rulers*; Wood, *Insurgent Collective Action and Civil War in El Salvador*.

¹⁷ Tilly, “Mechanisms in Political Processes.”

¹⁸ E.g. Collier and Hoeffler, “On Economic Causes of Civil War”; Gurr, *Why Men Rebel*; Horowitz, *Ethnic Groups in Conflict*; Fearon and Laitin, “Ethnicity, Insurgency, and Civil War”; Fearon, *Governance and Civil War Onset*; Sambanis, “Do Ethnic and Nonethnic Civil Wars Have the Same Causes?”; Collier, Sambanis, and World Bank, *Understanding Civil War*.

¹⁹ E.g., Kalyvas, *The Logic of Violence in Civil War*; Rule, *Theories of Civil Violence*; Tilly, *The Politics of Collective Violence*; Weinstein, *Inside Rebellion*; Wood, *Insurgent Collective Action and Civil War in El Salvador*.

statehood. This section traces briefly these key trends and seminal debates in the study of armed conflict and civil war, which inform this thesis.

The causation and mobilization canon is vast. Although conceptually distinct, causation and mobilization are inextricably linked in research that ranges from studies of the structural and historical factors underpinning revolution and rebellion, to the proximate causes inducing individuals to join. Olson's *Logic of Collective Action* remains a cornerstone of political analysis and has profoundly influenced the study of civil war.²⁰ A direct line can be drawn from his examination of free-rider problems and the provision of selective benefits to overcome them, to contemporary research on mobilization—from Lichbach's 'rational peasants', to Weinstein's 'opportunistic joiners'.²¹ Scholars in the sociological tradition have applied a meso-level or organizationally oriented approach to similar mobilization problems. Oberschall, for example, emphasizes the importance of pre-existing groups, which can be catalysed and redeployed toward common grievances.²² Gamson argues that structure and strategy differentiate successful protests from unsuccessful ones.²³ And McCarthy and Zald apply Olson's collective action problem to social movement organizations, stressing the rationality not just of individual actors, but of the group itself.²⁴ Variations in their resource mobilization approaches have been adapted and applied to the study of contentious politics globally. Concurring that grievances are ubiquitous and built into society, McAdam, Tarrow, and Tilly leave aside McCarthy and Zald's focus on entrepreneurs and emphasize instead the importance of structures, processes, and political resources for translating grievance into rebellion.²⁵ In his review of these nuanced and diverse resource mobilization theories, Jenkins summarizes: 'the formation and mobilization of movements depend on resources, group organization, and opportunities for collective action...[the success of which] is largely determined by strategic factors and the political processes in which they become enmeshed.'²⁶

²⁰ Olson, *The Logic of Collective Action*.

²¹ Lichbach, "Rethinking Rationality and Rebellion"; Lichbach, "What Makes Rational Peasants Revolutionary? Dilemma, Paradox, and Irony in Peasant Collective Action"; Weinstein, *Inside Rebellion*.

²² Oberschall, *Social Conflict and Social Movements*; Recent work by Paul Staniland echoes the importance of pre-existing social groups for organizational control and cohesion; see, Staniland, "Explaining Cohesion, Fragmentation, and Control in Insurgent Groups."

²³ Frey, Dietz, and Kalof, "Characteristics of Successful American Protest Groups"; Gamson, *The Strategy of Social Protest*.

²⁴ McCarthy and Zald, "Resource Mobilization and Social Movements."

²⁵ McAdam, Tarrow, and Tilly, *Dynamics of Contention*.

²⁶ Jenkins, "Resource Mobilization Theory and the Study of Social Movements," 528.

As the literature on social movements and revolution has waned, however, organizational and social structural factors in unrest have been replaced by new variables. Recent research has focused more intently on material resources, interest groups, and opportunities for rebellion. The study that has most directly shaped the field is Collier and Hoeffler's 'Greed and Grievance in Civil War'.²⁷ Their cross-national macroeconomic examination of conflict proneness finds, perhaps not surprisingly, that economic factors matter. Their indicators for the level, growth, and structure of income overwhelm their chosen proxies for 'grievance'-based explanations of civil war. This leads them to argue that regardless of grievances, predation ultimately motivates insurgents.²⁸ These findings suggest a potentially monumental shift from the politically saturated analyses of resource mobilization theory, and from seminal works by Moore, Tilly, and Skocpol that emphasize historical and structural readings of revolution.²⁹ However, Collier and Hoeffler revise their model a decade later. In effect, (with not so much as a hat-tip) they land at a less exhaustive version of McCarthy and Zald's proposition from 1973: that 'the definition of grievances will expand to meet the funds and support personnel available'.³⁰ Collier and Hoeffler state this claim more boldly: 'where rebellion is feasible, it will occur: motivation is indeterminate, being supplied by whatever agenda happens to be adopted by the first social entrepreneur to occupy the viable niche, or itself endogenous to the opportunities thereby opened for illegal income.'³¹

'Greed and grievance' has marked an important watershed for contemporary studies of civil war. In the decade leading up to 'greed and grievance', the study of war was in 'conceptual turmoil'.³² As Kalyvas notes, the end of the Cold War led to the 'demise of readily available conceptual categories'.³³ This reinvigorated narratives that focused alternately on nationalism and ethnic conflict,³⁴ greed and 'new wars',³⁵ and neo-Malthusian resource scarcity and

²⁷ Collier and Hoeffler, "Greed and Grievance in Civil War."

²⁸ Ibid.; the statistics and choice of proxies in the CH model have been critiqued in many quarters, see e.g., Keen, "Greed and Grievance in Civil War"; Nathan, "The Frightful Inadequacy of Most of the Statistics'."

²⁹ Moore, *Social Origins of Dictatorship and Democracy*; Skocpol, *States and Social Revolutions*; Tilly, *From Mobilization to Revolution*.

³⁰ McCarthy and Zald, 1973, p. 13; as quoted in Jenkins, "Resource Mobilization Theory and the Study of Social Movements."

³¹ Collier, Hoeffler, and Rohner, "Beyond Greed and Grievance," 24.

³² Angstrom, "Towards a Typology of Internal Armed Conflict."

³³ Kalyvas, "'New' and 'Old' Civil Wars: A Valid Distinction?," 99.

³⁴ E.g., Anderson, *Imagined Communities*; Horowitz, *Ethnic Groups in Conflict*; Ignatieff, *Blood & Belonging*.

competition.³⁶ Although the rupture is somewhat artificial, Collier and Hoeffler—along with Kaldor’s qualitative work on ‘New Wars’³⁷—mark the end of this period of narrative searching, not by introducing consensus but by providing a point of reference for theoretical pushback.³⁸

Their World Bank-funded study heralded the emergence of a micro- and macro-economic cottage industry on civil war, the models and analyses of which have dramatically reshaped the study of violent conflict.³⁹ The promise of their approach was that it provided a quantifiable, proxy-indicated framework that, with some refinement, seemed to transcend the means and ends of civil war, while sidestepping confounding variables like ethnicity, religion, leadership, incumbent regime type, and ideology.⁴⁰

The ‘greed’ model’s apparent cynicism also contrasted with—and further provoked—a flourishing of counterpoints and contradictions that reassert the salience of political grievance, and examine more rigorously the economic dimensions of civil war.⁴¹ In the past 15 years, an explosion of new research has introduced multi-level analyses, conflicting data sets, and a willingness to do without the ideological and theoretical parsimony the bi-polar Cold War system used to provide. This makes for some surprising, but productive, theoretical bedfellows. For example, the mixed methods research programme on horizontal inequalities brings together evidence from diverse cases and regions to synthesize the causal implications of religion and ethnicity, culture and citizenship, reform and secession.⁴² It identifies how the structure of social inequalities—whether cross-cutting, horizontal, or vertical—shapes the nature and incidence of violent conflict.⁴³ Similarly, the study of private security and mercenary companies in ostensibly internal conflicts has brought together a

³⁵ Collier and Hoeffler, “Greed and Grievance in Civil War”; Kaldor, *New and Old Wars*.

³⁶ Homer-Dixon, “Environmental Scarcities and Violent Conflict”; Kaplan, “The Coming Anarchy.”

³⁷ For a critique of Kaldor, see, Newman, “The ‘New Wars’ Debate”; Kalyvas, “‘New’ and ‘Old’ Civil Wars: A Valid Distinction?”

³⁸ Collier and Hoeffler, “Greed and Grievance in Civil War”; Kaldor, *New and Old Wars*; See also, Berdal and Malone, *Greed & Grievance*.

Collier and Hoeffler, “Greed and Grievance in Civil War”; Kaldor, *New and Old Wars*;

³⁹ E.g., Azam, “Looting and Conflict Between Ethnoregional Groups: Lessons for State Formation in Africa”; Blattman, *Civil War*; Fearon and Laitin, “Ethnicity, Insurgency, and Civil War”; Sambanis, “Do Ethnic and Nonethnic Civil Wars Have the Same Causes?”

⁴⁰ Collier, Sambanis, and World Bank, *Understanding Civil War*; Dixon, “What Causes Civil Wars?”

⁴¹ Cramer, “Homo Economicus Goes to War”; Cramer, *Civil War Is Not a Stupid Thing*; Duffield, *Global Governance and the New Wars*; Keen, *Complex Emergencies*; Keen, “A Rational Kind of Madness.”

⁴² Stewart, *Horizontal Inequalities and Conflict*.

⁴³ Stewart, “Horizontal Inequalities as a Cause of Conflict.”

range of scholars from IR, security studies, political economy, development, and more. Their research agenda skips nimbly between America's multi-billion dollar per month war on terrorism,⁴⁴ and comparatively rudimentary conflicts in Sierra Leone or DRC, where battles are fought for significantly smaller paychecks over a few hundred alluvial acres, an air strip in the Kivus, or supply lines to refugee camps.⁴⁵ Another new finding in the puzzle of who fights and why is research by Kalyvas and Arjona that highlights the striking similarities between mobilization of counterinsurgents and the rebels they fight.⁴⁶

Far from suggesting academic mission creep, the expanding scope of questions, debates, methods, and frameworks of analysis in contemporary studies of 'civil war' reflect the expanding nature of the problem. Civil wars are on the decline, but the internal armed conflicts that persist increasingly involve an array of national, regional, and international actors—both public and private.⁴⁷ As Keen notes, *contra* Collier and Hoeffler, the objective of these actors is often not victory *per se*, in the capture of the state and its rents; but rather, the continuation of low-level hostilities from which all sides (save the unarmed majority) profit.⁴⁸

This raises the second theme in civil war research: the nature of warfare and the causes of violence once conflict is underway. This is a slightly smaller and more precise agenda,⁴⁹ but one that has become increasingly prominent in light of high-profile conflicts with highly visible violence against civilians. There are three relevant sub-themes to studies of violence in wartime, loosely organized according to discipline. The first is the security studies-based

⁴⁴ Belasco, *The Cost of Iraq, Afghanistan, and Other Global War on Terror Operations Since 9/11*.

⁴⁵ Moesgaard, "Private Military and Security Companies: From Mercenaries to Intelligence Providers"; Percy, *Mercenaries*; Singer, "Corporate Warriors."

⁴⁶ Arjona and Kalyvas, "Recruitment into Armed Groups In Colombia: A Survey of Demobilized Fighters"; See also, Humphreys and Weinstein, "Who Fights?", which notes the similarity of combatant backgrounds across all forces in Sierra Leone.

⁴⁷ Kalyvas and Balcells, "International System and Technologies of Rebellion"; Straus, "Wars Do End! Changing Patterns of Political Violence in sub-Saharan Africa."

⁴⁸ Keen, "Greed and Grievance in Civil War."

⁴⁹ This discussion is limited specifically to studies of wartime violence. The corpus on individual and collective violence is much more expansive and ranges from individual criminal pathology, to the pathologies of power that perpetuate structural violence (e.g., Farmer, *Pathologies of Power*; Galtung, "Violence, Peace, and Peace Research.") Tilly helpfully differentiates scholars into 'idea people, behaviour people, and relation people', putting himself in with the latter (Tilly, *The Politics of Collective Violence*). Numerous other typologies exist and the lines between 'war-violence' and other violence are blurred at best, even in a war zone (see, e.g., Conteh-Morgan, *Collective Political Violence*).

analysis of the changing nature of warfare and insurgency.⁵⁰ Studies in this vein are driven as much (if not more) by practical applications, as by theoretical implications.⁵¹ On the theoretical end, Kalyvas and Balcells typologize these ‘technologies of rebellion’ as irregular, conventional, and symmetric non-conventional, determined by the nature of the fighting and the strength of the military actors involved.⁵² However, the approach has also come under criticism for its static assessment of dynamic violence. American military scholars have described the conventional and irregular distinction as an ‘artificial division...[that] adds no value’,⁵³ a binary that divides ‘phenomena that are universal and eternal’.⁵⁴ In an analysis that could readily be applied to the Sierra Leone case, Lockyer notes that fighting varies widely within war over time and between groups.⁵⁵ Similarly, Clausewitzian theorists caution against exceptionalising and essentialising warfare types in lieu of the actors, goals, and objectives, which they argue remain oriented toward ‘politics by other means’.⁵⁶ Writes MLR Smith, ‘Guerrilla methods do exist as tactics within war, but they do not intrinsically constitute a separate category of war.’⁵⁷ Guerrilla warfare, notes Clapham, ‘may be regarded as the normal form of warfare in societies without powerful states, and in this sense occupies a prominent place in the history of Africa’.⁵⁸

The second sub-theme seeks to explain why some non-state armed groups are particularly violent, while others exhibit greater restraint in the use of force.⁵⁹ This research is particularly concerned with violence against civilians and repertoires of violence and brutality, e.g. rape and torture.⁶⁰ Kalyvas again notes that the tools and technologies of civil war often make its violence seem more intimate or barbaric, but that this represents ‘less [an] objective empirical fact and more [an] enduring subjective perception’ that tells us little

⁵⁰ Scheipers, Strachan, and Oxford Leverhulme Programme on the Changing Character of War, *The Changing Character of War*.

⁵¹ Hammes, *Insurgency*.

⁵² Kalyvas and Balcells, “International System and Technologies of Rebellion”; see also, Kalyvas, “Warfare in Civil Wars.”

⁵³ Purvis, *Traditional and Irregular Warfare*, 2.

⁵⁴ Gray, *Categorical Confusion?*, 4.

⁵⁵ Lockyer, “The Dynamics of Warfare in Civil War.”

⁵⁶ Duyvesteyn, *Clausewitz and African War*.

⁵⁷ Smith, “Guerrillas in the Mist.”

⁵⁸ Clapham, *African Guerrillas*, 2.

⁵⁹ E.g., Eck and Hultman, “One-Sided Violence Against Civilians in War Insights from New Fatality Data”; Humphreys and Weinstein, “Handling and Manhandling Civilians in Civil War”; Raleigh, “Violence Against Civilians”; Wood, “Armed Groups and Sexual Violence.”

⁶⁰ E.g., Baaz and Stern, “Making Sense of Violence.”

about the considerable variation in the magnitude of said violence between cases.⁶¹ Analyses of this variation fall into three categories, which are elaborated in chapter five: the principal-agent approach;⁶² the collaboration and control model;⁶³ and the political instrumentalization rationale.⁶⁴

The third sub-theme in the study of armed groups' violence is the relatively new anthropological approach that fuses war ethnography and ethnographies of violence. It picks up the continuum of political contestation so prominent in the social movement and revolution literature.⁶⁵ And, in so doing, analyses armed conflict and collective violence as a social process, rather than as a discrete event (see below on terms and concepts).⁶⁶ Accordingly, the details of this ethnographic analysis vary widely, but focus generally on three attributes of violence: cultural symbolism and signification; historical continuity; and changing social dynamics.⁶⁷ This fine-grained approach is particularly prominent in the study of war in Africa, which has developed somewhat separately from the civil wars literature as a whole.

WAR AND REBEL GROUPS IN AFRICA

Studies of war in Africa are significant to the study of civil war more generally for two opposing reasons. On the one hand, scholars tend to exceptionalize conflict on the continent. This is partly a methodological artefact, as Africanists have often taken a more historical and descriptive approach emphasising specificity, rather than a theoretical view.⁶⁸ But also, it is a response to the colonial legacies (extraversion, weak institutions, and enduring but porous borders); trajectories of independence, dependency, and impoverishment; high levels of ethnolinguistic diversity; and ambiguous regime types, all of

⁶¹ Kalyvas, *The Logic of Violence in Civil War*, 54.

⁶² Humphreys and Weinstein, "Handling and Manhandling Civilians in Civil War"; Johnston, "The Geography of Insurgent Organization and Its Consequences for Civil Wars"; Mitchell, *Agents of Atrocity*; Weinstein, *Inside Rebellion*.

⁶³ Kalyvas, "Micro-Level Studies of Violence in Civil War"; Kalyvas and Kocher, "The Dynamics of Violence in Vietnam."

⁶⁴ Hultman, *Targeting the Unarmed*; Metelits, *Inside Insurgency*; Raleigh, "Violence Against Civilians."

⁶⁵ E.g., McAdam, Tarrow, and Tilly, *Dynamics of Contention*.

⁶⁶ Richards, *No Peace, No War*.

⁶⁷ See, respectively, for examples from the Mano River region: Ferme, *The Underneath of Things*; Fanthorpe, "Neither Citizen Nor Subject?"; Peters and Richards, "Rebellion and Agrarian Tensions in Sierra Leone"; Richards, "To Fight or to Farm?"; Hoffman, *The War Machines*; Utas, *Sweet Battlefields*.

⁶⁸ Clapham, *African Guerrillas*; Reno, *Warfare in Independent Africa*; Williams, *War and Conflict in Africa*.

which are seen as uniquely African—if not in their essence, then in their combination. In its uniqueness, war in Africa raises practical and theoretical challenges not seen elsewhere.

On the other hand, however, conflict in Africa has served as a bellwether for studies of war more generally. In the 1960s and 1970s independence struggles and various socialist and communist movements embodied a larger global trend in radical politics.⁶⁹ The 1980s saw African conflicts overrun by proxy wars and Soviet- and American-backed militarism.⁷⁰ The 1990s were read as the scourge of ethnic nationalism run amok in a post-Cold War vacuum.⁷¹ They also raised the spectre of resource wars, which, by the new millennium, have come to reign supreme amongst explanatory paradigms.⁷² Reno describes these shifts as ‘changing fields of leverage’ for rebels in Africa.⁷³ They also capture many of the key academic trends in which, for its population and economic size, the continent hits above its weight. This makes African armed conflicts all the more significant for further study, because, while it is quite literally ‘trendy’, the depth and rigour of the data underpinning the research has only recently begun to catch up with that from other regions.

The burst of post-Cold War violence affecting roughly two-thirds of African countries contributed a sense of urgency to the field of conflict studies. In 1991, 18 major armed conflicts involving the state were under way across sub-Saharan Africa.⁷⁴ Wars in Liberia, Somalia, Sierra Leone, and Rwanda were seen to parallel more ‘visible’ wars in the Balkans, fuelling politically apocalyptic interpretations of the so-called ‘end of history’⁷⁵, and spawning Kaplan’s influential Hobbesian thesis ‘The Coming Anarchy’.⁷⁶ Published in 1994, just months before the Rwandan genocide and South Africa’s democratic transition, Kaplan

⁶⁹ Amílcar Cabral’s PAIGC provides a paradigmatic example, Chabal, *Amílcar Cabral*. But see also, Davidson, *The People’s Cause*; Henriksen, “People’s War in Angola, Mozambique, and Guinea-Bissau”; Nayar, “Self-Determination Beyond the Colonial Context.”

⁷⁰ E.g., Angola, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Mozambique, Sudan, Eritrea, see, Reno, *Warfare in Independent Africa*; Johnson, *The Root Causes of Sudan’s Civil Wars*; Pool, *From Guerrillas to Government*.

⁷¹ See, e.g., Rothchild, *Managing Ethnic Conflict in Africa*; Des Forges, *Leave None to Tell the Story*; Turton, *War and Ethnicity* (particularly Intro).

⁷² E.g., Klare, *Resource Wars*; Cilliers and Dietrich, *Angola’s War Economy*.

⁷³ Reno, *Warfare in Independent Africa*.

⁷⁴ Williams provides a rigorous comparison of various counts of Africa’s post-Cold War conflicts, and notes ‘at the macro-level, not only is there no consensus over how to count Africa’s armed conflicts but analysts have ignored the non-state dimensions of organized violence for too long. At the micro end of the spectrum, all statistics are political and unreliable, and core assumptions about levels of baseline mortality can have drastic effects on the conclusions reached’. Williams, *War and Conflict in Africa*, 20–22.

⁷⁵ Fukuyama, “Reflections on the End of History, Five Years Later.”

⁷⁶ Kaplan, “The Coming Anarchy.”

used Sierra Leone as exhibit A of a fusion of new theses explaining war as banditry, Malthusian crisis, the unleashing of ancient ethnic hatreds, and the organized criminal underbelly of globalization, among other things. As a result, subsequent research has been positioned as ‘post-Kaplan’, heavily focused on describing and explicating the perceived ‘barbarity’ of violence and the opaque motives for civil war. This section details the three most prominent approaches to studying war and armed groups on the continent: the political economy and resource war literature, which focuses on macro-economic and structural factors; the ‘crisis of youth’, which speaks to its participants; and historically-grounded typologies that capture change in the armed groups themselves.

Resources

There are several competing explanations for armed conflict at the macro-level, which generally fit into one of four categories: communal conflicts (ethno-regional or religious); resource wars; governance failure or state collapse; and proxy warfare or superpower rivalry.⁷⁷ Of these, proxy warfare has all but disappeared. Proxy dimensions remain relevant in regionalized intra-state armed rivalries—for example, Rwanda-DRC, Chad-Sudan, Ethiopia-Somalia—but they are now motivated by local factors, not global politics, and do not entail the depth of sponsorship seen in the Cold War. The remaining three explanatory factors are all highly salient in various permutations across the continent. Proponents of the resource war approach argue that communal and governance-derived factors only reach a tipping point when resources are at stake. Meanwhile, its detractors posit that resource wars can only ever be understood in light of the social and political nature of a conflict. This section focuses on resources not because it is the most powerful of these explanations, but because it exerts the strongest gravitational pull in structural and macro-level analysis. As Ross notes, important temporal factors have heightened the profile of resource-related conflicts in the past two decades, including a precipitous drop in civil wars in non-oil and non-diamond states after 1992, giving the enduring oil- and diamond-related conflicts greater prominence.⁷⁸ Moreover, without Cold War patronage, natural resources have become a more valuable and visible source of rebel funding than in past decades.⁷⁹

⁷⁷ This typology also appears in, Sawyer, “Violent Conflicts and Governance Challenges in West Africa,” 439.

⁷⁸ Ross, “A Closer Look at Oil, Diamonds, and Civil War,” 270.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 271.

To crudely simplify an unwieldy discourse, resource war theory argues that resources remain both the means and the ends of conflict in Africa. The field is rife with headlines—from ‘blood diamonds’⁸⁰, to ‘blood barrels’⁸¹ of oil, ‘the blood of mechanized production’⁸²—and fatalistic theory (the ‘resource curse’) to match. But beneath the pitched rhetoric are fairly straightforward arguments about the processes that lead to undemocratic governance, atrophy of state capacity, and the unequal distribution of wealth and services. DiJohn succinctly summarizes the rentier state model, borrowed from scholars of Mid-East politics in the 1990s: ‘the logic of this model is that large levels of natural resource rents relative to income generate disproportionate levels of rent-seeking. These supposedly increase the level of distributive conflicts, which increases both the incidence of civil war and levels of corruption.’⁸³ Cooper historicizes this governance pattern in Africa in light of colonialism through what he calls the ‘gatekeeper state’.⁸⁴ The ‘gate’ is the state apparatus through which all revenues and resources are channelled. It is narrowly controlled by political elites; and in resource-rich countries, the value and exclusivity of state control is multiplied through the enclave nature of mineral wealth, which requires no production, just extraction.⁸⁵

Large-*n* studies have confirmed this pattern across multiple cases. In their ‘greed’ model, Collier and Hoeffler argue that natural resources, specifically primary export commodities, are the most powerful indicator of civil war risk.⁸⁶ They identify a non-monotonic relationship between resource wealth and civil war: the ‘worst’ level of natural resources is that in which they dominate the economy (24-27 percent of GDP), but are not enough to give the state an insurmountable military advantage.⁸⁷ These claims have been widely critiqued and refined by other prominent scholars of the resource war approach in the 15 years since their first publication. Ross identifies four major pitfalls that large-*n* quantitative studies of the economic causes of civil war suffer from (including his own early work): weak and imprecise data; endogeneity concerns; robustness problems; and causality issues, including reverse causality and failure to specify causal mechanisms.⁸⁸ Fearon finds, moreover, that the effect of primary export commodities is ‘neither strong nor robust’ when

⁸⁰ Campbell, *Blood Diamonds, Revised Edition*.

⁸¹ Ross, “Blood Barrels.”

⁸² Yates, *The Rentier State in Africa*.

⁸³ DiJohn, “Mineral Resource Abundance and Violent Political Conflict.”

⁸⁴ Cooper, *Africa Since 1940: The Past of the Present*.

⁸⁵ Humphreys, Sachs, and Stiglitz, *Escaping The Resource Curse*.

⁸⁶ Collier and Hoeffler, “Greed and Grievance in Civil War.”

⁸⁷ Collier and Hoeffler, “On Economic Causes of Civil War,” 568–69.

⁸⁸ Ross, “A Closer Look at Oil, Diamonds, and Civil War,” 265–6.

examined with a more fine-grained analysis.⁸⁹ Yet, in keeping with the rentier model, the salience of oil endures. According to Fearon, “There is direct evidence that oil exporters have less reliable and competent states given their income levels, and weaker evidence that this is true on average for exporters of other primary commodities.”⁹⁰

Accordingly, diamonds are less clearly related to conflict. Even selecting based on the dependent variable of civil war onset, only 12 of the 90 civil wars that began between 1960 and 1999 occurred in countries with ‘non-trivial’ quantities of diamonds.⁹¹ Expanding the date range, from 1945 to 2005 only 20 conflicts ‘could plausibly be related to diamonds’.⁹² Moreover, of those 20, in only four were diamonds ‘strongly related to conflict either through vulnerability, risk, or opportunity factors’.⁹³ These cases are Sierra Leone, Angola, Namibia, and South Kasai (the short-lived Congolese secessionist movement), all of which saw diamonds exacerbate conflict through different mechanisms. Unlike oil, alluvial diamonds⁹⁴ and their revenues can be moved easily hand-to-hand and across borders. Accordingly, their trafficking can also influence conflicts in neighbouring countries (e.g. Liberia), as well as affect fighting within the war zone more directly than other revenue streams, such as diaspora support, external sponsorship, or extraction-intensive resources, the control of which is more centralized. It is much easier to escape to Guinea with a 52-carat diamond (see Chapter 8), than with a load of contraband timber; just as it is easier to sabotage and then extort protection for oil pipelines than to divert off-shore production.

There is some evidence that these intra-conflict effects of lootable commodities, such as drugs and diamonds, increase conflict duration but not onset.⁹⁵ However, the mechanisms through which lootable commodities affect duration, and how changes in actors’ access to resources affect their capacity and tactics over time have not been rigorously examined. With the number of observations too small for robust generalization, diamond resources are entangled in a trap of ‘if they matter, they matter’. The presence of diamonds alone does not

⁸⁹ Fearon, “Primary Commodity Exports and Civil War.”

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 504.

⁹¹ Ross, “A Closer Look at Oil, Diamonds, and Civil War,” 286.

⁹² Le Billon, “Diamond Wars?”

⁹³ *Ibid.*, 350.

⁹⁴ Alluvial diamonds, unlike kimberlite diamonds, do not require heavy equipment to extract and are found in river deposits and gravel near the surface of the ground.

⁹⁵ Ross, “What Do We Know About Natural Resources and Civil War?”

indicate greater risk of civil war, and in countries with both diamonds and conflict, ‘how’ they matter is specific to the context.

Here, other approaches to the political economy of civil war are instructive. At the international level, globalization has created what Duffield calls ‘war economies’, in which conflict becomes self-sustaining and power brokers adapt to exploit business opportunities originating from the humanitarian aid industry, arms dealers, and wartime entrepreneurs.⁹⁶ Cramer describes this as a two-way relationship in which not only does capital perpetuate war, but ‘the means of war finance [itself] may sustain capital accumulation.’⁹⁷ At the state level, Reno identifies within this economic-security nexus warlord governance, in which resource exploitation insulates ruling elites from societal demands, while also providing them revenues (or concessions) with which to buy private security. In his formulation, civil war as-such can be almost entirely removed from the equation. Violence controls ‘the distribution of wealth and building of political alliances’, while external alliances, extractive governance, and lack of accountability supplant Weberian forms of authority.⁹⁸ Keen brings this analysis down to the local level to examine how these dynamics encourage different actors to perpetuate the conflicts from which they profit. He writes of Sierra Leone:

The pattern of “sell-game” during the civil war in Sierra Leone was a variation on a peacetime phenomenon. Collaboration was in many ways a mutation of peacetime corruption, particularly in relation to the diamond economy.⁹⁹

The powerful global trade networks, humanitarian and government aid flows, and international arms transfers that these authors describe, combined with elite exploitation of resources and consolidation of power at the state level, impose structural constraints on the poor majority in conflict-affected countries.¹⁰⁰ These constraints translate into meaningful grievances, as well as limited options that can be readily exploited by violent entrepreneurs. This brings us to local-level explanations and the ‘crisis of youth’ framework for conflict in Africa.

⁹⁶ Duffield, “Globalization, Transborder Trade and War Economies.” See also, Duffield, *Global Governance and the New Wars*; Keen, *Complex Emergencies*.

⁹⁷ Cramer, “Homo Economicus Goes to War,” 1856.

⁹⁸ Reno, *Warlord Politics*, 8.. Max Weber identifies three types of legitimate authority—traditional, legal-rational, and charismatic—authority through violence falls outside the bounds of his ‘legitimate’ typology, see, Weber, *The Essential Weber*.

⁹⁹ Keen, *Complex Emergencies*, 33.

¹⁰⁰ This is demonstrated in very different styles at the intimate and systemic level, respectively, by, Nordstrom, *Shadows of War*; Cramer, *Civil War Is Not a Stupid Thing*.

Youth

Africa has been described as a continent of youth in which rebel groups are overwhelmingly comprised of young men.¹⁰¹ This in and of itself is not surprising—young men have long been the prevailing demographic on the battlefield. What youth-centric explanations of conflict in Africa emphasize, however, is the continent's exceptionally high number of young people combined with exceptionally poor life chances.¹⁰² More than 40 percent of the population in sub-Saharan Africa are children (under age 15);¹⁰³ 20 percent fall in the World Bank 'youth' bracket of 15-24 years old. Without even expanding the definition of 'youth' up to age 35, as many local organizations do, youth account for 40 percent of the workforce and 60 percent of the continent's unemployed.¹⁰⁴

In light of these statistics and stagnant economic growth since the 2008 market crash, the rhetoric of the 'youth crisis' is as urgent as that of resource wars. Youth in Africa are described as 'makers or breakers',¹⁰⁵ 'raging against the machine'¹⁰⁶ or, themselves 'war machines'.¹⁰⁷ Vigh locates this crisis, however, not in the security system, but in youths' daily existence where they face the persistent 'presence and possibility of conflict, poverty, and disorder'.¹⁰⁸ Living within a continuous state of decline, crisis becomes 'endemic rather than episodic'¹⁰⁹ in their lives. American Black Panther Party leader Huey Newton succinctly captures the violent phenomenon much research has focused on:

[Revolutionary suicide] is the "spiritual death" of the oppressed. It's a rage caused by the pressure of poverty, as youths are passed through schools that don't teach, then forced to search for jobs that don't exist, and finally left stranded in the street to stare at the glamorous lives advertised around them.¹¹⁰

¹⁰¹ Boas and Dunn, *African Guerrillas*, 5.

¹⁰² Vigh, "Social Death and Violent Life Chances." There is also a vast literature on child soldiers with which this section does not deal directly. For an introduction see, e.g., Honwana, *Child Soldiers in Africa*; Boyden, "Children, War and World Disorder in the 21st Century: A Review of the Theories and the Literature on Children's Contributions to Armed Violence"; Denov, *Child Soldiers*; Shepler, "The Social and Cultural Context of Child Soldiering in Sierra Leone"; Beber and Blattman, "The Industrial Organization of Rebellion"; Zack-Williams, "Child Soldiers in the Civil War in Sierra Leone."

¹⁰³ *2012 World Population Data Sheet*.

¹⁰⁴ Agbor, Taiwo, and Smith, *Sub-Saharan Africa's Youth Bulge: A Demographic Dividend or Disaster?*.

¹⁰⁵ Honwana and de Boeck, *Makers and Breakers: Children and Youth in Postcolonial Africa*.

¹⁰⁶ Boas and Dunn, *African Guerrillas*.

¹⁰⁷ Hoffman, *The War Machines*.

¹⁰⁸ Vigh, "Crisis and Chronicity," 7.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, 8.

¹¹⁰ Newton, *Revolutionary Suicide*.

Unlike the quantitative and comparative studies that dominate resource war literature, the discourse on youth and conflict is dominated by fieldwork-based qualitative case studies. Ethnographic research seeks to humanize at the micro-level the macro-level structures and systems reflected in the resource debates above, dismantling the greed discourse through thick description of the constraints motivating young fighters' survivalist calculations.¹¹¹ The approach is also a direct rejoinder to polarized representations of young combatants as either victimized child soldiers (young and drugged and powerless), or greed-driven murderers and bandits (young and drugged and very much to blame).¹¹²

Within this overarching agenda there are divergent emphases. Scholars such as Boas and Dunn focus on war's capacity for radical restructuring and remaking of youth power.¹¹³ They describe war as a social drama, 'a site for innovation—reordering social, economic, and political life—and...the distribution of ideas, identities, resources, and social positions.'¹¹⁴ Utas and Hoffman, on the other hand, see less reordering, and more replication of familiar patronage networks to which youth are subject.¹¹⁵ Any innovation that occurs during war is both constrained and enabled by the big men who usurp the erstwhile formal power of state bureaucracy. As Hoffman describes, wartime power structures 'are dependent almost entirely on the dictatorial rule of a charismatic leader who promises an alternative form of authority to the patronage system but replicates its most exploitative aspects.'¹¹⁶ Other scholars, such as Pratten, Ferme, and Ellis, identify even more deeply local continuities in the idioms of power that youth access and recreate.¹¹⁷ Their studies describe how modern youth groups draw on and reinvent cultural institutions of secrecy and the occult through a creative process that synthesizes multifarious layers of community, national, and international politics. Not inconsequentially, these adaptations and appropriations often themselves seek the 'power of mimicry and transmutation' embodied in traditional practice. Ferme describes how the skills of Mende hunters were redeployed by *kamajors* in rural Sierra

¹¹¹ Boas and Dunn, *African Guerrillas*.

¹¹² Boas, "Africa's Young Guerrillas: Rebels with a Cause?"

¹¹³ Boas and Dunn, *African Guerrillas*.

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 5.

¹¹⁵ Hoffman, *The War Machines*; Utas, *African Conflicts and Informal Power*.

¹¹⁶ Hoffman, "Like Beasts in the Bush," 305.

¹¹⁷ Pratten, "The 'Rugged Life'"; Ellis, "Young Soldiers and the Significance of Initiation"; Ferme and Hoffman, "Hunter Militias and the International Human Rights Discourse in Sierra Leone and Beyond."

Leone ‘to identify subjects who change their appearance’—*viz.* the *sobel* and his changing loyalties—‘all while implementing personal techniques of concealing their own identity.’¹¹⁸

It is fitting that these authors speak to different sites of power and contestation for African youth. The apparent contradictions are real. On the one hand, youths’ actions are constrained by their vulnerable economic status and subjection to older, wealthier elites. But, on the other hand, this subjectivity is often their primary tool for political engagement. As Gore and Pratten describe in youth-led identity-based social movements of the Niger Delta, the patron-client relationship represents a dialectic in which:

Youths’ claims of marginalization resonate within the sphere of “high” politics¹¹⁹...Area boys will often have formal and informal patrons who will support them financially or sponsor social events in which they are involved. In return the patrons secure extra security, political support and a means of effecting disorder.¹²⁰

Similar patterns of elite-sponsored violence have been seen across the continent, particularly where youth seek to engage as political constituencies in nascent democracies, from post-war Sierra Leone¹²¹ to Kenya’s 2007 elections.¹²² At the blunt end of this violence spectrum, these young actors are seasonally mobilized youth wings; in their sustainably violent middle, they are ever-present vigilantes¹²³; and, at their sharp end, fully mobilized, they have been dubbed the ‘armies of the young’.¹²⁴

This diversity of roles for youth as violent actors draws attention to smaller micro-historical patterns. Like the larger temporal trends that have determined resource war studies, timing matters in shaping research on youth and conflict in Africa. To use the Sierra Leone case as an example, much has been made of the Western aspirations and hip-hop adulation of

¹¹⁸ Ferme, “La Figure Du Chasseur et Les Chasseurs-miliciens Dans Le Conflit Sierra-léonais,” 123. Original: “pouvoir de mimétisme et de transmutation...Ainsi les sobels aux loyautés changeantes s’ajustent-ils bien à la logique culturelle d’un monde dans lequel des chasseurs se déploient pour identifier les sujets qui changent d’apparence, tout en mettant en œuvre des techniques personnelles de dissimulation de leur identité.”

¹¹⁹ Gore and Pratten, “The Politics of Plunder,” 203.

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*, 227.

¹²¹ Christensen and Utas, “Mercenaries of Democracy.”

¹²² See, Dercon and Gutiérrez-Romero, “Triggers and Characteristics of the 2007 Kenyan Electoral Violence”; Kagwanja, “Courting Genocide”; Anderson and Lochery, “Violence and Exodus in Kenya’s Rift Valley, 2008.”

¹²³ Anderson, “Vigilantes, Violence, and the Politics of Public Order in Kenya”; Pratten, “The Politics of Protection: Perspectives on Vigilantism in Nigeria.”

¹²⁴ Rosen, *Armies of the Young*.

Boas's so-called 'apocalypse dudes'.¹²⁵ Utas and Jörgel attribute the 'West Side Boys' name to the bi-coastal U.S. gang war of the 1990s, immortalized by rappers Tupac and Notorious B.I.G.¹²⁶ Prestholdt notes the allegorical frames of reference and 'disembodied global mobility' that these cultural icons, along with Chuck Norris, Rambo, and (somewhat uncritically, incongruously) pacifist Bob Marley, held for youth combatants.¹²⁷ But less than a decade prior, at the beginning of the war, Opala gives a radically different reading of youth politics, played out to the same soundtrack of 'rap and reggae':

During the emotionally charged period at the beginning of [1993] when the NPRC was perceived under threat, working class youths in Freetown suddenly took to the streets to support the [NPRC] revolution. They formed themselves into neighbourhood 'youth organizations' and set about patching streets, cleaning gutters, and painting curbs and median strips on a massive scale throughout the city. To pay for paint and supplies they set up road blocks and asked motorists to contribute. Soon afterwards they expanded their efforts into patriotic art celebrating the revolution—wall paintings, cement sculptures, public monuments, and road-side decorations in the shape of military weapons painted in army camouflage—and their artwork soon filled the city. What is remarkable is that the youths' actions were entirely spontaneous. The NPRC taken by surprise hurriedly set up a National Social Mobilization Secretariat to coordinate the youth organizations, but the young people continued to work almost entirely unsupervised and to raise funds on their own...[creating art] reflecting the imagination of youth in their teens and twenties.¹²⁸

To be sure, Opala identifies these youth as members of urban gangs—*neo*-traditional societies—and fond of drink, drugs, and petty theft. His account is important precisely because of the alternative angle it presents alongside the *lumpen* thesis, which sees the war and its gratuitous violence as a consequence of the same youth culture.

There is a bifurcated emphasis on urban or rural youth marginality, respectively, in Sierra Leone civil war research, but it is largely an artefact of fieldwork. Scholars have found the most compelling evidence where they have spent the most time looking for it. Abdullah explains the RUF's criminality and apparent lack of political rigour as resulting from the dominance of petty criminals and 'marijuana-smoking youth' who had nothing to lose and much to gain by exploiting civilians.¹²⁹ He provides the authoritative account of how armed

¹²⁵ Boas, "Africa's Young Guerrillas: Rebels with a Cause?," 211.

¹²⁶ Utas and Jörgel, "The West Side Boys." Notably, my WSB informants reject this explanation for the name, and argue it was used to describe the 'west side' hills and highway they controlled.

¹²⁷ Prestholdt, "The Afterlives of 2Pac."

¹²⁸ Opala, "Ecstatic Renovation!," 197.

¹²⁹ Abdullah, "Bush Path to Destruction"; see also, Mkandawire, "The Terrible Toll of Post-colonial 'Rebel Movements' in Africa."

rebellion emerged and disappeared from urban social movements, and through unlikely twists of fate, re-cohered, attracting the *lumpen* elements who derailed a misbegotten agenda.¹³⁰ Conversely, research by Richards, Peters, and others focuses on youth in the provinces, identifying historical patterns of alienation and marginalization that they say motivated rural recruits to overthrow gerontocratic structures of oppression.¹³¹ This social exclusion fuelled labour migration, which Keen notes provided the ‘third group of marginal youths attracted to the RUF...the illicit miners eking out a precarious existence in the diamond-mining areas.’¹³²

From these abject positions across Africa, Boas argues, ‘it is important to realize that most young combatants join the fight of their own free will.’¹³³ Yet, as evidence, he quotes Utas’s description of Liberia, in which ‘parents sent their children off to fight in what was seen as a righteous war, [while] young people also saw it as a youth revolution.’¹³⁴ In the rush to attach agency to young people, the power and influence that their families and households have on them has been almost entirely obscured.¹³⁵ Descriptors such as ‘loose molecules’ may describe their political and economic status, but young people often find themselves directly in harm’s way because they have been sent there to protect family possessions, find lost relatives,¹³⁶ loot properties¹³⁷ on behalf of the household, or serve as a collectively nominated member of community defence groups. Although current research has documented extensively the ways in which youth power and agency is contingent on others, very few studies focus on either the big men and power brokers, or the more intimate social relations around whom young people navigate.¹³⁸

¹³⁰ This is traced in many contributions of, Abdullah, *Between Democracy and Terror* see in particular, chapters by Ismail Rashid and Ibrahim Abdullah.

¹³¹ Peters and Richards, “‘Why We Fight’”; Peters and Richards, “Rebellion and Agrarian Tensions in Sierra Leone”; Archibald and Richards, “Converts to Human Rights?”; Fanthorpe, “Neither Citizen Nor Subject?”.

¹³² Keen, *Conflict and Collusion*, 59.

¹³³ Boas, “Africa’s Young Guerrillas: Rebels with a Cause?,” 212.

¹³⁴ Ibid.

¹³⁵ A notable exception is Zack-Williams, who stresses the importance of household-level social dynamics in creating opportunities and vulnerabilities to violent mobilization, Zack - Williams, “Child Soldiers in the Civil War in Sierra Leone.”

¹³⁶ Several informants for this study described being forcibly recruited while trying to connect with separated parents and siblings.

¹³⁷ Steinberg, *Little Liberia*.

¹³⁸ Exceptionally, see, Christensen, “Big Man Business in the Borderland of Sierra Leone.” The theory may have arrived before the empirics; on relational navigation within a moving force field, see, Vigh, “Motion Squared.”

Rebel typologies

Within the existing literature on African civil war outlined above there is a small body of work that focuses specifically on armed groups, most of which is qualitative and case study-based. Almost all studies focus on the insurgent side, with a growing body of literature on militia and paramilitary groups. Since the wane of the military state, there has been little examination of African state armies, their politics, and their behaviour.¹³⁹ In this regard, by studying rebels, this thesis is very much in line with the dominant methodological approach for examining armed groups in Africa. It diverges in its emphasis on internal structures and processes, and its connection of the material and organizational aspects of armed groups in conflict.

To date, two important comparative efforts have been made to develop comprehensive analytical frameworks for rebel groups in Africa: Clapham's edited volume, *African Guerrillas*, and Reno's, *Warfare in Independent Africa*.¹⁴⁰ Clapham presents a typology of insurgent movements with four categories: *liberation insurgencies*, as seen in the anti-colonial/post-independence wars of Angola, Mozambique, Zimbabwe, Namibia; *separatist insurgencies*, such as the 'classic examples' in South Sudan and Eritrea, and Somali irredentists in Ethiopia and Kenya; *reform insurgencies*, which includes the National Resistance Army (NRA) in Uganda, the Sudanese Peoples' Liberation Army (SPLA) in South Sudan, and the Ethiopian Peoples' Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF); and *warlord insurgencies*, for which he cites Charles Taylor's National Patriotic Front of Liberia, Jonas Savimbi's UNITA in Angola, and the Somali militias of Ali Muhammed (SSA) and Mohammed Farrah Aidid (SNA).¹⁴¹ Reno's typology is similar, identifying anti-colonial, majority rule, reform, warlord, and parochial rebels as the ideal types on the continent since the colonial era.¹⁴²

While these typologies provide a valuable starting point, history and reality do not fit as intuitively as the chronological approach might imply. Liberation, anti-colonial, and majority rule insurgencies present the clearest categorical features, but are inapplicable for the foreseeable future given that they are inherently defined by their opposition to imperial domination. Further, there seems to be a built-in victor's or ideological bias between the

¹³⁹ Herbst, "African Militaries and Rebellion."

¹⁴⁰ Clapham, *African Guerrillas*; Reno, *Warfare in Independent Africa*. See also, two historical surveys: Davidson, *The People's Cause*; Clayton, *Frontiersmen*.

¹⁴¹ Clapham, *African Guerrillas*.

¹⁴² Reno, *Warfare in Independent Africa*.

'liberation' category and the more vague 'reform' or 'warlord' categories. The Angolan People's Movement for the Liberation of Angola (MPLA) and Mozambican Frelimo, for example, are deemed liberation movements, while their opponents, formed at the same time and for the same ostensible reasons, are not.

The separatist category is equally problematic. The number of separatist and ethno-nationalist claims in Africa has dropped off dramatically. South Sudan's successful independence after a drawn out referendum raises the question of whether the category may now be extinct for civil wars on the continent.¹⁴³ Moreover, Clapham's labelling of the Tigrayan People's Liberation Front (TPLF) as having been a potential separatist group highlights the interchangeability between types over the course of long conflicts. For all their secessionist potential, the TPLF formed the dominant group in the EPRDF, the 'reform insurgency' that now controls power in Ethiopia. Meanwhile, 'some reform elements' are astutely identified in the SPLA, a movement whose leader, John Garang, sought national coalitions and political reform. Garang's very reformist rhetoric and ambitions (which led to a split in the group not easily captured in the typology) fell by the wayside at the conclusion of the civil war, leaving a more separatist picture of regional autonomy and prospective self-determination for the once-reformist SPLA.¹⁴⁴ Clapham himself identifies the reform category as the most problematic, questioning the analytical distinctions between rhetoric and action, and between the very visible overthrow of government and implementing truly meaningful reforms.

Ultimately, both typologies face this problem. There is no clear guide for distinguishing between a group's rhetoric, ideological goals, and basic objectives. Researchers are faced with what is effectively a group-level version of the structure versus agency conundrum that afflicts much of the motives- and onset-related literature outlined above. For example, are rebels who fight for independence and settle for power-sharing really just interested in holding office? Are rebels fighting against state corruption but looting diamond fields to fund the war effort really just interested in securing their own share of the wealth? Furthermore, as this thesis will show, armed groups inevitably change over the course of a conflict, adapting their means and ends in response to the shifting political and economic

¹⁴³ Somaliland represents an interesting case of the use of governance and institution-building, rather than war-making, to try to secure independence. If they are successful, it will not be as a direct result of secessionist war. See, Menkhaus, "Governance Without Government in Somalia."

¹⁴⁴ Johnson, *The Root Causes of Sudan's Civil Wars*; Berger, "Southern Sudan's Red Army."

constraints of war, or in response to internal shifts in their own leadership and organizational structure. The typological analysis has little to say about the frequent splintering and realigning of African armed groups and militias in civil war. It is for this lack of flexibility and responsiveness to the realities of contemporary African wars that the frameworks falter, not, as Boas and Dunn argue, because warlord insurgency is the only game in town.¹⁴⁵

Weinstein's comparative study, *Inside Rebellion*, makes the biggest strides toward examining and theorising what Clapham identifies as the key category for further analysis—the internal structures of rebel groups. By comparing the formation of the NRA in Uganda, Renamo in Mozambique, and two disparate factions in Peru's Sendero Luminoso, Weinstein seeks to explain variations in rebel group behaviour and identify 'why some civil wars are so much more violent than others and why some groups commit horrendous atrocities and others do not'.¹⁴⁶ The central claim of his thesis is that the economic endowments of rebel leaders at the outset create path dependent combatant mobilization patterns. Resource-rich groups overcome the 'recruitment problem' by offering short-term rewards, thereby attracting a large pool of 'consumer' combatants with minimal commitment to the group, its cause, and its laws. Weinstein argues that these groups—he uses as examples Renamo and the RUF—are more violent because of their reliance on looting mechanisms and low levels of behavioural control by the leadership. Conversely, resource-constrained rebellions are dependent on social endowments and trust, promising only long-term rewards at best. As a result, they recruit high-commitment combatants, forming a rebel group in which participants are 'invested' in the cause and use violence in pursuit of group, not personal, interest.

The model is appealing for a number of reasons. It significantly simplifies the rebel group typology from Clapham's four subjective, overlapping categories to just two—resource-rich and resource-constrained—that can potentially be defined with objective criteria for analytical and comparative consistency. Further, it combines individual, group, and structural analysis to address such interconnected themes as resource war theories, the greed and grievance debate, and fieldwork-centric approaches to conflict studies (seen in his rich

¹⁴⁵ Boas and Dunn, *African Guerrillas*. With apologies to, Linz, *Problems of Democratic Transition and Consolidation*.

¹⁴⁶ Weinstein, *Inside Rebellion*.

interview data), all while explicating the puzzle of ‘barbarity’ or inscrutable violence. Another strength is Weinstein’s identification of a possible causal hypothesis with clearly defined dependent and independent variables. As a model for theory development regarding African armed groups it is impressive and encouraging, suggesting the oft-ignored project of *African Guerrillas* is alive, well, and not limited to Africa.

Where the model is limited is in its static and path-dependent formulation of resource endowments and recruitment. Like other civil war onset literature, it is unable to capture, much less explain, conflict duration, continuity, and change over time. This is largely because the framework presents resource baskets as coherent wholes, when in reality, resources vary widely within groups according to time and place (due to agricultural seasons, geographic control, aerial raids, etc.) and according to internal factors (retention, leaders’ personalities, infighting, and other power dynamics). Similarly, war’s permutations once it begins dramatically alter the context and calculus for joining. By limiting his study to financial resource endowments, Weinstein underestimates the scope of the ‘action repertoire’ available to rebel leaders.¹⁴⁷ He also excludes from the model the effects of the larger military-political environment on these available strategies for recruitment, retention, and control, and how individual fighters and commanders may themselves shape the internal dynamics.

Utas and Jörgel’s account of the West Side Boys, while less theoretically ambitious, is important as an alternative model for understanding African rebel groups.¹⁴⁸ They construct a theory of ‘military navigation’, which draws on the concept of social navigation and Clausewitz’s and DeCerteau’s military strategy and tactics¹⁴⁹ to ‘unravel the logic of a militia like the WSB’.¹⁵⁰ To examine the tactical shifts and strategic calculations the WSB made in their short tenure as insurgents, Utas and Jörgel provide a detailed account of the procurement of food and weapons in Occra Hills, the WSB territory. They augment detailed descriptions of how the group met its logistical needs—through ambush, food finding missions, and checkpoints—with an account of how the WSB balanced power in their territory. For both its detailed description of the basic functions of an armed group, and for connecting ethnographic methodology with the political-military nature of civil war, it is an

¹⁴⁷ Ibid.

¹⁴⁸ Utas and Jörgel, “The West Side Boys.”

¹⁴⁹ Vigh, “Motion Squared,” 432.

¹⁵⁰ Utas and Jörgel, “The West Side Boys,” 490.

important example of how interdisciplinary research of group-level microdynamics can advance the study of non-state armed groups as military actors. It is ironic, but incisive, that they have chosen the most criminal and opportunistic group in the war. The successful application makes the approach all the more compelling.

With so little written about the inner-workings of African guerrillas as groups, much less as military organizations that exist in and create war—and not just violence—the armed group is virtually lost as a unit of analysis.¹⁵¹ This thesis seeks to bridge the gap between individual-level and system- or state-level analysis, and pick up the research agenda where Weinstein, and Utas and Jörgel leave off. It moves beyond examinations of the pre-conflict causes and post-conflict effects of war to examine civil war not as banditry or violence, but *as war*, and an armed group—the RUF—as a military organization. This thesis rests on the assumption that, as important as identifying the multiple reasons why men and women mobilize to fight, is understanding how they initiate and sustain such a fight in inhospitable environments, lacking basic resources, equipment, and historical legitimacy—in other words, why war works.

TERMS AND CONCEPTS

This section provides a brief definitional overview of the terms ‘war’, ‘armed conflict’, ‘civil war’; and ‘armed group’, ‘rebel’, and ‘revolution’. The thesis does not rely heavily on the comparative frameworks presented by the words themselves, as the typologies they offer are highly contested and generally less instructive than the relationships and processes they describe. However, it is necessary to establish conceptual clarity and acknowledge the importance of semantics before moving forward—particularly when analysing power, politics, and violence.

War, civil war, and armed conflict

War is a universal concept without a universal definition. Clausewitz offers the best-known formulation—that war is a ‘continuation of politics by other means’.¹⁵² Like Sun Tzu writing more than two millennia before him, Clausewitz notes that the advent of war ‘does not

¹⁵¹ The notable exception to this trend is Clayton’s military history of the continent from 1950-1999, Clayton, *Frontiersmen*.

¹⁵² Clausewitz, *On War*.

suspend political intercourse nor change it into something entirely different.¹⁵³ Rather, what both of these great strategists have in mind is war between political actors who choose to deploy existing armies to compel their enemy to follow their political will when diplomacy fails. Tilly, on the other hand, argues that war itself ‘makes the state’.¹⁵⁴ Quoting Lane, he elaborates that ‘governments are in the business of selling protection—whether people want it or not’.¹⁵⁵ Their protection rackets create the scaffolding for state institutions. Whereas Tilly draws on early-modern Europe, in contemporary war, Kaldor sees the opposite, which she argues ‘un-builds’ states through its depoliticizing and criminal tendencies and multiplicity of non-state actors.¹⁵⁶

The primacy of the state in any definition of war, therefore, makes war in Africa theoretically sticky. Africa’s sovereign entities have been described as ‘quasi-states’, weak states, failed states, collapsed states, and more.¹⁵⁷ Herbst applies Tilly’s thesis to Africa and concludes, for a host of structural reasons, that it is doubtful African states could go through the same war-making to state-making process, not least because of the mutual recognition of and investment in sovereignty by fellow African Union members and international donors.¹⁵⁸ This buffers weak rulers, who have focused more on the consolidation of power than the expansion of state capacity.¹⁵⁹ Rather than being in the business of selling protection, pre-war, post-independence governments in Sierra Leone and Liberia were in the business of selling the state itself to buy protection.¹⁶⁰

Quantitative studies, on the other hand, step away from historical trajectories and conflicting concepts in favour of code-able definitions of war. In the Correlates of War project, Singer and Small define war first in terms of violence. They write, ‘the taking of human life is the

¹⁵³ Clausewitz, as quoted in Handel, *Masters of War*, 35; Sun-Tzu, *The Art of War*. Both note moreover, that war is best avoided. Excellence in war is ‘to subjugate the enemy’s army without doing battle’ writes Sun Tzu on ‘Planning Attacks’.

¹⁵⁴ Tilly, “War-making and State-making.”

¹⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 175.

¹⁵⁶ Kaldor, “Elaborating the ‘New War’ Thesis,” 211–12.

¹⁵⁷ See, respectively, Jackson, *Quasi-States*; Reno, “War, Markets, and the Reconfiguration of West Africa’s Weak States”; Gros, “Towards a Taxonomy of Failed States in the New World Order”; Zartman, *Collapsed States*; On post-Cold War state retraction and violence in sub-Saharan Africa, see, Allen, “Warfare, Endemic Violence & State Collapse in Africa.”

¹⁵⁸ Herbst, “War and the State in Africa”; Herbst, *States and Power in Africa*.

¹⁵⁹ Reno, *Warlord Politics*.

¹⁶⁰ Reno, “Political Networks in a Failing Stage.”

primary and dominant characteristic of war.¹⁶¹ To differentiate war violence from other forms of individual, collective, state-sponsored, or criminal violence, they operationalize war as ‘sustained combat, involving organized armed forces, resulting in a minimum of...1,000 battle-related fatalities within a 12 month period.’¹⁶² The Uppsala/PRIO dataset uses the significantly lower threshold of 25 annual battle deaths to capture a larger number of cases.¹⁶³ Gleditsch and Lacina note, however, that no tally of battle deaths (itself difficult to measure in contexts like Sierra Leone where outright battles were avoided, while violence was used frequently against civilians¹⁶⁴) actually reflects the violence of war:

A complete accounting of the true human costs of conflict would include—in addition to fatalities—non-fatal injuries, disability, reduced life expectancy, sexual violence, psychological trauma, displacement, loss of property and livelihood, damage to social capital and infrastructure, environmental damage, [and] destruction of cultural treasures.¹⁶⁵

These limitations aside, the fatality numbers in quantitative research are more than just figures in a vacuum. Their descriptive value comes when applied to typologies of conflict, which inevitably returns to the questions posed by theorists. The simple and granted distinction between wars as ‘international’ or ‘civil’, for example, belies the complexity of the questions it raises about locations, actors, and the power and goods at stake.¹⁶⁶ Tellingly, Singer and Small have doubled their two-part framework to a four-part matrix. They define wars as either inter-state; extra-state (imperial/colonial); intra-state (including civil, regional internal, and intercommunal, i.e. sub-state, wars); or non-state.¹⁶⁷

This thesis is concerned with the third category, intra-state war. Civil war and armed conflict are used interchangeably, with ‘armed conflict’ being the more general term and ‘civil war’ the more precise (and more politically and conceptually contentious). Armed conflict entails sustained violence between two or more organized armed groups, and though it is inevitably concerned with power and influence, it is not necessarily overtly political. It includes ostensibly apolitical or supra-political economic, religious, or identity-driven violence. As

¹⁶¹ Singer and Small as quoted in, Sarkees, “The COW Typology of War.”

¹⁶² Ibid.

¹⁶³ Gleditsch et al., “Armed Conflict 1946-2001.”

¹⁶⁴ On battle deaths in Africa, see, Williams, *War and Conflict in Africa*.

¹⁶⁵ Lacina and Gleditsch, “Monitoring Trends in Global Combat,” 148.

¹⁶⁶ Small, Singer, and Bennet, *Resort to Arms: International and Civil Wars, 1816-1980*. For a discussion of conceptualizations of international war, see also, Most and Starr, “Conceptualizing ‘War’ Consequences for Theory and Research.”

¹⁶⁷ See, Sarkees, “The COW Typology of War.”

Angstrom notes, armed conflict is an ‘umbrella concept’ that does not describe ‘the nature of combating parties...[and it includes] classes of civil wars as well as minor conflicts.’¹⁶⁸

For precision and comparative purposes, this thesis adapts Kalyvas’s definition of civil war¹⁶⁹ as ‘armed combat in a recognized sovereign entity between parties subject to a common authority at the outset of hostilities.’ In this case, Sierra Leone is the sovereign entity under the one-party APC regime of Joseph Momoh at the outset of the war. Civil war is elsewhere called ‘internal war’ (or intra-state war as above), a perhaps more clearly defined concept in political science, but one that is too broad for this case study. It also places undue emphasis on ‘internality’—*vis-à-vis* bordered territories—making it inaccurate for describing contemporary African wars. Kalyvas similarly defines civil war as taking place ‘within the boundaries of the sovereign entity—in this case and overwhelmingly since 1648, the state—hence, adaptation to exclude this wording.

Ephemeral borders, interdependent neighbourhood security issues, and powerful foreign actors ensured that the Sierra Leone civil war was not contained within the territorially defined state. The vast majority of African armed conflicts are diffuse and internationally connected, often taking place across liminal border regions where the state has not consolidated and can barely project its power.¹⁷⁰ Several scholars underscore this point in Sierra Leone by rejecting the civil war appellation and its attendant literature entirely. Hoffman, Richards, and Sawyer all use variations of ‘Mano River War’—referring to the natural border between Liberia and Sierra Leone—to emphasize that it was, ‘a war in which the same actors appeared on both banks of the river...in which events on one side can only really be understood in the context of events on the other.’¹⁷¹

As the following chapters illustrate, the movement of fighters and logistics across borders and throughout the region was central to the conflict. And the support of regional actors, international mercenary firms, and UN peacekeepers on the government side; and Liberian, Burkinabe, and other mercenaries on the RUF side, strongly influenced the course of the conflict. However, they did not fundamentally regionalize the goods being fought over, nor,

¹⁶⁸ Angstrom, “Towards a Typology of Internal Armed Conflict,” 95.

¹⁶⁹ Kalyvas, *The Logic of Violence in Civil War*, 17.

¹⁷⁰ E.g. Herbst, “African Militaries and Rebellion.”

¹⁷¹ Hoffman, *The War Machines*, 27; Richards, “To Fight or to Farm?”; Sawyer, “Violent Conflicts and Governance Challenges in West Africa.”

equally importantly, the political-historical framework through which participants and bystanders understood the war. All parties were ultimately fighting to control territory and project power within the country's borders. Reno notes this pattern throughout Africa since the 1950s, '[most] rebels fight to capture the capital city of their country and install themselves as the new government...Even parochial rebels who provide protection to narrowly circumscribed communities rarely question the existence of the state.'¹⁷² This basic buy-in to the concept of Sierra Leone as a sovereign state worth defending—at the time just 30 years old—is lost when the war is redefined in regional terms. As King reminds us, 'no civil war is wholly internal.'¹⁷³

Thus, although Kalyvas's definition claims agnosticism about 'causes, goals, and motivations,'¹⁷⁴ it is valuable to incorporate some of Eckstein's definition of internal war, which specifies that it occurs 'within a political order to change its constitution, rulers, or policies.'¹⁷⁵ Control of sovereign authority, exercised through various forms of influence or representation, is necessarily the spoils at stake in civil war, and to this Sierra Leone is no exception.

Armed group, rebel, and revolution

Although civil war presents the setting for this research, the unit of analysis is the armed group, the RUF. 'Armed group', like armed conflict, is the broader term inclusive of rebels, revolutionaries, guerrillas, insurgents, counter-insurgents, and armies and militaries that bear arms. These terms function as descriptors for collections of fighters, soldiers, and combatants. A basic distinction can be attempted in most civil wars between pro-state military forces and those that are challenging the state. This insurgent/counter-insurgent typology has recently enjoyed resurgence in the research agenda due to the war on terrorism and comparative studies with earlier anti-imperial struggles. However, it has three major challenges to its utility, particularly for the Sierra Leone case.

First, it risks tautological dependence on definitional concepts that are intrinsically contested in civil war: the power, authority, and monopoly on the legitimate use of violence that define

¹⁷² Reno, *Warfare in Independent Africa*, 15–16.

¹⁷³ King, "Ending Civil Wars."

¹⁷⁴ Kalyvas, *The Logic of Violence in Civil War*, 17.

¹⁷⁵ Eckstein usefully describes internal war as the genus, to the 'revolution, civil war, revolt, rebellion, uprising, guerrilla warfare, mutiny, jacquerie, coup d'état, terrorism, or insurrection...species'. Eckstein, "On the Etiology of Internal Wars," 133.

the Weberian state.¹⁷⁶ A rebel challenger by definition questions the legitimacy of state authority and undermines the regime's monopoly on the use of force. Second, as noted above, many civil wars in Africa occur in states that have arguably already lost their Weberian attributes of stateness.¹⁷⁷ In addition to suffering from weak authority, the Sierra Leonean state went through two military coups during the civil war that blurred the line between insurgent and 'counter-insurgent' forces. Third, governments, as a result of this weakness often rely exclusively, or in tandem with the state army, on private and para-military forces to protect their hold on power. In Sierra Leone, the Civil Defence Forces fought on behalf of a government and a regime (civilian multi-party democracy) that was not even in existence at the start of the war. When the CDF became the *de facto* state military, it marked a formerly para-military counter-insurgent force fighting alongside foreign troops and peacekeepers against the former state military, which, once putschist, was established as the state, only to become again insurgent.

The RUF, however, remained clearly 'insurgent' despite the volatile political and military environment and changing factions around them. This cohesion is surprising and, despite being taken for granted in much of the existing literature, presents one of the key puzzles of the thesis. Like other meaningful insights about the RUF as a military organization, the group's relative unity has been obscured by the generic use of the term 'rebel'. In comparative studies of armed groups, the RUF is often used as the signifier *par excellence* for African violence and barbarism.¹⁷⁸ Weinstein, for example—who co-investigated the largest quantitative study of ex-combatants in Sierra Leone and knows the war well—introduces the RUF within the first few pages of his comparative study, focused on different cases, as 'rebels...[who] hacked, raped, and pillaged their way through the countryside in a war that cost more than 10,000 lives.'¹⁷⁹ Similarly, Metelits uses the RUF (again not as a case study) to illustrate 'highly coercive' behaviour, in contradistinction from 'contractual' civilian interactions.¹⁸⁰

¹⁷⁶ Weber, *The Essential Weber*.

¹⁷⁷ On African states, see, Clapham and Mills, *Big African States*; on the "rhizome state" in Africa and historicity, Bayart, *The State in Africa: The Politics of the Belly*; on personalization and the "shadow state", Reno, *Corruption and State Politics in Sierra Leone*, 1995; on the creation of African states and challenges with establishing authority and consolidating power, Herbst, *States and Power in Africa*.

¹⁷⁸ C.f. Richards, *Fighting for the Rain Forest*.

¹⁷⁹ Weinstein, *Inside Rebellion*, 5.

¹⁸⁰ Metelits, *Inside Insurgency*, 4.

In the Sierra Leone-specific literature, ‘rebel’ has been used to describe any combatant not readily identifiable as an army soldier or *kamajor*. This is noted in quantitative studies, as well as in basic DDR data, which tracks the frequency with which combatants changed sides or fought in multiple factions over the course of the war.¹⁸¹ Peters quotes a resident of Makeni describing this ambiguity: ‘Here, the soldiers were more involved in amputations than the RUF...but for us the civilians, they all look the same’.¹⁸² As a result, irregular SLA fighters, AFRC junta members and joiners, West Side Boys, and so-called NPRC *sobel*s, have all been conflated as rebels. ‘Rebel’ thus also marks the transgressive, morally and politically illegitimate nature of violent actors deemed as lacking meaningful ideological and political ambitions. Bangura, critiquing Richards’s ‘strange “post-modernist” reading’ of RUF rationality, illustrates the one-and-the-same attitude toward unnamed rebels and the RUF: ‘ordinary participants and victims of such violence, keep reminding [Richards] that the rebels are “evil people”, and “evil thugs” who “threatened the people to make them give (up) their property”’. Such voices...are in line with what most Sierra Leoneans think about the RUF.’¹⁸³

These connotations clearly make ‘rebel’ a loaded term in Sierra Leonean society¹⁸⁴, as well as in the academic and grey literature. Acknowledging this conceptual baggage, rebel and rebel group are used in this thesis to denote that the RUF fundamentally challenged the authority of the state regime.¹⁸⁵ Moreover, it acknowledges the prominence of the term in Sierra Leone, but here bears no normative claim.

Thus, RUF, rebels or rebel group, movement, organization, and armed group are all used interchangeably to refer to the Revolutionary United Front throughout the thesis. Today, former members are most likely to describe the RUF as ‘the movement’ or ‘the revolution’.¹⁸⁶ Accordingly, both are used occasionally, particularly when examining ideological aspects of the armed group. This simply reflects the local salience of the term for

¹⁸¹ Anon., “Unpublished Study on Ministry of Social Welfare Family Tracing and Reunification Data”; Humphreys and Weinstein, “Who Fights?”.

¹⁸² Peters, *War and the Crisis of Youth*, 154.

¹⁸³ Bangura, “The Political and Cultural Dynamics of the Sierra Leone War,” 23–4.

¹⁸⁴ Coulter, *Bush Wives and Girl Soldiers* deals extensively with local perceptions of rebels, noting how they were described as “animals” or “demons” (14), “wicked” (212) and belonging to the bush (214). Stigma, shame, and disgrace are the descriptors most commonly used to describe women’s reintegration experiences, and that of their ‘rebel children’ (Coulter, chapter 7), whilst ‘(re)marginalization’ and re-mobilization have more often been used to describe men’s experiences (e.g. Utas, “Building a Future? The Reintegration and Re-marginalization of Youth in Liberia.”)

¹⁸⁵ Reno, *Warfare in Independent Africa*, 3.

¹⁸⁶ Also noted in, Peters, *War and the Crisis of Youth*.

informants. ‘Movement’ should be read through the decidedly apolitical definition of ‘an organized effort toward an objective that challenges the status quo’; not as reflective of an organic social movement or mass movement.¹⁸⁷

Similarly, the use of ‘revolution’ in the thesis reflects the term’s use by the group itself, not the ‘rapid, fundamental, and violent domestic change in the dominant values and myths of a society, in its political institutions, social structure, leadership, and government activities and policies’, as described by Huntington.¹⁸⁸ As Skocpol notes, revolutions are defined by a combination of structural transformation and massive class upheaval that sets them apart from ‘coups, rebellions, and even political revolutions and national independence movements.’¹⁸⁹ Neither structural transformation nor class upheaval transpired in Sierra Leone. Moreover, as the following chapters demonstrate, the RUF relied on many pre-existing structures and institutions in its governance efforts.

METHODOLOGY

This thesis is part of the growing trend toward fieldwork-driven research during and after conflict that seeks to unpack the so-called black box of rebellion. It is inspired methodologically by studies of insurgent group behaviour, such as those from Weinstein and Wood, which seek to fill the gap between war onset and the nature of its violence by focusing on the group as the unit of analysis.¹⁹⁰ Accordingly, it follows Kalyvas’s emphasis on examining microdynamics and interactions at different levels of analysis in order to identify endogenous mechanisms of war (also an important contribution from Wood’s ethnographic study of El Salvador).¹⁹¹ However, this study diverges from these scholar’s express focus on determinants of and variation in rebel violence and instead, provides a complementary analysis of group behaviour focused on the more mundane and less visible aspects of war-making. It reflects Rule’s insight that, ‘the purposes reflected in violent action

¹⁸⁷ Similarly, Morrison and Stevenson define ‘mass movement’ as a social grouping ‘organized for the attainment of relatively specific political goals, in which membership is based on an associational commitment to those goals...[rather than] a communal identity’, see, Morrison and Stevenson, “Political Instability in Independent Black Africa,” 349.

¹⁸⁸ As quoted in, Skocpol, “France, Russia, China.”

¹⁸⁹ Ibid.

¹⁹⁰ Weinstein, *Inside Rebellion*; Metelits, *Inside Insurgency*; Wood, *Insurgent Collective Action and Civil War in El Salvador*; Lidow, *Violent Order*; Staniland, “Explaining Cohesion, Fragmentation, and Control in Insurgent Groups”; Wood, “Rebel Capability and Strategic Violence Against Civilians.”

¹⁹¹ Kalyvas, *The Logic of Violence in Civil War*; Wood, *Insurgent Collective Action and Civil War in El Salvador*.

are rarely if ever antipathetic to or sharply discontinuous with participants' enduring, everyday interests.¹⁹²

Analysing how the basic material and organizational demands of the RUF structured strategic priorities and tactical decision-making is also a distinctly different emphasis from the extensive literature on civil war onset and collective action. In light of the foregoing literature review, this study moves away from the temporal focus on mobilization as a moment that precedes or initiates rebellion for two reasons. First, the implicit assumption that an identifiable distinction exists between pre-war and war's onset is problematic in the Sierra Leone case. Perhaps counter-intuitively, the onset of civil war in Sierra Leone occurred before any viable rebel group cohered. Only retrospectively can the RUF's incursions into the South and East be seen as substantively different from the many other low-level and sporadic incidents¹⁹³ of violence and conflict preceding this formal 'onset' of civil war. With some 382 members divided between two battalions, the RUF did not form a viable rebel group until after the war entered the country.

Second, focusing on motivation and onset fails to address the reality of mobilization, the vast majority of which must occur during and be sustained throughout conflict in order for rebellion to remain viable. Once war has begun, the very social and economic processes that ostensibly led to or enabled¹⁹⁴ onset are altered. As a result, the calculus for participation invariably changes. Fear, violence, and being forced to choose a 'side'—or assigned one by proximity and chance—can obviate many of the collective action problems identified in the theoretical literature.¹⁹⁵ In the RUF in particular, the vast majority of 'recruits' were coerced into joining. In effect, the civil war began with no social movement or collective action, its violence a function of dynamics internal to the conflict itself.

¹⁹² Rule, *Theories of Civil Violence*, 265–66.

¹⁹³ Ndorgboyosoi movement in Pujehun, c.f. Richards, *Fighting for the Rain Forest*, 8, 22. As well as a coup attempt on Joseph Momoh led by senior police officers, leading to gun battle in West Freetown, loyal RSLAF seizing large quantity of arms and ammunition: Anon., "Sierra Leone Reports Quelling of a Rebellion."

¹⁹⁴ See, e.g. Collier's evolution from the 'greed'-based causes of civil war to the 'opportunity'-oriented approach

¹⁹⁵ For contrasting examples of this, see e.g., Arjona and Kalyvas, "Recruitment into Armed Groups In Colombia: A Survey of Demobilized Fighters"; Arjona and Kalyvas, "Rebelling Against Rebellion"; Nordstrom, *A Different Kind of War Story*.

By looking at the space between the two emphases of onset and violence, this thesis concurs with Richards's assertion that 'war only makes sense as an aspect of social process'. And, it responds to his resultant call to 'place less emphasis on answering the question "what triggered war" and more emphasis on exploring how people *make* war and peace.'¹⁹⁶ Similarly, it heeds McAdam, Tarrow, and Tilly's criticism that many 'analysts of revolution love origins and outcomes but often neglect organization and dynamics'.¹⁹⁷ Examining the basic building blocks of rebellion in wartime provides an entry point that is empirically grounded and inductive, with practical and theoretical implications that complement, and occasionally challenge, the wealth of findings from the dominant research agenda.

The case selection of Sierra Leone and the RUF has been discussed above regarding its prominence in contemporary debates about and understandings of conflict in Africa, and civil wars more generally. Practically speaking, the country has also been stable enough to allow the level of in-depth and fine-grained fieldwork required to access sensitive armed group information, following 'do no harm' principles. This section describes this fieldwork in six parts. It outlines how the project was structured and interviewees were identified; it describes the interview process; and it discusses the implications of war crimes trial proceedings on these endeavours. It introduces wartime documents from ex-combatant archives as a key component of data triangulation; and it identifies challenges of confirming data and accessing an objective 'truth' in a post-conflict setting, and describes how these challenges are overcome. It concludes with a brief discussion of the ethical challenges of conducting post-conflict research in developing countries.

Fieldwork

Fieldwork was conducted over ten months from 2008 to 2010 in seven of 12 districts and Western Area. The study is nation-wide in two respects: strategic sites and interview locations were visited throughout the country in all three provinces; and interviewees were selected such that their wartime experiences span the map of RUF operations (Figure 1 illustrates research sites). The majority of interviews were conducted in urban areas—Freetown and the provincial capitals—where most ex-combatants have resettled since the war. Smaller towns and villages were included because valuable informants lived there, or because they were strategically important headquarters and battle sites during the war (e.g.

¹⁹⁶ Richards, *No Peace, No War*, 12–13.

¹⁹⁷ McAdam, McCarthy, and Zald, *Comparative Perspectives on Social Movements*, 1.

Sandiallu and Pendembu, Sankoh's headquarters; Bomaru and Koindu, sites of the first RUF invasions). An emphasis was also placed on Kailahun District, as it was the RUF stronghold throughout the war. The primary challenges confronting fieldwork were health problems (malaria) and road problems (rainy season). As a result, two planned research visits had to be scrapped: a second round of interviews in Kono was eliminated; and the trip to Pujehun District, site of the second RUF invasion could not be made. However, the loss of these visits did not compromise the findings.

The research question and data collection process was constructed in two phases. First-round research in 2008 included interviews with 50 former RUF, two-thirds of whom are women. It focused primarily on the social and logistical aspects of life in the RUF *vis-à-vis* the experiences of female combatants. This provided the basis for formulating a research question that focused on the organization's basic functionality—its social structure and the importance of logistics in its survival. Interviews in 2009-2010 more than doubled the informant pool and, instead of oversampling women, focused largely on targeting high-level members privy to the group's leadership and strategic operations. Informant selection was as thorough as possible, with the initial objective of interviewing the universe of able and willing ex-RUF. When the number of prospective informants outstripped interview capacity, long-serving members, and those with new or rare information were prioritized so that largely 'secret' data could be accessed and cross-checked.

Informants were identified through the snowball method, in which contacts were made through those already interviewed. The first interviews, in 2008, were conducted through a combination of personal contacts and small-scale community activists who helped identify participants. From the 50 informants this led to, roughly half a dozen high-level individuals helped to double the size of the subsequent interview network, totalling more than 100 informants in the second round of field research. The RUF is a closed social network hidden in plain view, thus, former members serving as research assistants played a key role both in identifying informants and in establishing trust and credibility to broker participation. In order to avoid introducing selection bias as a result of these assistants acting as gatekeepers—whether intentionally or not—two or more points of entry to the RUF network were used in all primary field sites (where five or more interviews were conducted). Moreover, once in a given field site, local RUF helped provide connections to other interviewees, and the present locations of key individuals named in interviews were inquired.

Interviewees ranged from top commanders to children and the bush wives who cared for them. They had spent anywhere from nine months to 12 years in the RUF. This ensured that different levels of the group's hierarchy and attendant experiences were represented, avoiding as much as possible bias from over-reliance on high-level sympathizers. All roles and functions in the RUF are represented in the interview pool. In most instances, several representatives are included for any given position, unit, mission, base camp, etc. Key posts, like Overall Signals Commander, Overall Black Guard Commander, and bodyguard to the leader, changed over time, but all individuals who filled those positions are included. Many of the RUF's political leaders are also included, although those top-ranking during the war have largely left the country. With the exception of Issa Sesay, the top military commanders have all been killed; accordingly, several of their wives have been interviewed, providing insights on three of the four commanders. Numerous interviews were also conducted with members of other armed factions (SLA, AFRC, WSB, and CDF), and with community leaders and civil society representatives, in order to balance in-group information with outsiders' observations. A wealth of secondary source material has also been instrumental in this respect.¹⁹⁸

Interviewing the RUF

Interviews were semi-structured and usually lasted about one hour, although several lasted much longer. Follow-up interviews were conducted with the most lucid and helpful informants. Many hours of informal discussions and social visits also inform the thesis but cannot be measured in the references or appendices. Formal interviews were conducted with a notepad and (in most cases) voice recorder, and were structured as mini-wartime life histories. This traced how and when ex-combatants came to join the RUF and their missions, movements, and assignments during the war. Each informant thus provided an individual lens onto the group's change over time, as well as variations between assignment areas and commanders. It also indicated what knowledge the interviewee had so that more pointed questions could target specific information. Follow-up questions targeted gaps in the literature on the organizational structure and internal and external governance of the

¹⁹⁸ See, in particular: TRC, *Witness to Truth*; Panel of Experts, *Report*; Prosecutor vs. Charles Ghankay Taylor, Judgment (2012); Smillie et al., *Heart of the Matter*; Richards, *Fighting for the Rain Forest*; Peters, *War and the Crisis of Youth*; Keen, *Conflict and Collusion*; Abdullah, *Between Democracy and Terror*; Fithen, "Diamonds and War"; Gberie, *A Dirty War in West Africa*.

group, and on the logistical procurement and provision of food, weapons, and other supplies.

Throughout fieldwork, interviewing was a dialectical process that sought out contradictions and refutations as much as confirmation and affirmation of findings. This ensured rigorous cross-checking of facts and revealed new questions to ask. The art of interviewing lies in uncovering information that the researcher does not know she does not know. This happened organically and by asking informants what they thought was most important to understanding the war and life in the RUF. Ex-combatant assistants were invaluable in identifying and connecting me with interviewees who had exclusive or ‘top secret’ knowledge. However, on numerous occasions, these exceptional informants were not revealed outright, but rather, the information they held was only uncovered in the interview process.

Almost all interviews were conducted one-on-one. A non-combatant female translator was present for the first two months of fieldwork to translate Krio and Temne, the dominant language in the North. Thereafter, all interviews were conducted in a combination of Krio, the *lingua franca* of Sierra Leone and of the RUF, and English. The exceptions were two interviewees—a *kamajor* initiator and a Bomaru village elder—who spoke only Mende, the dominant language in the South. Communicating in Krio was instrumental in building rapport and trust, and encouraging informants’ comfort and candour. It also protected their privacy, by eliminating a translator, and allowed for spontaneous, rapid-fire discussions between ex-combatants to emerge. Interviewing in Krio was also essential to examining how participants understand their experiences in their own terms, using the RUF’s own names and phrases.

Accordingly, questions introduced as little descriptive and ascriptive language as possible. Instead, they were simple and direct, and targeted concrete topics that could then be elaborated with greater nuance. Group discussions and social settings complemented this detail by capturing the *gestalt* of the war for its participants. For example, while one person might say simply that men captured in the Segbwema tank hi-jacking were executed or handed over to authorities, a group of two or three ex-combatants revisited the incident with boisterous conviction about why those prisoners were traitors and had to be killed. Group discussions were particularly useful for providing insight on ‘good’ experiences and

humorous episodes; heroic battle exploits; and moral assessments of bad commanders, bad husbands, lies, and ‘wickedness’. In these settings, I kept a low profile of listening and observing to avoid disrupting the flow of conversation.

The shadow of the Special Court

The greatest challenge for conducting interview-based fieldwork in Sierra Leone was the presence of the Special Court for Sierra Leone, which was active throughout the project. Established in 2000 by a joint agreement between the Government of Sierra Leone and the UN Security Council, and active from 2002, the Special Court prosecuted ‘persons who bear the greatest responsibility for serious violations of international humanitarian law and Sierra Leonean law...since 30 November 1996.’¹⁹⁹ As a result, 13 commanders were indicted from three factions—the RUF, CDF/*kamajors*, and AFRC/West Side Boys—including RUF leaders Foday Sankoh, Sam ‘Mosquito’ Bockarie, Issa Sesay, Morris Kallon, Augustine Gbao, and former Liberian president and leader of the National Patriotic Front of Liberia (NPFL), Charles Taylor. With the exception of Sankoh and Bockarie, whose charges were dropped after their deaths, all have been convicted and sentenced. At the time of fieldwork, however, their trials were on-going.

Ex-combatant networks were heavily affected by activities of the Court. Prosecution and defence teams combed the country to recruit former RUF as witnesses. This meant that many informants first assumed my research project was either related to the Court, or commensurate to its work. There was a danger that fear of prosecution by national or Special Courts might have prevented some ex-combatants from wanting to participate. This proved to be a problem only with lower-level members, who had limited familiarity with the Special Court or Truth and Reconciliation Commission. It was overcome through reassurances of confidentiality and by clearly explaining the project, as well as the limited mandate of the Court.

The risk with those who understood the Court and its legal processes, was that reluctant witnesses would make reluctant interviewees; and moreover, that those who did engage with the Court would have participation fatigue when it came to my research. Both proved to be a problem but were not insurmountable. With clear understanding of the research project and basic trust, several individuals who had avoided the Court entirely welcomed being

¹⁹⁹ *S/RES/1315 (2000)*.

interviewed as an alternative venue in which to be heard. Many former RUF had also refused to work with the prosecution teams, but were willing defence witnesses and research participants.

Compared to reluctant participation, interview fatigue presented a greater challenge, not least because it affected the most senior individuals with the most information. The only way to overcome it was through casual visits to build rapport and garner support for the research, and by being eminently respectful of interviewees' time. One of the most straightforward ways to respect people's time is by compensating them for it. This presented an ethical and practical challenge that was heightened by the presence of the Court. Practically speaking, my modest research budget could not meet the expectations that Court-related compensation had instilled in the ex-combatant community. The Taylor prosecution team was relatively flush with resources and had 'unfettered discretion' to provide witnesses payments 'ranging from medical supplies to maintenance, information, time wasted, school fees and rent', some of which were then duplicated in provisions from the Witness and Victims Service.²⁰⁰ The few individuals who demanded greater compensation than I was willing to provide were all prosecution witnesses.

Ethical concerns regarding payment of informants also had to be considered. It was important that people's participation in the research not 'cost' them anything. Compensation was appropriate given the fact that interviewees were sacrificing their time and work opportunities for a project they had little stake in. It is a double-bind, however, as informants must also provide information freely and willingly so that they are not 'selling' the stories they think the researcher wants to hear. In Sierra Leone in particular, victim narratives are incentivized through the aid industry. It is thus crucial to establish distance between the research and NGO hand-outs, both to avoid creating false expectations and to separate incentives from information. A compromise was struck by providing compensation for 'transport', knowing that many interviewees walked, and basic hospitality—such as meals, tea, and drinks—depending on interview time and context.

These concerns about incentivizing particular narratives contribute to the scepticism with which Special Court proceedings are treated in this thesis. Several defence witnesses complained that prosecution witnesses had lied or been paid to say certain things. Evidence

²⁰⁰ Mahony, *The Justice Sector Afterthought: Witness Protection in Africa*, 85.

to support this is thin, and obviously all witnesses have a vested interest in their version of events being certified as ‘truth’. However, interviews with ex-combatants who served as prosecution witnesses do reveal more practiced narratives, perhaps an inevitable result of having spent many days and weeks giving statements and appearing in Court. These individuals provided impassioned narratives that could run for minutes without prompting, but when questioned tangentially became more hesitant and forgetful—answering, in short, with normal interview response patterns. To respect witness confidentiality and maintain my distance from the Court, interviewees were not asked if they had testified, although some offered this information. Thus, the overall patterns of prosecution and defence narratives emerged only later, when quiet conversations and off-hand remarks revealed a fuller picture of who had testified and in what capacity.

Because they are designed to construct particular legal narratives and contradict one another, Special Court proceedings and testimonies have been used sparingly and with great care in this research. The Taylor trial judgment, despite the controversy surrounding the case, presents the most comprehensive overview of the RUF’s high-level logistical and strategic decision-making. As it summarizes proceedings, it presents conflicting narratives side by side. Where cited in the following chapters, this information has been triangulated and read against the grain using fieldwork data and secondary sources. Several of the key witnesses in the Taylor trial were also invaluable informants in this research. There are no major discrepancies between their testimony and our conversations, which have also been cross-checked against interview data from non-witnesses. This scepticism has helped to affirm that the Special Court record, combined with the Truth and Reconciliation Commission report, UN Panel of Experts report, and expert witness reports for the Special Court represent some of the most valuable and thorough research on contemporary conflict in Africa.²⁰¹

Rebel archives: the pen and the sword

One of the greatest research challenges posed by war crimes trials is the fear of prosecution it instils in group members, who burned and destroyed countless files after disarmament. Throughout the war, in the most inhospitable bureaucratic settings, the RUF kept detailed records of its governance, supplies, and actions. Only mission commands and arms and ammunition procurement were restricted to encoded radio messages. Everything else was

²⁰¹ TRC, *Witness to Truth*; Panel of Experts, *Report*; Prosecutor vs. Charles Ghankay Taylor, Judgment (2012).

written, attested to, and stamped by supervising officers, and then copied to concerned personnel. What little remains was largely picked up by legal teams. The archives included in this thesis thus represent the exceptional few that survived air raids and other attacks, as well as the country's dust-blown dry heat, and rainy seasons that turn everything to mould (see Figure 2).

These documents include the only ideology material known to date that precedes the 1995 *Footpaths to Democracy*, as well as training manuals, minutes from peace talk meetings, commands from the leader, and more banal memos and records of the group's daily operations. This material is been instrumental in corroborating data, as well as providing insight into how the RUF and its members imagined their project and all of its civic and military trappings. It provides a striking rejoinder to the allegation that ex-combatant narratives cannot be trusted, as the archives overwhelmingly confirm the veracity of many months of interviews that preceded discovery of these original documents.

Accessing 'truth' and verifying data

A number of steps were taken to avoid introducing bias during fieldwork and to verify data during analysis. Informant selection has been detailed above. All research was wholly independent, without assistance from or affiliation to NGO or government-related institutions. Information was thoroughly triangulated between multiple interviews conducted in diverse locations, and secondary sources that include both academic research and expert reports from international institutions. At the individual level, ensuring confidentiality and anonymity, building rapport through repeat visits, and not incentivizing information all helped broker informants' honesty.

Still, despite these precautions, Mkandawire asserts that, 'in a situation where individuals commit terrible crimes, the need for rationalization is enormous, so that one cannot take the *ex post* explanations of individuals as evidence for the sequence of their reasoning'.²⁰² This is an often-repeated concern from researchers²⁰³ of war, and from readers who question evidence selection processes and the reliability of narrative accounts. The criticism is only

²⁰² Mkandawire, "The Terrible Toll of Post-colonial 'Rebel Movements' in Africa," 186; Peters picks up on this same line of criticism/debate in the deployment of interview and narrative material in Peters, *War and the Crisis of Youth*, 32–33.

²⁰³ Paul Collier has made a similar allegation saying belligerents have a vested interest in misrepresentation, Collier and Hoeffler, "On Economic Causes of Civil War."

marginally valid, however. Any rationalization, confession, or other comment or reflection, on individual or group behaviour is necessarily going to be *ex post*. The notion that the truth is somehow more apparent amidst violence overlooks the fog of war, and multiplicity of motives and countervailing factors therein. Only after pitched violence has subsided can researchers move freely and safely between armed groups and civilians without putting either at greater risk. Moreover, many combatants do not see their wartime actions as ‘terrible crimes’. Fighters act whilst under the command of others, voluntarily or under duress; in self-defence or to protect civilians and comrades; in keeping with or violating directives; and often in defence or pursuit of goals and objectives that they deem noble and worthy. They thus tend to view their actions in light of the military codes of conduct that governed their behaviour then, and which continue to shape their recollection of wartime events today.

As a result, during post-war interviews many individuals justified their behaviour not in a new, sanitized *ex post* narrative, but in terms of the codes and norms of the movement. Former members of the RUF repeatedly explained how their actions were constrained or dictated by the group’s leaders and laws. Their ‘rationalization’, which Mkandawire rejects as evidence for understanding wartime events and reasoning, may be not only sincere and deeply felt, but also grounded in the wartime context the researcher hopes to illumine. It is thus not only worthy of analysis, but instrumental for understanding the historical realities these informants created. To suggest all ex-combatants seek the same revisionist rationalization of their actions oversimplifies the processes of memory and memorialising, history writing, and testimony giving.

Indeed, my expectation, following admonitions in the literature about the unreliability of ex-combatant narratives, was that nothing could be taken without lashings of salt; that informants would grandstand and lie, posture and obfuscate, all while presenting a narrative they thought I wanted to hear. Although interviewees generally did not engage in particularly critical or morally fraught self-reflection during our conversations, they were poignant and honest the vast majority of the time. In this regard, extensive interviews and diligent rapport building were exquisitely humbling. As interviewees provided me with ever more personal information, and accounts of practices to which they had been sworn to secrecy under threat of death, they exposed the prejudices and misinformation about conflict-related research.

Ethical challenges

The conduct of the research raised a number of ethical issues that need be acknowledged here. The basic tenets of ethical research require informed consent and doing ‘no harm’. To do no harm in conflict- and violence-related research requires delicacy at the individual level in the interview itself, at the community level and in the socio-political context, and in larger national and academic settings. Informed consent on the other hand is relatively straightforward to secure, but does not in and of itself guarantee ethical research or the informant’s wellbeing.

During fieldwork, informed consent was obtained by describing the research questions and objectives, and explaining guarantees of confidentiality and anonymity. Surprisingly few informants were concerned with what the information would be used for or how their identities would be protected. Rather, they wanted to know the basic terms of engagement: what was required of them and what they would get in return. This put the power imbalance of the researcher and ‘researched’ front and centre, and thus, full informed consent also required telling prospective participants approximately how much of their time would be required, and how little compensation was available (see discussion above on remuneration). It was made clear that the research was not tied to any aid or development projects, and was backed by extremely limited resources. The vast majority still chose to participate, and most took my forthrightness as a springboard to complain bitterly about abrogated promises in the past.

In the interview itself the most important ethical consideration is to avoid retriggering trauma and emotional distress. This is no small task when interviews focus on wartime experiences and life inside an armed group. Several strategies were implemented to protect informants’ emotional wellbeing. First, the setting of the interview was private and quiet. Second, where a translator was required, care was taken to ensure they would not intimidate the interviewee or otherwise make them uncomfortable—considerations ranged from basic tact and decorum, to avoiding hidden social tensions related to age, class, gender, education level, religion, etc. For this reason, a young (about 30 years old), single mother of one with a Form 2 education from the local area, but not from the participants’ community, was chosen as a translator. She was demographically similar to the women interviewed in 2008 and non-threatening to the men. What she lacked in translation skills, she made up for with

her discretion and ability to soften the foreignness of the interview situation. Third, in discussing violence, a non-directive approach was taken that avoided explicit questions about personal experiences of violence—if and how it had been inflicted by or on interviewees. Instead, violence stories emerged organically, if and when informants were comfortable sharing them.

Fourth, despite these precautions, pain and upset often occur when people talk about difficult or tragic experiences. This can go both ways, affecting the interviewee or destabilising the interviewer. Once a semi-structured interview begins, the researcher loses a great deal of control; they cannot prevent an individual from crying any more than they can prevent them from describing torture in gruesome detail. It is the researcher's responsibility to have the emotional fortitude to maintain their own composure and provide a safe and secure, reassuring tenor throughout the interview. To do this, I responded to tears, and any other sign of visible distress or discomfort, with respectful quiet, reassurances that we could end the interview, and where it felt appropriate, physical contact, such as a hand on the knee or arm. Fortunately, no interviewees ended their narrative when they began crying. This allowed me to be a compassionate audience for their emotions (to a person it was related to the loss of loved ones, usually parents), and to facilitate their emotional recovery as the conversation was redirected. This relates to the fifth point: ending on good terms is an important component to ensuring that interviews have not inadvertently unsettled the participant by bringing up traumatic memories and then ending abruptly. To this end, I brought interviews up to the present day before finishing, concluding with reflective questions on informants' personal assessments of the war, challenges they face post-disarmament, and their hopes and plans for their family's and children's future.

Not all ethical problems stem from individuals' experiences of victimhood, however. Just as the researcher must remain composed in the face of horror and sadness, so too must they be able to confront callousness and confessions of violence. Almost all informants in this study treated life and death with respect. However, where informants expressed disregard for human dignity or described crimes they committed in wartime, I concealed any discomfort, and never maligned their actions, nor passed judgment on their narrative. This is important for both ethical and practical (quality of research) reasons. Ethically, the interview put them in the position of describing their story, making it unfair to pass judgment on them for fulfilling the researcher's request. Respecting their emotional security and confidence,

however, does not require abandoning one's morals, nor condoning or laughing along with violence. Rather, I listened quietly and probed with respectful questions that often revealed deeper insight into informants' actions—be it their own trauma in the war, or shame and self-reflection hidden beneath coping-mechanism bravado.

It is not the job of the researcher to assess guilt or assign blame in the interview or in the final product. Doing so in a post-conflict setting violates not only the academic norms of objectivity and impartiality, but also the trust of the participants. This is not to say that researchers cannot be engaged and critical activists, but to do so requires contending with several challenges. Foremost is preserving academic rigour. Further, post-conflict societies are still (re)writing their war histories; and researchers must be sensitive to the role they play in that process. Third, acknowledging one's positionality is essential in order to avoid appropriating or misrepresenting others' experiences, and inadvertently silencing them or reinforcing informants' subalternity.

To avoid criminalising informants and doing harm to their narratives, moralistic and legalistic language have not been superimposed on their words and concepts in this thesis. As much as possible, the quotes included herein are representative of a larger reality, while also allowing individual voices and narratives to shine through. The thesis thus seeks to humanize, rather than sanitize, war and its participants. To this end, it follows the basic precept that all informants should be able to recognize at least part of their 'truth' within its pages.

To protect informants now and in the future in their home country, all names have been replaced with pseudonyms, with the exception of public figures and top commanders who have been killed. Individuals named in other secondary sources and SCSL proceedings are not considered public figures and, though their names appear elsewhere, their anonymity here has been preserved. Similarly, names have been redacted from all archive documents; and equal care was taken during fieldwork to protect data (for example, when my computer was stolen, no interview notes or audio files were stored on it as a basic precaution).

Protecting informants' privacy in their own communities is more complicated than keeping their interviews out of unauthorized hands. A number of steps were taken to avoid attracting undue attention, 'outing' participants in their communities as former members of

the RUF (or other armed groups), and thus potentially stigmatizing them. First, I was somewhat vague to casual observers about the nature of the research, telling them only that I was studying people's experience of the war in X. As a bonus, this sometimes translated into their own offer to participate. Second, interviews were conducted in discreet locations, of the informants' choosing wherever possible, allowing them to stay home/away from home/etc. where they would not be seen. Third, I was generally friendly and talked casually to a broad swathe of people, particularly neighbours and family, to help temper potential jealousies and suspicions and distract from the interviews themselves. Within the RUF network, I also took simple precautions to protect informants' confidentiality by not offering information about who else had been interviewed. This required a delicate balance between connecting long-lost wartime friends or acknowledging my prominent role in the social network on the one hand, while remaining suitably aloof about the particulars of who provided what information, on the other.

Finally, the last major ethical consideration is the researcher's care of self. As mentioned above, it is essential to conduct interviews with as much focus and composure as possible so that the interviewer, while never fully in control of a given conversation, is at least in control of the larger project and setting. Accordingly, it is as important for the researcher to feel safe as it is for the interviewee. This is easier said than done. Finding composure and compassion was never a problem during fieldwork, and to avoid burnout, necessary respite was found in social settings, road trips between field sites, and basic daily joys, such as marketing and warm bucket showers. I tried to avoid having to conduct interviews while wracked with post-malarial fatigue or travellers' sickness, and was marginally successful in looking after my health. Some safety and control challenges arose around alcohol and drugs, as several interviewees arrived high or drunk (or both) to interviews. I conducted the interviews regardless, as, whether they had an addiction problem or wanted to blunt their anxiety about the interview, it was beyond my purview to do much about it. Other concerns arose around possible compromises to personal safety when interviews were in unfamiliar locations, took place at night, or involved several unknown informants. I avoided these situations as much as possible, not least because, had anything happened to me, it would have posed an equally grave problem for those involved. As a result, I never felt threatened by my informants and, indeed, the close working relationships garnered trust and close protection in Freetown and in the provinces.

OUTLINE OF THE THESIS

The chapters that follow are structured in two parts. The following chapter presents a brief historical background of the civil war in Sierra Leone. It details, in broad terms, the pre-war history from the end of colonialism through the rise of Siaka Stevens's one-party autocratic 'shadow state', the structural causes leading to war, and the origins of the RUF. The war story itself traces the three phases of the war, from the invasion and conventional warfare of Phase I, through the guerrilla Phase II, and closing with Phase III, the unification of the army and rebels in the 'People's Army' and the final cessation of hostilities.

Part two of the thesis examines the organizational capacity of the RUF. It does this through three thematic chapters. Chapter three examines the mobilization and recruitment of the RUF—how the group was populated with members. Chapter four details how order and cohesion were established within the RUF as a new military organization. It describes the hierarchy, ideology, and laws of the group. The chapter also lays out the dual governance demands of rebellion: the command and control of fighters, and the governance and administration of civilians. Chapter five looks at how, once established, this militarized social order was enforced and discipline maintained. It examines the disjuncture between RUF rhetoric and action, and describes how violence was institutionalized and rewarded within the organization. It presents a new approach to understanding wartime violence as a combination of incentives and control failures.

The third part of the thesis shifts the focus to the RUF's material viability over the course of the war. It presents three chapters on the basic resources that sustained rebellion: food, weapons, and diamonds. Each chapter accomplishes the dual task of, first, examining in close detail how materials were produced, procured, and managed over the course of the war, emphasising changes and challenges over time. And second, how this material capacity influenced the tactical decision-making and organizational dynamics of the group. Chapter six, on food, reveals for the first time the RUF's complex civilian governance system and how it was structured to support the military enterprise. Chapter seven examines the procurement of arms and ammunition, bringing into the analysis the role of Charles Taylor and other international patrons, while contextualising their influence in light of more mundane dynamics on the ground. Chapter eight, on diamonds, revisits high-profile debates about the role of mineral resources in war from the underexamined angle of local extraction and military management of resources. It traces the RUF's changing relationship with

diamonds, and identifies striking parallels between wartime resource exploitation and past trends in the country's mining industry. Diamonds are used as the lens for the contest in the organization between personal power and public goods provision. In its entirety, part three illustrates how the pursuit of material viability informed the violence and governance of the RUF, shaping the group's military strategy and organizational strength. It fleshes out through description of wartime processes the in-built contradictions explored in part two.

Together, the empirical parts further illumine the interdependent nature of organizational and material viability in armed groups and the processes that sustain rebellion from within. The conclusion draws out these findings and examines their implications for the study of non-state armed groups in Africa and globally, in civil wars as well as in regional and international conflicts. It calls for a reinvigoration of what might be called 'low security studies'—the militarization of the mundane that makes war viable and potentially self-sustaining at the local level. It explores how a better understanding of these microdynamics and their relationship with pre-war history can inform our understanding of armed group behaviour and incentives to improve the prospects for peace.

FIELDWORK MAP

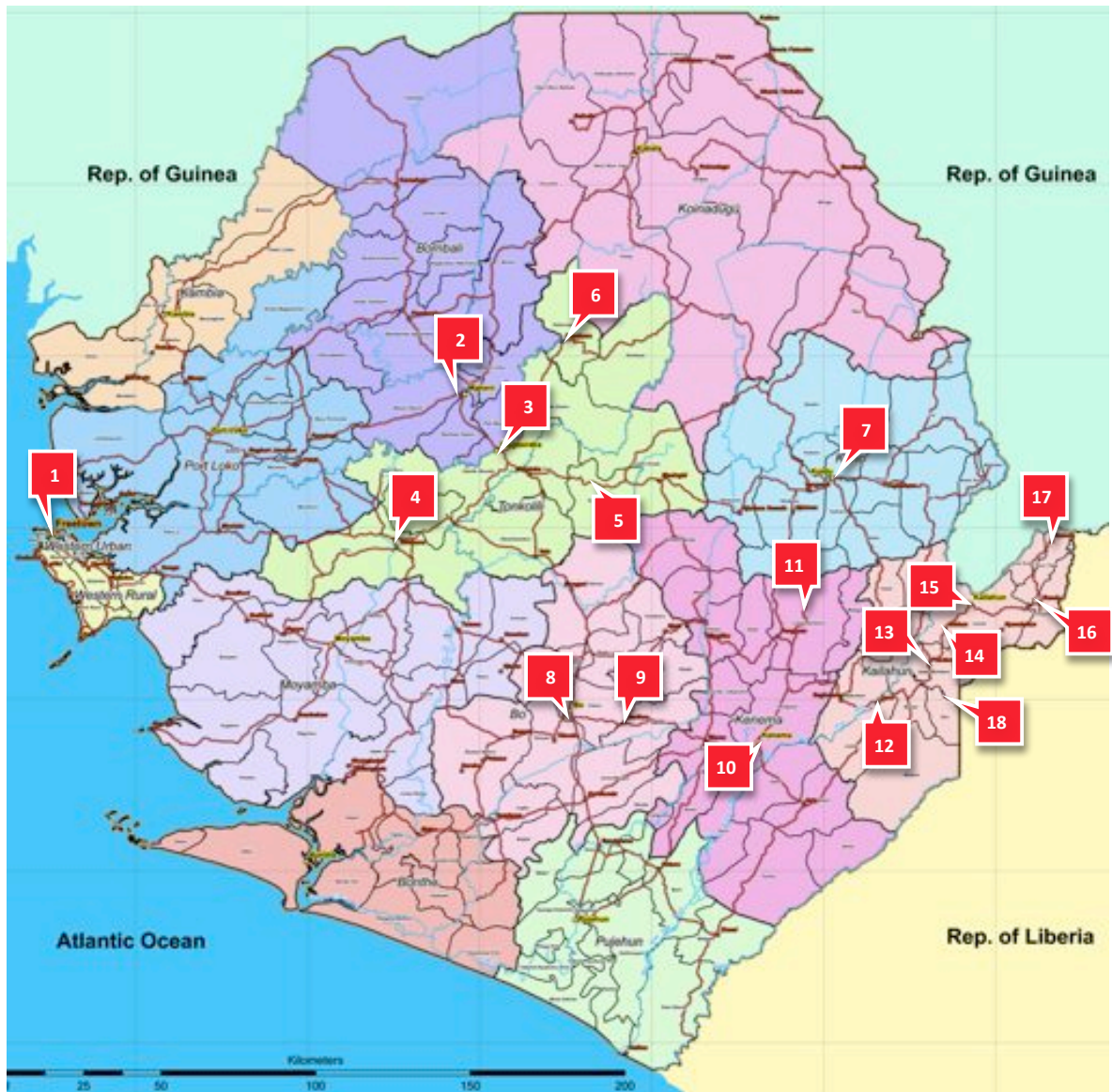


Figure 1: Interview sites

1. Freetown (2008, 2009, 2010)
2. Makeni (2008, 2009, 2010)
3. Magburaka (2008, 2009); Mapaki (2008)
4. Mile 91 (2008)
5. Makali (2008)
6. Bumbuna (2009)
7. Koidu (2009)
8. Bo (2010)
9. Gerihun (2010)
10. Kenema (2010)
11. Tongo Field (2010)
12. Daru (2010)
13. Pendembu (2010)
14. Ngiehun (2010)
15. Kailahun (2010)
16. Buedu (2010)
17. Koindu; Mendekorma, Liberia (2010)
18. Baiwalla; Bomaru (2010)

WORKING WITH REBEL ARCHIVES

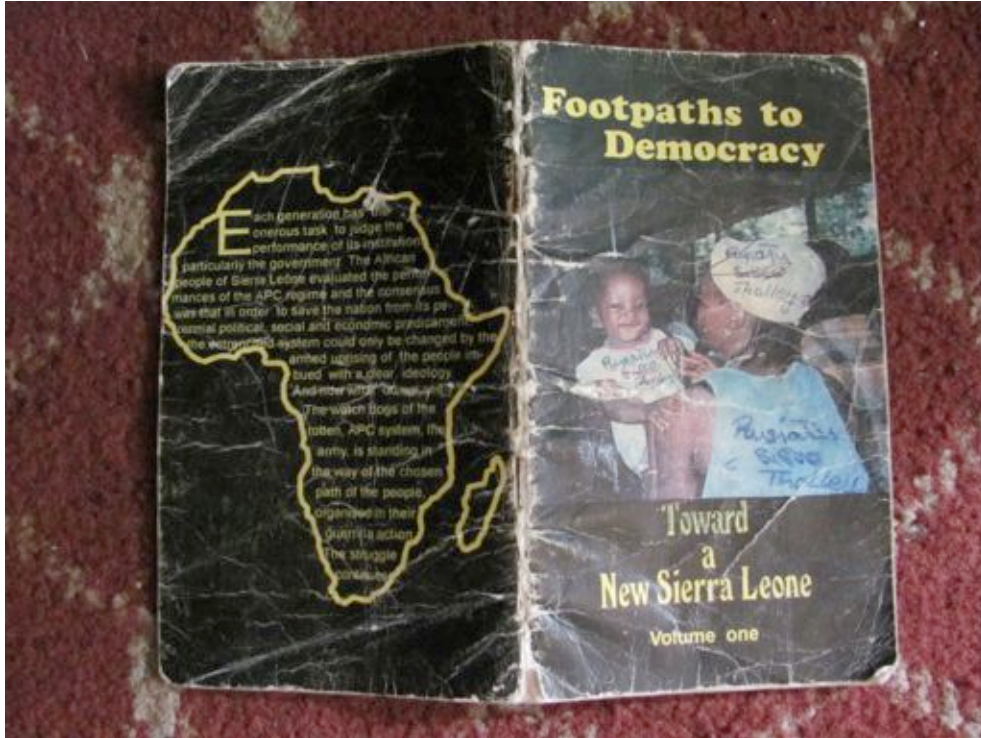


Figure 2.1: An original copy of *Footpaths to Democracy* (2010).



Figure 2.2: Archival research in Kailahun (2010).

CHAPTER 2

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

[The Sierra Leonean state] has not...achieved either legitimacy, or effectiveness, nor anything more than an artificial and very possibly transient political stability.

Christopher Clapham, 1982¹

This chapter provides a brief overview of the underlying and proximate causes of the Sierra Leone civil war and a succinct history of the war itself. The first section presents the pre-war history and the creation of the ‘shadow state’. It examines state failure and ingrained-but-shrinking patronage systems that led to demands for violent revolution. The second section focuses on the proximate causes of rebellion and the formation of the RUF. It identifies the elite players and factors that translated disillusionment and dissent into full-scale rebellion. The third and fourth sections provide a basic overview of the war, and are separated by the advent of the 1996 elections and subsequent Armed Forces Revolutionary Council (AFRC) coup, which united the RUF with their former adversary, the Sierra Leone Army (SLA), under the banner of the ‘People’s Army’.

UNDERLYING CAUSES

Regularly relied on as ‘a paradigmatic example of a resource-driven or loot-seeking conflict’, the Sierra Leone civil war has also been noted for being ‘rooted in decades of political misrule and corruption by a parasitic state elite and exacerbated by ensuing socioeconomic deterioration and institutional decay.’² The failure of the state to provide basic goods and services to its population made the regime the target of popular protests, and ultimately, armed insurrection, precisely when it had the lowest capacity to respond to these demands and threats to its stability.³ This historical overview

¹ Clapham, *Private Patronage and Public Power*, 89.

² Ballentine, “Beyond Greed and Grievance,” 261.

³ *Ibid.*, 261–2.

emphasises the state's mismanagement and squandering of resources alongside other historical, economic, and political factors that imploded in the 1990s into civil war.

In his history of warfare in Atlantic Africa, Thornton describes pre-Mende Sierra Leone as 'divided into numerous kingdoms, constantly at war, but greatly integrated commercially by their water network that made for large and active markets and considerable regional trade, even in basic commodities.'⁴ By 1462, Portuguese traders had established coastal trading posts at *Serra Lyoa*—now Sierra Leone's Western Area—but did not engage in raiding or seek to establish control due to African naval superiority.⁵ In the mid-16th Century, Mane armies invaded from southern Mali and consolidated control over present-day Liberia and southern Sierra Leone, later forming the Mende ethno-linguistic group, with its strong warrior tradition, that continues to dominate the Southern province and parts of the East. Dutch, English, and French traders followed with trading posts and forts established along the coast in the 1500-1600s.⁶ The 1700s saw Islamic jihad sweep through the region from the North, beginning to shape the country's diverse present-day religious demographics, while the European slave trade turned the coastal trading sites into garrisons of human commerce.

The first slaves brought to North America were taken in 1652 from Sierra Leone, which served as a source and export port for thousands of victims of the slave trade until 1787. That year, some 400 'Black Poor' from the African American, Caribbean, and British diaspora came from England and 'returned' to Sierra Leone, where they held democratic elections, extending the franchise to both men and women in the nascent 'Province of Freedom'. They were followed by freed-slave settlers from Nova Scotia in 1792, and Jamaica Maroons in 1800.⁷ An official British colony was established in 1808, thereafter reversing the country's position in the slave trade as thousands of former slaves 'returned' to the burgeoning Krio community.⁸ Freetown became a pastiche of British and diverse West African influences, and an Anglophone educational capital following the creation of Fourah

⁴ Thornton, *Warfare in Atlantic Africa*, 42.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 43.

⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷ Fyfe, "Reflections on a Sierra Leone Bicentenary," 411.

⁸ The Slave Trade Act of 1807 officially abolished the British slave trade, but the institution of slavery was not outlawed until passage of the British Slavery Abolition Act in 1833. Domestic slavery in Sierra Leone, however, was practiced throughout the 19th Century and not abolished until 1928.

Bay College in 1876.⁹ Establishment of the British Protectorate in 1886 incorporated the ‘hinterland’ and marked a dramatic shift in colonial power, from Krio civil servant dominance to that of white British officers and rural chiefs.¹⁰ As a result of paramount chieftaincy—the vehicle for indirect rule—the rural elite was crystallized, strengthening the class divide between chiefly families and the peasant population, and sharpening the contest for power between the Krio colony and ‘tribal’ Protectorate.¹¹

Independence from the Crown was granted in 1961, ten years after ratification of the Constitution uniting the two domains, and political power was transferred to the Protectorate-based Sierra Leone Peoples Party (SLPP). The SLPP cobbled together national unity by continuing colonial patronage to rural chiefs.¹² Just a decade after the pre-independence elections of 1957 brought ‘Father of the Nation’ Sir Milton Margai to power, the 1967 elections heralded the country’s first electoral turnover. Siaka Stevens led the Northern-dominated All People’s Congress breakaway faction to defeat incumbent Albert Margai, who had succeeded his late brother as head of state and leader of the Mende-dominated SLPP. Despite its long history of democratic competition (over 100 years in the colony) and promising two-party democratic structure, Clapham notes the state’s continued failure to establish legitimacy and efficacy.¹³ Fyfe writes, ‘political independence brought no structural change. Sierra Leone remained the fragmented country it had been under colonial rule. Only the labels changed—‘Western Areas’ for ‘Colony’, ‘Provinces’ for ‘Protectorate’.’¹⁴

Long-standing resource extraction and exploitation increased inequality and the socio-economic marginalization of the rural majority. With domestic slavery not abolished until 1928, and a long history of forced labour practices and social domination in rural areas by chiefs—who brokered the law, land, community membership, and the relationship with the colonial state—rural tensions mounted and led to frequent riots.¹⁵ Until 1935, Sierra Leone’s primary export commodity was rice, the national dietary staple. In 1930 however, a geological survey team discovered alluvial diamonds in Kono District, and within five years,

⁹ Fyfe, “Reflections on a Sierra Leone Bicentenary,” 412.

¹⁰ Kandeh, “Contradictory Class Functionality of the ‘Soft’ State.”

¹¹ Clapham, *Private Patronage and Public Power*, Fyfe, “Reflections on a Sierra Leone Bicentenary.”

¹² Pham, *Child Soldiers, Adult Interests*, 33.

¹³ Clapham, *Private Patronage and Public Power*.

¹⁴ Fyfe, “Reflections on a Sierra Leone Bicentenary,” 417.

¹⁵ Richards, “Green Book Millenarians?”

DeBeers had secured the Sierra Leone Selection Trust mining concession (SLST).¹⁶ A major source of pressure became the diamond rush in eastern Sierra Leone, which displaced farmers from arable land and sapped labour reserves, as rural populations, and particularly young men, increasingly sought the cash allure of prospecting.¹⁷

DeBeers officially had a monopoly on the country's diamond sector, yet by 1956 an estimated 75,000 illicit diamond miners were digging in the SLST area.¹⁸ Both DeBeers' reliance on South African 'soldiers of fortune' and willingness to buy through Liberia to staunch smuggling presaged the role of diamonds in the conflict, as elaborated in Chapter eight.¹⁹ Rapid national economic growth—7 percent from 1950-1972—occurred at the expense of rural livelihoods, as mining investments and import substitution transformed Sierra Leone from being rice-exporting to import-dependent.²⁰ As a result of changes in the mining sector, farmland became increasingly unavailable for cultivation, as paramount chiefs consolidated power and exploited local citizens for labour.²¹

The 1967 elections, which Stevens won by the slimmest margins, inaugurated a year of political instability. Following declaration of martial law, a military coup,²² and a mutiny, Stevens was only sworn in as prime minister in April 1968. He swiftly centralised control, imprisoning the putschists and agitators from the interregnum. He used heavy-handed patronage and built the SLA into an ethnic cabal with lax military requirements but rigorous political standards for inclusion.²³

Stevens deployed his thuggish security regime to intimidate and eliminate political opponents. In 1978, he established a one-party state with himself as president, and through his extensive patronage network, eliminated avenues to competition.²⁴ Reno describes this as

¹⁶ Smillie et al., *Heart of the Matter*, 88.

¹⁷ Zack-Williams, "Crisis and Despair," 23.

¹⁸ Smillie et al., *Heart of the Matter*, 38.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 26.

²⁰ Zack-Williams, "Crisis and Despair," 23.

²¹ Smillie et al., *Heart of the Matter*, 4.

²² Then-army lieutenant Sam Hinga Norman was responsible for arresting Stevens and other newly elected officials (Koroma, "The Crisis That Shook Sierra Leone's Political Foundation.") He then attended officers school in the UK, before becoming leader of the *kamajors* and Deputy Minister of Defence under President Kabbah (1998-2004).

²³ Clapham, *Private Patronage and Public Power*; Pham, *Child Soldiers, Adult Interests*, 38–41.

²⁴ Reno, *Warlord Politics*, 257; Reno, *Corruption and State Politics in Sierra Leone*, 229; Zack-Williams, "The Political Economy of Civil War," 144.

a 'shadow state' in which the 'patronage system (was) rigidly organised and centred on the ruler's control over resources...(binding) potential rivals to him in exchange for largesse'.²⁵ APC largesse was derived entirely from the SLST, which Stevens nationalised as the National Diamond Mining Corporation (NDMC), giving himself and his business partner Jamil Mohammed near total control of the Kono District diamond resources.²⁶

This enabled Stevens to distribute plots to loyal chiefs and APC officials; those who refused to be bought 'were removed from office or punished'.²⁷ Rather than focusing on eliminating illicit mining, he sought to exercise total control over its benefits. In 1970, before nationalization, official production was more than two million carats. By 1980 it had fallen to 595,000 carats; and in 1988, after Stevens collapsed his shadow state apparatus, the number was just 48,000.²⁸ Diamonds have never been mined for local benefit in Sierra Leone, and were often sold for foreign currency, decreasing the chances of revenues being reinvested into the country. Exploited by local chiefs and APC outsiders, the rural poor became alienated from the economy.²⁹ State-imposed savings programmes³⁰ and imported rice subsidies that diminished local producers' prices added insult to injury.³¹ Farmers resorted to agricultural smuggling, or simply switched to subsistence farming to withstand economic pressure and labour shortages.³²

As the state retracted, the economic downward spiral decimated public spending. From 1980-1987 health and education spending decreased by 60 percent. Stevens's personalized shadow state was strong, but the formal state apparatus was vacuous politically, militarily, and economically. When Stevens retired in 1985, he did nothing to transfer the patronage structure to his successor, Brigadier Joseph Momoh, dooming his pretences of real power. Writing in 1982, before Momoh's installation, Clapham notes presciently that tenuousness of the degeneration of clientelism into a 'mutually supportive oligarchy', the fragility of

²⁵ Reno, *Warlord Politics*, 2. The "shadow state" is similar in description to Bayart's *l'état rhisome* (Bayart, *The State in Africa: The Politics of the Belly*.)

²⁶ Smillie et al., *Heart of the Matter*, 5.

²⁷ Zack-Williams, "The Political Economy of Civil War," 145.

²⁸ Smillie et al., *Heart of the Matter*, 5; Zack-Williams, "Crisis and Despair," 24.

²⁹ Reno, *Corruption and State Politics in Sierra Leone*, 115.

³⁰ Zack-Williams, "The Political Economy of Civil War," 145.

³¹ Zack-Williams, "Crisis and Despair," 24–25.

³² *Ibid.*, 26.

which could 'be revealed as a result of economic crisis or of some chance political act such as a riot or a military coup.'³³

Momoh was selected for his political weakness and ineptitude, leaving Stevens to enjoy his retirement without fearing prosecution for the violence and corruption of his regime.³⁴ While in power, Stevens had packed the military with ethno-regional loyalists and concentrated real force in executive paramilitaries.³⁵ Accordingly, Momoh struggled to buy these soldiers' loyalty, and was forced to slash other government salaries, as well as the education, health, and economic sector budgets, just to maintain rice supplies and housing subsidies for the military.³⁶ The country went from a US\$4 million surplus in 1979 to a deficit of US\$103 million in just four years.³⁷ This prompted Momoh to declare a state of economic emergency in 1987 in order to 'crack-down on corruption, gold and diamond smuggling, (and) the hoarding of essential commodities and local currency'.³⁸

These stern policy objectives spurred a coup attempt in 1987, for which diamond magnate Jamil Mohammed was exiled, ironically leaving the diamond sector in greater disarray.³⁹ The so-called crackdown also resulted in opportunistic exploitation by the soldiers enforcing it. Rather than consolidating Momoh's control, the SLA gained power and independence. Keen describes the Emergency as successful only 'in providing profitable distraction for an increasingly restive army.'⁴⁰ Finally, to meet IMF financial demands, Momoh mortgaged the diamond fields to foreign firms that were given selective exemptions and little oversight for their operations.⁴¹

These international partners solicited by Momoh failed to engage in genuine, revenue-generating mining operations. Official diamond exports in 1988 hit a shockingly paltry all-time low of US\$22,000. Meanwhile, smuggling into Liberia, which had minimal mining operations at the time, was thriving with US\$50 million in exports. Momoh waged military campaigns Operation Clear All and Operation Clean Slate in Kono District, expelling 10,000

³³ Clapham, *Private Patronage and Public Power*, 91.

³⁴ Reno, *Warlord Politics*, 116.

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ Keen, *Conflict and Collusion*, 31.

³⁷ Zack-Williams and Riley, "The Coup and Its Consequences," 92.

³⁸ Zack-Williams, "The Political Economy of Civil War," 146.

³⁹ Reno, *Warlord Politics*, 118; Smillie et al., *Heart of the Matter*, 5.

⁴⁰ Keen, *Conflict and Collusion*, 33.

⁴¹ Reno, *Warlord Politics*, 119.

miners in an attempt to weaken what he considered the ‘treasonous, coup-plotting’ Lebanese businessmen.⁴² In the process, he also drove off another 25,000 illicit miners.⁴³ Momoh’s ill-conceived anti-mining military campaigns proved to be one of ‘the best recruiting tool(s) the rebels had’.⁴⁴

After alienating diamond miners and traders in the East, Momoh exacerbated his rural unpopularity by executing his deputy, Francis Minah, a Mende from Pujehun District in the South, for allegedly supporting the 1987 coup plot. According to Zack-Williams, ‘in one swoop, Momoh became alienated from two of the most powerful ethnic groups in the country: the Temnes from the northern and central areas of the country, and the Mendes from the South...about 60 percent of Sierra Leoneans’.⁴⁵

With debts totalling nearly US\$1.2 billion, the country was ranked last on the UN Human Development Index, where it would remain until 2009.⁴⁶ Internal dissent forced Momoh to convene a Constitutional Committee that in 1991 recommended a return to multipartyism, which Parliament approved. However, while Freetown was making moves toward democratization, the rural political landscape looked very different. At the frontlines of economic crisis, Liberian refugee influxes, and National Patriotic Front of Liberia (NPFL) cross-border raids, many rural residents say they knew war was coming.⁴⁷

BACKGROUND TO THE RUF

The founding members of the RUF had their revolutionary roots in two urban youth spaces in Freetown: the university campus, and urban *potes*.⁴⁸ *Potes* are local bars—often little more

⁴² Keen, *Conflict and Collusion*, 33.

⁴³ Reno, *Warlord Politics*, 121.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ Zack-Williams, “The Political Economy of Civil War,” 146.

⁴⁶ Zack-Williams and Riley, “The Coup and Its Consequences,” 92.

⁴⁷ According to a CDF commander who knew Foday Sankoh from his days as a photographer in Segbwema, in addition to warnings from the Liberian refugees streaming into Sierra Leone, leaflets and flyers were being brought into the country saying Sankoh would come with a revolution (Johnny Jalloh, CDF Commander; also Alfred Wureh, Agriculture Agent (civilian); Alice Kargbo, Women’s Deputy Overall Medical Commander).

⁴⁸ Abdullah notes the presence of a *pote* code of honour, and describes it as an ‘extension of the general clientelist relationship’ in society (Abdullah, *Between Democracy and Terror*, 47.) Today many *potes* and area hang-outs also post strict ‘codes of conduct’ that explicitly forbid bad language, fighting, and theft, among other things, despite their reputation for just such behaviour (fieldnotes, Aug. 2010). This disconnect between the self-imagining and self-policing of those who frequent *pote* spaces, and their image or perception in society, parallels the rhetoric-and-action gap in the RUF.

than makeshift benches with a sound system and drinks—where young men pass the time discussing politics, listening to popular music (in the 1980s the resistance music of Bob Marley and Fela Kuti was ubiquitous), and enjoying leisurely gambling, drinking, and *jamba*-smoking (marijuana).⁴⁹ Radical students at the university—Fourah Bay College (FBC) on a hilltop above the city—served as the interlocutors between street politics and campus activism. ‘Politics of confrontation’ took root from 1977, as radical activists increasingly clashed with Stevens’s APC regime and ruling party thugs.⁵⁰ At FBC, the one-party state responded with harsh political repression, appointing a former police chief as warden of students, sending State Security Defence forces (the former ISU) to sweep residence halls, and finally, decreeing a complete moratorium on student politics.⁵¹

This incited increasing radicalism and protests throughout the mid-1980s. To keep what was deemed ‘anti-social’ behaviour in check, students set up a ‘militaristic’ internal ‘people’s tribunal’⁵², a control mechanism that would be echoed by the RUF ‘People’s Court’ (see Chapter 4). Growing campus radicalism occurred at the same time the street discourse began openly calling for revolution. In *potes*, urban parlance shifted from the individual—signified in *rarray boy*, a petty thief or hustler; and *savis man*, a streetwise intellectual—to the collective *man dem*, akin to ‘the people’, and ‘comrades’ and ‘brothers and sisters.’⁵³

In 1985, several expelled student leaders, who had taken a handful of earlier regional political trips, travelled via Ghana to Libya. Gaddafi hosted them at Benghazi⁵⁴ for ideology training and advanced guerrilla military training.⁵⁵ Among the group was Foday Sankoh, a disgruntled photographer and former army corporal in the signal (radio) unit who had

⁴⁹ Ibid., 45–7. The criminal elements present in *potes* are often emphasized in the literature, but, as social spaces dominated by poor, young men, they are not intrinsically criminal or subversive.

⁵⁰ Rashid, “Student Radicals, Lumpen Youth,” 75–7.

⁵¹ Abdullah, *Between Democracy and Terror*, 45; Rashid, “Student Radicals, Lumpen Youth,” 81–3.

⁵² Abdullah, *Between Democracy and Terror*, 49; Rashid, “Student Radicals, Lumpen Youth,” 81.

⁵³ Abdullah, *Between Democracy and Terror*, 46–7; Rashid, “Student Radicals, Lumpen Youth,” 79 fn17. Today, urban youth and ex-combatants often call their peers *bra* (brother) and *bra dem* (my brothers), indicating the shift away from radical collective identification and a (re)turn to highly personalized patrimonial support networks.

⁵⁴ Richards, *Fighting for the Rain Forest*.

⁵⁵ TRC, “Volume 3A,” 93–5. Libya had already supported Museveni’s National Revolutionary Movement in Uganda, military factions in Chad, and the All-African People’s Revolutionary Party led by Kwame Ture (formerly, Stokely Carmichael) in Guinea; was training aspiring revolutionaries from Burkina Faso, Gambia, Ghana, and Liberia; and had been making inroads into urban peri-political spaces in Sierra Leone since the late 1970s Abdullah, *Between Democracy and Terror*, 51–2. To this day the state ferries that run between Lungi, where the airport is located, and the Freetown peninsula are Libyan-donated.

served jail time for his alleged role in a coup plot against Siaka Stevens.⁵⁶ By this time, most of the student intelligentsia in Freetown had abandoned the armed struggle option in light of shaky progress toward political pluralism (ultimately leading to the 1991 constitutional amendment).

Meanwhile, in Libya, Sankoh built a close, politically prudent partnership with Charles Taylor and persevered with other ‘hardened militarists’ in their quest to bring armed rebellion to Sierra Leone.⁵⁷ On Christmas Eve 1989, Taylor’s NPFL—a small militia of just 168 entrepreneurial fighters and mercenaries of revolution—invaded Nimba County, along the Liberian-Ivoirian border.⁵⁸ Recruited from training camps in Libya and the ex-pat population in Côte d’Ivoire, the group was bolstered by Burkinabe mercenaries loaned by military president Blaise Compaore, as well as by Libyan-trained Sierra Leoneans who would soon form the top command of the RUF. In hierarchical order, they were Foday Sankoh, Abu Kanu, Rashid Mansaray, Patrick Lamin, Mohammed ‘Zino’ Tarawalie, and Mike Lamin (no relation to Patrick).⁵⁹ Taylor planned to assist the Sierra Leone revolution after overthrowing the government of Samuel Doe and consolidating power in Liberia.⁶⁰ However, Sierra Leone’s sponsorship of the ECOWAS Monitoring Group (ECOMOG) regional peacekeeping force precipitated more hurried mobilization and training of the RUF.⁶¹

Less than a year into the Liberian war, Taylor consolidated power in the increasingly fractious NPFL by purging his Executive Council with several top-level killings.⁶² This would later be echoed by Sankoh in Sierra Leone, who at the time was gaining battle experience serving as a training and battlefield commander for Taylor.⁶³ Taylor set up military headquarters and his ‘mansion ground’ (the executive residence; more ‘mansion’ in concept than reality, but strikingly non-proletarian in title) in Gbarnga, the capital of Bong

⁵⁶ Abdullah, *Between Democracy and Terror*, 53. On the basis of this 1971 coup plot and Sam Hinga Norman’s role in the 1967 coup, former members of the RUF who were close to Foday Sankoh allege there was a long history between the two men and that Hinga Norman had some role in bringing the war.

⁵⁷ For more on these abortive pre-war recruitment drives, see, Rashid, “Student Radicals, Lumpen Youth”; TRC, “Volume 3A.”

⁵⁸ Adebajo, *Building Peace in West Africa*, 46.

⁵⁹ Eddie Bockarie, IDU Commander; Abdullah, *Between Democracy and Terror*, 56–7.

⁶⁰ TRC, “Volume 3A,” 95–6.

⁶¹ Adebajo, *Building Peace in West Africa*; TRC, “Volume 3A,” 97–8, 118–19.

⁶² Ellis, “Liberia’s Warlord Insurgency,” 159.

⁶³ TRC, “Volume 3A,” 100.

County. It was near AFL military barracks, Camp Namma, which would become the main NPFL training base and site of RUF Vanguard training. Sankoh initially trained Liberian fighters, before establishing his own training ground at nearby Cuttington College⁶⁴ for the 350-plus men and 17 women who constituted the RUF ‘Vanguard’.⁶⁵

As detailed in the following chapter, Vanguard members were recruited from the Sierra Leonean ex-patriate population in Liberia, and primarily came from Monrovia, Bong mines (a large iron ore operation a few hours north-east of Monrovia), and NPFL custody.⁶⁶ Few had any revolutionary aspirations. A Vanguard member quoted in the TRC report captures the combination of trust, ambivalence, and lack of options that characterized their recruitment: ‘Sankoh spoke to me as a fellow Sierra Leonean. He told me that had he left me there I was going to be killed.’⁶⁷

Harsh, violent military training for this relatively small quorum of future rebels first began at Namma in July 1990⁶⁸, and by mid-October, the whole group was assembled at Cuttington College.⁶⁹ Led by veterans of Ghaddafi’s Benghazi programme, training lasted three to six months, depending on when recruits joined. The nascent RUF were then hastily separated into two battalions, numbering 382 troops in total, and deployed for the East-South pincer invasion of Sierra Leone.⁷⁰

INVADING SIERRA LEONE AND PHASE I

The specifics of the RUF invasion are somewhat contested. The date most often cited is 23 March 1991, when Liberian NPFL commander Anthony Menquor-Nagbeh, attacked Bomaru (see Figures 3.1, 3.2).⁷¹ A few dozen SLA troops had been sent to secure the small border town, which was a thoroughfare for illicit export before the war and in-bound loot from 1989. The SLA soldiers befriended the Liberian rebels, monopolized the flow of war

⁶⁴ According to Vanguard interviewees, air raids by ECOMOG jets forced the Vanguard trainees to abandon Cuttington College and shift final RUF training to Camp Namma (Kai Fekkah, Vanguard/S4 Commander).

⁶⁵ Kai Fekkah, Vanguard/S4 Commander; see also, TRC, “Volume 3A.”

⁶⁶ Mariatu Sankoh, Vanguard woman; Mariatu Thomas, Vanguard WACs.

⁶⁷ TRC, “Volume 3A,” 103.

⁶⁸ Kai Fekkah, Vanguard/S4 Commander.

⁶⁹ TRC, “Volume 3A,” 103–4.

⁷⁰ Fatu Sannoh, Women’s Wing/RUSO Secretary General.

⁷¹ Fatu Tucker, Vanguard/WACs Commander; Kai Fekkah, Vanguard/S4 Commander; see also, TRC, “Volume 3A,” 127.

booty, and began harassing the local population.⁷² This foreshadowed the collusion that would take place between supposedly antagonistic armed groups, and the generalized exploitation of local populations throughout the Sierra Leone war. On the day of the attack, the SLA were caught off guard and put up little to no resistance, losing their commander and one soldier. According to the TRC, a relatively small force of NPFL attackers came from just across the border in neighbouring Voinjama to avenge a looting trade gone awry.⁷³ RUF Vanguard members, however, describe Bomaru as a key component of the two-flank invasion, despite Sierra Leonean rebels not taking up arms until the attack on Koindu four days later. As the TRC report notes:

[Bomaru] demonstrated that the border crossing was effectively unprotected and that troops stationed in the territory just beyond could easily be caught off guard...If Sankoh had at all been wavering as to his attacking strategy, the attack was a fillip to his confidence.⁷⁴

Thus, when the RUF Second Battalion invaded Koindu with full force 27 March, they numbered over 300 fighters, more than half of whom were NPFL commandos (see Figures 4.1, 4.2).⁷⁵ Libyan-trained Sierra Leonean Mohammed ‘Zino’ Tarawalie served as the field commander of the newly minted RUF troops.⁷⁶ A border town and historical cash crop trading post, Koindu, Kailahun District, marks the north-easternmost point on the Liberia-Sierra Leone border, where it meets Guinea. The invading rebels quickly advanced, claiming towns and villages and repelling the under-equipped and out-numbered SLA forces. A little over a week later, on 3 April 1991, the First Battalion—the other 180 Vanguard—launched a parallel invasion in Pujehun District near Zimmi, also led by Liberian ‘Special Forces’, with Sierra Leonean Mike Lamin serving as the deputy RUF commander.

The Special Forces were the Liberian NPFL fighters sent by Charles Taylor to help the Vanguard gain territory and establish control in Sierra Leone.⁷⁷ In both invasions, the more

⁷² Rashid Sankoh, Civilian (Bomaru resident); see also, TRC, “Volume 3A”; Peters, *War and the Crisis of Youth*, 143; Gberie, *A Dirty War in West Africa*, 59.

⁷³ TRC, “Volume 3A,” 110–13.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 115.

⁷⁵ Fatu Tucker, Vanguard/WACs Commander; Kai Fekkah, Vanguard/S4 Commander; see also, *Ibid.*, 127.

⁷⁶ Eddie Bockarie, IDU Commander; Morie Kamara, Overall Signals Commander.

⁷⁷ There are two categories of ‘Special Forces’ in the history of the RUF. The first set of ‘Special Forces’ refers to the small cabal of original RUF founders who were trained in Libya; the second—more commonly used, and the group for whom the appellation is reserved in this thesis—are the NPFL ‘commandos’ loaned by Taylor to the RUF for its initial invasion of Sierra Leone (see also,

experienced NPFL fighters led attacks, while Sierra Leonean fighters secured the rear. In the South, the NPFL fighters were particularly abusive and aggressive toward civilians, though similar problems soon emerged in the East. With the Liberians leading with violence, Vanguard commanders Mike Lamin and Patrick Lamin sought to minimize their colleagues' damage, instil order, recruit fighters, and spread the movement's ideology among the local population.⁷⁸ This meant that along both fronts, civilians first met the RUF through attacks by Liberian rebels. This undermined the reputation of the movement from the start, as the NPFL Special Forces were by all accounts more hardened, 'fearful' (fear-instilling in others), 'brave' (unafraid of armed resistance), and ruthless than their Sierra Leonean counterparts.⁷⁹ They were also, crucially, accountable to Charles Taylor, and only providing support to Sankoh and the RUF at Taylor's instruction. As a result they saw themselves as above RUF command and saw the mission as an opportunity for personal enrichment, rather than as a revolutionary overture to win supporters, secure territory, and promote a cause accountable to the people.

Along both fronts, recruitment and mobilization involved a combination of propaganda campaigns, community pressure, coercion, and outright force. Geographically, both invasions took place in economically marginalized rural areas where infrastructure and public services had all gone the way of the dilapidated and neglected cash crop railroad. The South and East are also historically pro-SLPP, with populations that were overwhelmingly opposed to APC one-party rule in 1991. As a result, when the advancing RUF Vanguard called together local people to give speeches about their military project and revolutionary ideology, audiences were often receptive, and even welcoming where minimal violence was deployed. Sankoh himself travelled between the Southern and Eastern fronts via Gbarnga to promote the RUF in town *barries* and newly established training bases.

The sparsely stationed and ill-equipped SLA and paramilitary forces were forced to retreat, as the RUF and NPFL Special Forces advanced from the border to establish 'target' positions throughout the Sierra Leonean countryside. The basic strategy placed 'targets'—

TRC, "Volume 3A," 120–1.). Both of these groups are different from the 'Special Task Force', a short-lived specially trained unit in the RUF First Battalion in Pujehun, and from the 'Special Task Force' consisting largely of Liberian war refugees, which was organized by the SLA to form ULIMO, the armed group backed by the Sierra Leonean government and sent to secure the Liberia-Sierra Leone border and attack the NPFL from the rear (Umaru Rogers, ULIMO-STF/RUF Artillery).

⁷⁸ Ibid., 130.

⁷⁹ See also, Ibid., 120–1, 129–30.

strategic offensive positions—near the frontlines, and administrative headquarters, training camps, and civilian governance structures at the rear.⁸⁰ RUF military commanders deployed ‘advance teams’ to clear towns and villages of SLA troops and secure targets. Although Charles Taylor had provided arms and ammunition for the initial invasion (see Chapter 7), military targets were identified based on the food and weapons they might provide for the rapidly expanding rebel forces. Secured towns were put under joint military and civilian control, and civilians were mobilized to provide food and labour (see Chapter 6). The RUF intended to match the speed of NPFL expansion in Liberia, where Taylor quickly controlled most of the country. However, indiscipline and power struggles in both RUF battalions had dire consequences for the trajectory of the war.

After their initially similar invasions, the Southern and Eastern flanks effectively developed completely separately. Their recruitment and mobilization techniques, and basic military strategy and architecture were the same, and both battalions shared a tendency toward indiscipline, following the example of the NPFL Special Forces. However, they differed greatly in the amount of territory secured, the character of battle, and the degree of civil-military governance established. These differences were compounded by First Battalion losing its radio equipment in the river during a hasty retreat early on. This completely cut communication between the East and South for over two years.⁸¹ The Second Battalion, in Kailahun, maintained regular communication with Gbarnga, Taylor’s NPFL base. Yet, although NPFL strategists also kept tabs on activities along the Southern front, fighters in Kailahun District, including those who travelled back and forth to NPFL headquarters in Liberia, inexplicably thought the First Battalion had failed and that Eastern forces were waging a single-front war.⁸² The following two sections describe how the war developed on its separate fronts.

The southern front, 1st Battalion

Like the attack on Bomaru, the Southern incursion was preceded by NPFL cross-border raids throughout 1990 at the Mano River bridge and other crossing points, where looted goods from Liberia were traded and transported. This existing instability complicated interpretations of what was happening and who was responsible when RUF forces first

⁸⁰ Mohamed Mundah, Overall Black Guard Commander.

⁸¹ Bobson Lamin, Black Guard Signals.

⁸² Mohamed Mundah, Overall Black Guard Commander; Sidie Dumana, Driver to Leader.

invaded in April 1991. Their attack was also suspected of being related to the 1982 Ndorgboyosoi rebellion, which spawned the Joso Group militia when SLPP supporters in Pujehun took up arms against APC thugs surrounding the elections. Borderland vulnerability coupled with this legacy of anti-APC activism helped the RUF quickly mobilize recruits.

The ragtag RUF thus included NPFL fighters, Vanguard members, and ‘junior commandos’, Sierra Leoneans recruited after the invasion and trained at camps such as ‘Libya’ and ‘Pademba Road’ (after the main prison in Freetown).⁸³ The Southern Front was fractious and constrained geographically—by the coastline and Mano and Moa Rivers—as well as militarily, by the SLA and the Liberian United Democratic Front (LUDF), who patrolled the Bo-Kenema highway.⁸⁴ LUDF were Liberian soldiers and police from the former Doe regime given haven with the SLA and soon supported militarily by the government to form ULIMO (United Liberation Movement of Liberia for Democracy). The military alliance between the SLA, LUDF, and Guinean artillery units, under the aegis of ECOMOG, was a driving factor in Taylor’s acceleration of the RUF invasion.⁸⁵ Accordingly, the military strategy of First Battalion and the NPFL forces in Pujehun aimed at Kenema—where the SLA and LUDF operated from Taoma Base—not Freetown. First, however, the rebel forces took control of Zimmi, a trade and mining town, and began establishing defensive positions and training bases.

At this point, many NPFL fighters looted properties and turned back across to their Liberian base in Bomi Hills. Those who stayed in Sierra Leone became increasingly violent toward the ‘enemy’ civilian population. It was largely the NPFL who attacked Taoma Base, capturing a large quantity of arms and ammunition before being rebuffed. However, rather than staying to strengthen the RUF position, the NPFL carried the military supplies back to Liberia, looting other Sierra Leonean towns and villages along the way, and even seizing some of the RUF’s own supplies and munitions.⁸⁶ This created a cleavage between the NPFL support troops effectively leading the war effort and the Sierra Leonean Vanguard and junior commandos seeking to reclaim it. ‘They said they would take over the place, so the RUF had to fight them; we drove them out because they just came to plunder the

⁸³ TRC, “Volume 3A,” 129.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 133 fn150.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 119–20.

⁸⁶ Sisco Brooks, Special Task Force.

country’, said a member of the rigorously trained, internal security unit ‘Special Task Force’, an intelligence-gathering and ideology training unit in the early RUF.⁸⁷

Under the leadership of Patrick Lamin, the Sierra Leoneans rallied amongst themselves and the local population to drive out their erstwhile colleagues.⁸⁸ As a result, however, they were left militarily weakened and not much internally stronger. The RUF’s liminal group cohesion was torn asunder by a power struggle between junior commandos, and Patrick Lamin and the Vanguard members. Two dozen of the group’s ideological and military leaders were executed for alleged treason, sowing fear and mistrust among the remaining Vanguard and threatening the confidence of new recruits, who found themselves embedded in a brutally violent armed group without the leaders who recruited and trained them.

During this internal upheaval, the First Battalion consisted of several distinct combat groups. One was Momoh Konneh’s Action Group (formerly Joso Group), which, having fought in the Ndorgboyosoi rebellion, joined the RUF to help secure Pujehun District. The Joso fighters were intimidating forebears of the *kamajor* militia that would later mobilize to fight against the RUF, but at this stage of the war, their support helped the rebels curry favour (or cow acquiescence) in the local population. The group was small—numbering just 27 fighters—with loyalty to Konneh over Sankoh. Their qualified involvement as a distinct sub-group proved prescient of how the First Battalion would splinter and evolve from 1992 to 1994.

Despite the NPFL’s plunder of rural Sierra Leone and undermining of the RUF, another group of 200-400 heavily armed Sierra Leonean recruits was deployed under NPFL command to Bomi Hills, where they formed the military unit ‘Black Gaddafi.’⁸⁹ Their support enabled the NPFL to push ULIMO back across the Sierra Leone border, reclaiming defensive positions for the RUF and creating a buffer zone.⁹⁰ A group of 100-200 RUF, however, were caught behind the NPFL frontline, where they were arrested as suspected ULIMO fighters. Those that were not executed were put into a NPFL prison and released only after a Vanguard member escaped to Gbarnga, where he told Foday Sankoh that Sierra

⁸⁷ Ibid.

⁸⁸ Jacob Sesay, Brigade Commander.

⁸⁹ Amara Sumana, Fighter/Security to Leader; Mohamed Mundah, Overall Black Guard Commander; Augustine Tholley, Battalion Commander.

⁹⁰ Sisco Brooks, Special Task Force.

Leonean RUF were being killed if they could not speak Liberian English.⁹¹ Once rescued in 1992, this group was taken by truck to Kailahun, and would later prove instrumental in reconnecting the two battalions.

Compared to Black Gaddafi, other RUF groups in the south were weaker, but also less splintered. They coordinated activities through targets named Jungle Warriors, Struggle Forces, Alligator, Desert Warrior, Delta Force, and Konneh's Action Group. Because they were not supplied by the NPFL, these groups were militarily weak, and spent much of the first two years of the war huddled in defensive positions in Soro Gbema chiefdom, between the Moa and Mano rivers. In late 1993, a small group set out to connect with the Second Battalion in the East.

The eastern front, 2nd Battalion

The RUF in Eastern Province was comparatively much stronger and more militarily cohesive, but riven with violent infighting. The heavily forested geopolitical peninsula extending between the Guinean and Liberian borders provided strategic advantage, as did the slightly weaker military opponent of the SLA based at Daru Barracks (compared with the larger, artillery-heavy forces pressuring the RUF and NPFL in the South from the Bo-Kenema axis). As a result, unlike First Battalion, the Second Battalion successfully secured large swathes of territory in Kailahun District. After invading at Koindu, the NPFL and RUF joint forces successfully pushed government troops back to their base at Daru. The rebel forces initially established district capital Kailahun as their headquarters, before shifting to Pendembu, some 17 miles to the west. They fought a conventional war for territory, with the bridge separating them from Daru Barracks marking the frontline (see Figure 5).

After a three-day assault in which the rebels failed to take the bridge at Daru, the RUF moved target operations to the northwest of Ngiehun and succeeded in establishing control at the Manawa Ferry crossing. From there, Vanguard commanders, including Mohammed 'Zino' Tarawallie and Sam 'Mosquito' Bockarie, led an attack on Koidu, the diamond mining capital of the country.⁹² This marked a strategic shift for the RUF, who initially intended to

⁹¹ Amara Sumana, Fighter/Security to Leader.

⁹² Koidu, or Koidu Town, is also known as Koidu-Sefadu, for the paired neighbouring towns, and is also sometimes referred to as simply Kono; it is not to be confused with Koindu, the easternmost town in Sierra Leone, through which the RUF invaded.

sweep west, through Daru, Kenema, and Bo to Freetown, but had to change course after being blocked at Daru.⁹³

To capture Koidu, Kono District, in October 1992, two RUF battalions overcame SLA troops along with Guinean artillery and ECOMOG air support. The rebels held Kono for three months, and ransacked the town, looting clothes, money, electronics, and other items from shops, and destroying many civilian homes in the fighting, before government forces, backed by ECOMOG helicopters and Nigerian Alpha jets, regained control.⁹⁴ The pattern of strategic, sanctioned looting of logistical supplies as ‘government property’ followed by a veritable free-for-all by frontline fighters⁹⁵ would prove to be a problem for the RUF throughout the war, weakening internal discipline and undermining the purported revolutionary intentions of the group.

While the RUF’s strongest fighters were away on the Kono mission, infighting between the RUF and Taylor’s NPFL fighters reached its boiling point. A year earlier, a group of Sierra Leonean junior commandos had protested the abusive behaviour of Liberian Special Forces by mobilising a local Poro group to ‘humiliate’ them.⁹⁶ From November to December 1991, in retribution that would come to be known as ‘Top 20’, Pa Jim, the Liberian commander, ordered an entire town to be killed, and attacked and raped high- and low-ranking Sierra Leonean fighters and their wives.⁹⁷ The result was the dissolution of the Bunumbu frontline, destabilization of the Manawa Ferry crossing, and havoc at the Pendembu headquarters, where, in a striking display of the rebel leader’s lack of control and loss of group cohesion, Pa Jim arrested top Vanguard commanders in front of Foday Sankoh.

Taylor recalled Pa Jim, but similar problems surfaced in Kailahun and Buedu, where tensions escalated throughout 1992, when other Liberian fighters began killing Vanguard and junior commandos, driving many RUF and civilians into hiding in the surrounding forest.⁹⁸ Although a relatively small number of Liberian fighters were responsible for most

⁹³ Mohamed Mundah, Overall Black Guard Commander.

⁹⁴ Johnny Kabbah, Medic.

⁹⁵ Even at this early stage in the war, the common narrative used to explain (and perhaps dismiss the gravity of) the looting—staunchly forbidden under RUF law—is that combatants coming from the jungle and war zone had not previously enjoyed material comforts.

⁹⁶ Jinnah Brooks, Battalion G4 Commander.

⁹⁷ Ibid.

⁹⁸ Fatu Tucker, Vanguard/WACs Commander.

of the harassment and abuse, mistrust and conflicting aims led to a tightening of group allegiances and ethnified fissures (particularly toward the Gio, whom Peters identifies as being uniquely antipathetic toward the RUF).⁹⁹ Vanguard leaders and junior commandos launched a concerted attack on NPFL forces, dubbed ‘Top Final’, in which two days of pitched fighting from Kailahun to Buedu, forced their retreat.

As the Overall Signals Commander describes, ‘There were more than 900 (NPFL) at that time...they had personal aims and objectives different from what Charles Taylor told them.’¹⁰⁰ After Top Final, Taylor finally agreed to withdraw his troops from Sierra Leone. Only a smattering of Liberians trained at Camp Namma, loyal and willing to comply with RUF rules and hierarchy, remained. Without the Liberians’ domineering presence, the RUF ‘mastered the territory’¹⁰¹ in the east, but also lost a great deal of support. Taylor curtailed provision of arms and ammunition now that his fighters were not directly engaged in the war. The RUF-NPFL infighting could have been an opportunity to unify the movement around its Sierra Leonean character and revolutionary agenda. Instead, infighting within the Vanguard and high command itself further shook the faith of RUF loyalists and eliminated any future possibility for constructive internal dissent.

The execution of Rashid Mansaray, the co-founder of the revolution and second-in-command to Foday Sankoh, and other founding members in 1993 is one of the most stigmatized public ‘secrets’ in the RUF. Ex-combatants are reluctant to circulate rumours about their commanders if they did not ‘see it with their own eye’—and those who did witness it are reluctant to finger the eventual leaders of the RUF for torture and execution. Mansaray, along some twenty other Vanguard members, was accused of conniving with the enemy and seeking to sell out the revolution.¹⁰² ‘CO Rashid’ was known as a fair man who disapproved of the excessive violence seen in the early stages of the war. As is often the case in armed groups, he, like other moderates, was marginalized for the threat his opinions posed to the group’s militarists. In 1993, he was beaten, arrested, and taken to Foday Sankoh at Sandiallu, where, over the course of two days, he was publicly tortured, executed, and decapitated, so that his head could be displayed to his wife and others who questioned the

⁹⁹ Peters, *War and the Crisis of Youth*, 145.

¹⁰⁰ Morie Kamara, Overall Signals Commander.

¹⁰¹ Ibid.

¹⁰² Zainab Tarawallie, Senior civilian wife.

leaders of the revolution (see Chapter 5).¹⁰³ Some of his last words were, ‘RUF will scatter because you turned against me.’¹⁰⁴ It proved to be a prescient threat.

Infighting was not the exclusive preserve of the rebels, however. The APC government of Joseph Saidu Momoh had been overthrown on 29 April 1992 by junior army officers, who formed the NPRC junta government through a combination of luck and conspiracy. Former head of military intelligence under Momoh, Lt. Col. SIM Turay believes there were three coup plots, all inter-woven and highly tribalistic in their politics¹⁰⁵, while international academics have argued that the putschists appear to have stumbled into power while seeking redress for pay and supply shortages at the war front.¹⁰⁶ The NPRC had a mixed governance record—to this day they are best remembered for summary executions and their compulsory ‘cleaning days’, popular for keeping the streets tidy¹⁰⁷—but as a military government, they were decidedly more committed to the war effort than their predecessor, the APC. Captain Valentine Strasser, 26 year-old president of the ‘interim’ government, embarked on a rapid expansion of the armed forces as government resources were rededicated toward the war.¹⁰⁸ Reno, using IMF figures, estimates the size of the army as having grown from roughly 3,000 in 1991, to 14,000 in 1994.¹⁰⁹

In 1993, the SLA caught wind of RUF infighting and launched a full-scale attack. Ground troops led by Tom Nyuma began clearing the RUF from ‘liberated zones’, retaking Pendembu, Ngiehun, Bunumbu, Kailahun, Sandiallu (where Foday Sankoh’s mansion had been moved for security, see Figure 6), Buedu, and finally Koindu—the furthest reaches of Eastern Sierra Leone, dispersing the RUF and destroying all of their supplies. Facing insurmountable military pressure, its support from Taylor cut off, and all of its supplies and armaments destroyed, the RUF was forced to completely reconfigure its war strategy.

¹⁰³ Ibid.; see also, Amara Sumana, *Fighter/Security to Leader*; Taylor, *We’ll Kill You If You Cry*, 33–4, describes the torture in detail.

¹⁰⁴ Zainab Tarawallie, Senior civilian wife.

¹⁰⁵ SIM Turay, Head of Military Intelligence; see also, Turay, “The NPRC Coup: Lt. Colonel SIM Turay’s View.”

¹⁰⁶ E.g., Gberie, *A Dirty War in West Africa*, 18; Kandeh, “What Does the ‘Militariat’ Do?,” 390.

¹⁰⁷ The NPRC legacy remains a contested political issue, particularly in light of the nomination of Julius Maada Bio as the presidential candidate of the SLPP in the 2012 elections, and the continued prominence of figures such as John Benjamin Hirsch and Tom Nyuma in national politics. On Maada Bio, see e.g., Adebajo, *Building Peace in West Africa*, 46.

¹⁰⁸ By 1995, the NPRC military budget accounted for 75 percent of all government spending (Ibid., 84.)

¹⁰⁹ Reno, *Warlord Politics*, 125.

PHASE II

Pushed to the brink of extinction, with air-dropped leaflets cajoling members to surrender to the government forces in exchange for amnesty, the RUF re-grouped. When pressed for how and why the RUF was able to re-cohere and organize its members, former fighters assert that, for them, surrender was not an option. Government troops were killing alleged rebels, and escape into Liberia and Guinea was even more precarious, as both countries were controlled by armed groups targeting Sierra Leoneans, and RUF in particular. Sankoh called for 'Phase Two', 'jungle warfare', a guerrilla strategy avoiding main towns and roads, and instead establishing jungle bases from which to wage hit and run campaigns across the country. 'No retreat, no surrender' and 'self-reliant struggle' became the group's rallying cries, the un-ironic Jean-Claude van Damme-Marxist mash-up typical of the group's fluid ideology (Chapter 4).

To initiate Phase II in late 1993 with the Liberian border blocked by ULIMO, the RUF re-armed by attacking SLA weapons caches at Gbworbu Gao and Ngiehun (see Chapter 7).¹¹⁰ The next target was ULIMO's Sierra Leone base at Nomo Faama, where the RUF secured further supplies to advance to Peyama. Meanwhile, the fighters from First Battalion who had been arrested in Liberia and repatriated to the RUF in Kailahun set off to retrieve their forgotten colleagues in Soro Gbema. The step-wise assault on Peyama began with a midnight river crossing at Manawa in the 1994 dry season. A defensive position was established at Bunumbu, where four days were spent securing the position and ambushing the government reinforcements sent from Daru. From there, the RUF moved on to Wuima, near Tongo, before finally launching an attack on Peyama, from which the RUF could easily access the roads to Kenema, Daru, and Kono.¹¹¹

Although a big fight was waged in the mining town Tongo, the rebels did not seek to hold it or Panguma, where the hydroelectric power station was located. The firepower required to secure such strategic territory was seen as a waste of supplies under the new strategy.¹¹² Rather, attacks focused on resupplying the movement with drugs, rice, and ammunition, which were sent to Foday Sankoh at the rear. The new defensive strategy had a light

¹¹⁰ Amara Sumana, *Fighter/Security to Leader*.

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*

¹¹² *Ibid.*

footprint and tight internal control. Firepower was focused on securing defensive positions and seizing logistics and other supplies.¹¹³

The First Battalion scouts sent by Sankoh returned with 150 fighters from the South, forming a third RUF battalion with additional manpower from Kailahun. They were quickly reincorporated and helped establish combat camps in the forests of Eastern and Southern Province. Zogoda, Sankoh's headquarters, was established in the dense Gola forest, between the villages Menemi, Juikoya, and Bandawor, atop hills that provided both strong defensive positions and access to fresh water.¹¹⁴ Meanwhile, from Peyama, Zino embarked on the mission to establish Kangari Hills/Northern Jungle between Koidu and Makeni, just off the Freetown highway near Makali. Superman took a group of fighters to establish Black Water/Western Jungle in the hills between Freetown, Moyamba, and Mile 91. And while Issa Sesay held the rear in Kailahun, Mosquito began an advance toward Mattru Jong and Sierra Rutile.

Throughout Phase II, the RUF was cut off from Liberia and the support of Charles Taylor. ULIMO remained a threat, as the Sierra Leonean government continued to train and arm Liberian refugees and other willing fighters for the anti-Taylor, anti-RUF militia.¹¹⁵ Having secured the border, however, members of ULIMO-K¹¹⁶ became more interested in trade and business transactions with the rebels than in battles.¹¹⁷ From their jungle bases, the RUF high command re-established covert trading networks that not only included small-scale arms trades with Guinean and Liberian enemies, but stretched to Côte d'Ivoire, Burkina Faso, and even France (see Part III).

While small-scale trades and ceaseless ambushes supported the logistical needs of the RUF as a whole, individual fighters and entrepreneurial commanders increasingly pursued their own personal agendas. Looting at the frontlines, though officially proscribed, fuelled bartering and equipment-selling between soldiers and rebels. For its part, the NPRC in its rapid recruiting push had incorporated thousands of poorly trained irregular fighters. As a result, both forces were ill-equipped, with government-allied fighters often lacking uniforms,

¹¹³ "Mohamed Mundah, Written Testimony."

¹¹⁴ Dwight Mansaray, Military Intelligence Cartographer/RUF District Chairman.

¹¹⁵ Umaru Rogers, ULIMO-STF/RUF Artillery.

¹¹⁶ ULIMO split into two factions: ULIMO-K, under Alhaji Kromah, and ULIMO-J, under Roosevelt Johnson.

¹¹⁷ Augustine Tholley, Battalion Commander.

and the rebels seizing ‘combats’ (khakis and fatigues) and army boots in attacks. Matching uniforms, similar behaviour, and occasional collusion between the enemy forces and made it increasingly difficult for civilians to distinguish between forces attacking at night. Allegations of pre-1997 military ‘conniving’ between the rebels and military are widely denied by former commanders, however, and appear to be partly based on rumours resulting from the indecipherability of armed forces.¹¹⁸ As Reno writes, ‘underpaid soldiers...found they could exploit the chaos caused by rebels to extort or loot from local inhabitants [who] suspect rogue military units...were behind a large number of “rebel” attacks.’¹¹⁹

With the government forces increasingly distracted by their own avarice, the RUF inched ever closer to Freetown. Arrangements were made with private military companies, first with the Nepalese Ghurkhas and later, with South African mercenary firm Executive Outcomes (EO), to provide aerial and other strategic military support to the government. By April 1995 the RUF’s hit-and-run campaigns had matured; they looked ready to ‘hit’ the capital. In May, after two battalions under the command of Mosquito ransacked the Sierra Rutile mine—taking vehicles, supplies, and foreign hostages, and eliminating the last major revenue source for the government (accounting for 60 percent of export earnings)¹²⁰—the military government turned to EO. Brought in as a ‘force multiplier [that] provided technical services, combat forces and limited training’¹²¹ in exchange for money and mining concessions, EO first pushed the rebels from Waterloo, on the outskirts of the capital. They then set about clearing Kono and the surrounding mining areas (where the parent holding company, Branch Minerals’ concession was located) through repeated air strikes, before turning to Sierra Rutile, home of the country’s rutile and bauxite reserves.¹²²

After initially re-training soldiers, EO was asked by the NPRC to focus its efforts on training the paramilitary groups that had been mobilised by local chiefs throughout the country as civil defence forces (CDF), under various local appellations: the *kamajors*, *donso*, *gbethis*, *kapras*, and *tamaboros*. Thus, the *kamajors* grew in power and formality as the army became increasingly restive. Lack of military control eventually spread to the State House in January 1996, when Brigadier-General Julius Maada Bio overthrew Strasser in a bloodless coup. Bio

¹¹⁸ Mohamed Mundah, Overall Black Guard Commander.

¹¹⁹ Reno, *Warlord Politics*, 125.

¹²⁰ Kandeh, “What Does the ‘Militariat’ Do?,” 402.

¹²¹ Howe, “Private Security Forces and African Stability,” 314.

¹²² For more on the role of mining and foreign revenues at this stage of the war, see, Reno, *Warlord Politics*, 126–32.

had the support of powerful regional allies—namely Ghana’s Jerry Rawlings, Guinea’s Lansana Conté, and Nigeria’s Sani Abacha—but still faced immense international and domestic pressure for democratic elections from the US, UK, and the Sierra Leone Women’s Movement for Peace.¹²³

The RUF protested the accelerated timetable for transition and called for ‘peace before elections’. In an attempt to establish peace talks, Bio (whose sister and brother-in-law had become leading civilian members of the RUF after being pressured to join in 1991 at Bunumbu Teachers’ College) sought out Sankoh on national radio: ‘To you, Corporal Foday Sankoh, the message from my government is that we are prepared to meet with you anywhere, any time, and without precondition.’¹²⁴ At the behest of the international community, NGOs (including controversial conflict resolution organization International Alert),¹²⁵ and regional representatives (notably Ivoirian Ambassador and former president of the UN General Assembly Amara Essy), Sankoh agreed to peace talks in Abidjan, against the wishes of his military commanders.¹²⁶ In late February 1996, elections were held in the face of desperate, violent RUF intimidation, including the first widespread amputations of prospective voters’ hands.¹²⁷ Following the elections, initial talks came to an abrupt halt, but the RUF, while still rejecting the elected civilian government, agreed to a two-month ceasefire and a meeting with Bio. In preparation for this second wave of negotiations, Sankoh travelled to all major RUF bases, commanding rebel forces to maintain the ceasefire and ‘relax’ now that peace was coming.¹²⁸ A Red Cross (ICRC) helicopter then collected Sankoh from Zogoda, and took him, four RUF political and ideological strategists (Figures 7, 8),¹²⁹ and three bodyguards to Côte d’Ivoire, where he would remain through April, holding meetings with the media and regional representatives, and eventually with newly elected President Ahmad Tejan Kabbah.

¹²³ Adebajo, *Building Peace in West Africa*, 85.

¹²⁴ Mutwol, *Peace Agreements and Civil Wars in Africa*, 232.

¹²⁵ The representative of London-based International Alert, Akyaaba Addai-Sebo (the alleged former publicist for Charles Taylor), is widely suspected of supporting the RUF logistically and of ghost-writing its treatise ‘Footpaths to Democracy’, see Chapter 4. See also, Jinnah Brooks, Battalion G4 Commander; Binningsbø and Dupuy, “Using Power-sharing to Win a War,” 10 fn4.

¹²⁶ Hirsch, *Sierra Leone*, 51–2.

¹²⁷ For one discussion of some of the conflicting claims around the highly visible, though relatively infrequent, practice of amputation, see, Peters, *War and the Crisis of Youth*, 154.

¹²⁸ Mohamed Mundah, Overall Black Guard Commander.

¹²⁹ See, Richards, *Fighting for the Rain Forest*; Abdullah, *Between Democracy and Terror*.

Sankoh repeatedly called for all foreign troops to leave Sierra Leone, but Nigerian ECOMOG forces stayed in Western Area, and EO continued intelligence operations on behalf of the government. From their position outside the government's official chain of command, EO mobilized the *kamajors* for a major assault on RUF headquarters in breach of the ceasefire agreement. 'Massive attacks on all main towns' were waged by the SLA, forcing the RUF to pull out of its strategic base at Peyama.¹³⁰ The assault on Zogoda and camp 'Libya' in Soro Gbema chiefdom devastated the RUF, who were caught off guard under the ceasefire. With EO providing aerial support, the *kamajors* overwhelmed footpath approaches and defensive targets securing the three satellite camps that made up the headquarters. Hundreds of RUF women, children, and fighters were killed by the professionally armed *kamajors*.¹³¹ Once again, the RUF lost all of its food stores, arms caches, and bureaucratic infrastructure, as well as Battle Group Commander Mohammed Tarawallie, deputy to Foday Sankoh.

With Tarawallie missing and presumed dead,¹³² Sankoh named Mosquito second-in-command. Although they had lost Peyama, the RUF secured Giema, a small town south of Kailahun toward the Liberian border, and maintained control of the Northern Jungle base and Superman's ground to the west.¹³³ Peace talks continued in Abidjan, but 'the frontline was hot' with attacks by the emboldened *kamajors* throughout rebel territory.¹³⁴ According to Muana, 'Kabbah threatened an all-out *kamajor* offensive' if the RUF did not agree to a peace deal by the end of the year.¹³⁵ Sankoh again returned to tour the jungles and reassure RUF fighters and civilians. As his Black Guard Commander and bodyguard in Abidjan describes:

The men were concerned about their positions as the *kamajors* were attacking: Zogoda had fallen and [Mohammed Tarawallie] was missing. People were concerned the agreement would not hold. Foday Sankoh said he had come to hear the comments and to speak to the peace-brokers.¹³⁶

Sankoh then returned to Côte d'Ivoire to finalize the Abidjan Agreement, signed 30 November 1996. The accord provided for the removal of foreign troops (both ECOMOG

¹³⁰ Augustine Tholley, Battalion Commander.

¹³¹ Peters, *War and the Crisis of Youth*, 147–9; Hirsch, *Sierra Leone*, 52–3.

¹³² His body was never found; although presumed to have been killed in the attack on Zogoda, Tarawallie was half Guinean and spoke both French and Arabic—some ex-combatants who were close to him believe he remains in hiding in Guinea.

¹³³ "Mohamed Mundah, Written Testimony."

¹³⁴ Ibid.

¹³⁵ As cited in Keen, *Conflict and Collusion*, 158.

¹³⁶ "Mohamed Mundah, Written Testimony."

and mercenary), full amnesty for rebel fighters, and a fund to support the RUF's transition to a political party. However, it had no timeline for implementation and no provision for the RUF to hold central or local government positions.¹³⁷

PHASE III

The Abidjan Accord steadily unravelled over the next seven months. Sporadic fighting continued between the RUF, SLA, and *kamajors*, with the *kamajors* defending major towns, the SLA guarding their military bases, and the RUF hunkered down in their few remaining jungle camps. On 6 March Sankoh was arrested in Nigeria for possession of a firearm (pistol) while allegedly pursuing an arms deal.¹³⁸ With Sankoh in custody in Abuja, a power struggle erupted in the RUF that led to the arrest of the movement's top civilian leaders, leaving recently promoted battlefield commanders Bockarie and Issa Sesay in control of both the political and military strategy of the movement.

Again, the government faced similar leadership upheaval. On 25 May 1997, soldiers from Murray Town Barracks overthrew the Kabbah government, driving the President into exile and freeing prisoners from Freetown's Pademba Road Prison, including Johnny-Paul Koroma, a military officer who had been arrested on suspicion of a coup plot the year prior and was immediately named president of the newly formed Armed Forces Revolutionary Council (AFRC). The AFRC quickly invited the RUF to join them in the capital in a power-sharing government. Although the rebels widely mistrusted the junta—comprised of their enemies of six years—they followed Sankoh's instructions sent over BBC radio to end the war and join the new military government. Upon the RUF's arrival, however, negotiations on the specifics of joint governance were fraught with mutual disdain, mistrust, and accusations that RUF commanders only had 'bush ranks'.¹³⁹ Feeling unsafe in Freetown, Bockarie retreated to Kenema, where he would remain for the duration of AFRC rule. Superman, meanwhile, developed a close relationship with the leaders of the junta, particularly second-in-command to Johnny-Paul Koroma, SAJ Musa;¹⁴⁰ Sesay also liaised

¹³⁷ Keen, *Conflict and Collusion*, 159; Binningsbø and Dupuy, "Using Power-sharing to Win a War," 11–12.

¹³⁸ Hirsch, *Sierra Leone*, 55.

¹³⁹ Yusuf Keita, AFRC Commander.

¹⁴⁰ Solomon Anthony Joseph 'SAJ' (*Sahj*) Musa played a pivotal role in the NPRC coup and was responsible for the execution of a number of political prisoners, before himself seeking temporary exile in the UK following disputes with Strasser.

with the government to provide logistical support from Freetown for the RUF in the provinces.

The AFRC had no governance accomplishments other than buying time while they sought arms and a path to political legitimacy, both of which were primarily forthcoming from newly elected Liberian president Charles Taylor. Pallo Bangura, foreign minister of the AFRC, Eldred Collins, representing the RUF, and the Sierra Leone government in exile conducted abortive negotiations in Abidjan and Conakry from April to November 1997, but these resulted in neither disarmament by the AFRC and rebels, nor the release of Sankoh from prison.¹⁴¹

Moreover, these talks were largely irrelevant to fighters on the ground, who were focused on rebuffing *kamajor* attacks and exploiting their powerful positions to mine diamonds in the South and East. With Koroma declaring he would remain in office until 2001, Nigerian Colonel Maxwell Khobe mobilized the ECOMOG troops stationed at Lungi, where Freetown's international airport is located, and in February 1998, led a weeklong aerial and naval assault to retake Freetown. The RUF and AFRC forces were unimpeded in their retreat from the peninsula and able to take the main highways toward Makeni and Bo, wreaking havoc in towns along the way.

Upon their withdrawal from Freetown, SAJ Musa led the majority of AFRC fighters to the north, sweeping through Rogberi Junction, Lunsar, and Makeni, and on to the mining capital Koidu, and the Kabala-Kamakwie axis toward the Guinea border, where Superman also based with his RUF battalion. Meanwhile Johnny-Paul Koroma joined Issa Sesay and Mosquito in the East, where the RUF achieved new-found dominance over their urbanized AFRC colleagues, who were dependent on the RUF's experience with jungle combat, footpath bypasses, and *kamajor* tactics. Mosquito withdrew the RUF from Kenema and established new headquarters at Buedu, which would remain the movement's military headquarters until 2000, when Issa Sesay moved it to Makeni.

With Sankoh still in prison and the youthful RUF leadership competing with one another for power, the uneasy RUF-AFRC 'People's Army'—an alliance more in name than in reality—soon began to dissolve. Johnny-Paul was arrested and imprisoned by Issa and

¹⁴¹ Hirsch, *Sierra Leone*, 63–5.

Mosquito before fleeing to Liberia and, though his soldiers stayed under the command of Mosquito, SAJ Musa severed ties in the North. Many former AFRC members busied themselves with mining in Kono and Tongo, and infighting grew rife, as both groups had lost their leadership and, though fully militarized, any *raison d'être*.

In this state of heavily armed disarray, Deputy Minister of Defence Sam Hinga Norman aggressively consolidated power over the *kamajors*—officially re-named the Civil Defence Forces. Fully backed by the government, with arms, vehicles, food, and petrol provided to training bases and command headquarters throughout the country, the *kamajors* and ECOMOG were an equal match for the joint RUF/AFRC forces. The RUF controlled nearly 80 percent of the country, including Kailahun, Kono, and Makeni, while *kamajor* strongholds remained in Pujehun District, Bo (and the surrounding area toward Kenema), and parts of the North.

In late December 1998, SAJ Musa's battalion left Koinadugu and headed southwest toward Freetown. Although the RUF knew AFRC were planning an assault, they did not join them. Superman refused to cooperate, having recently disputed with Mosquito and Issa over a stolen G4 rifle, and Mosquito and Issa mistrusted Musa and his troops.¹⁴² In their hesitation, they underestimated the speed with which the AFRC would take the city.

AFRC forces entered Western Area through footpaths over Lion Mountain (the hills outside of Freetown) 17 December, attacking the military base at Benguema before retreating into the hills for two weeks. On the eve of entering Freetown, when the AFRC seized Benguema barracks, SAJ Musa was killed, leaving his much weaker deputy, Alex Tamba Brimah, in command.¹⁴³ On 5 and 6 January 1999, a Special Task Force of battle-hardened Liberians and freelance RUF fighters called 'Red Lion' secured the rear at Benguema, while hundreds of AFRC forces split in two to take the city. They entered the city from above, via the hills by Grafton, and passed through Jui to take the main highway through the heavily populated East End of the capital.¹⁴⁴ Disguised as ECOMOG troops, the advance team opened fire at the central *kamajor* checkpoint, opening the way to State House and Pademba Road Prison,

¹⁴² Yusuf Keita, AFRC Commander.

¹⁴³ Controversy surrounds Musa's death: although a mortar blast hit his and his bodyguards' shooting position, a bullet hole was found at the back of his helmet and suspicions turned to a latent power struggle that had been simmering between Musa and his second-in-command, Tamba Brimah ('Gullit').

¹⁴⁴ See also, Samura, *Cry Freetown*; "Open Session Testimony."

where nearly 4,000 inmates were released.¹⁴⁵ During the assault on Freetown, former soldiers avenged their loss of power on the ‘enemy’ population that had rejected them, destroying properties and vehicles, and targeting police stations and other institutions of the state. The AFRC and some late-arriving rebels held siege for two weeks, repelling attacks by *kamajors* based at the centrally located Brookfields Hotel, ULIMO, and ECOMOG, before making a fiery retreat back through the East End of the city.

The AFRC fighters who led the assault on Freetown did not return to the ‘jungle’ with their compatriots, but rather, stopped between Waterloo and Masiaka.¹⁴⁶ There they cut the road (by digging a massive hole through the asphalt) and set up camp in Occra Hills, branding themselves the West Side Boys. The West Side Boys (WSB) traded primarily in roadblocks and ambushes on the Freetown highway, and regularly raided the surrounding villages for food and other supplies. Despite their lack of either political or military objectives, their strategic location made them a particularly destabilising force. Their proximity to the capital and their previous SLA ties quickly earned them offers from Kabbah to reinstate their military ranks and put them on government salaries to curry their compliance.¹⁴⁷

The rising profile of the WSB was largely an opportunistic response to their initial exclusion from the Lomé peace talks, which were held between Foday Sankoh and President Kabbah from May to July 1999. The Lomé peace accord, signed 7 July 1999, revisited the terms of the Abidjan agreement in order to achieve ‘a definitive settlement of the fratricidal war...[and] genuine national unity and reconciliation.’¹⁴⁸ It provided for full amnesty, a ceasefire monitoring committee (to be chaired by the UN observer mission UNOMSIL), and demobilization of armed groups prior to the restructuring of the armed forces. It also called for the political transformation of the RUF into a political party; their participation in a government of national unity and the (previously-failed) Commission for the Consolidation of Peace; and Sankoh’s appointment as head of the Commission for the Management of Strategic Resources, National Reconstruction and Development (CMRRD), which would oversee all mining and report directly to the President. The negotiations—conducted largely by then-Attorney General (and future vice-president) Solomon Berewa

¹⁴⁵ Yusuf Keita, AFRC Commander.

¹⁴⁶ Ibid.

¹⁴⁷ Ibid.

¹⁴⁸ Lomé, Togo, *Peace Agreement Between the GoSL and the RUF/SL*.

and RUF War Council Chairman SYB Rogers (see Figure 8)¹⁴⁹—were led by President Gnassingbe Eyadema of Togo, with support from Francis Okelo, Executive Secretary of the UN Secretary-General, who refused to sign, rejecting the amnesty provision. Rev. Jesse Jackson acted as US special envoy, but had far less influence than regional power-brokers Liberian President Taylor, for whom the war had become a political, military, and economic liability, and former-RUF supporter President Compaore of Burkina Faso.

Due to a number of factors, the actual implementation of the peace agreement was messy and drawn-out. The WSB and *kamajors* were excluded from the negotiating table; all groups faced fissures in their top command; and there was a sharp disconnect between the political brokers and the frontline fighters. After the failures of past treaties, Sankoh struggled to sell the Lomé accord to his commanders. Mosquito in particular refused to disarm, resigning in December (see Appendix I) and taking nearly a full battalion of fighters to Liberia, where Taylor gave him a prominent position in his ruthless praetorian guard, the Anti-Terrorist Unit.¹⁵⁰ In Bockarie's place, Issa Sesay was promoted to second-in-command, overseeing all RUF operations until the final disarmament in 2002.

Despite these challenges, Sankoh took up residence in Freetown and maintained direct communication with Sesay and other RUF commanders. In the provinces, the RUF maintained control over Kono, Makeni, and Kailahun, and focused on re-establishing civilian governance structures. Newly legitimized, the rebels worked directly with humanitarian relief organizations to secure food and medical supplies, and to improve the infrastructure for farming and schooling.¹⁵¹ Under the ceasefire, fighting cooled, though tensions remained, and trade began to resume, with merchants and businesspeople negotiating checkpoints and complex pass systems to travel between rebel- and *kamajor*-held areas.¹⁵²

Three hostage crises broke the relative calm of the post-Lomé moment, however, revealing the growing cleavage between civilian and military actors in the various armed groups. In May 2000, Morris Kallon and Augustine Gbao (reportedly operating outside the command

¹⁴⁹ Sidikie Siaka, Target Commander.

¹⁵⁰ Ramatu Fofanah, Senior civilian wife. Mosquito was eventually assassinated in 2003 by Taylor's men on his return from Côte d'Ivoire to Monrovia, where many of his family members were also killed while living in the house Taylor had provided them.

¹⁵¹ Eddie Bockarie, IDU Commander; Hawa Vandy, Educational Coordinator.

¹⁵² Alpha Daboh, Battalion Commander.

of Foday Sankoh¹⁵³) disarmed and arrested hundreds of UN peacekeepers from UNAMSIL.¹⁵⁴ Sankoh had to convince Sesay to order their release, and although the potentially incendiary situation was diffused quickly, it compounded distrust of Sankoh in Freetown and the international community. While the UN hostage situation was taking place in Northern Province, the RUF leadership in Freetown was under pressure from *kamajors* and WSB loyal to Johnny Paul Koroma, who was back in Freetown under the power-sharing government. From 6-8 May, the homes of senior political leaders of the RUF were raided. A protest at Foday Sankoh's 56 Spur Road residence turned violent on 8 May—with gunfire exchanged by ECOMOG, *kamajors*, and WSB, and former SLA and RUF. Several civilians were killed, and after a few days on the lam, Sankoh and most of his security guards were arrested (Figure 9).¹⁵⁵

Simultaneously, Indian and Nepali peacekeepers were detained in Kailahun, Daru, and Quiva in the East while seeking to negotiate the release of their northern counterparts. Two of the groups were released, but one remained under arrest in Pendembu, the military headquarters for RUF's First Battalion. India mobilized several helicopter gunships for Operation Khukri, a two-day ground and aerial rescue mission that killed scores of RUF civilians and top fighters (see Figure 10).¹⁵⁶ The defeat effectively broke the group's morale in the East, and proved that UNAMSIL forces could be willing and able to deliver military defeat to the rebels.

The third hostage situation occurred in late August 2000, when the WSB captured an 11-man British patrol team near their Occra Hills base. The two-week situation heightened the WSB profile and gained them communications equipment, before culminating in Operation Barras, a well-documented British paratrooper mission that annihilated the base at Gberi Bana and left dozens of WSB fighters dead or captured.¹⁵⁷ With British, ECOMOG, UN, and Guinean forces all deploying superior firepower and intelligence—supported by aerial

¹⁵³ Ibid.

¹⁵⁴ UNAMSIL replaced UNOMSIL in October 1999, and was mandated with implementing the peace agreement and disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration (DDR) plans in cooperation with the government. Its size was increased three times, making it, at over 17,000 troops, then the largest peacekeeping mission in history. "Facts and Figures."

¹⁵⁵ Amara Sumana, *Fighter/Security to Leader*; TRC, "Volume 2," 302–3, 307–9; Gberie, *A Dirty War in West Africa*, 166–7.

¹⁵⁶ Abdullai Conteh, HQ Medic Commander; for a detailed account of the military operation, see, Raman, "Operation Khukri: Joint Excellence."

¹⁵⁷ Alfred Gbla, WSB Commander.

capacity that the AFRC and RUF forces lacked—the already low morale of the rebels plummeted. Thousands of fighters and their families had been killed, and many of the top commanders were dead or missing.

A civilian peace entrepreneur from Mile 91, and former RUF-member, Muckson Sesay broke the military and political impasse by serving as a self-appointed liaison between the UN, RUF, and *kamajor* troops.¹⁵⁸ He brokered an agreement for all parties to meet at Ferry Junction (Kholifa Mabang chiefdom), where a small monument marks the final peace treaty of the war. On 18 January 2002, President Kabbah declared the war officially over.

¹⁵⁸ Muckson Sesay, Civilian Negotiator.

BORDER SITES



Figure 3.1: Bomaru, site of 23 March 1991 invasion (2010).

Figure 3.2: Sierra Leone-Liberia border post outside Bomaru (2010).





Figure 4.1: Liberia border post, site of 27 March 1991 Koindu invasion (2010).

Figure 4.2: Mendekorma, Liberia customs office (2010).



STRATEGIC SITES



Figure 5: Daru Bridge, Kailahun District (2010).



Figure 6: Foday Sankoh's temporary Mansion HQ in Sandiallu (2010).

RUF LEADERS



Figure 8 (above): War Council Chairman SYB Rogers with bodyguards in Abidjan for peace talks (1996).



Figure 7: A rare photo of Foday Sankoh in Zogoda with bodyguard behind (undated).



Figure 9 (right): Foday Sankoh after his arrest at war's end (undated).

REBEL-HELD TERRITORY, 2000



Figure 10: Operations map for UNAMSIL India Batt. Operation Khukri¹⁵⁹

¹⁵⁹ 'RUF Controlled Territory', UNAMSIL Operation Khukri (accessed online).

PART II

ORGANIZATIONAL CAPACITY

CHAPTER 3

MOBILIZATION AND RECRUITMENT

The seeds of armed rebellion were sown under Siaka Stevens's rule with his appropriation of the formal apparatus of state to consolidate his power and bring personal enrichment. Political representation, accountability, and transparency were discarded. Opposition voices were marginalized and repressed. With urban and rural youth being denied education and employment opportunities, increasingly radical student activists began agitating on campuses and in back-alleys for violent revolution. By 1990, however, there were clear signs of political opening and democratization under Stevens's successor, Joseph Momoh. The following year Momoh declared that multiparty elections would be held and opposition parties allowed. Yet, Sierra Leone never rode the 'third wave' of democracy. The wheels of rebellion were turning in neighbouring Liberia's war zone.

COLLECTIVE ACTION PROBLEMS, SELECTIVE INCENTIVE SOLUTIONS?

The conundrum of the collective action problem as identified by Olson, Popkin, Lichbach, and other scholars is that, if individuals are rational actors, they will not undertake the undue personal risk of participating in armed rebellion in order to secure the communal goods that revolution would ostensibly bring.¹ The argument starts with the free-rider problem, in which the rational choice of the individual is to fulfil personal interest and not make sacrifices in pursuit of a public good. The 'problem' for analysis is how groups overcome this rational stasis of self-interest.

There are a number of different theories for how aspiring rebel entrepreneurs overcome individuals' opting out. Lichbach outlines at least 24 discrete solutions in four broad categories, all of which were seen to varying degrees in the RUF mobilization and recruitment process.² However, increasingly, recent research has accepted selective

¹ C.f. Olson, *The Logic of Collective Action*; Gurr, *Why Men Rebel*; Popkin, *The Rational Peasant*; Lichbach, *The Rebel's Dilemma*.

² Lichbach, "Rethinking Rationality and Rebellion."

incentives-focused mechanisms as the central means by which collective action is attained. This is largely the result of the predominance of the greed and grievance debate in the averred ‘new wars’ era. Scholars interrogating motivations and mobilization to fight have interpolated the greed and grievance framework (broadly defined) into the collective action literature on rational action. The question seems no longer to be ‘whether’ selective incentives, but rather, ‘which’—social or material—benefits are at play. This chapter uses the selective benefits (or incentives)³ solution to the collective action problem in rebellion as its point of departure. It helps structure the analysis of how the RUF was built and maintained, the story of which in turn calls into question the explanatory utility of selective incentives for understanding the group’s mobilization and recruitment processes.

The selective incentives argument posits that revolutionary leaders have to provide exclusive benefits to members of the armed group in order to motivate their initial joining and continued participation in an otherwise personally costly venture. Although incentives can be either social or material, the framework usually refers simply to material, monetary or consumer, benefits. Their value *vis-à-vis* how they also provide social and emotional benefits—such as power, security, and influence in family or patronage networks—is rarely drawn out or examined. Rather, they are taken as goods private unto the individual fighters who receive them. Weinstein for example, presents the choice as being between selective benefits on the one hand, conceived as material incentives for individuals’ participation; and social mechanisms, such as moral, communal, or ideological obligations, on the other. The missed connections between material and social incentives and benefits will be returned to below.

From these two prospective means of overcoming collective action problems in armed rebellion, as mentioned in the introduction, Weinstein identifies a path-dependent arrangement for rebel leaders in which they are forced to pursue one of the two recruitment incentive models based on their initial resource basket. The theory states that rebel groups that have secured material wealth, called ‘initial endowments’, through either external support (diaspora remittances, foreign sponsorship, etc.) or a domestic resource base (e.g. control of markets or mines) are able to provide immediate material incentives to members.

³ ‘Selective benefits’ can be construed as a reward for membership, while ‘selective incentives’ reward behaviour, however despite these semantic differences, they are used interchangeably in this chapter, as in most of the theoretical literature.

This results in an opportunistic, ‘consumerist’ membership that is more committed to personal gain than to the political agenda for which the group is purportedly fighting. Conversely, groups that do not have material resources rely on all manner of social networks and communal allegiances to build a cohesive and committed fighting force willing to take up arms. In Weinstein’s framework, these latter groups are built through trust and ideological commitment, with any material incentives being provided only in the long-term, if at all.⁴ They therefore attract a membership of ‘investors’ who prioritize group goals over personal gain, as any ultimate gains individuals might secure are predicated first on the group’s success.

There are a number of problems with the resource endowments model when applied in the Sierra Leone case. According to Weinstein, the RUF were a resource-rich rebel group that attracted opportunistic joiners who ultimately undermined the revolution through their self-interested ends and indiscriminately violent means. This is descriptively accurate at times, but historically misplaced. Stripped of its path-dependency and contextualized with changes over time, however, we can identify ways in which Weinstein’s theory does play out in the behaviour of profit-driven combatants. Fighters from the NPFL (who had no stake in the country) in the first two years, and later from the AFRC (who were used to getting paid), were largely opportunistic, and their violence directly influenced the coherence of the rebel group and trajectory of the war. But, before examining how these sub-groups of rebels impacted the group as a whole, we must accurately identify the primary mobilization processes that created and sustained a viable rebel army. It was not accomplished through initial endowments, such as alleged RUF diamond wealth, which Chapter 8 identifies the rebels did not have for doling out as selective incentives throughout the war. Rather than material vs. social endowments, choice vs. coercion provides a more instructive framework for understanding RUF recruitment and the value of even the most marginal incentive—survival—during wartime.

Although we can expect models to simplify certain things for the sake of explicating others, in Sierra Leone, selective incentive explanations for rebel participation and motivation obscure organizational processes central to the conflict. Four limitations of the resource endowment-selective incentive framework are identified in the development of the RUF as an armed group. First, selective incentives cannot resolve the first mover problem. Who

⁴ Weinstein, *Inside Rebellion*.

started the revolution and how did they overcome collective action problems before incentives were in place? Second, the individuals that joined to form the Vanguard, after the first movers had moved, were neither given nor promised any of the pecuniary benefits on which selective incentive recruitment is predicated. The extent of their ‘initial endowment’ was promises of military support from Ghaddafi and encouragement toward their revolutionary objectives—nothing that could be distributed to would-be recruits apart from a uniform and firearm. Moreover, their attempts to mobilize fighters based on social ties, ideology, and long-term promises failed utterly. With neither selective material incentives, nor social values and obligation-based recruitment pitches overcoming the collective action problem, coercion emerges as a key explanatory factor behind individual rational action. Third, collective action theory deals with onset-oriented action, overlooking the critical changes wrought by wartime. What happens to mobilization and recruitment after the war has begun, when the RUF resource base is both established and threatened over time?

Finally, collective action and selective benefits approaches treat all participants as unitary rational actors without accounting for the spectrum of participation in conflict. Just as individuals do not all join for the same reasons, neither are they simply ‘in’ or ‘out’ of the group and party to its benefits accordingly. Non-state armed groups consist of a core leadership, active participants, and the rebel support network. All three layers of participation are treated as one homogenous whole in much of the mobilization literature, but it is arguably their differentiation that is most significant in determining the nature of violence, as well as the scope and success of armed rebellion.

The incentives that did exist within the group were highly centralized and attached to rank and performance, not simply participation. In the RUF, as in most armed groups, compensation accrued up the military hierarchy, the conduit of power. The commanders at the top had the most influence over the distribution of material goods and therefore the greatest opportunity for personal gain. Conversely, fighters at the bottom of the hierarchy were incentivized and rewarded at the whim of the commanders above them, who themselves were beholden to the leaders and, in theory, the formal organizational structure.

Thus, if selective benefits can be said to apply to the average RUF member, it is only in the context of gaining entry to the group within which one might hope to climb the ranks through merit or malice. However, even the slimmest margins of opportunity can be acutely

powerful incentives when opportunity costs have plummeted as a result of state failure, economic collapse, and wartime insecurity. When being a ‘rebel’ (broadly defined) did translate into increased access to selective benefits, we see Weinstein’s argument about opportunistic joiners undermining organizational control and propagating increased levels of indiscriminate violence fulfilled. But, as will be illustrated throughout the following chapters, during many phases of the war, membership in the RUF brought relatively more harm than benefit. When access to weapons, food, and basic survival shrank in response to military pressure, the nature of recruitment and retention became more coercive in turn.

The following sections present the four phases of RUF mobilization chronologically. The first stage of mobilization—the first movers—occurred prior to armed conflict. Stages two and three—those of the first joiners (before a group formed) and first recruits (to said group)—occurred amidst insecurity, but preceded full-scale civil war in Sierra Leone. While the first three phases of mobilization led to a full-scale civil war, stage four—on-going recruitment throughout wartime—shows the potency of both survival concerns and individual material interests in perpetuating war. Once under way, the civil war fundamentally changed the nature and calculus of mobilization and recruitment for joiners, and for recruiters. Examining these phases sequentially illustrates the salience of different collective action mechanisms at different times, depending on the confluence of push and pull incentives for participation.

STAGE ONE: THE FIRST MOVERS

Not only is the first mover problem sidestepped in most collective action literature, which picks up its explanatory narrative only after the organizational mechanisms that would reward participation are in place, but moreover, in pre-war Sierra Leone, a robust, benefit-providing apparatus already existed: the APC patronage machine. The civil war was a violent rejection of this existing incentive structure. At a reach, we might extrapolate the selective benefit framework to overcome the first mover problem by considering the presidency and its plum posts as the ‘incentives’ for revolutionary entrepreneurship. Indeed, Sankoh largely fits the bill of an acutely ambitious, tunnel-visioned opportunist, who pursued political power wherever and however the opportunity presented itself. While his motives were not unique in 1970s and 1980s West Africa, his determination, luck, and dedication undoubtedly were. They mixed with structural factors conducive to civil war: severe economic decline; anaemic social welfare indicators (education, health, and employment all in steep decline);

retraction of APC patronage flows following the near-collapse of the one-party state; and international support for regime change.

While others pursued political change through non-violent means, Foday Sankoh and a small collective of revolutionary entrepreneurs clung to the ideals of revolution espoused by Mao Tse-Tung, Che Guevara, Frantz Fanon, and Kwame Nkrumah. With the Cold War rapidly waning and proxy military intervention in West Africa fairly limited to begin with, they had to look beyond the usual sources of external support. The US, USSR, Cuba, and China—who had competed to provide training, material support, and even fighting forces to rebellions in Angola, Congo, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Mozambique, Namibia, Somalia, South Africa, Sudan, Uganda, and Zimbabwe—largely supported the ruling regimes in West Africa.⁵ In Sierra Leone, Cuba provided training to Stevens’s praetorian ISU (Internal Security Unit)⁶ and China trained 150 SLA military officers.⁷ As a result, West Africa’s revolutionaries turned northward, to the Jamahiriyya-al-Islam of Muammar Ghaddafi.

Having been side-lined by the Arab world, Ghaddafi’s foreign policy looked southward.⁸ As St John writes of his criteria for support, ‘personalities and internal policies were generally irrelevant as long as governments professed support for Islam and opposed imperialism, colonialism, and Zionism’.⁹ Regimes began breaking ties with Libya, however, when actual disbursements diverged widely from promised support. His overtures were seen as ‘both insincere and self-serving’,¹⁰ as numerous countries accused him of interfering in their internal affairs.¹¹ Accordingly, he interfered all the more so, sponsoring insurgents instead of states. He backed two of the continent’s most destructive post-independence regimes—Idi Amin of Uganda and Jean Bedel Bokassa of Central African Republic—throughout the 1970s;¹² and by the 1980s, provided ‘rhetorical and practical support for African liberation movements, including arms supplies and military training’.¹³

⁵ Basic support was provided to the PAIGC independence movement in Guinea Bissau and Cape Verde following the dogged diplomatic efforts of leader Amilcar Cabral, who secured military aid from the Soviets, Chinese, Organization for African Unity, Sweden, and other Scandinavian countries, despite their ideological differences (Chabal, *Amilcar Cabral*, 86–8.).

⁶ Rashid, “Student Radicals, Lumpen Youth,” 75.

⁷ Smaldone, “Soviet and Chinese Military Aid and Arms Transfers to Africa,” 107.

⁸ St. John, *Qaddafi’s World Design*, 96.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ St. John, “The Libyan Debacle in sub-Saharan Africa, 1969-1987,” 135–6.

¹¹ Ibid., 100–101.

¹² Ibid., 99.

¹³ St. John, *Qaddafi’s World Design*, 98.

The connection to Sierra Leone was made through former student leader Alie Kabba, the focal point for connecting radicals to the larger political currents of the day. With the sponsorship of Gaddafi and nominally ‘revolutionary’ Jerry Rawlings, Kabba travelled from Sierra Leone between Ghana, Guinea, Burkina Faso, and Libya.¹⁴ Sankoh and a ‘motley collection’ of 35-50 individuals responded to a call sent through Kabba for guerrilla training in Benghazi and Tajura, Libya in 1987—most left ‘frustrated and divided’.¹⁵ But RUF co-founders Sankoh, Abu Kanu, and Rashid Mansaray, along with a half-dozen other trainees, continued pursuing the military option, returning to Sierra Leone seeking avenues for further action.¹⁶ Simultaneously, Charles Taylor was carrying out similar preparations for rebellion in neighbouring Liberia. With his requests for sponsorship from Momoh rebuffed, Taylor found support from Burkina Faso’s Blaise Compaore, a fellow acolyte of Gaddafi. In return for introducing Taylor to the Libyan leader, Compaore received support from Taylor and his Liberian associates in the 1987 coup over President Thomas Sankara, whom he served as second-in-command.¹⁷

This web of interpersonal ambition and intrigue is not exceptional in elite politics, but it is central to understanding the context in which the RUF was founded. Violent entrepreneurship in 1980s and 1990s West Africa was highly personalistic, non-ideologically driven, and devoid of significant superpower involvement. This had internal and external implications for attempted ‘revolution’. Internally, it led to rampant elite-level mistrust, resultant group fractionalization, and dependence on the use of highly visible force as power. Externally, it meant that the revolutions of Sankoh and Taylor were not beholden to foreign sponsors’ ideological rhetoric or political agendas. Their ambitions began and ended with seizing state power, and they used the widely popular discourse of people’s revolution to do it.

STAGE TWO: THE FIRST JOINERS

The recruitment of the ‘first joiners’ of the RUF, the Vanguard, marks perhaps the true transition to collective action: when a small group of committed ideologues became a military organization. According to predominant selective incentives narratives, such as

¹⁴ Abdullah, *Between Democracy and Terror*, 52.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 55.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 56.

¹⁷ Gberie, *A Dirty War in West Africa*, 52–3.

Weinstein's resource endowments model or Collier and Hoeffler's greed and feasibility formulation, the RUF were a resource-rich group that individuals joined because of the favourable economic calculus of participation. However, to the contrary, at its outset the RUF was endowed with almost no financial wealth, only promises of military support from external allies. There was no pretence of fighter payment schemes, nor was there any guarantee that the group would be able to control and disburse diamonds or other resources. Instead, the first attempts to mobilize fighters in Sierra Leone were based on social networks, revolutionary ideology, and long-term promises of the education and jobs that revolution would bring. It was a patent failure. Sankoh and colleagues were completely incapable of recruiting followers during their pre-war forays in the capital and countryside in 1988.

Rebuffed by their own target audience and lacking a base camp or training ground, they focused on assisting Taylor and the NPFL's invasion of Liberia. The NPFL started as a core of West African revolutionaries for hire, recruited in Libyan training camps and reinforced by fighters on loan from Compaore. They were mobilized in Côte d'Ivoire, a mix of ideologues, militarists, and job-seekers, with the blessing of President Felix Houphouët-Boigny. After invading Liberia from the Ivoirian border on Christmas Eve 1989, the NPFL quickly extended their reach across the country, destabilising village life not only for Liberians, but also for the thousands of Sierra Leoneans living and working in the country. Rebel ranks swelled quickly through a combination of coercion, looting, and playing upon political grievances. Sankoh was reportedly a battle commander in a number of the initial attacks in Nimba County, before he left the front to serve as a strategic advisor in Gbarnga, Taylor's headquarters, where he began plotting his own rebellion.¹⁸

Sankoh found his second attempt at recruiting a revolutionary 'Vanguard' much easier in the wartime context, where acute insecurity made the opportunity cost and personal risk calculation of participation a far cry from the motives identified in greed and opportunism theses. The situation for Sierra Leoneans in Liberia was particularly precarious as they were blamed for their home government's anti-Taylor stance—President Momoh provided Lungi Airport outside Freetown as the base for ECOMOG's assault on the NPFL. According to the TRC Report, Taylor struck back at ECOMOG through its countries' citizens:

At the point when NPFL forces started to incur casualties as a result of

¹⁸ TRC, "Volume 3A," 100–101.

ECOMOG bombing raids, which started around August 1990, Taylor was prepared to retaliate. He issued an arbitrary order to his NPFL troops to arrest and imprison all those persons on the territories under his control who were nationals of ECOWAS states.¹⁹

As a result, Sierra Leoneans across Liberia were arrested, detained, tortured, and killed by NPFL fighters. Retribution seems to have been the primary factor motivating anti-Sierra Leonean attacks and hostage-taking. Professionals and youths; women, children, and men, were all subject to inhumane treatment. As described by a Sierra Leonean vocational instructor working in Liberia:

(In September) there was a press release heard on LAMCO FM radio station that all foreign nationals resident in Liberia, whose countries of origin formed ECOMOG based in Sierra Leone, were to be arrested. It stated that for every Liberian NPFL commando killed by jet bombings of ECOMOG, we were going to bear similar consequences. That night my whole family and I were taken by four armed men to a nearby jail; there we met over 85 other foreign nationals, including women, children, and the elderly. The old, the women, and the children were released two weeks later and allowed to return to their homes, while a number of us were still held in detention. Executions were carried out for every time the ECOMOG jet bombed their areas, even without killing anyone. I came to understand that multiple executions were carried out in all control areas throughout the country as retaliation.²⁰

Amidst this reign of terror on expatriate West Africans, Sankoh proposed to Taylor that he organize Sierra Leoneans in the country for his own war. Sankoh was inspired by Marxist-Leninist ideology, in which a revolutionary vanguard is recruited from the working class, providing the political origin and practical mobilization for economic and political revolution—ultimately, the democratic dictatorship of the proletariat. But his coercive recruitment strategy for bringing revolution to the masses collected a mixed bunch of Sierra Leoneans and Sierra Leonean-Liberians with little to no political pedigree nor avowed interest in revolution. While war swept across the Liberian countryside in October 1990, Sankoh travelled from one NPFL base and town to the next, ‘rescuing’ Sierra Leonean detainees. He used their physical insecurity to establish an allegiance to the RUF.

According to Vanguard testimonies to the TRC, when Sankoh arrived at detention facilities with an NPFL ‘hit squad’, Sierra Leoneans were spared the beatings, abuse, and executions to which other detainees were conspicuously subject. Sankoh’s ‘favoured means of recruitment depended on convincing people that their lives lay squarely in his

¹⁹ Ibid., 99.

²⁰ Ibid., 99–100.

hands...effectively, he blackmailed them into becoming members of the RUF.²¹ The Vanguard recruits were aware of the ploy, but rather than being cynical about it, even upon reflection they remain acutely pragmatic: ‘Had it not been for Foday Sankoh’s mission, plenty of us might have been killed. So we regarded it as a rescue mission...Had he left it to volunteerism, perhaps he might not have successfully got that number that he managed to get in a very short time.’²² Many joined after losing relatives at the hands of the NPFL. An elder Vanguard, whose brother was killed by the NPFL, described getting ‘freedom’ from Sankoh: ‘Foday Sankoh met me and gave me some freedom...We were mostly Sierra Leoneans, but many had stayed in Liberia for a long time...*Foday Sankoh recruited us personally*. He said to go die for our country; they harassed too much’ (emphasis mine).²³ Stripped of other options and with compelling grievances to stand behind, these first joiners soon became charismatic Sankoh’s spokespersons and loyal followers.

They were taken for training at Cuttington University College in September and October 1990, and from November, to Camp Namma, the former Liberian Army base that was commandeered by Taylor following the capture of Gbarnga in July 1990. As a result, the ‘Vanguard’ was not a class-based revolutionary movement, but a reluctant revolutionary movement, ‘a highly unconventional fighting force...taken on board in troubled circumstances, many of them under false pretences, duress, or threats to their lives...only loosely bound together by superficial bonds, more out of a sense of common adversity than any true notion of unity.’²⁴

Not all Vanguard recruits had been arrested by NPFL forces. Some met Sankoh while attending secondary school in Liberia, or while working at companies like Bong Mines and Boma power station. Reiterating the above description of being recruited ‘personally’, many of these individuals had a personal connection, or a friend with a personal connection, to Sankoh. He elevated recruits from powerless marginality, instilling in them a sense of purpose and historical significance. Voluntary joiners were thus mobilized through trust-based social networks. One of the female Vanguard members described how the confluence of trust-based social networks, a coercive wartime context, and political grievances landed her in the RUF:

²¹ Ibid., 103.

²² Vanguard member, as quoted in, Ibid.

²³ Kai Fekkah, Vanguard/S4 Commander.

²⁴ TRC, “Volume 3A,” 106.

[My best friend] is the one that made me to join in this war when we were [studying] in Liberia. We were Sierra Leonean, and she went to me and she said, “Mariatu, if you stay here, people are going to kill you. So let us go and fight for our country.” I said, “Which fight is that?” She said, “You don’t know that the leader from the Sierra Leone rebel leadership is here?” I said, “Ah! I do not want to fight at home. I am afraid.” She said, “Oh, do not be afraid.” I said, “How are we going to fight in Sierra Leone?”...We went in the training ground, and got trained in Sukutu base—the real name is Namma Base. There was the training. So we were there for nine months. After that, we came in [to Sierra Leone]. They split the group in two...There were only 17 girls in our battalion. We were the original WACs.²⁵

Both the Vanguard members captured by the NPFL and those recruited less coercively by Sankoh and other Libyan-trained ‘Special Forces’, were committing to a revolutionary project that at the outset bore no sign of personal gain. Collective action problems were overcome as a direct result of the wartime context, which changed survivalist calculations to ‘follow Foday Sankoh or die’. In terms of material incentives, *voluntary* Vanguard members most closely resemble Weinstein’s ‘investors’ committed to the cause itself, not opportunistic joiners attracted by material gain. Moreover, those *forced* to join soon became investors, as exit was not an option and any potential benefits were anticipated only after the long-term goals of the revolution could be realized. Herein lies the importance of the six-month training process undertaken at Camp Namma. It inculcated in the ragtag assemblage of detainees and war-displaced a revolutionary ideology, giving name to social, political, and economic grievances and attaching to them an armed solution. By the end of the training programme, these 382 recruits became a viable Vanguard, able not only to perform basic military operations against a better-equipped enemy, but also to perform the political role of militant revolutionaries.²⁶

STAGE THREE: THE FIRST RECRUITS

Sankoh’s recruitment strategy for the first joiners to the RUF, described above, underscores the often-overlooked importance of physical insecurity and coercion—both direct and indirect—in facilitating collective action. It set an unfortunate precedent for subsequent RUF recruitment efforts. With a Vanguard membership that had been exposed to extreme violence and brutality at the hands of the NPFL before being ‘rescued’ through forcible recruitment, it could easily be argued that the practice of violent recruitment had been

²⁵ Mariatu Thomas, Vanguard/WACs.

²⁶ Fatu Tucker, Vanguard/WACs Commander.

institutionalized from the war's inception. However, early recruitment patterns show a rather more ambitious strategy.

The large-scale mobilization that followed the Vanguard's invasion of the country in March and April 1991 took the form of vigorous recruitment campaigns in small Eastern and Southern towns and villages beyond the reach of the SLA. Dubbed the 'junior commandos', these early recruits numbered in the thousands. They were mobilized through an 'invade-rally-recruit' modus operandi that characterized the RUF's operations in the first six months of the war. The standard procedure was to fire two to three 'warning' shots into the air, and then corral frightened civilians back into town, calling promises of safety to those who had scattered into the surrounding bush. Once everyone was assembled at the court *barrie* (the open-air structure where chiefs levy judgments and broker local disputes) or village centre, Sankoh or the highest-ranking commander would address residents, proclaiming the arrival of revolution and calling for the overthrow of the 'rotten APC system'. In some instances, leaflets arrived before the RUF, heralding an impending attack.

The RUF first struck Bomaru in the East, then retreated into Liberia for a week before attacking at Koindu, where the Sierra Leone-Liberia border meets Guinea. Hearing that rebels were coming, many people had already fled into Liberia or Guinea; those who remained were unprotected by the army. As Jinnah Brooks, a teacher at Pendembu who was recruited into the RUF, says:

We went three to four months without pay...[at that point] we knew the war would come...On April 15 the rebels invaded from Liberia to Pendembu...They called people to the court *barrie*. By that time the SLA had pulled out. They sensitized people about why war came to Sierra Leone. All people waited until they were satisfied there were not enemies there; the government had said Liberians were invading the country. The rebels asked volunteers to join and we were trained for six months. Foday Sankoh came after two days—he explained the rotting system as the cause of the war.²⁷

It is widely reported in Kailahun province that at this initial stage individuals were not forced to join. One of the Black Guard fighters, in Kailahun when the war entered, was taken into the RUF in a nearby village:

They entered peacefully. They said they came to free people and eliminate the APC. I was convinced to join...my parents evacuated to Daru, but I was denied to go because any youth going to the government zone, you will risk your life,

²⁷ Jinnah Brooks, Battalion G4 Commander.

you are killed when you reach the government zone.²⁸

He spent two months at the Baiwalla training base before being sent to the frontline, not far from where his parents had escaped. Moving from village to village in the half-abandoned East, the rebels faced little resistance pitching their campaign and sending new recruits for training at 'Base One', Pendembu.

The First Battalion used similar recruitment strategies in the south. Like that in Kailahun town, the attack on district capital Pujehun town, was in the morning. As a Sierra Leonean-Liberian Vanguard member describes it: 'We recruited gallant men. They joined because they were tired of the rotting system.'²⁹ Many of those 'gallant men' who became the RUF's junior commandos were schoolboys. One describes, 'I was going to school. The rebels captured the town and called everyone in front of their houses, then started picking out the young men and women, and told them to join the movement. There was no resistance because we had heard they were at Zimmi'.³⁰ Those in surrounding villages were mobilized through a combination of social, political, survivalist, and coercive factors.

Social and political ties are closely intertwined in rural Sierra Leonean society. Poverty, compounded by the arrival of war, only amplified household concerns for survival and people's willingness to comply with demands, fitting themselves into the bottom rungs of shifting power structures. Moreover, in an informal fashion, apparently through no overarching strategy of the RUF, they rode the coattails of pre-existing social networks and local cultural-political institutions in Pujehun and Kailahun Districts already opposed to the APC. An entire squad—dubbed 'Action Group'—was formed from participants in the Ndorgbooyosoi rebellion, a comparatively small uprising led by Momoh Konneh in Pujehun in 1986. Sympathetic to the RUF, Konneh became Foday Sankoh's 'first advisor' in Pujehun District, and Soro Gbema chiefdom was quickly established as his stronghold—and resultantly that of the whole First Battalion. His personal mobilization of fighters presaged the highly personalistic nature of military leadership that developed in the RUF, and which characterizes both formal and informal politics in the greater region.

²⁸ Bockarie Ngobeh, Black Guard Commander.

²⁹ Kai Fekkah, Vanguard/S4 Commander.

³⁰ Sylvester Kabbia, Junior commando.

Many young men in particular, but also young women, joined because of their family's support for RUF rhetoric and objectives. They were sent to training as representatives of their village and family. Traditionally strong support for the opposition made the region fertile ground for recruitment. One of the several hundred teenage boys recruited during the first month, a battalion commander by the war's end, describes: 'I decided to join because of the ideology. My family was SLPP. People were glad to overthrow the SLPP areas because they [the civilians] were more likely to support [the RUF].'³¹

The influence of social networks and encouragement from communities and families for their able-bodied young women and men to join the invading rebels derived in large part from the acutely insecure wartime context. Although there was a degree of latent support for rebellion in the rural social networks of the East and South, civilians also faced a spectrum of fear and opportunity that encouraged participation via uncertain survivalist calculations. Some parents hoped their children's participation might buttress the rest of the family against abuse and theft. Many heard stories of teen-aged children being killed upon arrival in government-controlled territory, and thus left their children to the RUF in order to protect them from summary execution at the hands of the SLA.

For example, because the RUF invaded during the Easter vacation, several of the early recruits were youngsters home from secondary schools in the larger provincial towns. An Internal Defence Unit commander recruited in the East was attending school in Kono but went to his parents' village for the holiday:

We heard about rebels at Bomaru, but I had to stay with my parents, because if you leave the rebel area the SLA will kill you. It happened to my uncle at the Moi River. If you are running from the rebels, the SLA will do harm to civilians as well. When the rebels joined people in the village, I said I had to [finish my studies]...but eventually I saw there was no way [to return to school] and civilians were being harassed, so I joined them to protect myself and family.³²

Many young men stayed in rebel areas while their parents evacuated.³³ Similarly, individuals recruited in the South often stayed in rebel-held areas out of a fear of execution should they move to SLA zones. 'Afraid to move because we would be killed'³⁴ transformed readily into

³¹ Jacob Sesay, Brigade Commander.

³² Bobson Lamin, Black Guard Signals.

³³ Bockarie Ngobeh, Black Guard Commander.

³⁴ Yassir Kabbia, Combat Medic

recruitment and training during the first few months of the war, when options began to dwindle and threats multiplied.

By late May 1991, the RUF advanced across the Moa River to Bunumbu, where they recruited many of the movement's prominent intellectuals from the teachers' college. Again, the rebels entered the town peacefully and unhindered, as described by a man who became a 'strong fighter':

The rebels crossed on two fronts to take Bunumbu...they captured the village around 6:30am. They were knocking at doors. They only fired two rounds because there was no enemy, only civilians. They took the *barrie* in the village and started asking about the enemy. They lectured their purpose was to remove the APC government...They started selecting youth and strong men and women. They took us to Manawa and fed us at Manawa. They left the civilians there and took us to the training base.³⁵

What is significant in narratives of the first recruits is not only the routine description of the RUF taking towns peacefully—and almost wholly uncontested—but also the immediate differentiation between 'fighters', yet to be trained, and civilians, who remained under the governance and control of the RUF G-2 political wing. As a teacher, then in the final year of his certificate, described, after entering 'peacefully', armed men organized people into categories. Among the groups identified were skilled tradespeople—carpenters, masons, and drivers—and educated and literate civilians (mostly teachers and trainees), who would build the RUF's administrative structure.³⁶

The training programme differed according to the group to which one was assigned. The teacher, for example, did not advance to the training base immediately as other youth had done, but still 'had basic training at Bunumbu, [before being sent for] further training at Pendembu for three months'.³⁷ The leader's driver was also among those recruited at Bunumbu: 'They took me to Foday Sankoh's Mansion, where I became his driver because I knew how to drive a truck. I took him all sides. We passed to talk to the frontline and to civilians.'³⁸ Thus, the early recruitment phase was not as overtly coercive as those that would follow, nor was it indiscriminate. It was focused on populating the group with the military,

³⁵ Gasimu Komba, Strong fighter.

³⁶ Sidie Dumana, *Driver to the Leader*. Among this group was Ibrahim Deen-Jalloh, a lecturer at Bunumbu Teacher's College who, along with his wife, was one of the leading intellectuals in the RUF.

³⁷ Abie Tamba, *Adjutant*.

³⁸ Sidie Dumana, *Driver to the Leader*.

administrative, and logistical skill sets necessary for guerrilla warfare. Civilian support was mobilized alongside fighters, as farmers, doctors and nurses, teachers, blacksmiths, and other artisans were recruited for everything from agriculture (provision of foodstuffs, upkeep of hoes, etc.), to medicine (running medical triage units near the frontlines, or hospital training centres at the rear).

A powerful training commander who was recruited as a junior commando in the first months of RUF control in Kailahun describes the contradictory push-pull factors that motivate rebel joining, and reject path-dependent selective incentive explanations:

The RUF Vanguard captured people when they first came. By that time it was against my will, yes, because I didn't know the motive—they have arms. They sensitized us, trained us and gave us ideology. They used most of us to talk to our people. We wanted to wipe out tribalism and economic degradation. People were happy because of what they were saying...You're only conscious of your surviving for safety.³⁹

It is not inconsequential that this apparently contradictory narrative of coercion, conviction, and survival comes from even the top ranks of training commandants. It underscores how social, political, survivalist, and coercive incentives for participation can all exist simultaneously and interdependently. It also hints at the importance of ideology training in giving name to the grievances that rural communities, and youth in particular, were feeling, thereby attaching meaning to the war they found themselves enveloped by. The rebellion would likely have sputtered and failed had the Vanguard not been able to convert the early recruits into reluctant investors of the RUF programme, particularly as recruitment became less hybrid and more coercive.

STAGE FOUR: ONGOING RECRUITMENT

As the war progressed, the RUF and NPFL commanders became increasingly aggressive in their recruitment drives, forcing young and fit people to join. A CDF commander described Sankoh's 'war of liberation' as an initially popular effort that was derailed as it came under pressure:

He brought the RUF and Liberians, but there were not enough fighting men. He asked for younger men and single barrels...people had given them willingly at the sectional level. They became victims after Kailahun and Pujehun. At the initial stage they didn't do anything to force people to join. But later they checked for any young man physically strong. The territory was too large; they

³⁹ Peter Kalawa, Training commander.

needed manpower.⁴⁰

Herein lies the key to mobilization and recruitment of the RUF. Whilst exhibiting certain trends, such as the foreshadowing of capture and coercion from as early as the Vanguard days, recruitment also changed relatively rapidly as a result of the group's needs and constraints. Thus, while some joined partially out of support for the SLPP, and others 'lacked education and joined to further (their) education', most early recruits say the RUF 'lost the programme in the end'.⁴¹

The on-going mobilization of fighters and 'manpower', herein the 'fourth stage' of rebel recruitment, occurred after the RUF became a fully-fledged armed group fighting a full-scale civil war. Recruitment became more haphazard and even less voluntary after the foundational membership of the RUF—the Special Forces, Vanguard, and junior commandos—was formed. The political script, largely welcomed at the outset, quickly lost legitimacy in the first two years in light of the NPFL fighters' abuse of civilians in the RUF realm. Moreover, the NPRC overthrow of Momoh's regime in 1992 obviated the RUF's central stated objective of toppling the APC. Yet, while political and social mobilization became virtually non-existent, selective incentives also fail to account for collective action, as mobilization continued despite steep variation in the group's basic material viability and resource-control.

After 1993, the RUF lost control of the East and was forced onto jungle bases, with pressure from ECOMOG, the redoubled SLA, and private military contractors increasing under the new NPRC military regime. Mistrust of civilians, rampant violence, and disregard for social mores increasingly characterized the isolated group's public profile as the ideological resources for mobilization steadily declined. The RUF was surprisingly cohesive, however, when it was at its most marginal. This cohesion under duress can partly be explained by the heightened threats members faced upon defection or capture. But it is also explained by group members' struggle for basic goods, which reinforced cooperation and retention, as they became more dependent on solidarity for survival. The primary response to increased military and logistical pressure was ambush—an intrinsically group-based undertaking. Moreover, ambushes and raids provided a direct mechanism for forced recruitment: they created the opportunity to 'catch-up' people caught in the operation, and

⁴⁰ Johnny Jalloh, CDF Commander.

⁴¹ Thomas Alpha, Junior commando.

also the need for ‘manpower’ to carry looted provisions back to the jungle camps. A few quotes illustrate the tactics the RUF relied on for food and weapons in the second phase of the war, and the opportunities and needs they provided for forced recruitment:

We got food from neighbouring villages, and set ambushes to capture arms and ammunition. I was sent to establish a training base at Jui Koya, two miles from Zogoda, to train all the young men captured from the frontlines to strengthen our manpower.⁴²

Maybe 15-25 armed men were needed to go on food finding. They would capture food and civilians to tote on their heads.⁴³

We got lots of ammunition at Masingbi. We captured the civilians to carry loads into the bush to the camp at Kangari Hills.⁴⁴

This ‘recruitment’ pattern characterized the RUF mobilization strategy for the rest of the war, with one significant exception—the union of the RUF and AFRC (former SLA) forces. The former soldiers who headed for the provinces after being driven from Freetown by ECOMOG were largely urban recruits accustomed to receiving a military salary. Inasmuch as they could, they headed for urban areas with commercial prospects. SAJ Musa and his men encamped around Koinadugu district, engaging in illicit trade across the Guinea border. Others set up in the diamond-mining areas of Kono district. These fighters largely fit the description of Weinstein’s opportunistic joiners, as they capitalized on territorial control and the wartime cover of lawlessness to pursue self-interest. However, many of them gradually dispersed, some to Gambia,⁴⁵ others into Guinea, where they were hired by an aspiring coup leader,⁴⁶ some into Occra Hills where they set up the West Side Boys,⁴⁷ and still others back into Freetown after the 6 January attempt to retake the city failed. The circumstances under which they joined the group, and their ambiguous commitment to the goals of the ‘revolution’—much less the RUF leadership—fundamentally unhinged the internal cohesion of the group and led to significant spikes in in-fighting and factionalization. This affirms the implications of the selective benefits argument, wherein self-interested participation by opportunistic fighters decreases organizational control and group-oriented behaviour, even

⁴² Bockarie Ngobeh, Black Guard Commander.

⁴³ Thomas Smart, Training Instructor.

⁴⁴ Gasimu Komba, Strong fighter.

⁴⁵ Abubakarr Daboh, AFRC follower.

⁴⁶ Gasimu Komba, Strong fighter.

⁴⁷ Alfred Gbla, WSB Commander.

if the narrative of selective benefits itself explains only a small fraction of RUF participation on the whole.

No prominent theories of rebel group mobilization accommodate the dramatic change over time seen in most groups' life spans. A defining characteristic of war is the inconstant nature of power and control—of territory, civilians, and military muscle—over time, because war by its very nature is a conflictual relationship between armed groups seeking to disrupt the balance of these traits. Weinstein's initial endowments argument provides perhaps the most path-dependent example, but in some ways it is reflective of the larger mobilization literature. The models outlined by Lichbach's review of solutions to the collective action problem focus largely on the point at which it is overcome at the outset of a conflict.⁴⁸ Once an armed group is mobilized, however, mobilization and onset-focused literature presumes that the armed group is somehow viable until its logical conclusion: victory or defeat. The history of the RUF, and indeed of most other anti-state military organizations, is one of a constant fight for survival, not only from without (the external forces pushing their demise) but from within its own ranks, as fighters tire of the cost-benefit balance that purportedly inspired their participation in the first place, defecting as a result.

In addition to individual motivation and commitment flagging over the course of a conflict, the resources available to rebel leaders can change drastically. The RUF's military strength was directly tied to the strength of its competitors and opponents, and ebbed and flowed non-linearly. Their material resources also changed over time, in relation to military might (for example, when they increased upon taking valuable towns and targets) and external support (decreasing strikingly, for example, when ULIMO cut the border, and resultantly all links from the RUF to Taylor). As a result, while selective benefits play a role in facilitating and sustaining collective action for rebellion, they are both closely intertwined with the insecure wartime context, and often outside the control of the armed group. The following chapter delves into the social and organizational control mechanisms that kept members in the group and sustained its relative cohesion for over a decade.

⁴⁸ Lichbach, "Rethinking Rationality and Rebellion."

CHAPTER 4

ESTABLISHING ORDER AND CONTROL

Despite the focus on mobilization and conflict onset in studies of civil war, the question of whether and how fighters are retained, and the extent to which their behaviour is controlled, arguably has a greater impact on the nature and duration of violence.¹ The retention and control of fighters in non-state armed groups, however, remains under-examined. Secretive rebel training programmes are overshadowed by the violence they wreak. This chapter relies on interview and archive data to distil and analyse the three main processes through which leaders of the RUF turned peaceable citizens into an organization capable of waging war against the state.

The first process is training, wherein civilians become military personnel. Second, the militarization process entails supplanting civilian power structures with military ones.² This hierarchy is empowered through the third process, the implementation of policies that structure daily life within the group. Enforcement of organizational laws and order reifies the hierarchical power structure and the ideology articulated in training. Together, these three processes replace peacetime norms and power structures with ‘revolutionary’ militarized ones. Though built sequentially, they are interdependent and maintained continually.

MAKING REBELS: THE RUF TRAINING PROGRAMME

Africa’s history of armed conflict, from pre-colonial wars of kingdom expansion, to anti-colonial wars of independence, has a rich legacy of warrior training and initiation.³ After the 1960s, liberation struggles and other military solutions to political problems were shaped strongly by Cold War training and arms transfers. From 1964-1966 alone, for example, China—then the least influential Communist power—worked alongside own-trained counterparts from Ghana and Tanzania to transfer guerrilla skills to prospective

¹ Kenny, “Structural Integrity and Cohesion in Insurgent Organizations.”

² Denov, *Child Soldiers*.

³ Clayton, *Frontiersmen*, 235.

revolutionaries from 17 countries.⁴ The Soviet programme was even more advanced, bringing thousands of aspiring revolutionaries to Eastern Europe for military training.⁵ Cuba also brought African revolutionaries to its shores, and deployed trainers and fighters to serve in African wars.⁶ The leaders of the RUF, trained in 1980s Libya, missed this wave. A decade or two prior and they may have been among the thousands of trainees sent abroad, or to regional satellite bases in countries such as Ghana, Tanzania, and Congo-Brazzaville.⁷ Instead, the Mano River states and neighbours were conspicuously absent from the Cold War landscape of revolutionary agitation.

When they appeared in Libya in the 1980s, these West African militarists became part of a tight-knit network of military entrepreneurs who destabilized the region by supporting each other's coups and rebellions. The 'Special Forces', who hailed from Burkina Faso, Côte d'Ivoire, Gambia, Liberia, and Sierra Leone, returned to their home countries with harsh Libyan 'guerrilla training' programmes in hand. This section examines the process of military training more generally, and African rebel training in particular, before detailing how this training was implemented in the RUF.

Turning civilians into soldiers, many into one

Two processes of transformation distinguish military training from all other forms of group joining or initiation. The first is the transformation of the individual into a soldier or military actor. The second is that of the individual actor into a member of a unitary group, omnipotent over its constituents. To make fighters effective and readily responsive to command, their peacetime socialization is subjugated to their new militarized identity; their individual will and interests subjugated to that of the commander and group. As Wheeler writes of the SPLA in South Sudan, 'It was the purpose of the military training to sever the

⁴ Algeria, Burkina Faso, Congo-Zaire, Congo-Brazzaville, Canary Islands, Cameroon, Gabon, Ghana, Malawi, Mozambique, Niger, Nigeria, Rwanda, Swaziland, Tanzania, Zambia, and Zimbabwe; Gilks and Segal, *China and the Arms Trade*, 54–5; Grundy, *Guerrilla Struggle in Africa*, 51.

⁵ See, e.g., Alexander and McGregor, "War Stories."

⁶ Cuba's role was most influential in Angola and Ethiopia, where they fought on behalf of Mengistu Haile Mariam and also trained South Sudanese forces. In the mid-1980s Cuban troops were transferred from Ethiopia to Angola, where 25,000 forces served as engineers, advisers, and military support personnel, including fighters and trainers, see, Gleijeses, *Conflicting Missions*.

⁷ The US and post-imperial powers were staunchly anti-'radicalization' and as a result pursued 'political stability' by propping up capitalist regimes through its 'he may be a bastard, but he's our bastard' approach to foreign policy. Aid to UNITA is the notable exception in the US pattern of supporting regimes over rebels. Barnes, *An Alternative US Military Strategy for Africa in a Post-Cold War World*.

boys from the social restraints and moral sensitivities of their traditional background and to weld them together as a tightly disciplined, politically trustworthy and ruthless youth army on a Marxist model.’⁸ State militaries are similar. Yarmolinsky describes the American military training goal as turning ‘a civilian into a soldier, a boy into a man’—basic training replaces ‘individual gratifications with group goals, (and inculcates) unquestioning acceptance of authority, and development of conformity to official attitudes and conduct.’⁹

Although military training programmes are remarkably similar across state and insurgent—even private¹⁰—armed forces, the mechanisms that build cohesion are the subject of much debate. Academic research is sharply biased geographically, due in part to Western military investments in studies aimed at improving their own forces’ retention and battle effectiveness. Disciplinary biases also demarcate competing theoretical approaches:

Psychologists are prone to look at individual identity and attraction to the group, while social psychologists tend to look at group interaction and bonding. Sociologists might focus on group structure, networks, and fill of personnel, for example...Some of the ethnography by anthropologists has described the interactions among service members, group rituals, and bonding. Political scientists, on the other hand, are more likely to look at the bonding between service personnel...and the integration of military personnel, especially high-level leaders, with the wider society or high government officials.¹¹

Siebold, a social psychologist for the US Army, goes on to advocate the ‘standard model’, which focuses on bonding among group members (primary cohesion), and between members and the larger organization (secondary cohesion). This social psychological approach, first laid out by Shils and Janowitz¹², has rarely been applied to either non-state (i.e. rebel) training programmes or African military cases.¹³

Instead, much of the research on African rebel groups comes from anthropology, which provides a culturally situated response to the prevailing functionalist approach. The functionalist account of rebel training is heavily normative, exceptionalising violent

⁸ Wheeler, “Finding Meaning Amid the Chaos,” 58.

⁹ A. Yarmolinsky (1971) as quoted in, Arkin and Dobrofsky, “Military Socialization and Masculinity,” 158.

¹⁰ Grant, *US Military Expertise for Sale: Private Military Consultants as a Tool of Foreign Policy*; Schreier and Caparini, “Privatising Security: Law, Practice, and Governance.”

¹¹ Siebold, “The Essence of Military Group Cohesion,” 287.

¹² Shils and Janowitz, “Cohesion and Disintegration in the Wehrmacht in World War II.”

¹³ The limited research on military socialization in Africa focuses overwhelmingly on Western ‘professionalization’ campaigns and security sector reform, rather than processes indigenous or endogenous to African militaries. See, e.g., Soeters and Ouytsel, “The Challenge of Diffusing Military Professionalism in Africa.”

socialization on the continent as abusive indoctrination, particularly of child soldiers.¹⁴ While training *is* often abusive, the similarities between institutionalized abuse in rebel training and professional military training globally are rarely explored. War ethnographies, on the other hand, give pride of place to cultural parallels and historical continuities between rebel joining practices and local cultural symbols and initiation rites.¹⁵ Initiation has been stressed in the Mano River literature as an important process of military transformation.¹⁶ However, it does not wholly apply to the RUF and has overshadowed other physical, social, and political training processes of making soldiers.

RUF training: four forms, one ideal

This section draws together these different conceptions of formal training, informal socialization, and cultural practices, and identifies four modes of transforming civilians into rebels in the RUF: formal training, apprenticeship, violence-as-practice, and initiation. The formal training camp, the ideal model wherein recruits are trained militarily and ideologically until ready for deployment, is discussed in detail below.

Informal apprenticeship, in which new members paired with seasoned fighters, was as common as formal training, but personalistic rather than group-centric. Often starting as small boys, informal apprentices were irregular combatants who served as bodyguards or domestic hands before being given a weapon and taken along on missions.¹⁷ This pattern was seen across all factions, but particularly where the RUF and SLA/AFRC were stationary, attracting young hangers-on looking to maximize their education and survival opportunities.¹⁸ To some extent, it also reflects the legacy of warrior, hunter, and other guild apprenticeships in the region.¹⁹

¹⁴ Nuanced examples of this approach include, Beber and Blattman, “The Industrial Organization of Rebellion”; Denov, *Child Soldiers*, 103–8.

¹⁵ See in particular, Ellis, *The Mask of Anarchy*; Hoffman, *The War Machines*; Shepler, “The Social and Cultural Context of Child Soldiering in Sierra Leone.”

¹⁶ E.g., Shepler, “The Social and Cultural Context of Child Soldiering in Sierra Leone”; Ellis, “Young Soldiers and the Significance of Initiation.”

¹⁷ Richards, *Fighting for the Rain Forest*; Shepler, “The Rites of the Child.”

¹⁸ Keen, *Conflict and Collusion*, 97–8, 103–4; Richards, *Fighting for the Rain Forest*; Peters and Richards, “Why We Fight’.”

¹⁹ Shepler, “The Social and Cultural Context of Child Soldiering in Sierra Leone,” 19–20, 28; Utas, *Sweet Battlefields*, 90.

As Arkin and Dobrofsky note with respect to Western militaries, ‘The military provides a social environment which is a hybrid of family and social groups as well as work and reference groups that becomes interwoven through a network of primary and secondary interactions.’²⁰ The surrogate ‘fathers’ and ‘elder brothers’ that male soldiers and commanders provided younger boys echoed the Sierra Leonean socio-cultural institution of fosterage, in which children are raised by family or acquaintances with more resources than their parents, often in exchange for the child’s labour and servitude.²¹ Informal apprentice-style training turned boys into fighters, but it did not inculcate in them revolutionary ideology or fidelity beyond their immediate *bossman*.

The third most prominent training practice—the use of violence itself as a form of socialization and induction—was widespread in its occurrence but violated RUF policy. This ‘training’ technique involved having new members perpetrate violent acts to mark their membership. Similar practices have been noted in street gangs around the world.²² While violent induction militarized recruits and created primary allegiances, it also undermined central control and cohesion by transgressing overall RUF policy. Cohen identifies sexual violence and gang rape in particular (both illegal under the RUF) as a tool of ‘combatant socialization’ and a ‘vehicle for creating esteem’ among perpetrators.²³ With empirics grounded in Sierra Leone, Cohen writes, ‘gang rape is notable for its performance aspects, and perpetrators...often watch each other and organize an order of participation.’²⁴ Accordingly, violence appears to be correlated with apprenticeship, as low-level commanders instructed aspiring fighters to commit violence under their tutelage. As one former child soldier described, ‘My boss, he would call me and say, “See how we do mommy and daddy business [sex].” After one year I did it. [But] my boss wouldn’t let me take women back to camp. Only the older boys had women in camp.’²⁵

A systematic examination of violent socialization as a form of training is beyond the scope of this study, not least because research ethics preclude direct questions about the first acts

²⁰ Arkin and Dobrofsky, “Military Socialization and Masculinity,” 158.

²¹ Fosterage has been invoked for both creating an alienated, marginalized urban youth class, and for inspiring youth to turn to armed groups as ‘family surrogates’. See respectively, e.g., Zack-Williams, “Child Soldiers in the Civil War in Sierra Leone,” 76–7; Gberie, *A Dirty War in West Africa*, 149; Zack-Williams, “Child Soldiers in Sierra Leone.”

²² Watts and Zimmerman, “Violence Against Women,” 1234.

²³ Cohen, “Causes of Rape During Civil War: Cross-national Evidence (1980-2009),” 12.

²⁴ Cohen, ‘Causes of Rape’, p. 12

²⁵ Umaru Sallah, *Fighter*.

of violence committed by ex-combatants. There is some anecdotal evidence that, in addition to being pressured to participate in rape, new recruits were also forced to mutilate or kill friends, family, or neighbours as a way of severing their community ties and forcing them to accept a new violent identity.²⁶ While exposure to violence against friends and family was tragically common, the majority of young combatants did not perpetrate these crimes. Instead, they were forced to watch as a means of being cowed into submission.²⁷

The act of violence has been interpreted by some scholars through a Durkheimian lens, as a means of reinforcing social solidarity and wartime beliefs through the ‘interaction ritual’ of the combat group.²⁸ But more simply, perpetrating violence forced complicity and served as training-through-doing. Even in structured boot camp settings, Levy notes, ‘rituals are coupled with violence [as] violence toward trainees [is] merged with the learning how to do violence.’²⁹ In camps, the RUF often forced young fighters to inflict violence against disobedient civilians or recruits in a public proving ground that simultaneously tested and reinforced their allegiance to the group.³⁰

The fourth, and least common, form of training in the RUF is not training at all, but ritual initiation. In initiation, new recruits were not the agents of violence, but rather its subjects. The fluid, locally situated gnosis and ontology of power in the Mano River region is also outside the scope of this study, but the prominence of initiation-like rituals in the ethnographic literature and in other groups’ narratives points to its salience in the war.³¹ However, like unsanctioned violence and commanders’ personal recruitment and training of fighters, occult practices were officially outlawed in the RUF. Foday Sankoh staunchly

²⁶ Zack-Williams, “Child Soldiers in the Civil War in Sierra Leone”; Goodwin, “Sierra Leone Is No Place To Be Young.”

²⁷ It may have been presumed to be more systematic than it was in reality after being identified among child soldiers in Uganda, Angola, and Mozambique, with a few cases also emerging in human rights reports from West Africa. See, Cahn, Haynes, and NiAolain, “Masculinities and Child Soldiers in Post-Conflict Societies”; Honwana, “Negotiating Postwar Identities: Child Soldiers in Mozambique and Angola”; Vermeij, “Children of Rebellion: Socialization of Child Soldiers Within the Lord’s Resistance Army,” 40; Ovuga, Oyok, and Moro, “Post Traumatic Stress Disorder Among Former Child Soldiers,” 139.

²⁸ King, “The Word of Command,” 503; Richards, “Green Book Millenarians?”; Peters, *War and the Crisis of Youth*, 229–30.

²⁹ C.J. Levy (1971) as quoted in, Arkin and Dobrofsky, “Military Socialization and Masculinity,” 160.

³⁰ See also, Cahn, Haynes, and NiAolain, “Masculinities and Child Soldiers in Post-Conflict Societies.”

³¹ See, e.g., Richards, *Fighting for the Rain Forest*, 30; Shepler, “The Social and Cultural Context of Child Soldiering in Sierra Leone.”

enforced religious observance in camps, with all fighters and civilians called for daily Christian and Muslim prayers, and meetings opened with pastors' and imams' invocations.³² Indigenous beliefs were discouraged and medicinal charms and rituals, while widespread in Taylor's NPFL, were reportedly banned by Sankoh.³³

As the war dragged on, however, several top commanders turned to local medicine to compete with the bullet-proofing and other supernatural advantages *kamajor* initiators were providing the CDF.³⁴ However, these practices were not seen as a form of training or means of creating fighters, but rather, as a military prophylactic. A woman based in Kono in the late 1990s describes, 'They gave the marks to protect you from the enemy. Superman's brother from Liberia came to give us them. Some did not like it and didn't want it so they didn't have to get it.'³⁵ Ex-combatants report being told that these medicines—usually a powder or poultice rubbed into razorblade incisions in the arms or chest—would provide protection from aerial attacks.³⁶ Others said they provided general protection in battle.³⁷ Many fighters were sceptical of such 'creative technologies',³⁸ and said they were forced to undergo what they viewed as a meaningless but painful procedure.³⁹

That RUF leaders did not consider apprenticeship, violent practice, and initiation to be 'real' training illustrates the military formality with which they envisioned their revolutionary project. Moreover, the fact that informal practices outpaced formal training goes a long way toward explaining the dissolution of order and control, examined in the following chapter. The RUF's technical capacity, ideology, and organizational cohesion were established in the formal training programme. Accordingly, it was central to members' self-conception as participants in a real revolutionary army, even if against their will.

RUF military training practices

Guerrilla training in the RUF was a rigorous, highly structured pastiche of the Libyan course and British-informed SLA practices, with cameos from Mao and the US military. It ranged

³² E.g. Koomba Sama, Civilian wife; Archive documents, various.

³³ Fatu Sannoh, Senior civilian woman/RUSO.

³⁴ Claude Pearce, CDF Battalion Commander; Zainab Sundifu, *Kamajor* Initiator.

³⁵ Aminata Turay, WACs.

³⁶ Mariatu Thomas, Vanguard/WACs Commander.

³⁷ Alpha Daboh, Battalion Commander; Mohamed Mundah, Overall Black Guard Commander.

³⁸ Hoffman, *The War Machines*, 227–29.

³⁹ Mohamed Mundah, Overall Black Guard Commander.

in length from two weeks to nine months, dictated more by manpower needs at the frontline than the amount of time it took new recruits to be prepared for battle. However, based on the number of informants who spent three months on the training base, particularly from 1991 to 1994, the ideal timeline appears to have been modelled on the American military's nine-week Boot Camp.⁴⁰

Training bases were set up around the country and given names like 'Camp Lion', 'Cuba', 'Burkina', and 'Camp Charlie'. After Camp Namma in Liberia, the first bases were established in Pendembu and Baiwalla in the East, and Gissi Wulo and Bayama in the South. During Phase II, training bases were attached to various jungle camps, with the largest training sites in Zogoda and Kailahun.⁴¹ Phase III saw the most erratic implementation of formal training, as irregular recruitment and training became widespread; but major bases run by the most experienced training commanders continued to operate in Kono and Kailahun Districts.⁴²

Dedicated 'training commandants' were responsible for shaping new recruits into rebels, and were well-versed in managing the two-part process of physical and technical military training, and political ideology training. They were also expert in the strategic use of violence and public punishment to control recruits through fear.⁴³ Most of the training commanders were Vanguard members, who worked alongside more experienced NPFL trainers and Special Forces during the first two years. As described by one former training commander, Sierra Leoneans took over the programme when the Liberians 'started to disturb the training...There were language barriers and they weren't giving proper training, so Foday Sankoh had to send...more Sierra Leonean instructors.'⁴⁴ The TRC report describes:

The exposure of the vanguards to extreme violence during training seemed to have had an enduring effect on each of them personally, creating a propensity to subject others to acts of personal violation and compulsion...Some of the vanguards went on to exercise their own reigns of terror over conscripts in the Sierra Leone conflict, especially child recruits at the infamous Camp Charlie.⁴⁵

⁴⁰ E.g. Fatu Tucker, Vanguard/WACs Target Commander.

⁴¹ Peter Kalawa, Training Commander.

⁴² Manfred Kamara, Adjutant General/Acting Battlefield Commander.

⁴³ John Sallah, SBU Commander.

⁴⁴ Peter Kalawa, Training Commander.

⁴⁵ TRC, "Volume 3A," 109.

As one female fighter described the training commandants at Camp Charlie, “They behaved like fighters, not like mothers.”⁴⁶ The ‘reign of terror’ was also conjoined with common military induction rituals, such as all recruits’ heads being shaved, and being separated from their family when they were taken for training:

I was there with my papa and mama, and they had sent me to go for my sister, but on the way...they held me. I was with them one week, and from there, they sent me to the base. They scraped my hair, all of it. All! They put me inside a truck; there were a lot of us who went to the base to go train...When we got there, there were so many people, both men and women.⁴⁷

When it functioned according to plan, those selected for training were sent first to the Military Police to be divided according to strength and skill. Strong fighters, both male and female, were sent for military training, while skilled and educated individuals were selected for technical and administrative jobs. The RUF Military Intelligence Cartographer alludes to the value of education, and reflects the pervasive disdain for illiteracy, often blamed for undermining the revolution:

Morris Kallon [captured] me and said those who know a small thing will form an advisory committee to teach ideology to the illiterates. We came to Kailahun; it was there Foday Sankoh asked me to draw a lion, to design the RUF logo...The IO (Intelligence Office) screened civilians to find out what work people did.⁴⁸

People with medical training were dispatched to frontline service or hospitals at the rear. Teachers and others who could write well were generally assigned as adjutants to commanders, while those with some secondary schooling, including many women, were selected for special units, such as artillery, armoury, and intelligence.

The signallers—the RUF radio operators—had one of the most extended training processes, while the most physically rigorous training was ‘special forces training’ for the Black Guard and other members of Foday Sankoh’s personal security. Not incidentally, these were the two groups closest to the leader, directly under his supervision and selected for both loyalty and ability. They were regularly re-trained, continually reinforcing their allegiance to the organization and its rules. The first RUF signallers were trained in Liberia, before being re-trained by Sankoh personally, as Sankoh’s radio operator describes:

(In Liberia) we underwent another military training: physical fitness and political ideology...Pa Sankoh came to meet us. He came to see the Tactical Infantry

⁴⁶ Agnes Sumana, Female fighter.

⁴⁷ Mohamed Mundah, Overall Black Guard Commander.

⁴⁸ Dwight Mansaray, War Office Cartographer/RUF District Chairman.

Battalion Commander for NPFL...they slotted us into various units...to learn different disciplines. Myself with some other RUF men...we were the signal unit. It was at Bomi Hills (Liberia) that I got an introduction to communication...[Three years later, we were brought back to Sierra Leone.] When we reached Pendembu, they sent us all to our various sides...We took about three weeks again to learn voice procedure—the British voice procedure—because we had been using the Liberian voice procedure. So, we went to the Pa and he had the signallers teach us the standard voice procedure. You know the Pa, he was a communication man. He did communication for 12 years in the army, so he taught us the procedure.⁴⁹

The military training the Black Guards underwent, on the other hand, was neither technically specific, nor under the tutelage of the leader. Black Guards were selected from the frontline based on physical fitness and bravery, and sent for extreme endurance and battle drills under a Special Forces commander:

I was called for Black Guard training. They took 30 men from the highway, two squads; there were 150 men in total for Task Force training...CO Mon Amis from Gambia trained us as Black Guard. It was too intense—some people ran away to the frontline. From 3:00am we had muster parade. Then we would jog until 6:00am, and then go to the bush without food, water. By 7:00pm we returned to town (Zimmi, Southern Battalion Headquarters) and then we could eat...In one drill, ‘open grenade’, all the men are supposed to drop; we lost three people. Of 150 only 50 completed training. Foday Sankoh came to Zimmi for the graduation. He came with two bags of rice and congratulated everyone. He had Le 500,000 for us all.⁵⁰

Even for ordinary recruits, RUF training was life-threateningly gruelling. The shortest, most basic course entailed early morning muster parades, ‘cock and fire’ firearm training, ambush drills, and ideology training. Several signature drills recur in combatants’ narratives, regardless of the length of their stay on the training base. An extended narrative from a woman captured at age 15 detailing what ‘urban and guerrilla warfare training’⁵¹ actually entailed in the RUF is included in Appendix II. It includes abusive and potentially fatal physical and tactical drills, such as the feared ‘Halaka’ and mock ambushes:

I was trained at Bayama, ‘Camp Llama’, in 1991...They had us jogging first, then rolling, then you crawl. You make a big circle, with a small circle inside of ten big commanders. The circle is called ‘Halaka’ so that we can be strong. Eight recruits have to run around the *halaka* while they beat you with a whip. Then you lay flat, then you have to crawl. The whole time they are flogging us, and they don’t look where they are hitting, even your face.

⁴⁹ Kemoh Aruna, Signals to the Leader.

⁵⁰ Mohamed Mundah, Overall Black Guard Commander.

⁵¹ Benjamin Swaray, Fighter.

...Another training was called 'Escape for Survival', where they took us to the middle of the bush. We couldn't eat or drink for three days, so that at the frontline we can take hunger. They divided the group into two mock groups, the RUF and the 'SLA'. There were two commanders and they gave us sticks as mock arms. We had to lay ambush while the other group makes like they're passing the road. The commander fired up with a real gun to show the ambush. We would call the password, 'commando!', and they had to say 'brave, strong, intelligent'. If the group does not answer, you know it's the 'SLA'.⁵²

The military component consisted largely of these physical strength and endurance drills, and the simulated operations of jungle manoeuvres, ambush, and pincer attacks. However, recruits were also lectured on the principles of guerrilla warfare, given technical weapons training, and indoctrinated with the history and ideology of the revolution.

'Ideology' training in the RUF

The ideology component is integral to RUF members' descriptions of training. It introduced new ideas and rhetoric for addressing old grievances and shared experiences of marginalization; and it located the war in a larger historical arc of national struggle and international revolution.⁵³ Its propaganda gave meaning to the suffering of war. Recruits learned didactic principles through rote memorization, mnemonic devices and acronyms, an RUF anthem (see Chapter 8), and by transcribing information into training manuals, again distinguishing the literate from illiterate.

Master training manuals were used by the training commandants to drill recruits, and were written in the War Office by the Adjutant General. They are strikingly consistent throughout the war, but were also periodically updated, such that by 1999, the document referenced Sandline International's late involvement in the war.⁵⁴ The Lion National Training Base manual is a 28-page typewritten document with six parts: introduction, ideology, discipline and courtesy, ambush, weapons, and tactics and map reading (this last page missing from the archive). Its introduction provides a definitional overview of ideology—including elementary but non-dogmatic descriptions of government types, and a discussion of military ideology

⁵² Naberay Morrison, WACs commander. Abdullah and Muana, "A Revolt of the Lumpenproletariat" identify a rather different "halaka" (190) not described by my informants. E.g., Benjamin Swaray, Fighter; Andrew Mundah, Adjutant.

⁵³ *Lion National Training Base*, 99.0200.TS.B.ID/TRAINING.24P, 5.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 1.

that explicitly refers to ‘rules and regulations that can bind the members together so that good spirit can prevail’.⁵⁵

The manual’s nebulous ideas are consistent across archive documents. Training manuals dating back to 1991, for example, all note the same causes of revolution and ‘what to study’ before it is launched:

Below listed are some major causes of a Revolution. (A) Tribalism (B) Sectionalism (C) Political Instability and Malpractices (D) Economical Degradation (E) Racial Discrimination.⁵⁶

Before launching an armed rebellion or revolution, you first need to study the below listed factors: (A) HISTORICAL BACKGROUND (B) GEO-POLITICAL BACKGROUND (C) ECONOMICAL BACKGROUND.⁵⁷

The Camp Lion manual elaborates the background of these three factors in Sierra Leone somewhat superficially, but with grandiose rhetoric. The geo-political background, for example, describes the continent with its ‘igneous rocks...forested coast land...and land mighty animals’, before mentioning more prosaically, ‘golds, diamonds, silver, iron ore, rutile etc.’ (sic).⁵⁸ The economic background rails against alienation of this wealth, economic inequality, and corruption, before asserting that ‘the inhabitants of the country became fed up with the embarrassing situation.’⁵⁹ Detail is reserved for local politics, naming leaders and incidents of military, labour, and student protest as forebears of the RUF struggle.

Only a few components of the core document appear to have changed over time. For example, there were three ‘Pillars of the Revolution’ in a 1995 signals manual—‘discipline, arms and ammo, medicine or drugs.’⁶⁰ Backdated medic training notes from 1991 (re-copied between 1994-1996) also mention discipline, arms and ammunition, and food and medical facilities, as well as ‘equal rights and justice’.⁶¹ The War Office manual from 1999, however, doubles the number of ‘pillars’ to eight, presumably reflecting the increased importance of

⁵⁵ Ibid., 3.

⁵⁶ Ibid.; see also, *Medic Notebook*, 91-00.0000.PM.B.ID.30P, 8; *Signal Station Commander Notebook*, 95-96.0000.LS.K.ID/SIGNALS.21P, 9.

⁵⁷ *Lion National Training Base*, 3; see also, *Medic Notebook*, 5; *Signal Station Commander Notebook*, 9.

⁵⁸ *Lion National Training Base*, 5.

⁵⁹ Ibid.

⁶⁰ *Signal Station Commander Notebook*.

⁶¹ *Medic Notebook*.

mining and perceived need to legitimize the war politically, as ‘food, unity, love, justice, and minerals’ are added to the original three.

Other features of the movement’s patchwork ideology include Bob Marley references (‘Liberation...a struggle, to free your people from mental slavery’);⁶² allusions to Frantz Fanon (‘the solution to Africa problem is violence and the key to this violence is arm struggle (sic)’⁶³ and ‘in the course of the struggle, many people will shed blood in the form of sacrifice for the few or many that will survive’);⁶⁴ and ‘Eleven Principles of Leadership’, borrowed from the US military.⁶⁵

Surprisingly, the training manual shows no traces of overlap with *Footpaths to Democracy*, the only RUF document ever formally published and circulated in the public domain; nor does it share features of Gaddafi’s *Green Book*, often mentioned as the putative foundation of the RUF’s limited political agenda. In addition to having no rhetorical parallels with the central ideology training texts, *Footpaths to Democracy* does not mention any of the nine ‘Aims of the RUF’ that are presented uniformly in archive documents and interviews (see Appendix I). This reaffirms the wide-held belief that leaders of the RUF did not write the *Footpaths* treatise themselves. Moreover, this disparity strengthens informants’ claims that the training manuals that were passed from Libyan-trained Special Forces to Vanguard members—transcribed in turn by Sierra Leonean recruits and typed up by the War Office until the last peace talks—were written by Rashid Mansaray and other founders of the movement.⁶⁶

This challenges the notion that the RUF were politically and ideologically vacuous.⁶⁷ But it also calls into question the claim that the RUF had vigorous agrarian dimensions, as some authors suggest.⁶⁸ Farming was certainly a meaningful component of the war effort (see

⁶² Ibid., 3.

⁶³ *Signal Station Commander Notebook*.

⁶⁴ Ibid., 3. See also, *Medic Notebook*, 8, ‘there is no Revolution without bloodshed’—this also echoes Karl Marx, ‘no great movement has ever been inaugurated without bloodshed’, as quoted in, Marik, *Reinterrogating the Classical Marxist Discourses of Revolutionary Democracy*, 152.

⁶⁵ *Medic Notebook*, 2; *Signal Station Commander Notebook*.

⁶⁶ Peter Kalawa, Training Commander; Manfred Kamara, Adjutant General/Acting Battlefront Commander.

⁶⁷ E.g., Denov, *Child Soldiers*, 63–5; Gberie, *A Dirty War in West Africa* (c.f. “incoherent political sentiments”, 7).

⁶⁸ E.g., Peters, *War and the Crisis of Youth*, 101–11; Richards, “To Fight or to Farm?”.

Chapter 6), but there is almost no mention of it in the ideology documents in the archive,⁶⁹ and agricultural issues do not appear at all in the movement's nine 'Aims'. If the ideology can be characterized at all, politically it is simply the eradication of corruption, replacing it with 'true democracy and self-reliance'⁷⁰; while militarily, it is a rudimentary adaptation of Maoist guerrilla warfare principles (see Appendix I). The majority of fighters, followers, and captives, were unaware of the goals of the organization and its loftier rhetoric,⁷¹ but thousands of core members and the commanders who trained them saw themselves as part of a larger legacy of protest.

THE RUF POWER STRUCTURE

As a whole, the ideology set out the power structure and laws that regulated life (and violence) in the RUF. Teaching new recruits the hierarchy of the RUF—and their place at the bottom of it—was a key component of the training process, asserting the supremacy of the movement over the individual.⁷² It was also a mode of military legitimization, presenting the RUF as a formalized rebel army structured along the British model (also used by the SLA in which Sankoh served).⁷³ Recruits were lectured on the differences between commissioned and non-commissioned officers (e.g., only salute commissioned officers) and on the mechanisms of promotion. However, in practice, foot soldiers generally had little grasp of the overall organizational structure beyond their immediate commanders and their commanders' leaders.

Even now, with the benefit of a bird's eye view and retrospect, the organizational structure is difficult to reconstruct. Entire branches changed over time and were re-named, and Sankoh used promotion and demotion zealously. Accordingly, this section provides an overview of the larger organizational structure of the RUF, the military hierarchy that in principle ordered individual power within it, and the main branches of the RUF and their

⁶⁹ The geo-political background has one line: 'Swamps and upland are fertile for crops production' (*Lion National Training Base*, 5).

⁷⁰ *Ibid.* 6-7.

⁷¹ Interviews illustrate a distinct pattern in knowledge of the organization's objectives based on whether informants had received formal training with its ideology component. Informally trained RUF were not considered full members and often could not describe the aims or cause of the war. See, Marks, "Women in the War Zone," 65.

⁷² See also, Abdullah and Muana, "A Revolt of the Lumpenproletariat," 191.

⁷³ The AFRC spin-off West Side Boys also retained trappings of SLA command structure; see, Utas and Jörgel, "The West Side Boys," 499.

functions. The following chapter describes how this intended order was undermined by the personalization of power and irregular recruiting and training practices.

Organizational structure

At the outset of the war, there were just two branches of the RUF: the G1 and the G2. The G1 was concerned with military affairs and training,⁷⁴ and the G2 oversaw all political concerns, from basic administrative procedures bureaucratizing the war effort, to the implementation of complex governance institutions.⁷⁵ Subsequently, the G2 was renamed to the G5 and several other branches were established to tighten control and improve logistical coordination as the group expanded.⁷⁶ After 1991, the primary RUF branches were:⁷⁷

G1	Training
MP	Military Police
IDU	Internal Defence Unit
G4	Armorers
S4	Food
G5	Political branch/Civilian governance
WACs	Women's Auxiliary Corps (alternatively, Women's Armed Corps; or WACCs, Women's Auxiliary Command Corps)
...	Medics; Artillery; Signals

These branches were represented at every jungle base and 'target', operating under the overall commander at a given site while also reporting to a centralized commander for the branch. Three further strategic and internal intelligence branches reported directly to Sankoh: the Black Guard; Intelligence Office; and War Council. There were thus branch and service-specific command chains, as well as area hierarchies that operated geo-specifically under the centralized command. For example, at the end of the war, Morris Kallon was deputy leader to Issa Sesay, the head of central command; Kallon was also Overall MP Commander and head of internal security; and had been commander of the Makeni-Kono axis, where UN forces were taken hostage.⁷⁸ The Commander in Chief (CIC), Foday Sankoh, dictated vertical power via centralized ranking across the lateral services and command chains.

⁷⁴ Dwight Mansaray, War Office Cartographer/RUF District Chairman.

⁷⁵ Gasimu Komba, Fighter.

⁷⁶ E.g. Gasimu Komba, Fighter.

⁷⁷ E.g. Kai Fekkah, Vanguard/S4 Commander; see also, *Medic Notebook*, 4.

⁷⁸ E.g. Mohamed Mundah, Overall Black Guard Commander.

Military activities were organized through basic units following the British model: a squad consisted of 15-16 troops; four squads made a platoon of 62 soldiers; four platoons were a company; four companies—‘A, B, C, and D’—were a battalion; and four battalions constituted a brigade.⁷⁹ Even these somewhat static units, however, frequently had their assignment areas changed, or individual fighters and commanders reassigned. This was either in response to changing manpower needs in the war, or to mitigate command and control problems.

Command hierarchy

Commissioning of officers also followed the British model, in theory. Only Vanguard members were to be fully commissioned officers⁸⁰; while all other commanders were non-commissioned officers, ranging from junior NCO (private, lieutenant corporal, corporal, and sergeant) to NCO (staff sergeant, sergeant major, and regimental sergeant major).⁸¹ Although the generic ‘C.O.’ (commanding officer) was used most frequently in interviews, former RUF still regularly refer to the rank titles of their superiors.⁸² There were three forms of commission: combat commission, the most common, involved being sent for ‘Special Combat Training’; specialist commission was reserved for medical doctors and others with ‘technical skill’; and services commission was granted for ‘long stay backed with experience.’⁸³ The prominence of ‘combat commission’ rewarded excellence in violence, leading to a particularly battle-hardened leadership cadre (see Chapter 5).

Every individual in the RUF was categorized as either a combatant (if trained) or a civilian. Separate civilian and combatant command structures were then sub-divided by gender. Trained women were under WACs⁸⁴ command and were clearly distinguished from wives and other female civilians.⁸⁵ Several ‘General Orders’ speak directly to the civilian-WACs distinction:

1. All area orders must pass through the area commanders and all soldiers are to fall under units.

⁷⁹ Jinnah Brooks, Battalion G4 Commander.

⁸⁰ Ranks were: Second Lieutenant, Lieutenant, Captain, Staff Captain, Major, Lieutenant Colonel, Colonel, and Brigadier (the highest awarded rank before disarmament).

⁸¹ *Lion National Training Base*, 9-10; *Medic Notebook*, 2-6.

⁸² E.g. Kadijah Aruna, Civilian wife.

⁸³ *Lion National Training Base*; see also, *Signal Station Commander Notebook*.

⁸⁴ I use ‘WACs’ as iterated to me in interviews; the acronym is usually pronounced with a silent ‘C’ as *wyze*, and thus may have been mistaken for ‘wives’ in previous research.

⁸⁵ E.g. Margaret Sewa, Female fighter.

2. All WACCs are to do military duties, especially guarding.
3. WACCs commanders are to be given full respects as they are also soldiers. After one month pregnancy by doctor's prescription, WACC are not to serve duties.
4. WACCs of battlefield commanders, frontlines commanders, areas commanders, and battalion commanders from the rank of Captain onwards, are not to serve [as] guards.
- ...
17. WACCs commanders in the battalion [and] company must be promoted.
- ...
38. All radio operators [and] wives of the movement are to perform all military jobs in their battalion areas, companies, and units.
39. Battalion WACCs are subject to the WACC command.
- ...
44. Wives of area, battalion, companies, and units commanders and senior officers are not to take the post of WACCs commanders effective immediately.⁸⁶

These policies illustrate the prominent status of WACs in the RUF and their distinction from civilian women. To minimize women's casualties in battle, WACs specialized in radio, medical, and security services, including as bodyguards for the leader and as sentries at the rear.⁸⁷ Civilian women without military credentials also fulfilled some administrative positions, but not under WACs command.⁸⁸

Trained women (WACs), although officially equal and promoted commensurately, were easily outnumbered by the men's military hierarchy, which dominated the organization. Accordingly, former RUF often describe the women's command chain as a separate military branch to distinguish it from the default male hierarchy.⁸⁹ Both male and female combatants across all services were brought under operational command for missions the same way. Orders for tactical formations were assigned daily in morning muster parades by area and

⁸⁶ From a lengthy list drawn up at the 'People's Military Congress for Re-Organization', held in February 1996 and marking the inception of Phase III; *Medic Notebook*, pp. 8-9.

⁸⁷ Thomas Alpha, Fighter.

⁸⁸ E.g. Alice Kargbo, Women's Deputy Overall Medical Commander.

⁸⁹ E.g., Bakarr Dumbuya, Adjutant.

target commanders and were mission-specific, drawing together manpower and technical skills as required for ambushes, road blocks, food finding, etc.⁹⁰ Troop movements for the largest strategic assaults meanwhile—formal orders—were carefully planned at the rear and involved units from several targets. For example, both the 1992 and 1998 attacks on Koidu town in diamondiferous Kono District entailed weeks of preparation and movement of three or more battalions led by the best battle group commanders.⁹¹

The civilian leaders of the movement also worked directly with Sankoh, outside of this military command structure, as members of the War Council. They dealt with political strategy—including public relations, passing by-laws, and representing the RUF at peace talks in Abidjan and Lomé.⁹² For gender balance, the Council also included WACs commanders and prominent commanders' wives for diplomatic missions.⁹³ Chaired by SYB Rogers, the War Council was mistrusted by the younger military commanders, and as a result, the 'tribal authorities and civilians' on the committee were repeatedly accused of treachery and conniving against the movement.⁹⁴ All other civilians came under control of the military G5 branch.

Military and logistical branches

The G5, though it dealt with civilians, was militarized like all other branches of the RUF. Arguably the most important branch, it was responsible for all civilians captured or protected by the RUF, oversaw civilian governance in rebel-controlled towns, and coordinated logistics at the rear. Every rebel-controlled town and base had a G5 office that conducted intake of captured civilians, keeping detailed lists of all individuals brought under the group's control.⁹⁵ These lists were used to surveil and restrict movement, and to organize 'manpower' for tasks ranging from swamp-clearing, to sending civilians in the wake of a frontline attack to retrieve looted supplies.⁹⁶ Civilians were also often sent as spies and porters on food-finding missions. As the former head of the G5 humanitarian wing, Organization for the Survival of Mankind, describes:

⁹⁰ Alpha Daboh, Battalion Commander.

⁹¹ Bockarie Ngobeh, Black Guard.

⁹² E.g. *Medic Notebook*, 15; Dwight Mansaray, War Office Cartographer/RUF District Chairman; Bockarie Ngobeh, Black Guard.

⁹³ Fatu Sannoh, Senior civilian woman/RUSO; Fatu Tucker, Vanguard/WACs Target Commander.

⁹⁴ Bobson Bockarie, District MP Commander.

⁹⁵ See e.g., 'Laah Town registry', 93.0420.PM.B.F.LAAH.GOV.34; 93.0400.PM.B.F.LAAH.GOV.35.

⁹⁶ Gasimu Komba, Fighter.

G5 was purely the political wing. It was dealing with the civilians; [the] administrative wing of the war, in short. So all others, like the women's wing, the youth wing, you know, they were in charge of all other social services...Like NGO business, like humanitarian aspect, all of that was under G5. The judiciary...you have the People's Court doing the top cases among people or between people. They had a lot, a lot of areas. Food production, agriculture. They did marketing, the waterside business [trade to Guinea and Liberia]. All of that was under G5. So it was a purely civilian administrative wing of the RUF. They even had the [representatives] who disseminated the ideas, the ideology of the RUF to other civilians.⁹⁷

Like the military command with WACs, the G5 had its 'Women's Wing' to administrate women's issues and organize female labour in towns and jungle bases. In 1998-1999, RUF ministries were set up and the Women's Wing was brought under the RUF Gender Ministry.⁹⁸ Its top members represented the RUF at international peace talks and founded the Revolutionary United Sisters' Organization (RUSO)⁹⁹—a political initiative to bring together WACs, SLA wives, and RUF wives. Yet, many civilian women under RUF control appear to have had limited access to the wing's representation. The institution of 'marriage', for example (see Chapter 5), which fell under G5 control, affected almost all women in the group and illustrates what limited 'protection' and lack of autonomy the office provided its constituents:

The G5 were taking care of any civilians that we captured in the frontline. There was a special place after we've captured where we usually go and keep the civilians. Those G5, it was their duty to take care of them—it was just a mediator between the soldiers and civilians...like those civilians who were with the G5, you have a seen a woman, you want the woman. You would go to the G5 like, "I want this woman to be my wife." They will arrange it and give her to you. Then this G5, they were also responsible, they have to keep the civilians together in terms of food—they will go and harvest rice and come and process the rice, then they send it to the combat camp. Or, during that time they have to cook and send it to the combat camp. Those were their duties. [Q: Was it mostly women?] Both.¹⁰⁰

Although the G5 played a prominent role in organizing the harvesting, processing, and preparing of food, the S4 were the primary branch concerned with provisioning fighters. As one of the smallest branches in the RUF, the S4 oversaw all food stores in combat camps

⁹⁷ Eric Bangura, Agriculture Secretariat/Humanitarian; Interview, Sidie Dumana, Driver to Leader.

⁹⁸ Hawa Vandy, Educational Coordinator/Senior civilian woman.

⁹⁹ Fatu Sannoh, Senior civilian woman/RUSO; Fatu Tucker, Vanguard/WACs Target Commander; Hawa Vandy, Educational Coordinator/Senior civilian woman.

¹⁰⁰ Sylvester Kabbia, Adjutant; see also, Peters, *War and the Crisis of Youth*, 131–2.

and jungle bases, the largest of which was kept at headquarters. Much like in the SLA, rice distribution was centralized.¹⁰¹ According to the overall S4 commander, food stores under his jurisdiction operated at all targets, and the RUF was supposed to feed any civilians it held.¹⁰² Rice was collected for S4 in ‘food patrol’, in which SLA bases and convoys were attacked for supplies, set amounts of which were to be sent back to the jungle camps. The mission commander and fighters were allowed to keep a portion of what they captured, but the balance had to be reported in weekly target meetings in which S4 commanders gave an account of the number of bags of rice left in the warehouse.¹⁰³ As they ran out of food, unit commanders could sign for more rice—as well as salt and maggi procured through trade—and distribute it to their fighters, often to be prepared by the SBU (Small Boys’ Unit).¹⁰⁴ When supplies in the store ran low, S4 could also request that the G5 requisition food from civilians via the local chief (see Chapter 6).¹⁰⁵

The complement to the S4 food store was the G4 arms and ammunition store. G4 armorers were responsible for maintaining and repairing the RUF’s limited weapons supply.¹⁰⁶ Given the security-sensitive nature of their wares, only a select few knew the stores’ whereabouts, hidden in the bush during the jungle phase and in heavily fortified armouries when headquarter towns were secured.¹⁰⁷ As with rice, careful statistics were to be kept of all weapons captured from the enemy, and a G4 officer in each company distributed arms and collected surplus materiel from the front for the ‘armour dome’ (see Chapter 7).¹⁰⁸

The military branches also had centralized command hierarchies, and were under the control of the area or target commander. Artillery units manned and maintained heavy weapons, including anti-aircraft missiles, mortars, and howitzers.¹⁰⁹ The signals unit managed all radio communications and went on missions to report problems and the number of casualties, enemies captured, supplies collected, etc.¹¹⁰ Sankoh’s Black Guard had their own radio operators, who also reported on events at various bases and on any breaches of command at

¹⁰¹ Zainab Sallah, Medic/Matron.

¹⁰² Kai Fekkah, Vanguard/S4 Commander; Gasimu Komba, Fighter.

¹⁰³ Kai Fekkah, Vanguard/S4 Commander.

¹⁰⁴ Haja Musa, WACs.

¹⁰⁵ Eric Bangura, Agriculture Secretariat/Humanitarian Commander; Sidie Dumana, Driver; Mohamed Mundah, Overall Black Guard Commander.

¹⁰⁶ *Medic Notebook*, 4.

¹⁰⁷ Sylvester Kabbia, Adjutant.

¹⁰⁸ Jinnah Brooks, Battalion G4 Commander.

¹⁰⁹ Umaru Rogers, ULIMO-STF & RUF Artillery; Emmanuel Kallon, Signals to Leader.

¹¹⁰ Johnny Kabbah, Medic.

the front.¹¹¹ Radio signallers were thus a lynchpin in organizational oversight, responsible for conveying orders and reporting colleagues' and commanders' misconduct.

Medics also accompanied fighters on missions, carrying wounded fighters back to the base, where makeshift clinics and hospitals were set up.¹¹² In 1994, following heavy fighting, Sankoh reportedly ordered all literate fighters to report to Zogoda for medical training.¹¹³ The overall doctor for the RUF set up formalized programmes to train medical personnel, despite the general shortage of supplies and equipment. After eight months of training and passing final exams, nurses were dispatched to RUF 'hospitals' throughout the country to oversee hygiene and midwifery, while combat medics were assigned to various targets.¹¹⁴ This again led to a gendered division of labour, with women working as nurses and matrons and providing most medical care for female patients, and men serving as the medics and doctors, although both men and women could be sent as medics to the frontline.¹¹⁵ Each of the six jungles had a hospital and until 1996, the RUF even had a bone specialist who amputated the limbs of those injured by anti-personnel mines and gunfire.¹¹⁶ But, as with other services in the RUF, medical care worked best at the rear, where supplies could be monitored and adequate personnel maintained through the 'adult education' training programme (for further details on drugs and medicine, see Chapter 9).¹¹⁷

Internal security branches

While the above branches managed labour and logistics, the MP and IDU branches of the RUF were responsible for establishing law and enforcing order. The laws were simple and harsh. They were enumerated in the General Orders and Code of Conduct, which consisted of Mao's 'three principles of discipline' and 'eight points of order' (see Appendix I). They were memorized by rote during ideology training sessions:

After [jogging and drills], we have ideology. Then, we sit down and they really tell you what caused the war, what made the war come into this country. [Q: What did they say?] Well, within the training base they taught us that SLPP are in this war because it's a one-party state with APC. We didn't have freedom of speech, and because freedom hadn't been there, the Pa made the war come... They even say that people embezzled government funds; they stole from

¹¹¹ Bobson Lamin, Black Guard Signals.

¹¹² Mohamed Mundah, Overall Black Guard Commander.

¹¹³ Johnny Kabbah, Medic.

¹¹⁴ Zainab Sallah, Medic/Matron; Christopher Summa, Medic.

¹¹⁵ Zainab Sallah, Medic/Matron.

¹¹⁶ Zainab Sallah, Medic/Matron; Florence Banda, Nurse.

¹¹⁷ Naberay Morrison, WACs commander.

this country and would go with the money to America; they don't even think of us...They talk about the rotting system, and how they came to wipe out the rotting system.

...Then, after that, they came to give us the General Order, the laws that cover you: what to do, what not to do. [Q: What were they?]

When you attack any town, you're not to kill civilians.

Then, even your enemy, when he surrenders to you, you're not to kill him.

You're not to take property that belongs to civilians; only what is pertaining to the military, you have the right to take.

The law was there not to burn any house, or put any house on fire when you attack it.

The law was there that you're not to rape, you're not to do 'mommy and daddy business' with any woman by force—that is rape.

So all this, they taught us. [Q: So, how did they enforce the laws?] They said, when you rape, they will fire you, with a bullet; when you kill civilians, they will kill you. And all these other things were there. When you steal civilians' property, that property will be taken from your hand and they will beat you, seriously. When you burn a house, they will beat you seriously and will put you in a jail for some time. Then we had prisoner with hard labour, where they will jail you and then give you hard labour. If the enemy surrenders to you and you kill him, they will beat or they will kill you, and then they put you under jail. [Q: Did they have any other laws?] Yes, other laws were there where they had other operational areas, but these were the laws that covered the whole movement.¹¹⁸

The fighter quoted above was himself severely punished with a year in prison, six months on the training base for re-education, and eleven months of farm labour after being found guilty in a five-day court martial trial for stealing 'government property', what he had seized from an SLA commander. RUF who did not have such intimate experiences of punishment can still list the laws, and do so with only slight variations. For example, rape being punishable by execution was mentioned repeatedly in interviews, as was the rhetoric of not taking a 'single piece of thread or needle.'

There were five security branches in the RUF responsible for enforcing these laws: the Military Police (MP), Internal Defence Unit (IDU), Intelligence Office (IO), Black Guard, and G5. Each unit had different tasks, but came together as the 'Joint Security' panel to investigate what were considered serious cases. As described above, the G5 was responsible for all civilian affairs, which often meant enforcement of RUF law. The first law was against escape. Guards surrounding the 'safety zone' and providing 'protection' in the camps made it difficult for civilians to run away; and those who were caught were

¹¹⁸ Benjamin Swaray, Fighter.

publicly punished by the G5—usually flogged or beaten, sometimes executed.¹¹⁹ They were also supposed to file civilians' complaints and mediate problems with soldiers looting, harassing, raping, or violating other prohibitions.¹²⁰ In addition to responding to these violations of RUF law, the G5 also served as the conduit for women's complaints about their rebel husbands. Domestic abuse was a major problem within forced marriages and was to be dealt with by Women's Task Force commanders:

If you have any problems with your man, you go to [her] and she will settle the matter. I went once because my husband was beating me. She talked to him, and he stopped for some time. If she told him, he had to stop. Sometimes she would call meetings for the women to show us how to fight. She would encourage the women and explain about the war. She would say, "Be patient until the war is finished. Don't try to run away." She would mark you with 'RUF' if you try to run—I saw them marking. And she would kill them with a cutlass if they were making too much noise.¹²¹

Violence and protection were thus inextricably interlinked in the RUF. Those who could protect were also those who could hurt you. This seems like an obvious deterrent to coming forward with complaints, though former security forces insist many civilians still did:

[Q: But what if the civilians are afraid and they don't want to come forward?] The civilians are so brave! Even more than some of the soldiers—they are very, very brave. The civilians have their own areas where they can report, that is the IDU. But, if it happens in the absence of them, if there is any MP that is around, they will lodge the complaint to him and then they will take appropriate measures, or any immediate authority. But these people were very, very brave—oh! (laughs)¹²²

However, many of the younger wives and vulnerable girls appear not to have heard of or been able to access the Women's Task Force, suggesting it operated only at bases and camps with powerful female commanders.¹²³ With the exception of crimes dealt with directly by the Women's Task Force or fighters' own commanders, the G5 handed over complaints to the MP and IDU for investigation.

The IDU were integrated into the regional command chain, with at least two officers attached to every company. According to the deputy overall IDU commander, IDU officers were required to read and write, and accompanied fighters on all missions, including food finding, to write reports on how many people were injured, killed, and captured, and the

¹¹⁹ Jacob Sesay, Brigade Commander.

¹²⁰ Gasimu Komba, Fighter.

¹²¹ Lettitia Ballah, Civilian wife.

¹²² Bobson Bockarie, District MP Commander.

¹²³ Fanta Massaquoi, SLA civilian wife.

quantities of arms, medicine, and money captured.¹²⁴ While the IDU enforced order between fighters and civilians by taking reports and investigating cases, the Military Police were tasked with controlling fighters and the movement of people.¹²⁵ MPs manned checkpoints, wrote passes, and were assigned to every village and camp under RUF control to ‘guide and direct’ civilians in case of attack.¹²⁶ A former MP commander describes the unit’s tasks:

The ones that I was asked to be doing, were: one, we were to arrest and detain upon instructions from commanders; two, we join internal defence unit—that is IDU—for investigation; three, to always go in search of AWOL soldiers and conduct them to the frontline. Those are floating soldiers...when we get them we put them together and we send them to the frontline.

Those were the major duties of MP...And to prepare passes either to the front, or from the frontline to the rear. Then, the other thing is to arrest anyone with certain things, we used to call them ‘unlawful items’; for example, when we get information you have diamond—which of course is not supposed to be in your possession—we will arrest you, we invite you, investigate you, and then if you have it, we will take it from you. Even arms—some soldiers used to hide arms, some soldiers used to hide ammunitions; some soldiers used to go to the rear, to the civilians, and take their personal properties. So all these things were arrested from them...We investigate, whether guilty or not guilty, we forward the report to the commander...after doing this report, then we advise what’s to be done. We were working specifically with the fighters, not the civilians.¹²⁷

Fighters who were accused of a crime and arrested by the MP were then investigated by the Intelligence Office. If found guilty, their punishment would be meted out according to the level of their crime and rank by a ‘Task Force’ composed of MP and IDU. The overall intelligence officer for the RUF describes the secrecy with which his investigative unit operated:

The IO was the most supreme security branch...I used to report directly to Foday Sankoh. When Sankoh left, I used to report directly to Mosquito. When Mosquito left, I used to report directly to Issa. I was only answerable to the head of the movement. My main concern was to see that nobody goes against the rules of the movement, the ideology of the movement: nobody kills innocently, you don’t kill your friend soldier, you don’t kill innocent civilians, you don’t burn houses. There were laws within the RUF and those laws were maintained; I made sure that they are maintained. And if you go against those laws, I will write it and report you secretly to the head, and he will call upon you and punish you. That was my own duty. And I must know whatever comes in the RUF, and whatever goes out, I must know. I was overseeing a set of secret agents within

¹²⁴ Eddie Bockarie, IDU commander.

¹²⁵ Bobson Lamin, Black Guard Signals.

¹²⁶ Eddie Bockarie, IDU commander.

¹²⁷ Bobson Bockarie, District MP Commander.

the RUF.¹²⁸

Like the G5, MP, and IDU, the Intelligence Officers were charged with compiling regular reports for the leader regarding frontline activities and internal and external security issues at the area level.¹²⁹ All four units, along with Sankoh's personal bodyguards, the Black Guard, advised on the appropriate measures to be taken when fighters were accused of committing crimes. The IO commander also notes that they had the power to advise the leader of good behaviour as well as bad, and could recommend RUF combatants for promotion.¹³⁰

According to some accounts, the tribunal of internal security commanders that presided over court martial proceedings was called the 'People's Court'.¹³¹ Other informants, however, said that the People's Court was specifically for civilians. It was indeed under the purview of G5 and chaired by the head of the War Council, SYB Rogers.¹³² It seems that in most areas and bases, the Joint Security commanders' panel dealt with minor offenses, while the People's Court tried more serious cases.¹³³ Both Abdullah and Peters note parallels between the rhetoric of 'People's Court' and that of various 'people's tribunals' on Sierra Leone's university campuses, suggesting a democratic or egalitarian bent to the notion of justice in the RUF.¹³⁴ But Keen's anecdotal evidence of People's Courts suggests their darker unilateralism.¹³⁵ The IO commander described emphatically the number of crimes punishable by summary execution, for example, which could not be appealed:

Yeah, we were having people who commit. Some people kill their friends at the frontline. They brought them to us and we investigate them. If they are found guilty, we...inflict a heavy punishment on them. Rape. If you are found raping, they bring you, they investigate you, when guilty, they punish you...Raping was execution. When you rape, *they kill you*...When you kill innocently, *they kill you*. Don't kill your friend, because you kill your friend, *they kill you*. Those things like diamonds, when you go to the frontline, you see diamond, you present it to the commander. But when you try to hide it from the movement, you are taken to security, they investigate you; if you are found guilty they punish you. That one, they don't kill you, but they take the diamond from you and they punish you. They can send you to the frontline, for two or three months, the most hot frontline, where fire blazes, they send you there. Sometimes they flog you. Sometimes they will put you in a cell, maybe for one month, and then you go

¹²⁸ John Sesay, Overall Intelligence Officer/Joint Security.

¹²⁹ Ibid.

¹³⁰ Ibid.

¹³¹ E.g., Gasimu Komba, Fighter.

¹³² E.g., Eric Bangura, Agriculture Secretariat/Humanitarian Commander; Sidie Dumana, Driver.

¹³³ Peters, *War and the Crisis of Youth*, 136–7.

¹³⁴ Abdullah, *Between Democracy and Terror*, 49; Peters, *War and the Crisis of Youth*, 136.

¹³⁵ Keen, *Conflict and Collusion*, 233.

back to your assignment area. It depends on the level of the crime—we were having light crimes and we were having heavy crimes. But you kill, *they kill you*. When you rape, *they kill you*. That one was automatic.¹³⁶

Thus, even when the oversight and enforcement mechanisms in the RUF worked as they were supposed to, they were opaque and draconian, subjecting the individual to the will of the commanders or ‘the masses’ as represented by the People’s Court. Both the Black Guard and IO reported directly to the leader, as did overall commanders for each branch, and target commanders throughout the country. Such consistent and voluminous reporting illustrates Sankoh’s intent to maintain tightly centralized control over the movement. His ‘eyes and ears’ and ‘secret agents’ were known at the targets, making their presence all the more effective as a deterrent. Total control was the objective in rebel territory. And the extreme measures used in its pursuit could not be appealed or negotiated by its constituents once the formal channels had spoken.

Thus, the organization created and maintained cohesion through three interconnected processes. First, training made individuals into either military ‘civilians’ or soldiers, bringing them under the command structure accordingly and instilling in them the strict ideology and laws of the RUF. Those who underwent military training learned to relate to society through their ability to wield violence. And in ideology training, they learned to relate to politics through revolutionary rhetoric and ideals. Second, this process delegitimized the old system and in its place was established a new power structure—a military framework and command hierarchy—that superseded pre-existing social hierarchies. Finally, the requirements for group membership were established by displacing pre-existing laws with rebel laws, thus codifying wartime norms. The adjudication mechanisms for enforcing RUF law created a new locus for legitimate claims to ‘justice’. They combined political appeal with fear and coercion to bind members’ allegiance. As a result, the enforcement of the laws gave weight to the ideology transmitted in training, again enforced by the command structure, thereby creating a feedback loop designed to maximize organizational control and cohesion.

¹³⁶ John Sesay, Overall Intelligence Officer/Joint Security.

CHAPTER 5

DISCIPLINE AND DISSOLUTION

If you betray the cause, the cause will betray you.

Musa Bangura¹

The RUF legacy is one of unmitigated violence and destruction, remembered and analysed for two things: targeting unarmed civilians, and stealing diamonds. In light of the organization's strict laws against abuse and profiteering, this chapter examines the nature of the disconnect between word and deed in the war, and the failure to maintain internal control and cohesion.

To do so, it first examines prevailing theories of violence against civilians in war, and then establishes an approach to RUF abuse that focuses on the relationship between power and violence, in its tacitly and officially condoned and illicit forms, as defined by the organization itself. It examines whether and how the laws of the RUF were actually implemented and enforced, and why they failed to prevent rape, looting, and 'innocent killing' by its members. This approach overcomes two limitations of the existing literature. First, it returns attention to armed groups' stated military programme and objectives, that is, the kind of war they claim to be fighting and the active decisions they take to execute it. Groups' tactics, strategies, and 'technologies of rebellion'² affect the nature of their violence and the self-defined legitimacy of various targets in war, but these implications are often not explored overtly. This chapter identifies how changes in RUF military strategy led to increased civilian abuse and violations of group policy.

EXPLAINING VIOLENCE AGAINST CIVILIANS

There are two questions at play in understanding wartime violence against civilians. The first is why fighters resort to reckless violence. The second question, which is rarely asked, is how

¹ Musa Bangura, *Security to the Leader*.

² Kalyvas and Balcells, "International System and Technologies of Rebellion," 415.

abuse becomes widespread if it is not official policy or strategy—in other words, why control mechanisms designed to prevent such violence fail. These explanandum are connected, but not the same. The first question assumes there is a reason for the violence, that a utility mechanism exists either at the individual or group level making violence purposive or desirable, and thereby incentivising its use. The latter question assumes, regardless of whether violence against civilians has useful functions, that a genuine desire exists on the part of the leadership to minimize its incidence. Approaches to the former question often deal with rationales or logics of violence. The factors understood to be motivating the violence then bear on the second question of how it can be controlled within the group. Neither the utility of violence nor its prevention can be taken for granted in war.

The trope that wartime violence against civilians represents chaotic and senseless ‘barbarism’ has been resoundingly rejected; a descriptive argument at best, it lacks both explanatory and predictive power.³ And while there have also been several studies that identify the emotive and spiritual dimensions of violence, civilian targeting in wartime is generally understood as either tactically or criminalistically rational. The prevailing explanations fall into three general categories. The first, most closely related to anarchic depictions of conflict, is the Hobbesian rational-actor thesis.⁴ This argument posits that wartime violence is perpetrated in pursuit of private gain by rational, opportunistic,⁵ often ‘lumpen’⁶ youth, combatants. The argument suggests that, if they can (i.e. if organizational control and cohesion are weak), self-interested insurgents will abandon the collective military project in favour of private accumulation. Several scholars have framed this as a principal-agent problem arising from fighters’ personal goals diverging from those of the group, where monitoring and enforcement are lacking.⁷ It follows Keen’s observation that many of the internal processes of conflict appear to be ‘economics by other means’, as personal accumulation supplants political objectives.⁸ Several of the most prominent iterations of this thesis have been developed in response to

³ Richards, *Fighting for the Rain Forest*, is written largely as a rejoinder to what he calls the “new barbarism” thesis.

⁴ Kalyvas conceptualizes this as the Hobbesian approach, Kalyvas, *The Logic of Violence in Civil War*; see also, Kalyvas, “Micro-Level Studies of Violence in Civil War,” 664.

⁵ Weinstein, *Inside Rebellion*.

⁶ Abdullah, *Between Democracy and Terror*; Mkandawire, “The Terrible Toll of Post-colonial ‘rebel Movements’ in Africa.”

⁷ E.g., Butler, Gluch, and Mitchell, “Security Forces and Sexual Violence”; Johnston, “The Geography of Insurgent Organization and Its Consequences for Civil Wars”; Mitchell, *Agents of Atrocity*.

⁸ Keen, “A Rational Kind of Madness.”

the Sierra Leone case, with ‘sobel’ attacks on the local population understood as primitive accumulation⁹ devoid of meaningful political or military content.¹⁰

While the Hobbesian approach assumes that all anti-civilian violence is more or less indiscriminate (perhaps targeting wealth or gender), the second theoretical approach focuses on the distinction between indiscriminate and selective violence. There are different formulations of the theory but the most prominent articulation is Kalyvas’s control-collaboration model.¹¹ Kalyvas posits that the relevant information asymmetry is not between individuals inside the armed group (namely, principal-leaders and their agent-fighters), but between armed groups and civilians. Both insurgent and counter-insurgent forces aim to maximize civilian collaboration and minimize defection, either by establishing total territorial control, or through selective violence that punishes non-cooperation.¹² Coercion, as a result, is a function of group-level tactics by fighters cohesive enough to wield violence in pursuit of their collective strategic interests. Indiscriminate violence does not reflect a failure to control abuse, but rather, a rational military strategy used where the group lacks control over the population. Therefore, more information results in more selective violence, until the group has total territorial control and violence is reduced to its minimum wartime level; conversely, the less information a group has about the civilian population, the more indiscriminate their violence is, as fighters struggle to distinguish between ‘enemy’ and ‘ally’ civilians.

A different iteration of the thesis is that violence is not directed at controlling the civilian population and coercing their cooperation, but rather that violence against civilians functions as an attack on the state (or enemy). In Mozambique, Hultman identifies the ‘power to hurt’ as RENAMO’s strongest move against the incumbent regime.¹³ Strategic attacks on the state via its economy and infrastructure gradually led to attacks on the population under its control, both as a punitive measure against FRELIMO supporters and to force the government to the negotiating table. Similar explanations have been applied to seemingly reckless violence in the Congo, where militias, such as the Mai-Mai and FDLR, have engaged in campaigns of mass rape and anti-civilian violence to establish themselves as

⁹ See also, Richards, *Fighting for the Rain Forest*.

¹⁰ E.g., Johnston, “The Geography of Insurgent Organization and Its Consequences for Civil Wars.”

¹¹ Kalyvas, “Micro-Level Studies of Violence in Civil War,” 660.

¹² Kalyvas, “Micro-Level Studies of Violence in Civil War.”

¹³ Hultman, “The Power to Hurt in Civil War.”

a serious threat in order to be included in peace talks and power-sharing.¹⁴ Raleigh's disaggregated event-based comparative analysis suggests it is the less-dominant groups in multi-actor conflicts that are more likely to use violence against civilians. She argues, 'the "support" based VAC [violence against civilians] narrative is exaggerated, and that VAC actually has three functions—it is a mode of information exchange; a tactic in local power disputes; and an opportunity to create chaos for ruling powers.'¹⁵ Metelits focuses on dominant, not weaker, armed groups, but makes a similar argument. She describes increased rivalry between armed groups as the cause of increased violence against civilians: threats to territorial control raise the stakes for maintaining control over the population, and groups more readily resort to violence.¹⁶ In these related approaches, violence remains a function of group objectives. Armed agents act in concert with their commanders to target civilians in both militarily tactical and politically performative violence designed to move their organization out of marginality.

None of these explanations for civilian targeting are mutually exclusive. To master and territorially monopolize the use of force—a presumed prerequisite to military victory in civil war—most armed groups deploy a range of violent tactics at both the individual and group level, against targets both civilian and military. Selective surgical precision might illustrate technical or intelligence capacity, while large-scale destruction in enemy terrain demonstrates military might. Errant violence that undermines group unity or the overall military strategy may be a sign of divergent aims and material accumulation, or it may be a sign of fear or competition on the part of vulnerable combatants, and hence, an assertion of their power. As Rule describes, violence is both 'instrumental and consummatory'. It is, on the one hand, 'highly purposeful, aimed at closely calculated strategic goals', and on the other—often simultaneously—reflects 'expressive actions aimed at venting hatred for opponents or vaunting the virtues of one's own side.'¹⁷ Thus, violence against civilians can be either (and sometimes both): rational at the group level—deliberate, strategic, desirable, and condoned from the top down in some or all forms; or discouraged and undesirable—an uncontrolled or uncontrollable by-product of war, that may be rational at the individual level, but is not in the group's interest.

¹⁴ Levine, "Civilian Protection and the Image of the 'Total Spoiler'."

¹⁵ Raleigh, "Violence Against Civilians," 463.

¹⁶ Metelits, *Inside Insurgency*.

¹⁷ Rule, *Theories of Civil Violence*, 265.

It is often that case that, while some forms of violence are condoned and strategic (such as imprisonment or execution of suspected spies), other forms are illegal and undermine support (such as house-burning or rape). Both condoned and illicit violence by all armed actors in Sierra Leone had deliberate as well as collateral dimensions. In the RUF, although some forms of civilian-targeted violence were part of the group's military strategy, most violated the RUF's policies. They therefore signal failures in internal control and cohesion, and in the execution of guerrilla strategy. Focusing on how and why oversight and enforcement failed clarifies the nature of power in the RUF and the causes and consequences of the group's dissolution. In doing so, it also brings in-group violence to the fore as a key means of policing and punishment, which was often as harsh as the violence wrought on civilians and enemy troops.

VIOLENT PUNISHMENT

Most efforts to maintain control and cohesion relied on force. From recruitment to training and throughout the duration of the war, fighters' experiences were characterized by violence and abuse. Members' violent socialization was defined by its performative, personalistic, and authoritarian nature. As discussed in previous chapters, nearly 90 percent¹⁸ of RUF fighters report being abducted, often in attacks that also entailed violence against their family, peers, or community members. Taken to the bush under threat of death, recruits were exposed to guns, live ammunition, harsh daily training regimens, and copious threats and beatings. Extreme violence was meant to harden recruits to the horrors of war and was structured along the policies of the newly established movement. Perfect compliance was demanded; anything less would be met with the strict punishments enshrined in RUF law.

Forcing people to stay in the RUF is perhaps the clearest sign of the group's intent to impose total control over its members, both fighter and civilian. Joining and staying were not options, but requirements for survival. This served to maintain manpower as well as prevent defections and intelligence breaches. The line between retributive punishment and preventive control was not always clear, particularly for RUF civilians. Because civilians captured at the front were brought first to the Joint Security Unit, who handed them over to the G5 for processing, they were immediately under the same military judicial structure responsible for policing and punishment. Once taken to the 'safety zone' at the rear, they

¹⁸ Humphreys and Weinstein, "Who Fights?," 438.

were effectively imprisoned: their movement was restricted, permissible only by approval with a written pass. Moreover, relations with fighters, from sex to theft, had to be negotiated through military structures; civilians' labour could be demanded at any time; and the soldiers guarding them, like a fence in a game park, were posted there as much to keep the civilians in, as to keep attacking *kamajors* out.

Almost all recruits and civilian captives thought of escape, and many tried.¹⁹ Those who failed and were not killed were punished with flogging, imprisonment, and threat of death:

When they captured us, they killed three of the girls because they did not cooperate. They said they were trying to run away...I was a small girl, just abiding by the laws to survive...For two months I was not happy, just crying, but I had no alternative. I just had to get used to the system...I tried once to run away, but I was punished. [My husband] gave me too heavy of a load to carry, and gave me lashes. Then he wouldn't give me food...But after I became used to the system, I did not try to run away again. I was lucky because [he] loved me. Some were killed for trying to run away.²⁰

'Non-cooperation' and 'stubbornness' were often cited as causes of punishment, including execution, particularly at the frontline. Once joined to the bush, those who 'adapted to the system' instead of trying to escape did so out of fear of the punishment they had seen wrought on their peers. As one fighter describes, deserters were effectively enemies of the RUF:

I wanted to escape when things were very rough, but Issa had passed an order to kill you if you tried to escape. They killed you so you wouldn't become an informant. They tied your elbows together behind your back, and then, "pah!"—they fire you in your chest. They also did it for the enemies.²¹

In a 'better the devil you know' calculus, some even aborted tentative attempts to escape and returned to the RUF voluntarily out of fear of being killed upon arrival in *kamajor* or SLA territory.²² Several interviewees recounted 'R-U-F' being carved into the skin of attempted escapees, in a perversion of medicinal incisions and secret societies' ritual scarification practices²³ in order to brand them members of the group, thereby eliminating their chances to slip unnoticed back into government territory.²⁴

¹⁹ Marks, "Women in the War Zone."

²⁰ Margaret Sewa, Female fighter.

²¹ Naberay Morrison, WACs commander.

²² E.g. Mariatu Thomas, Vanguard/WACs Commander.

²³ Interviews, various, e.g., Mohamed Mundah, Overall Black Guard Commander.

²⁴ Letitia Ballah, Civilian wife; Koomba Sama, Civilian wife.

As these quotes suggest, it was common for punishment to be used as a public spectacle to underscore the gravity of violating orders while discouraging others from doing the same. In addition to punishing the alleged perpetrator, performative punishment also reinforced the omnipotence of the commander, and on a more abstract level, of group law:

[My husband] had two other wives, but they tried to escape. When he caught them, he killed them...I think they were 15 to 16 years old. I was sleeping and in the morning I saw them tied up. He beat them for some time and then he shot them and he said, 'This is an example.' I was afraid. They took all the women to watch the execution...After that they took us to bury them and put us inside the rooms. After that we were not going anywhere again. They locked the hut with more than ten girls inside, all were the wives of other men. All of us in the camp were put in one room, in one hut, for more than one week. They only gave us water, but even then not every day.²⁵

I was afraid and went away from executions. They would put a rice bag over them and then shoot them. Sometimes they made people dig their own grave, get inside, and then they would fire at you.²⁶

There are two modes through which public punishment served a collective function that reinforced the RUF's violent power structure and combatants' socialization to it. The first is the physical, observed act of violence, while the second is the reverberation, spoken or recalled, of its advent. Performative violence drew on cultural symbols ranging from Hollywood action films, such as *Rambo*, to local secret societies' theatrical displays of gruesome corporal manipulation, used in parts of Sierra Leone to invoke fear and respect. Elite members of some Temne *poro* societies, for example, are widely reputed for public masquerades in which they cut off and reattach their tongues, or publicly disembowel themselves not as an act of *seppuku*, but as prelude to applying a poultice in the bush and being resurrected 'good as new'. During these and other society outings, including when the *poro* or *sande* devil comes to a village to punish someone for violating laws public or secret, power is wielded through the chants and jeers warning the group is coming, and the *post facto* recollections of their performance, as much as it is through the actual visual and physical spectacle.

Particularly in wartime, the threat of violence replicates actors' real or imagined force. The RUF deliberately used rumours, sending messages and pamphlets of impending attacks, both to spread fear throughout the countryside and, more pragmatically, in the hopes that

²⁵ Adama Gbla, Wife.

²⁶ Elizabeth Sesay, Wife.

villages would clear in advance, minimising the force required to overtake them. When ammunition supplies were low, fighters used whoops and shouts and threw stones to simulate a larger, better armed force than that attacking in reality. Stories of aggressive commanders and the punishments they wrought became part of the lore of their power within the group, and also translated to external ‘fearfulness’ among the civilian population.

Many fighters sought to mimic their commanders’ cult of violent personality through both their actions and by adopting *noms de guerre* that embodied some aspect of their military identity. ‘Rambo’, ‘Kai Londo’ and ‘Bai Bureh’ were all used by several commanders, and though the former is usually the only one cited in Western literature, ‘Bai Bureh’ and ‘Kai Londo’ are perhaps more significant for their appropriation of the legacies of local warriors. Kai Londo was a Mende warrior-chief who built Greater Luawa in the late nineteenth century around the capital Kailahun;²⁷ and Bai Bureh was Sierra Leone’s foremost resistance hero, a Temne chief who protested British rule and led the Hut Tax War of 1898.²⁸ Similarly, at least two commanders adopted ‘Changabulanga’. One did so in honour of his grandfather, also a Temne chief who held the thus-named warrior’s sword, with the added double entendre by the war’s end of the pervasive cutlass.²⁹ (Other names, like ‘Adama Cut-Hands’ and ‘CO Cut-Hand’, leave less to the imagination, but are not representative of all RUF names, which were as likely to be such non-headline-grabbing aliases as ‘Butterfly’, ‘Cocoa’, ‘Emcee Father’, ‘Jah Spirit’, ‘Mammy Queen’, ‘Mon Amis’, ‘Stop-the-War’, ‘Sunshine’, and ‘T-Boy’.) Violence was thus ‘performed’ physically, through public spectacle, and through rumours and reputations that amplified power both within and outside of the group.

Punishment was meted out both personalistically and officially. Neither route offered much prospect of mercy or clemency. Area and target commanders were the first port of call for the Black Guard, Intelligence Office, IDU, and MP agents overseeing internal security and cohesion. By 1994 these units were instructed to bring issues to central command only if the

²⁷ Richards, *Fighting for the Rain Forest*, 48–9.

²⁸ “Real Photo of Bai Bureh Discovered.”

²⁹ There appears to be some confusion in the legal record, based on one witness testimony in the AFRC trial about a target commander who went by this name and is responsible for the mass grave at Tombudo; both he and another prominent ‘Changabulanga’ have been interviewed by the author. Alfred Gbla, WSB Commander; Richie Kamara, Target Commander; see also, Jalloh and Meisenberg, “Prosecutor V. Brima, Kamara, and Kanu,” 1654; Adjovi, “Appeals Judgment in the AFRC Case.”

problem was particularly severe or persistent.³⁰ As the Overall Black Guard Commander describes:

You would not immediately report to Foday Sankoh if something was going wrong. You would advise the commander one to two times and if it was not improving, you would report...It was not secret work; they knew we were bodyguards and they must have guessed we were sending reports. This is why some of us had confrontations with some commanders. They would blame us for the reports...Foday Sankoh gave strict warnings to commanders about our security. This is why we did not keep too long in any one assignment.³¹

Because problems were taken to them directly, commanders had considerable leniency concerning which crimes they punished and how. Even as she explains official procedures, a Vanguard woman alludes to the personalistic and selective enforcement of policy:

They investigate you. If you're found guilty by a panel of target commanders for raping or stealing they charge you and send you back to the base for ideology...(But) every commander has his own punishment.³²

Moreover, with coercive power underpinning them, commanders were increasingly able to bypass centralized structures completely when away from Zogoda in Phase II, and in Phase III when Sankoh was imprisoned. They wielded their punitive power with varying degrees of discretion. However, the tendency of many toward summary justice led to commanders often being themselves reprimanded for acting outside the law. Top officers, such as Sam Bockarie, Morris Kallon, and Issa Sesay, were all demoted repeatedly for flaunting the internal justice system and summarily executing fighters under their command, sometimes for transgressions as small as killing a sheep or accidentally discharging a weapon when a convoy hit a bump in the road.³³

Punishments for commanders' own misdeeds, handed down from Sankoh and the People's Court, usually involved demotion in rank, occasionally time in jail, and reliably being sent for further ideology training, thereby removing them from military action and subjecting them to the total-control camp setting to re-learn RUF laws and principles. Other punishments ranged from being forced to carry heavy loads or clear swamps for rice-planting, to extreme torture, including mutilation, rape, and being locked into miserable 'dungeon' pits dug into

³⁰ Krijn Peters attributes this to a meeting in which commanders demanded greater control over their fighters at the front (Peters, *War and the Crisis of Youth*.)

³¹ "Mohamed Mundah, Written Testimony," 9.

³² Fatu Sannoh, Senior civilian woman/RUSO.

³³ Peter Kalawa, Training Commandant; Ricky Kamara, Security to Mosquito; Bockarie Ngobeh, Black Guard Commander.

the ground. The brutality of the RUF justice system reflected the movement's overall tendency to dehumanize its members, whether in training or day-to-day life. Live grenades were launched into exercise circles, so recruits would learn to drop for cover³⁴; Task Force trainees were forced to eat their own faeces, so they 'would be able to eat anything in the bush'³⁵; and in some camps, civilian women and girls were imprisoned in their own husbands' huts so they would not run away.³⁶ As the TRC noted in the previous chapter, the 'enduring effect' that training had on the Vanguardians in hardening them to violence can only be seen to have multiplied and created a cascade of 'reigns of terror' from central command, through area and target commanders, to foot soldiers patrolling the countryside. Unable to leave the group and forced to 'get used to the system' of copious violence, many learned to speak in the relevant idiom of power: coercion.

REWARDING VIOLENCE

The diversity of punishments meted out from one commander to the next, or for different incidents of the same crime, reflects the overall inconsistency of the RUF's efforts to control fighters and the use of force. While excess violence was deemed counter-revolutionary and a violation of RUF law, the 'hardest' and most violent fighters and commanders were the ones rewarded with promotion. As a result, in-group socialization to violence was evidenced not only in punishment, but also in the reward patterns established from the start of the war.

NPFL fighters' reckless abuse of the Sierra Leonean population in Phase I quickly set a violent standard of how a rebel ought to act. By raping women, summarily killing non-compliant civilians, and taking what they wanted from towns and villages, they created a template for power and 'fearfulness' predicated entirely on violence.³⁷ They rebuked Foday Sankoh and central RUF command, undermining group cohesion and setting a dangerous precedent of self-interest for years to come. It culminated, of course, in Tap Final, which resulted partly from Liberian protestations against the imposition of RUF law when one of their own was executed for rape:³⁸

³⁴ Benjamin Swaray, Fighter.

³⁵ Mohamed Mundah, Overall Black Guard Commander.

³⁶ Adama Gbla, Wife.

³⁷ Notably, their use of force in lieu of being able to clearly communicate or relate to the local population, or operate within its social institutions, fits social foundations-based explanations of group control and violent dysfunction, e.g., Staniland, "Explaining Cohesion, Fragmentation, and Control in Insurgent Groups"; Weinstein, *Inside Rebellion*.

³⁸ Jinnah Brooks, Battalion G4 Commander.

They said they didn't want junior people standing over their head...junior commandos were beaten and killed...they were even raping girls...some of these children, they don't listen to what they're taught on base; they go and do their own.³⁹

Yet, though the NPFL fighters were driven out for flagrant violations of RUF law and abusing the population, their habit of opportunistic violence polluted new recruits' image of how to become strong and respected fighters. A commander explains that Sierra Leonean fighters soon began emulating the coercive power the Liberians wielded:

They tried to be big by raping, killing...Why did they rape? Because they could. They didn't have a girlfriend before; they didn't have money. They liked women; they liked power.⁴⁰

In addition to new recruits' mimicry of violence, the internal dissolution that followed Top Final created mistrust and allegations of treachery in the highest levels of the central leadership. The torture and execution of Rashid Mansaray, Sankoh's second-in-command, and other Vanguard members at Ngiehun bridge and at Sandiallu headquarters in Kailahun District—as well as the execution of some 20 other Vanguards and junior commandos in the South—sent powerful signals about the value of violence during 'revolution'. First, the conviction of founding members illustrated the authoritarian nature of power and 'security' in the RUF.⁴¹ Decisions were ultimate and final, and held total power over even the highest members in the group. Second, the nature of their punishments demonstrated that no degree of cruelty was beyond the RUF's remit. The transgressive, horrific punishment Mansaray and those at Ngiehun were subject to capitalized on its performative aspect, sending fear and intimidation throughout the movement. Third, the events and their re-telling underscored the centrality of violence to machinations of power in the RUF.

Rumours swirled about if Mansaray had in fact turned against the RUF, or whether his execution was the result of Bockarie and Sesay making a power play to gain favour with Foday Sankoh. The collective memory emergent in interviews tells a narrative of disingenuous accusations and wrongful conviction. Far from being ostracized for killing founding members of the group, the young commanders behind their indictments rapidly climbed the ranks to become some of Sankoh's most trusted deputies. Finally, those killed were noted for their moderation, while their executors were committed militarists. Their

³⁹ Bangali Rogers, Fighter.

⁴⁰ Alpha Daboh, Battalion Commander.

⁴¹ Abdullah, *Between Democracy and Terror*, 61.

punishment showed that there was little tolerance for defending civilians by criticising others' actions, and that excessive commitment to revolutionary principles was a risky undertaking. The RUF would not become a revolutionary movement that practiced self-critique.⁴²

The narrative of Rashid Mansaray's widow illustrates how leaders consolidated central power structures by punishing dissent and rewarding violence during this key 1992-1993 phase, which would define the RUF's character:

Rashid came with the war. He trained them [Issa and Mosquito]—he trained them at Camp Namma. He spoke for the civilians. Kailahun: there's no village where people don't like Rashid...[But] they didn't want him to talk for the civilians. Issa Sesay, he didn't want to let him talk for civilians. Issa, he came out of the soldier barracks, he went to one village and put the civilians under gunpoint. He took all of their things. Then Rashid went to him and he said, "This thing that you do, this will give us a bad name!"... They came to train Issa Sesay and Morris Kallon and others; but they turned against the Special Forces, the ones who trained them at Camp Namma. Then they killed the Special Forces. They tied Rashid and took him into a cell at the MP. His skin was all scarred and blistered. It was Issa who did that—he put the [molten plastic] on him. Rashid said, "Issa, now it was me who trained you, and you've turned against me because you went above the civilians. You put civilians under gunpoint. I gave orders to my bodyguards to beat you, Issa, but then you went and put a fetish against me to make Foday Sankoh give you an order to kill me. Me and Mohamed Tarawallie."...

Foday Sankoh asked me, he said, "Zainab, what am I to do with Rashid?" I said, "Foday Sankoh, I am a young girl, I can't tell you what to do. When this man came with the war, you were the Pa; they took the war and handed it over to you. Don't let others fool you into acting against your own children...Papa God is with you, because you have the gun, and Rashid doesn't have anyone else here. On you it depends. But when you pass the order to kill him, it's left to you—you and Papa God." That's what I told him.

They took Rashid to a cell. They beat him. They put him inside a vehicle...They didn't even give us a chance! When me and Rashid would begin to talk, they would torment me. Issa Sesay audited me; he said I shouldn't talk to my man. Then he cut his ears. He cut his ears...Then Rashid said he wanted to smoke a cigarette. I had never seen him smoke a cigarette one day in his life, but that day he smoked. He said, "Today is the day I will die."...They accused Rashid of coming out of the bush and coming to town to talk to the SLA and the civilians to let the war be done...Issa Sesay cut his hand. He cut his ears...At times I would go inside the bush, sit down, and cry until—. People would have to take me out of the bush and come with me back into town...He had cut his head. He

⁴² Criticism/Self-Criticism is a cornerstone of Marxist-Leninism, adopted by Communist revolutionaries from Mao to the Eritrean People's Liberation Front; see, Iyob, "The Eritrean Experiment," 659 fn.

cut his head. He put a stick inside the head and came to show me the head. That's what he did. He said, "You're never going to see this." (begins crying) I said, "Today, you are making me suffer. Issa, you're making me suffer. You killed him." And even when I come to Freetown now I don't have a better person...[Bob Marley, 'No More Trouble' plays in the background] This is not even my body. From the day my man died, I never planned to take another man.⁴³

Throughout interviews, other RUF spoke admiringly of Mansaray and echoed her sentiments: 'It was all lies. They killed Rashid for nothing.'⁴⁴ Rather than becoming a martyr, however, he symbolized the persecution of moderate dissent for the rest of the war. In-group historical memory identifies these high-profile incidents as resulting in a more violent, less ideologically rigorous, and younger leadership, bereft of dozens of its founding members.

A second wave of dissent-silencing in 1996 redoubled the supremacy of hardliners over more moderate ideologues, and military commanders over their political civilian counterparts. Following the Abidjan peace talks, the political representatives of the RUF returned to Sierra Leone ahead of Foday Sankoh to begin implementing the ceasefire and transitional power-sharing agreement.⁴⁵ When Sankoh was arrested in Abuja, however, these 'founding intellectuals' recruited in the war's first months, were accused of selling out the revolution.⁴⁶ After they were arrested and heavily beaten, Court Martial proceedings were organized in Sankoh's absence, as this memo illustrates:

From: The Chairman People's War Council RUF/SL 2/4/97
Sembehun Zoe Bush
Overall Chiefdom Commander
War Council Member RUF/SL
Sub. Court-Marshall for I.H. Deen-Jalloh and others on 4/4/97

By the directive of the Chairman People's War Council and the High Command, you are to sit on the Court Marshall on Friday 4/4/97 at Buedu. Please inform the Secretary XX to come along with you without fail.

This is important.⁴⁷

⁴³ Zainab Tarawalie, Senior civilian wife.

⁴⁴ Kai Fekkah, Vanguard/S4 Commander.

⁴⁵ For full text see, "Peace Agreement Between the Government of the Republic of Sierra Leone and the Revolutionary United Front of Sierra Leone."

⁴⁶ Richards, *Fighting for the Rain Forest*.

⁴⁷ 'Court Martial For IH Deen-Jalloh and Others', 97.0402.PM.B.MIL-CTMTL.WCO.9.

One of the G5 commanders involved in their arrest explains:

Initially when the peace process started, some of them came to betray the cause...They were diplomats, negotiating for peace...about five of them. The RUF decided to let them go represent us on a peace negotiation. [But] when they got there, they changed the leadership and so they betrayed the cause. Later on, they were afraid even to come report to the RUF. But we were able to play a very cunning role and tricked them into coming over, and when they got here they were arrested. At that time the Pa was arrested in prison...but the Pa said let them not do that, so we left them at the border to escape to Guinea.⁴⁸

From this point onward, the inner circle was halved, but the overall membership soon doubled in size following the AFRC take-over. The influx of new, untrustworthy colleagues only exacerbated intolerance for dissent and the dominance of militarists in the organization. Just a few prominent civilians remained on the War Council, and all had proven their fealty to Bockarie and Sesay. Rewarding violence and persecuting its critics at the highest levels reinforced, for lower ranking commanders and foot soldiers, that harsh tactics and harsh enforcement of RUF law would be rewarded. One of Sankoh's personal radio operators explains his take on how commanders' violence set a dangerous precedent for the rest of the movement:

The ideological aspect of the war was correct, but later on, people deviated from the ideology. Yes, they deviated from the ideology, and some of the negative aspects came into the war. So what made them deviate?—so many reasons are there for people to deviate. One, some people are there for personal gain. Then, for example, some who are behind bars in the Special Court, when they came with this war it was with the right ideology, but when the time reaches for them...some start to deviate from what they came with...which wasn't correct.

[Q: So the deviation started even from the very top?]

Yeah. It started from up there; the deviation came up from up there. Even from the leader, when we were there with him personally, now there the deviation started: from up there, until it comes down. Because you're not going to say one thing I have to do, and then the next day, 'It is so I say. ...Now, not so I say.' Yeah, you say one thing to people, and then the next day, you say, 'I didn't say that.' This was the problem with diplomacy. Foday Sankoh would say one thing, and Issa Sesay would say another.⁴⁹

In the face of high-level inconsistencies and hypocrisy, and the apparent success of violence, fighters were also rewarded in more banal ways for replicating the power dynamics of their

⁴⁸ Eric Bangura, Agriculture Secretariat/Humanitarian Commander.

⁴⁹ Emmanuel Kallon, Signals to Leader.

commanders. Going on missions and fighting at the frontlines was the only way to gain property and some degree of freedom and autonomy during the war. A civilian girl describes some of the appeal fighting held for her counterparts:

[My friend] had a pistol and she was trained. She used cocaine. She would cut her cheek like this (slices her hand along her cheekbone) and put white powder in it so she could have a strong heart. She liked to fight. She would strip civilians and shoot them...she would tell me everything after the mission. The small girls would not fight, but there were many women fighting...I wanted to go because all my friends were going for missions and they have all these foods and clothes.⁵⁰

Even for commanders, the mobility and power gained by fighting held tangible appeal:

With the leader you are under perfect control, so you just pray to be sent on assignment so you can just be on your own. If you can take a pass to go one mile, you will get free movement, you will be *bossman* for yourself and you can control others. But when you are there (at Headquarters) the leader controls everybody.⁵¹

The perks of freedom and access to property translated into looting and abuse of civilians, made worse by some of the flaws in the RUF's punishment system. The personalistic nature of power, which gave commanders considerable discretion over violence and the rule of law at the front, was mixed with a high proportion of particularly violent combatants under their command. Fighters who were convicted of 'violencing' civilians—harassing, beating, abusing, or murdering—were regularly ordered to the 'hottest frontline' as punishment.⁵² This, of course, increased the likelihood that they would have further encounters with unprotected civilians. As a Black Guard commander describes, the most militarily insecure, hardest-to-police areas were also rife with some of the most violent fighters, who by definition were least adherent to the group's rules and ideology, and were fighting under the command of ardent militarists.⁵³ The result was a violent cocktail of military power and deviance:

The People's Court would look at the gravity of the matter and make a recommendation, but they did not fully operate the laws. Mostly the commanders concentrated on fighting the frontline operations. There the laws did not work easily. For example, one time, Morris Kallon set up his own court and sometimes overruled the People's Court...I was sent to Rutile [a major iron ore operation on the coast, and site of the 1995 spike in violence] because there was lawlessness, raping, killing, and looting. But we could not put the situation

⁵⁰ Fanta Massaquoi, AFRC civilian wife.

⁵¹ Peter Kalawa, Training Commandant.

⁵² Bobson Bockarie, District MP Commander.

⁵³ Marks, "Sexual Violence in Rebel Groups."

under control. The fighters came out of a place where there was nothing and came to an area where everything is in abundance. So, they could not easily control people. The law is you should only take food or medicine and one change of clothes, but it did not operate practically in the field.⁵⁴

LEGITIMIZING VIOLENCE

The fact that those who had power in the RUF were violent, and that those who used violence gained power, encouraged the legitimization of violence throughout the organization. At high levels, *internal* violence was carefully, systematically bureaucratized. At lower levels, *external* violence was couched in strategic and tactical terms that blurred the lines between what was condoned and what was illicit.

Bureaucratizing internal violence

Despite the apparent recklessness and lack of accountability at the frontlines, at the rear and in controlled areas the RUF went to great lengths to carefully administrate the use of force. As the preceding sections on punishment and reward illustrate, there is ample evidence that in-group policing structures not only existed as intended, but that they tried to implement the harsh punishments prescribed in the Code of Conduct. Letters of assignment and promotion installed internal security agents throughout the organizational structure.⁵⁵ Detailed records were kept of their movements and actions,⁵⁶ and regional situation reports were made of arrests and other proceedings against individuals inside the group and in territories under its control (see Appendix I).⁵⁷ Resultant promotions, demotions, and other sanctions against officers were then broadcast throughout the RUF by memoranda⁵⁸ or radio announcements dutifully transcribed by signals operators.⁵⁹ Interviews detail experiences of those subject or witness to violent punishments, as well as accounts by MPs and IDU who carried out these arrests, investigations, trials, and sentencing.

These self-legitimizing investigatory and judicial structures effectively *created* the law whilst interpreting it. In the RUF's process of establishing a new militarized system of governance,

⁵⁴ Bockarie Ngobeh, Black Guard Commander.

⁵⁵ E.g. 'Information', 93.0228.PM.B.MIL-IDU.MANDU.10.

⁵⁶ 'Information', 93.0303.PM.B.MIL-IDU.MANDU.15.

⁵⁷ 'Situation Report', 99.0211.PM.B.MIL-SITREP.MKNI-MP.2.

⁵⁸ E.g. 'Appointment', 91.1118.PM.B.MIL-PRO/CIC.PNDMB-DHQ.28; 'Peoples' Appointment Letter', 92.0103.PM.B.MIL-APPT.PNDMB-DHQ.33; 'Order Publication', 93.0315.PM.B.MIL-ORD/CIC.PNDMB-WO.35

⁵⁹ E.g. *Signals Training Manual*, 7-9.

both the burden of proof to prosecute and the margin of error to avoid prosecution could be very low. Some crimes, such as ‘innocent killing’ or ‘wilful killing’ were self-explanatory (killing innocent civilians and killing someone without permission) and were prosecuted based on eyewitness testimony. Other charges were more nebulous, such as ‘different intention’ and ‘failure to follow instructions’, and were thus open to security agents’ interpretation as well as the whims of the People’s Court. The number of crimes punished, investigated, or sent to trial in the RUF is unknown. Record keeping was not fully centralized, and at war’s end, war crimes trials inspired the near total destruction of files by former RUF administrators afraid of prosecution.⁶⁰ Also lost to the data fog of war are the demographics of those executed (versus otherwise reprimanded), making it difficult to determine whether lower ranking fighters were sentenced more harshly.

The little documentation of court martial and crime proceedings that survives, combined with interview data, suggests that higher-ranking military officers were shown greater leniency than lower-ranking fighters, RUF civilians, and out-group individuals. An ‘Order Publication’ from 1993 signed by the leader, for example, details court martial verdicts from the People’s Court in which privates were to be executed for weakness in battle, while a captain accused of killing and wounding two fellow fighters received six months imprisonment with parole (Appendix I). Similarly, a restricted internal Situation Report from RUF military police to the overall commander (Appendix I), includes an annexe of cases that ‘received the retribution of execution after investigation’—seven of the nine individuals sentenced to death were civilians.⁶¹ The report adds that, ‘retributions of flogging, changing of assignment areas, detention and deployment, and sending to the training base for more ideology have also been meted out for crimes that have not had a very serious impact on the complainants.’⁶²

This internal administration of violence *vis-à-vis* policing reflects continuous attempts to control behaviour and power within the group. The officiousness with which MPs carried out their work resulted partly from the fact that individuals employed as police officers and detectives (CID officials) before the war were prioritized recruits for the RUF’s own police

⁶⁰ Several informants who served as ‘adjutants’ or military secretaries during the war reported burning dozens of war files when the SCSL trials began because they were afraid of prosecution; e.g. Kai Fekkah, Vanguard/S4.

⁶¹ ‘Situation Report’, 99.0211.PM.B.MIL-SITREP.MKNI-MP.2.

⁶² Ibid.

force.⁶³ But, it also reflects the formality with which the RUF envisioned its governance structures, in spite of the personalistic, inconsistent enforcement of the law by military commanders. The above-mentioned situation report, for example, notably filed during the same time period as the 1999 siege on Freetown (of which it makes no mention), catalogues the sentencing and execution of two RUF soldiers in Makeni for rape. Another police report from the same month, also from Defence Headquarters, details for three pages a relatively petty theft of civilian property by three armed soldiers. Yet, at the same time, units further afield were claiming cars, houses, and lives in the two-week attack on the capitol, characterized by unequalled anti-civilian destruction and the highest concentration of rapes in the whole war.⁶⁴

That Military Police kept detailed crime reports and submitted overall situation reports at RUF headquarters in Makeni while Freetown was raped, pillaged, and burned to the ground is best understood, not as an exercise in wilful naiveté or ironic futility, but rather, as concrete evidence of the disconnect between claims for power at the frontline and aspirations of control at the rear. A former MP commander, while insisting internal policing was effective at the rear, identifies the tacit gap in law enforcement—they only effectively policed rebel-held zones:

Well, we had a good number of people to investigate. Because some people, they don't care, some people do not follow the rules and regulations of the movement. Sankoh came with an ideology. He came with the command structure and even what we are supposed to do and what we are supposed not to do. Some people for instance—we were not supposed to take *even a needle* from the civilians—some people were still doing it. So because of that we were arresting them when we get the report from the civilians...[or when they] go straight to the commander and lodge a complaint.

[Q: So would you say most of these accusations against the RUF were happening at the frontlines?]

The accusations, like what?

[Q: Like, people were abusing civilians, rape, looting...]

Exactly! All these things were happening at the frontline. At times when they captured civilians from the frontline—let's say they attack one village and happen to capture civilians, on their way to the authorities or to headquarters—it was during that time that most of these things, the accusations you're talking about, happened...It was very, very difficult to eliminate that bad behaviour. For example, some commanders stay there because, when you attack, you have to defend that area. You only have to send a small group to take the civilians from

⁶³ Andrew Mundah, Adjutant.

⁶⁴ Marks, "‘Virgination’, Rape, and Marriage in the RUF"; Taylor, *We'll Kill You If You Cry*.

the frontline to the rear, to the headquarters. And on their way to the headquarters, they play this havoc.⁶⁵

The gap between governance at the rear and law enforcement at the front meant that military strategy and tactics were broadly defined. As a result, the line between condoned and illicit violence was blurred. The above quote—as well as others, like the Black Guard commander’s description of looting and loss of control at Sierra Rutilé in the preceding section—indicates the proximity between looting for personal gain, on the one hand, and gathering food, military supplies, and resources for the group (including manpower), on the other.

Blurring the lines of external violence

Relatively little is said in the three dominant explanations of violence against civilians about the most obvious mechanism through which it can become more (or less) indiscriminate or widespread—the violent group’s chosen military strategy. Though much of the research implicitly examines how violence is not just condoned but commanded, there is little exploration of how groups self-define such strategies and enforce command control. This may be because we mistake the aims, such as ‘people’s liberation’, for the strategy, and then presume that non-liberative actions reflect an insincere or failed strategy. In reality, revolutionary leaders and philosophers throughout history have focused on justifying bloodshed as inevitable ‘in the name of revolution’ and choose their tactics accordingly. Guerrilla warfare, bastion of communist revolutions and anti-colonial liberation struggles, for example, demands that insurgents obtain arms and other supplies from the enemy.⁶⁶ The RUF’s version of guerrilla strategy condoned attacks on settlements in enemy territory, and effectively, the people within them.

Like in other armed groups, military strategy in the RUF was carefully planned in high-level meetings, with minutes taken and orders transmitted throughout the country by memos and radio. The initial strategy, a two-flank attack from the South and East that would quickly storm the country and overtake the capitol, failed at the narrow bridge to reach Daru

⁶⁵ Bobson Bockarie, District MP Commander.

⁶⁶ Other scholars have also identified the propensity for guerrilla warfare to blur lines between combatants and civilians, e.g., Hultman, *Targeting the Unarmed*; Kocher, Pepinsky, and Kalyvas, “Aerial Bombing and Counterinsurgency in the Vietnam War”; Wickham-Crowley, *Guerrillas and Revolution in Latin America*.

Barracks in Kailahun District. Other major assaults, such as the 1992 attack on Koidu town in Kono District, were also short-lived. In 1993, after being cut off from food and arms trading routes, and battling the nearly trebled NPRC state army—bolstered as it was by Guinean artillery units, Nigerian air support, foreign mercenaries, and geographically expert *kamajor* ground forces—the RUF switched to guerrilla tactics out of necessity.⁶⁷

‘Self-reliant struggle’, the phrase most often used in interviews to describe this phase of the war, captures the underdog sentiment members of the RUF felt fighting a stronger, better equipped enemy from the rural margins.⁶⁸ When Foday Sankoh and the frontline commanders shifted to jungle warfare in 1994, survival by capturing supplies became the cornerstone of the movement. Civilians were not supposed to be targeted, but any goods taken from the front were called ‘government property’ and looting spiked spectacularly:

We had different types of operations. For example...if we go on an operation ‘Finding Material’, then we will go find material, whether ammunition, medicine, food, all this. If it’s a one-week mission, we’ll go, or ten days, or two weeks, we’ll go on this mission. If they say we’re to take them from Kono areas, first we’ll call a meeting to assess the ambush from Kono to Masingbi, then we’ll set an ambush there in that area. After that ambush falls we have to raid several other towns so we’ll be able to get material...then we’ll avoid the area and jump to another side...We would travel with enough manpower, so when we get plenty of material, we can dispatch some armed men to go leave the things.

[Q: So from Peyama, they would send civilians to come and collect...?] Eh?! No! Not civilians! They’re going to give ammunition to civilians? No, soldiers have to come. No, listen, the only thing we would call on civilians to come for was if we were able to get enough food. But if it’s arms and ammunition, with medicine, we won’t ever call civilians.⁶⁹

Training manuals summarize these combat tactics—how to ambush, raid, and conduct patrols—shedding light on how official strategies facilitated violence against civilians.⁷⁰ For example, although they were supposed to only target enemy fighters, three of the four patrol types taught to recruits were offensive: fighting or combat patrol was ‘to raid and ambush the enemy’; ‘standing patrol’ was to ‘dominate’ the area; and fighters on ‘fan or nomadic patrol’ were instructed to travel ‘with all their weapons ready to fight.’⁷¹ When raiding,

⁶⁷ Bockarie Ngobeh, Black Guard Commander.

⁶⁸ E.g. Ricky Kamara, Security to Mosquito; Jacob Sesay, Brigade Commander.

⁶⁹ Mohamed Mundah, Overall Black Guard Commander; also, Abie Tamba, Adjutant.

⁷⁰ *Lion National Training Base*, 23-4.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 24.

fighters were to target ‘personnel’, ‘equipment’, and ‘documents’, in that order.⁷² An IDU commander describes going on these patrols, and the distinction between attacks and ‘food finding’ in civilian settlements:

We were wholly and solely responsible for recording and reporting...If an attack is going to Mile 91 today, there must be an IDU person going on the attack. Because all the attacks have their specific order, their different commands. They say, when you go to this area, no destruction, no burning of houses, no innocent killing. And they will show you a specific time when you will launch the attack. So we take all these things down...We cannot attack a civilian village. We call it ‘Patrol’. ‘Food Finding’. We don’t call it attack because we can’t make any firing when we hold this area only occupied by the civilians. We can only go there and threaten them.

[Q: How do you threaten?] Well you know all the civilians were afraid of weapons, so when we are in the town or the village some will run...In the frontline we cannot only kill and we cannot easily fire a civilian—unless we know that you have given our secret...If the attack is very serious on us, and we happen to capture that area, we will revenge.⁷³

Attacks on the enemy and SLA-controlled territory were thus an overt strategy that need not be inferred via path-dependent arguments about the nature of the participants (forced recruits), or the (paltry) initial resource endowments of the group. The hard-line guerrilla strategy determined by Sankoh and his commanders played out in the thousands of attacks and relatively few battles over the course of the war. Moreover, as combat avoidance became a central feature of RUF guerrilla strategy—targeting enemy territory, not enemy military power—civilians became even more vulnerable. Populated areas were the primary source of food, manpower, and other equipment, turning most of the country (anywhere outside rebel control) into the oft-referenced ‘frontline’. The centrally dictated General Orders, as transcribed in 1996, stated expressly:

32. That all soldiers must change the strategies in fighting as counter guerrillas movement to avoid enemies attacks (sic).⁷⁴

Accordingly, fighters were to conduct raids and ambushes for supplies without engaging the enemy. Unable to extract any more material from their own controlled territory—where equipment had already been commandeered, grain stores plundered, and civilians organized for communal farming (see Chapter 6)—RUF frontline fighters trawled the ‘no-man’s land’, where control was liminal, for provisioning. This squares the circle of how the RUF could

⁷² *Ibid.*, 23.

⁷³ Eddie Bockarie, IDU commander.

⁷⁴ *Medic Notebook*, 11.

instil ‘never take a single piece of thread or needle from the masses’ in ideology training, whilst ordering that, ‘men at the frontlines must not forget their brothers at the rear, especially clothing’ (sic).⁷⁵

Although fighters were not to use violence against civilians, as predicted by Kalyvas’s control-collaboration model, any uncertainty between ‘enemy combatants’ and ‘enemy civilians’ in these operations could result in indiscriminate aggression toward both. For example, supporting the theory that increased information leads to more selective violence is the four-point list ‘How To Gain Information from The Enemy’: recon patrol, civilians, past records or documents, and prisoners of war.⁷⁶ Of the different patrol types, ‘reconnaissance or recon patrol’ was the only one in which violence was limited to self-defence.⁷⁷ Thus, ‘cooperative’ civilians would be spared violent punishment, but also often brought into the bush camp to be ‘protected’ and provide further intelligence information.⁷⁸ The Overall Black Guard commander identifies the RUF’s simple intelligence tactics as the source of much civilian confusion over combatants’ identities at this stage of the war:

We used to dress in combat (military fatigues) and come sit down in the village as soldiers, to get information about the SLA movements...Then, only later would the civilians find out, ‘Ay, those were rebels!’...Those were the tactics we played with the people. That’s what made people accuse soldiers and rebels of conniving, but it was never true...I was in the RUF for a long time, I fought in many areas, and with many different commanders, so I’m explaining to you our own tactics. As *guerrillas*, that was what we played. The only time we had a connection with soldiers was during AFRC time when they overthrew the government. But 1994, ’95, ’96—no. Even when we would walk in the towns...they didn’t understand the *logic*.⁷⁹

From within the RUF, the blurring of the lines between combatant and civilians was particularly acute when the *kamajor* and CDF threat to rebel security intensified. Multiple informants describe how the group ‘knew’ if people were spies if they saw them in more

⁷⁵ Ibid., 12.

⁷⁶ *Lion National Training Base*, 24.

⁷⁷ Ibid., 24.

⁷⁸ Abie Tamba, Adjutant.

⁷⁹ Mohamed Mundah, Overall Black Guard Commander. This also led widespread fear and confusion throughout the country, as, in addition to rebels being mistaken for soldiers, soldiers were increasingly ill-disciplined, pursuing looting and mining opportunities rather than pursuing rebels. See, e.g., Keen, *Conflict and Collusion*, 119–31.

than one village, or if the SLA pre-empted their planned attack.⁸⁰ Yet, most maintain that it was against the laws of the movement to kill 'P.O.W.s':

When I was captured, the RUF was killing and destroying, but after some time, they stopped killing civilians. If they capture you, they convert you and liberate you. They killed civilians at the beginning because they were informants to the SLA.⁸¹

When we captured the CDF *kamajors* we also detained them and asked them questions about the *kamajors*. Then we trained them, but they were never sent to the frontline, because they were afraid they would try to escape.⁸²

While preceding sections allude to the persecution and execution of suspected spies and captured enemies, both the protocols for surrendered individuals and the Code of Conduct forbade killing enemy combatants. The Situation Report details:

Sir, where no one of the RUF's Rank and File can bluntly put it that the SLA, CDF, and SLP and the civilians of this Region are not with us, the Military Police Unit can boastfully announce to you that there is that seeming tendency that they are with us. Their co-operation in terms of surrendering and performing military duties on the part of the SLA/CDF and coming out of the bush and performing Governmental duties on the part of the SLP and civilians is a clear manifestation of their being loyal this time round. They should only continue for God's sake.

Registered figures of surrendered SLAs, SLPs, and CDFs so far stand at SLA 30+, SLP 85+, and CDF 836+.

Among the civilians who have been coming out of the bush, manifested loyalty has not only been limited to performing Governmental duties, but there has also been those who have been volunteering to join the RUF/SL to be combatants. Such civilians have been enlisted, encamped, and subsequently sent to the training base for basic ideology. Some SLA/CDF personnels have also been treated likewise.⁸³

These variations in strategic military policies and their enforcement via internal laws occurred over time and across the warscape, as a result of shifts in leadership, the military environment, and territorial control. The apparent contradictions they entailed worsened civilian abuse and undermined group cohesion. The following section provides a case study of policy change in the RUF that illustrates how attempts to enforce control, while pursuing

⁸⁰ Eddie Bockarie, IDU commander.

⁸¹ John Sallah, Fighter.

⁸² Naberay Morrison, WACs commander.

⁸³ 'Situation Report', 99.0211.PM.B.MIL-SITREP.MKNI-MP.2.

the strategic military aims of the movement (like strengthening manpower and food production), institutionalized abuse and exploitation.

RUF POLICY CHANGE, A CASE STUDY: AWOL SOLDIERS, RAPE, AND MARRIAGE

The clearest disjuncture between policy and practice in the RUF is perhaps seen in the widespread incidence of rape and ‘marriage’ in the war. It provides a single-crime microcosm of how the interplay between violent socialization, reward systems, internal control mechanisms, and official policies institutionalized widespread abuse.

Four documents, spanning one month in early 1993 in the RUF’s eastern stronghold, can be read as the beginnings of the RUF domestic sphere. They illustrate a social-organizational solution to the predictable military problem of fighters leaving the frontline to see their families. The first document, an ‘Inclined Executive Order in Stress’ from Foday Sankoh, dated 13 February 1993, warns parents not to shelter soldiers without proper documentation; and commands all chiefdom, section, and town commanders to seek out and arrest ‘all AWOL (absent-without-leave) soldiers residing within their territorial Liberated zones.’⁸⁴ A few weeks later, a memo was circulated from the Chiefdom Commander (to whom Sankoh’s order had been addressed) to all section and town commanders, calling for a census of all ‘unmarried and married women to commandos’ and ordering their presence at a chiefdom meeting.⁸⁵ The same week, a ‘letter of advice’ (10 March 1993) was addressed to the Chiefdom Commander on behalf of all commandos (RUF fighters) in the chiefdom. It threatens to ambush the commander if he does not ‘stop harassing our women...to do the chiefdom work’; it continues:

Secondly, you do not know how to do your work. If you want to stay in your position you better respect us (commandos) and also our women, if not you will not stay long in this war. So try and change your way (behaviour) together with your workers. Let me tell you one thing, we will not be in battle front suffering, while our women also will suffer to the rayahs [rears] (villages) so try and know what to do. This is not A.P.C. time. We are under R.U.F. so you better respect us and our womens.

Your military co-operation is needed.⁸⁶

⁸⁴ ‘Inclined Executive Order’, 93.0213.PM.B.MIL-ORD/AWOL.PNDMB-CIC.37

⁸⁵ ‘Unmarried and Married Women to Commandos’, 93.0307.PM.B.MIL-WOM.MANDU.6

⁸⁶ ‘A Letter of Advice’, 93.0310.PM.B.MIL-ADV/WOM.MANDU.14

Just two days later, 12 March 1993, an announcement from the Chiefdom Commander, entitled 'Observation - AWOL Commandos', was circulated to 'The Chiefdom People' stating:

It has been observed that one of the main reasons why RUF commandos persistently stay on AWOL in the towns/villages in this chiefdom is because of marriages.

To minimize or stop this practice the following recommendations are suggested:

- (i) That a census be made to register all wives of commandos and where they stay.
- (ii) That a census be made to register all un-married women in each town/village.
- (iii) That the RUF leadership in each target find a centre where wives of commandos can reside by their husbands when the needs arise.
- (iv) That any civilian who hosts a commando, without proper reasons allowing him/her to do so, be severely dealt with according to regulations that shall be laid by the chiefdom authorities.

It is my hope that if these suggested recommendations are approved and implemented they will help to minimize this acute problem in our community.⁸⁷

Policy-making in the RUF was not always this tightly controlled and formalized. As the movement became more diffuse, snap judgments and commanders' military fiefdoms increasingly shaped how formal structures operated in practice. However, what this rare full-sequence documentation of policy change demonstrates, is the movement's ordered ideal of state-like total control. And it shows how military concerns trumped all other issues, dictating power contestations as well as civilians' and fighters' welfare.

The Chiefdom Commander involved in these memos became one of the more enduring members of the War Council. His approach to solving the problem of AWOL soldiers apparently resonated with Sankoh, as gender-related policies became an increasingly central feature of attempts to enforce organizational norms and social control in the RUF. Although founded as a gender-neutral military in which women and men trained side-by-side, RUF gender policy first began to change after women's casualty rates outpaced men's in the first two years.⁸⁸ With women no longer required to fight, training and fighting

⁸⁷ 'Observation AWOL Commandos', 93.0312.PM.B.MIL-AWOL/WOM.MANDU.11

⁸⁸ Thomas Alpha, Fighter; Naberay Morrison, WACs Commander.

became male-dominated, while women dominated the logistical support sphere, as suggested in the above exchanges.

The move to jungle camps after the RUF lost control of towns and villages heralded the most important shift in gender policy. It involved a capture-as-‘rescue’ strategy, implemented to maintain manpower, and introduced marriage on a mass scale:

Foday Sankoh, he didn’t give the instruction for RUF to get married initially. He did not want to keep any civilians because to defend them you use up resources. But then Sankoh said you are not to leave any woman you take, you have to provide for her and secure her life.⁸⁹

According to several commanders, Sankoh decided ‘marriage’ was the best antidote to rape, which had persisted despite being punishable by execution, and was seen as one of the most potentially destabilizing threats to the RUF’s cohesion and efficacy.⁹⁰ Of greatest concern was ‘rape’ as the violation of another fighter’s wife. As a young fighter described:

All of the men had wives. Mine was my girlfriend before the war. She was captured at the same time and trained in Kailahun. She was a good fighter...There was no difference between a man or a woman if you’re a fighter. If you say no, then I’m not going to have sex with you. They have a law, if a man forces another man’s wife and they know, they will kill you. I saw people killed for violating the command, but it didn’t happen often...When you capture a girl you have to take her to Headquarters and they ask if you want her for a wife. If you say yes, then they say, ‘Ok, you take care of her.’ To take care of her you have to feed her, house her, and in case of attack, you secure her life. If you don’t want the woman you capture, you leave her at headquarters for someone else.⁹¹

This was increasingly problematic when the domestic and military spheres began to occupy the same space in the bush, as more aggressive fighters would prey on the wives and girlfriends of junior fighters while they were away on mission. Following the lead of the Chiefdom Commander who sought to bring wives nearer the bases of AWOL commandos, a proactive policy was announced from 1994-95—dubbed ‘operation fine girl’. Whether forced or consensual, ‘Everyone was supposed to have a wife because they did not want you to love another man’s wife. So long as you are capable of taking care of your (woman), you

⁸⁹ Bockarie Ngobeh, Black Guard Commander.

⁹⁰ Mohamed Mundah, Overall Black Guard Commander.

⁹¹ Bobson Sallah, SBU Commander; see also, Bangura, *Expert Report on the Phenomenon of ‘Forced Marriage,’* 16.

can marry.⁹² Many male combatants internalized the responsibilities of marriage in the RUF.

As two male fighters recount:

We treated the women well. We give them good food, good lodging, and we give them encouragement. Yes, the women were happy.⁹³

When I captured her, I said, ‘Don’t kill her, I’ll take her as my wife’...She stayed at Kono with me. Every three hours shift, I got to see her. She would cook, take care of the house, do laundry. I gave her food from the attacks. She tried to escape, but I talked to her; I did not beat her because I liked her so much. I’m patient, so I encouraged her. She stayed and I would collect gifts for her from the frontline.⁹⁴

The result, however, was that untrained and unarmed women began to outnumber trained men, threatening the group’s security and draining its limited food and military supplies. A former RUF adjutant describes the effect of changing policy:

In 1993, the jungles were established...In mid-1994 we saw it was important to have wives to stop raping. So at every successful attack, fighters would capture one woman. (But then) women almost began to outnumber the men, so they stopped allowing capturing. It caused a problem of feeding and protecting the women. In 1995 they stopped capturing. After 1995, no woman should be captured again. Then in 1996 the women came in because they would be killed by *kamajors* otherwise in enemy territory.⁹⁵

After the policy was cancelled, marriage became a privilege regulated according to fighters’ age, power, and resources. A young fighter explained that, while commanders could set the rules and often kept multiple wives and girlfriends, younger boys were not allowed women: ‘The SBU [small boys unit] did not have wives. If they catch you with any woman they’ll beat you nearly to the point of death and say you are raping her. It was an order Issa made.’⁹⁶ Women also could not keep more than one boyfriend or husband, which was considered a threat to group cohesion and punishable by beating.⁹⁷

The statistical record reflects these changes in the marriage policy—the number of ‘sexual slavery’ crimes peak in 1994, precisely when fighters began taking ‘wives’.⁹⁸ It also demonstrates the utter failure of the injunction against rape. Although rape accounts for a

⁹² Fatu Sannoh, Senior civilian woman/RUSO.

⁹³ Alusine Kandeh, Fighter.

⁹⁴ Abubakarr Kallon, Fighter.

⁹⁵ Eddie Bockarie, IDU Commander.

⁹⁶ Amadou Fofanah, SBU/child soldier.

⁹⁷ Zainab Sallah, Medic/Matron.

⁹⁸ Fatu Sannoh, Senior civilian woman/RUSO.

relatively small percentage of all abuses perpetrated by the RUF, they abused women at a much higher rate than other factions. The RUF were responsible for 67 percent of all rapes reported to the TRC, and half of all rape victims were aged 13 to 25.⁹⁹ That one in four reported rapes was perpetrated on a girl under age 13 marks the most damning evidence of the incoherent enforcement of the RUF's own laws. Pre-pubescent girls were considered too young to be wives, and were instead taken as servants and adopted children of commanders' wives.

Yet, where they were captured, at the 'frontline' away from oversight and enforcement mechanisms, they were extremely vulnerable. Most female interviewees report being raped when abducted, even if they were deemed too young for marriage in the camp.¹⁰⁰ Cohen identifies gang rape as a source of group socialization away from camps.¹⁰¹ Like other forms of violence, it was often performative, less about the act or the victim, and more about demonstrating power to group members complicit in the violence and community members powerless to intervene.¹⁰²

If they capture you here, not only one man, but five or six will use force to sex you. All the women they capture, they beat you and put you under gunpoint. After they finish, they force you to carry things and walk back. They might drag you inside a room where no one else is watching. This is why women suffered.¹⁰³

In this respect, even violent acts that broke RUF laws, signalling apparent control failures, could reinforce cohesion at primary group levels, where commanders had more personalistic, direct control.

Not only did many of these violations happen outside of the purview of internal policing, where personal bonds and the threat of violence protected perpetrators, but even if the RUF leadership wanted to, fighters could not be prosecuted as codified. The harsh punishments were unsustainable. Execution for rape would have eliminated some of the fiercest fighters upon whom the RUF relied for strength in battle, including key commanders like Sam 'Mosquito' Bockarie, Issa Sesay, Dennis 'Superman' Mingo, and Morris Kallon, some of

⁹⁹ TRC, "Appendix 1: Statistical Report," 13–15. For a detailed discussion of age patterns among victims of sex crimes, see, Guberek et al., *Truth and Myth in Sierra Leone*, 21–22.

¹⁰⁰ Marks, "'Virginisation', Rape, and Marriage in the RUF," 14–16.

¹⁰¹ Cohen, "Female Combatants and the Perpetration of Violence: Wartime Rape in the Sierra Leone Civil War."

¹⁰² Cohen, "Causes of Rape During Civil War: Cross-national Evidence (1980-2009)"; Groth and Birnbaum, *Men Who Rape*, 113.

¹⁰³ Safi Kanneh, Wife.

whom were responsible for high-profile retributive rapes.¹⁰⁴ An IDU commander describes the fate awaiting fighters accused of grievous crimes:

As you entered Zogoda, he would send you to the training base, whether you were trained or not, all had to go to the training base. And at the training base you would not get what you want. Little food would be given to you. So that was his idea, because if he allowed us to just base there, there would be a lot of problems. So everyone would be sent to the training base. And you were beaten! Seriously beaten! Some were even killed on the training base—they will beat you! Some will even *die*.

[Q: Why?] Well that is the whole logic behind the guerrilla movement. Beating? Eh! It's a matter of the day. Beating? It's very simple. They would call it 'ideology training.' Yes, because when Foday Sankoh invited any commander maybe he will have a report against a commander that he is not behaving well against the civilians...To control someone with a weapon is not easy. Even at the time they were opening the jungles a commander may say, 'Go with this route', give you a command. But the person will go contrary to the order. But you may not go in and kill them, because you need this man. If you kill them, who will replace them?¹⁰⁵

During AFRC time, after Sankoh was removed from power, control became even more difficult to enforce. A lower-ranking AFRC commander described the security he felt despite flagrantly violating the RUF's laws:

Yeah! They'll kill you! But as a commander—you understand, eh—no one will do that to a commander...I have my boys, if they do that and they catch you where they will kill you, we (will) go to the safety side. I'll give you money to go. But this is not on all attacks...Me, I like to say what was right inside the thing, you understand? No commander is going to say, when he was there in the bush, he didn't one day use a woman. Any commander who tells you that, it's a lie. I tell you. Any commander who tells you that, it's a lie. He must use a woman...Yes, I'm a commander. I will do what I want. But junior men, they can't just do what they want...If you don't take permission, you have a problem. You'll lose your life, or you'll have to scrape to keep your life.¹⁰⁶

As a result of attempts and failures to impose control, rape continued unabated throughout the war, worsening over time as violent group socialization came increasingly to substitute for full training. Meanwhile, marriage had been institutionalized as a morally legitimated status symbol and source of domestic security for male fighters, keeping thousands of 'wives' in bush camps under varying degrees of duress. Embedded within these wartime processes and policy changes are the key themes of discipline and dissolution this chapter has sought to address.

¹⁰⁴ E.g. Jinnah Brooks, Battalion G4 Commander; Bockarie Ngobeh, Black Guard Commander.

¹⁰⁵ Eddie Bockarie, IDU Commander.

¹⁰⁶ Yusuf Keita, AFRC/RUF Battlefield Commander/WSB Commander.

Fighters were harshly punished for leaving the front to visit their wives and families, and rape was punishable by execution. But commanders and other men of influence within the group, who could wield violence effectively to procure food, housing, and other goods—thereby taking care of their women—could keep wives in or near rebel bases. Bush marriage thus effectively acted as a reward and status symbol. The violence and coercion embedded in forced marriage was legitimized as a way of strengthening group cohesion and maintaining the logistical support infrastructure (i.e. the ‘domestic realm’) of the war machine. For their part, women also learned to navigate these violent structures, eking out status and security through male power brokers, in competition with other women, or by accessing such militarized governance structures as the WACs, G5, and Women’s Task Force.

CONCLUSION

In-group control and cohesion mechanisms have often been treated as little more than an aside in prevailing theories about violence against civilians. But, in the RUF, violence was integral to maintaining discipline and assertions of power, both internally and externally. Understanding out-group violence thus requires examining the in-group severity of punishment, how coercive power was rewarded, and the subsequent legitimization and institutionalization of violent practices.

As the RUF’s policies, leadership, and military environment changed over time, so too did fighters’ violent repertoires and the nature of their deviance from group laws and objectives. While many members preferred to avoid violence, its centrality to wartime processes and organizational control required that they ‘adapt to the system’. Harsh laws and internal security structures feature prominently in how ex-RUF understand the group’s violence. Many former members offer plaintive explanations of the disjuncture between policy and practice, along both individual and group-level lines.

Lack of education and the intrinsic aggressiveness of some individuals, exacerbated by lack of adequate training, are often invoked to suggest character flaws and ‘bad apples’ are to blame:

The RUF agenda was to remove the rotting system; that the power should be for the Sierra Leoneans, not just the leader; and the masses were suffering. There

was a code of conduct—the paper for the beginning of the movement: Not to treat women and old ones badly; Help one another; Do not execute civilians and don't burn houses; Don't execute soldiers, but make them hostages...It failed because of criminals and most of the people were not trained on the base. The place was so big, anyone could say they were 'RUF'.¹⁰⁷

Even in peacetime people commit crimes, but what about in war? Some fighters did not know the Code of Conduct. (The RUF) concentrated on the military side of training. But there were too many illiterate people; they did not understand the ideology. When they liberated prisons, people kept the criminal habit...Who is the enemy? Who is a friend?...As long as someone gets a gun they feel they have more power for their own right. The Code of Conduct said not to call the people the enemy. But the fighting forces developed interest for their selves, they only focus on fighting. Small groups developed with arms, leaving the majority vulnerable...The minute someone becomes commander, they feel they have power over other people.¹⁰⁸

Both civilians and combatants often described fighters from the frontline as having a 'warm heart',¹⁰⁹ being aggressive and easily angered. But clear patterns of violence over the course of the war suggest organizational and structural factors were also at play, in addition to individuals' negative character and self-interest. Peaks in abuses in 1991-1992, 1994-1995, and 1998-1999—when NPFL fought alongside Sierra Leonean RUF, when *kamajors* were expanding and 'sobels' were at their peak, and when the AFRC joined the RUF in retreating from Freetown—support the argument that group fractionalization dramatically increased frontline violence. An MP describes, 'After Tap Final, all was under law and order. It was well-organized.'¹¹⁰ Indeed, the most common explanation former members of the RUF give for serious loss of control is unification with the AFRC. Amputation, rape, and burning of houses appear to have increased when both groups' leadership was at its weakest, after ECOMOG forced the AFRC/RUF out of the capitol in 1998 and violence took on a more retributive and self-interested nature:

When we joined the AFRC, *all* those laws we put into place, they were not taken into consideration.¹¹¹

It was more or less a revenge war they were after, whereas we were after a liberated war.¹¹²

After the fall of the AFRC, there was just lawlessness...They met the RUF in

¹⁰⁷ Mariatu Thomas, Vanguard/WACs Commander.

¹⁰⁸ Bockarie Ngobeh, Black Guard Commander.

¹⁰⁹ E.g. Fatimah Bangura, Senior civilian woman; Alfred Wureh, Agricultural Agent (civilian).

¹¹⁰ Abie Tamba, Adjutant.

¹¹¹ John Sesay, Overall Intelligence Officer/Joint Security.

¹¹² Peter Kalawa, Training Commandant.

command, and were refusing to take orders.¹¹³

A unified ‘People’s Army’ in name only, command structures and laws remained separate, and high-level infighting created a toxic political and military atmosphere, ultimately undermining the alliance. A Black Guard commander described the impact in-fighting and lack of coordination had on the 1999 siege on Freetown, the most intensely violent event of the war:

It was not really a coordinated operation...That very day, a bomb exploded; it killed SAJ Musa (leading the mission). So the guys were not under complete control now. The attack was not planned; they were just advancing now into Freetown. It was the same looting, commandeering of vehicles, and enjoyment as the AFRC time. A lot of enjoyment—they forgot to set the security. It was not coordinated...because of the infighting [between Issa and Superman].¹¹⁴

RUF members overwhelmingly identify, first, NPFL mercenaries and later, disgruntled and opportunistic AFRC, as the source of command and control dissolution. But, almost all interviewees also acknowledge the difficulties—both practical and moral—of maintaining cohesion even among trained RUF:

There are some people who just took advantage over their position and the situation. They felt as though, anything they did was okay...Some people will be against the system, but there was just one order...At Camp Llama, they had thousands of prosecutors! Because when you go on patrol, they will call you all to write your names, the date, where you went, everything. So even if it’s later, they will just check the document, and we will call them all in formation. ‘Hey everybody, Foday, Mr Morie, ay...all of you were on that patrol—you raped.’ Because when you put everyone together, every man will defend himself: ‘Not-oh me-oh!’ They can all try to look so innocent. Sometimes the order is there to look for food, and they can abuse women, they cause problems, they do other things, you know...But to say that the rebels were just there in a loose manner...Aahh. No. If they a rebel is loose, he will fall down [fail] too much!¹¹⁵

The centrality of violence in socialization and control in the RUF, via punishment and reward, and in the group’s deliberate military strategy, illustrates the complex mechanisms at play in violence against civilians. In the case of the RUF, it is clear that the choice to wage guerrilla warfare had a number of direct consequences on the nature of the group’s violence and its military operations and tactics. In particular, it blurred the lines between combatants and civilians (made all the more plain with the conceptualization of ‘RUF civilians’ and

¹¹³ Abie Tamba, Adjutant.

¹¹⁴ Bockarie Ngobeh, Black Guard Commander.

¹¹⁵ Andrew Mundah, Adjutant; Abie Tamba, Adjutant.

‘enemy civilians’), and between personalistic and militarily strategic violence. The principal-agent framework suggests that private ends and collective ends in war are not only distinct, but often opposed. Yet, missions like ‘food finding’ and wife capture, aimed at strengthening group survival and cohesion, challenge this dichotomy. Moreover, private violence—on the part of commanders seeking to gain power, for example—was often formally rewarded and organizationally institutionalized through promotion and policing. As a result, in-group dynamics, and particularly RUF laws and enforcement challenges, take centre-stage not only in former members’ understandings of violence, but in their conception of the revolution as a whole.

PART III

MATERIAL VIABILITY

CHAPTER 6

FOOD

Hunger is the heaviest weapon in war.

Eric Bangura¹

Much of military history could be written as a history of pillage and plunder. In contemporary research, African civil wars, and rebel groups in particular, are emphasized for the connections between war, and looting, rent-seeking, corruption, banditry, and warlordism. Sierra Leone is reliably used as a paradigmatic case for prevailing resource war frameworks. For example, Collier and Hoeffler write, ‘Primary commodity exports provide opportunities for rebel predation during conflict and so can finance the escalation and sustainability of rebellion. The most celebrated cases are the diamond-financed rebellions in Sierra Leone and Angola.’² These frames are useful for identifying a correlation between resources and war-making writ large, but basic questions of how resources are managed, and the processes by which they sustain war beyond perfunctory descriptions of ‘looting’ have been largely ignored.³

This chapter shifts slightly the theoretical focus of the resource debate by detailing the RUF’s food production and procurement over the course of the war, capturing the most basic level of material viability for an organization at war. It illustrates that far greater time and effort in wartime is expended ‘looting’ for basic survival than for personal enrichment. While minerals and other export commodities can provide valuable economic leverage for rebels, they do not directly feed fighters and followers. It also implicitly questions the

¹ Eric Bangura, Agriculture Secretariat/Humanitarian Commander.

² Collier, Hoeffler, and Rohner, “Beyond Greed and Grievance,” 13.

³ An important sub-discourse in the resource war literature focuses on international humanitarian aid and its impact on rebel strategies and tactics, including its ability to perpetuate conflict. Aid provided a miniscule portion of the RUF’s food supply, however. As noted by an aid worker in Freetown, the war was ‘not really a food emergency at heart’; thus, this NGO-focused literature is left aside here. (As quoted in Keen, “Aid and Violence,” 321–2; see also, e.g., Macrae and Zwi, *War and Hunger*.)

emphasis on individuals as unitary rational actors, rather than as members of groups that deploy labour and allocate resources through organizational structures.

Van Creveld notes that in early iterations of modern armies, which had low ammunition usage, food and fodder constituted more than 99 percent of supplies, with some 792,000 tons of food consumed, compared to 6,000 tons of ammunition expended.⁴ The 19th Century European solution to sustaining formal armies was unsurprisingly state-centric, with treasuries disbursing payment through professional officer corps. However, as soon as armies began moving, the payment system and regulated markets put in place to sustain militaries began to crumble. In place of centralized commodity, quality, and price controls, ‘from time immemorial the problem had been solved simply by having the troops take whatever they required. More or less well-organized plunder was the rule rather than the exception.’⁵ As armies became too large to sustainably exploit either enemy or host populations, van Creveld writes:

[They became] probably the worst supplied in history; marauding bands of armed ruffians, devastating the countryside they crossed...Even from a strictly military point of view, the consequences of such a situation were disastrous. Unable to feed their troops, commanders were also incapable of keeping them under control and of preventing desertion.⁶

To some extent, van Creveld’s description of the modern professional armies of 19th Century Europe parallels the experience of the RUF over the course of the war. The first phase of the war saw strictly structured food production systems in place in rebel-held ‘liberated zones’, but as the movement shifted to guerrilla military tactics, so too did its provisioning tactics become increasingly divorced from its ideals. In his conception of rural violence in civil wars as the result of urban malaise and roving banditry, Mkandawire writes, ‘In the case of post-colonial Africa, over and over again, armed movements have appeared as anything but fish, violating Mao’s basic injunction by murderously wading into still waters to wreak havoc and cause enormous suffering.’⁷ This chapter illustrates how and why this came to pass, and connects the apparent banditry with strategic and tactical military decision-making, the pre-eminence of survival, and the attempted implementation of a revolutionary agenda.

⁴ van Creveld, *Supplying War*, 233.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 6–7.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 7–8.

⁷ Mkandawire, “The Terrible Toll of Post-colonial ‘Rebel Movements’ in Africa,” 182.

RUF food production and procurement fall into two forms: bureaucratic (governance of agrarian collective labour initiatives, and taxation of food production and supply management); and violent (guerrilla tactics of ambush, looting, and scavenging). The chapter first examines the agricultural side of the revolution as envisioned, and often successfully implemented, by the RUF. Farming was most effective when the RUF maintained control of Kailahun District, giving them time to sow and reap a harvest. Local food production and civilian taxation were supplemented by well-established, carefully policed transborder trade routes that operated throughout the war. Produce marketing schemes controlled cash crop pricing, even in the context of barter-based trade.

It then details how food procurement took place when organized food production failed to meet group needs. The primary mechanism for feeding members of the RUF during much of the war, and almost inevitably at the frontlines, was by ‘food finding’ missions—*jaja*. Finally, the chapter examines these food production and procurement practices within the organizational and social milieu of the rebel group. It examines the implications of the wartime economy of acute scarcity, what it meant for member retention, and its effects on social relations within the RUF. The significant role played by women, children, and civilians underscores the nexus between pre-war social norms and the complex organizational mechanisms required to sustain an armed group throughout the war.

FARMING AND FOOD PRODUCTION AT THE REAR

When the RUF invaded Kailahun, ‘conscripting and training of both adults and children started immediately...(and) the ranks of the RUF swelled quickly.’⁸ Initially, civilians supplied food for the training camps.⁹ However, as members multiplied, village-requisitioned supplies strained to keep up. In this context, civilian governance initiatives were implemented to organize local labour and oversee food allocation and consumption. The RUF’s food and farm management efforts illustrate further how the organization sought to establish and maintain a militarized social order, down, almost literally, to the last grain of rice.

⁸ Smith, Gambette, and Longley, *Conflict Mapping in Sierra Leone*, 21.

⁹ Thomas Alpha, Junior commando.

Richards and Peters have emphasized the rural and agricultural dimensions of the RUF rebellion, citing the group's only official statement of purpose, the 1995 *Footpaths to Democracy*, as evidence of a larger food security strategy and revolutionary agrarian agenda.¹⁰ Some of these collectivist elements were part of the RUF programme. However, in arguing that the war be seen as 'a revolt of the farm slaves'¹¹, Richards overstates the prominence of agricultural issues in the causes and aims of the war, as articulated and imagined by the RUF. Similarly, Peters argues the RUF pursued a 'socialist' land reform agenda and rural redistributive justice.¹² Both of these arguments somewhat overstate the case and, more importantly, miss the key point of food provision and procurement in the RUF: that it was not an ideological gesture, but a military imperative and top priority. The group's ideology informed its food management and production methods insofar as it trumpeted broad-based people's revolution and just resource distribution for the masses. However, practices on the ground more immediately simply adapted existing systems of tribute and collective labour. Civilians pursued RUF-mandated farming projects not because they introduced a revolutionary socialist approach to land-ownership and food production, but because they were the only available option for survival in a war zone.

Hunger was a recurrent problem for rural residents of the South and East in the early years of the war. As the Special Court's conflict mapping report states, occupation of rural areas in the Provinces:

...immediately affected food production in the country and resulted in food insecurity...the occupying forces had a devastating effect on output. In some areas, rural infrastructure was damaged and agricultural production was reduced, with food processing, storage and distribution systems being destroyed.¹³

At the same time, however, the RUF appointed civilian commanders at the town, section, and chiefdom levels to coordinate the civilian population on behalf of the movement. As the below letter illustrates, within six months of invading the country, a food unit was established to requisition food from town and chiefdom commanders:

7th October, 1991.

The Town Commander

Dear Sir,

¹⁰ Peters, *War and the Crisis of Youth*, 101–11; Richards, "To Fight or to Farm?"; Richards, *Fighting for the Rain Forest*.

¹¹ Richards, "To Fight or to Farm?," 586.

¹² Peters, *War and the Crisis of Youth*, 105, 109.

¹³ TRC, "Volume 3A," 214.

AN INVITATION

We have the food programme unit which you are aware of.

According to arrangement in the last meeting, the town commanders were to send a stipulated amount of rice, meat, pepper and oil to be conveyed to the soldiers in front to help the revolution.

Reports have reached us that you have made a counter suggestion. In the light of this you are invited including all the town commanders in your zone to meet in the Executive Ground in order to resolve the condition on Friday 11th October 1991.

You are also required to come with your own contribution for last week and this week too if you want to comply with arrangements made during the Levuma/Kpeima general meeting.

Thanks for your usual co-operation.

Militarily yours...¹⁴

From the outset, civilian governance sought to organize labour and resources in pursuit of the war effort. When the rapid military advance did not occur as planned, more complex structures and agricultural planning were implemented throughout RUF territory to sustain the group.

With Kailahun District secured from the Liberian and Guinean borders to the impregnable Daru Barracks, civilian governance initiatives began in earnest. Inspired by elaborate NPFL governance structures across the border, the G5 appointed chiefdom, section, and town level commanders and deputies, and female counterparts (chiefdom, section, and town mothers and deputies).¹⁵ At the section and town level, Master farmers, Lady farmers, and their respective deputies and constituencies (farmers and wives) attended agricultural planning meetings and organized community labour toward the war effort.¹⁶

By March 1992, a new humanitarian organization had been formed under RUF control: Sierra Leoneans United to Save Humanity. As the following letter describes, SLUSH met with its Liberian counterpart, LUSH, to coordinate distribution of food and medicine between the RUF's Eastern Headquarters and Taylor's NPFL base in Gbarnga:

¹⁴ 91.1007.PM.B.F.MANDU.31.

¹⁵ See: 93.0320.PM.B.F.PNDMB.26; 93.0220.PM.B.F.PNDMB.AGCOM.27; 91.1007.PM.B.F.MANDU.31; 93.0420.PM.B.F.LAAH.GOV.34; 93.0400.PM.B.F.LAAH.GOV.35; 93.0131.PM.B.F.MANDU.36.

¹⁶ Ibid.

Office of the G5
Pendembu HQ
17th August 1992

SUBJECT: SLUSH Operations

I wish to remind you that we are steadily making progress in our effort to receive relief aid for civilians in this liberated zone. SLUSH coordinating committee in Pendembu has successfully linked itself with her sister organization LUSH of Liberia under NPFL.

A three-man delegation left yesterday for Gbarnga for consultation on the invitation of LUSH coordinator.

While we are awaiting the outcome of this second visit, I am suggesting that you assist set up administrative machinery in Mandu and Dea chiefdoms which will assist SLUSH in the distribution of food, medicines etc. when the time comes.

In Pendembu we have created this administrative machinery as suggested by LUSH in Liberia.

Executive Body

1. General coordinator
2. Assistant General coordinator
3. Secretary

G5 Committees to work with SLUSH

1. Agriculture and Natural Resources Committee
2. (a) Coordinator (1)
(b) Members – one per section in each chiefdom¹⁷

Under the supervision of G5, SLUSH organized committees for public health and sanitation, housing and resettlement, social welfare, religion activities, local tools manufacturing (blacksmiths), and public works.¹⁸ The housing committee undertook local censuses to document 'both displaced and residents of towns and villages'¹⁹ in each chiefdom to assist 'Relief Aid Agencies for distribution of items.'²⁰ Road work was to be carried out in all chiefdoms at the behest of Foday Sankoh. A memo from the Executive Mansion Grounds at Pendembu illustrates the governance requirements placed on the

¹⁷ 92.0817.PM.B.F.SLUSH.32.

¹⁸ See e.g. 93.0000.PM.B.RD.MANDU.SLUSH.25; 93.0317.PM.B.F.MANDU.9.

¹⁹ 92.0000.PM.B.F.SLUSH.10.

²⁰ 93.0000.PM.B.RD.MANDU.SLUSH.25.

chiefdom commanders while Sankoh travelled between RUF Headquarters and Taylor's base in Liberia:

15th June, 1992

To: All Chiefdom Commanders

Subject Road Work.

By the directive of the above named office and with a view to see a formidable ROAD MAINTENANCE within the fair liberated zones, the R.U.F.S.L. due to administrative reasons, I wish to state further that the C.I.C. Cpl. Foday Sankoh before his departure from the state, mentioned in his statement that he will like to see the formidable road maintenance of all roads in the liberated zones when coming back. In view of this and in your own interest, you are hereby ordered to organize the chiefdom people to help maintenance the roads and the bridges. The above exercise is effective immediately.

Thanks for your usual co-operation,

Signed: {and stamped}

General Adjutant²¹

To facilitate collective food production, blacksmiths were organized into committees to rehabilitate and distribute farming tools.²² These were distributed across RUF towns and villages, and shared between fighters and civilians to maximize collective farming enterprises and efficiency. Again, SLUSH coordinated this through chiefs and local committees, calling for village and town commanders to:

1. Provide detailed inventory of members of BLACKSMITHS for each village/town and the centre workshop, in working condition in their area.
2. Prepare schedule of proposal locations requiring the distribution or supply of such tools—in your chiefdom.

Finally, we would like to stress that this aspects of rehabilitation is not intended to replace existing tools which simply need maintenance and all existing tools must be maintenance by the village blacksmith as usual and care(d) for. Please submit your report through the official.²³

This effort was led by the Rehabilitation Coordinator and highlights the organization's acute awareness that tools and equipment would need to be repaired, rather than replaced, during the war.

²¹ 92.0615.PM.B.RD.PNDMB.24.

²² 93.0131.PM.B.BK.MANDU.37.

²³ 92.0323.PM.B.F.SLUSH.8.

Similarly, a memo from the Junior Commandos to the Mandu Tawahun chiefdom commander notes an ‘Order...to collect some cutlasses’: ‘We have decided to assist the civilians for brushing, so that is why I am asking you to collect some cutlasses for us and after the mission, I will turn them back to you.’²⁴ Almost everything was collectivized for the war effort. Civilians could be called upon at any time by town commanders to provide ‘manpower’ to carry food to the war front.²⁵ Cash crops were requisitioned by the G5 and their civilian commanders at the local level to sell and trade through official RUF channels. For example, the chiefdom commander in Mandu Chiefdom was authorized in March 1992 to collect ‘all coffee produce in his chiefdom’ to be stored in his care ‘for the use of the Revolution’.²⁶

By micro-managing food procurement and production, Sankoh sought to reduce the strain on the civilian population caused by marauding fighters. He was increasingly struggling to maintain control of the growing number of troops, and NPFL fighters in particular, as the following letter from Sankoh makes clear:

FROM: The Office of the C.I.C. – R.U.F.S.L.

TO: The Chiefdom Commander & Elders – Mandu Chiefdom

SUBJECT: EXECUTIVE CLARIFICATION :

You are hereby informed that my commands to citizens always are not political and therefore will never fail. Therefore, my order was that citizens be exempted from previous molestations, intimidations, and harassment to supply food for soldiers. I am aware of your struggling with us in arms since the crucial stage since our revolutionary combat. Fellow citizens, you are at liberty to supply any front based upon your agreement with the chiefdom commander with special reference to your hard working and competent commander _____.

As a Commander In-Chief of R.U.F.S.L. I repeat “NO SOLDIER IS ALLOWED TO HARASSE (sic), INTIMIDATE AND OR MOLEST ANY CITIZEN IN OUR LIBERATED ZONES FOR FOOD.” effective immediately any soldier/s caught imposing this task on our citizens, the violator/s will be militarily dealt with according to our code of justice.

Thanks for your usual co-operation.

Signed {stamped Office of the CIC, Revolutionary United Front}

Cpl. Foday Sankoh, Black Revolutionary Brother²⁷

²⁴ 92.0818.PM.B.F.BAIIMA.29.

²⁵ E.g. 92.0717.PM.B.F.PNDMB.20.

²⁶ 92.0301.PM.B.F.PNDMB.11.

²⁷ 92.0000.PM.B.F.CIC.MANDU.21 (see also, Figure 19)

The above memo is undated, but was dispatched in 1992 when the revolution was fraying. Top 20, Top 40, and Top Final operations were taking place, and hundreds of civilians had fled into Liberia, seeking the protection of the NPFL's own refugee office in Foya.²⁸ These and other civilians began to return after Top Final, when the last NPFL fighters were driven out of the country. With RUF support and food and tool inputs from Liberia, farming efforts were reinvigorated.²⁹ A memo from the G2 (governance) commander to the Baiima ground commander headed 'Return of civilians to their normal homes and governmental areas of operation' noted the return of all civilians and civilian commanders to 'their respective areas according to the formal Governmental divisions.'³⁰ Under the directive of Sankoh, the memo calls for military commanders to 'avoid requesting anything from those people as they are fully to carry out orders only from Upper Bambara Chiefdom.'³¹

As the SLUSH agricultural officer explains, 'Civilians returned and made farms, played games, and went to school...everyone returned because they felt it was safe.' A training commander describes Kailahun similarly as a 'big liberated area...(where) people were going about their business, doing farming, making societies. Like how you are sitting here.'³² However, RUF taxes and quotas imposed on the local population through the communal farming and produce collectivization policies strained agricultural output. As Commander in Chief, Sankoh received his own tribute of produce, palm oil, and rice from towns and villages, which was distributed to other leaders, commanders, and communities according to need and to sponsor meetings and events.³³ According to the TRC report, "Town chiefs were asked under the threat of death to provide a determined quantity of agricultural products, usually cocoa or coffee, within a specified period. Failure to comply led to the punishment of either the chief or the entire town population."³⁴

While food and cash crops were collected from local farmers and through civilian committees, commandos and fighters were similarly tasked with food production. During the 1992 cocoa harvest, for example, Sankoh mandated that 'harvesting, processing, and

²⁸ Eric Bangura, Agriculture Secretariat/Humanitarian Commander.

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ 92.0000.PM.B.F.PNDMB.14.

³¹ Ibid.

³² Peter Kalawa, Training Commander.

³³ E.g. 92.0709.PM.B.F.AGCOM.6; 92.1114.PM.B.F.MANDU.CIC.32; 92.1204.PM.B.F.MANDU.5.

³⁴ TRC, "Volume 3A," 481; see also, Abdullah and Muana, "A Revolt of the Lumpenproletariat."

storing of cocoa involves everybody within (Malema, Mandu, and Dea chiefdoms) starting with commandos. Commando women and other civilians inclusively.³⁵ The same year, S4 and G4 units were established to manage food and weapons supplies for the fighting forces.³⁶

The RUF replicated produce pricing and marketing structures similar to those in place before the war, such as the Sierra Leone Produce Marketing Board, which was responsible for collecting export crops (particularly coffee and cocoa) through an established network of traders, agents, and buyers in the South and East.³⁷ Pendembu, which served as RUF headquarters from 1991-1993, was historically the terminus for the cash crop railway line, completed in 1908, which passed through Baiima and Daru to Kenema, the regional capital, following a ‘principal pre-colonial trade and military route...for the exchange of local produce (e.g. palm kernels and rice) for imported goods in the railway towns.’³⁸ In the colonial period, a ‘weekly market and warehouses of government produce-buying agents’ structured the collection, marketing, and transport of ‘intensive trade and cash-crop production.’³⁹

The sale and marketing of the main cash crops in Kailahun District—cocoa, coffee, kola, and palm oil—were overseen by the RUF Cash Crop Secretary. The memo below illustrates the cash crop pricing mechanisms and the committee-driven nature of agricultural planning put in place throughout rebel-controlled areas of Kailahun in 1993:

From: The Cash Crop Secretary

To: the Chiefdom Commander

Subject: Urgent information

Dear Commander,

I arrived on Monday from an agricultural meeting which was held at Ngiehun-Luawa Chiefdom on Sunday the 26th. I am sure you were officially informed by the Regional Secretary.

In lieu of this, I have invited all the master farmers, lady farmers and section commanders to meet me on Thursday, the 31st of this month. I shall be very much grateful if you could come tomorrow while furnishing them with this urgent message.

³⁵ 92.1208.PM.B.F.MANDU.DEA.4.

³⁶ E.g. Gasimu Komba, *Strong Fighter*.

³⁷ Binns, “Agricultural Change in Sierra Leone,” 124.

³⁸ Leach, *Rainforest Relations*, 52.

³⁹ *Ibid.*

To brief you sir, it was arranged that a sub-committee will be formed in this chiefdom in which you are one of the members. Other members include the cash crop secretary, master farmers, lady farmers, G2 officer and the town commander of the town where the produce is going to be stored. The general produce from Mandu Chiefdom will be stored in Levuma from now to the 5th of January 1993 which is the deadline. There is also going to be a meeting at Ngiehun where we are going to negotiate and market produce on behalf of R.U.F. and farmers. Items to be exchanged with produce are salt, tobacco, maggi, clean rice, and husk rice. It is going to be a continuous process in which coffee, oil etc. will be purchased through this channel. We shall be getting all these items after we have registered the produce due for C.I.C. on the 5th of January.

Therefore you are invited in order to tell people concerned about this.⁴⁰

The RUF established produce stores in each town and village and a Produce Marketing Centre and warehouse at headquarters. Centralized pricing schemes were implemented by collecting produce through a centralized system that reported everything to the Executive Mansion in Pendembu. A planning memo reflects the committee-based governance of agriculture and food prices in the RUF:

It is our wish to make prices of food items uniform in all the chiefdoms within R.U.F./S.L. liberated zone. In view of this we have produced a list of prices for some common food items, a copy of which is hereby attached for your perusal, comments/suggestions.⁴¹

A note attached calls for arranging a meeting to finalize the pricing framework.

This cash crop commerce was all channelled across the border to Guinea and Liberia. Prior to 1993 trade flowed freely between RUF-controlled Sierra Leone and NPFL-controlled Liberia, but in 1993, the NPRC-backed ULIMO forces controlled the border area. In response, the overall RUF military police (MP) commander deployed security along the border, arresting fighters who came into the country to take coffee and other produce.⁴² As a result, the RUF trade and barter system was concentrated along the militarily fortified Guinea Waterside—the riverine border between Guinea and Sierra Leone, where the Guinea military and RUF were officially enemies (Figure 11). As in peacetime, each crossing had designated market days,⁴³ and trading continued even when air raids forced civilians into bush shelters. Those nearest to Koindu and Kailahun remained the most active (Figure 12).

⁴⁰ 92.0000.PM.B.F.MANDU.13.

⁴¹ 93.0320.PM.B.F.PNDMB.26.

⁴² Kai Fekkah, Vanguard/S4 Commander.

⁴³ Some traded on Tuesdays and Fridays, others Wednesdays, etc. Abie Tamba, Adjutant.

Informal ceasefires were secured by RUF personnel knocking on a stick to signal to soldiers on the other side that they had coffee, cocoa, and palm oil to trade.

This produce marketing system was controlled down to the *bata*⁴⁴ (five-gallon plastic jerrycans) of palm oil with typed permits required for drivers carrying produce from villages and farms to contractors at Ngiehun and Pendembu.⁴⁵ The contractors who operated the ‘waterside business’ were members of a tightly guarded big man’s (and woman’s) network. Fighters and commanders could only participate through a small group of official brokers, many of whom were from the area and enjoyed well-established business ties, often with family on both sides of the river.⁴⁶ Over the course of the war, more than a dozen individuals, from both Guinea and Sierra Leone, acted as high-level contractors for cross-border trade on behalf of the RUF, under special permission directly given by Sankoh and the Kailahun-area commanders. The contractors were at the top of a trading racket.⁴⁷ They received a cut of the goods being bartered by the armed groups (or, less frequently, the money changing hands), and controlled petty trade by local civilians, on whom they imposed a percentage tax for themselves and the RUF.⁴⁸ Business was particularly strong for Guinean civilians when trade was cut off between RUF- and NPFL-occupied territory, as it made goods and market competition scarce.⁴⁹

Attempts were made in Phase I to streamline all trading through G5 and town commanders, who were responsible for organising section-level farms with a civilian labour rota and for providing a portion of the food and cash crops to the agricultural secretariat. This produce was then traded for goods to be distributed to RUF-held areas and frontline troops. A combination of these local taxes and money and properties pulled from attacks were used to buy supplies for the group:

⁴⁴ Leach notes 1 bag = approx. 3 bushels; 1 bushel = approx. 21 thruppence pans; 1 thruppence pan = approx. 5 butter cups; one bushel is equivalent in weight to approx. 38 kg of clean rice or coffee, and 29 kg of cocoa. Palm oil measures in 4 gallon kerosene ‘tins’ and 16 fl oz. ‘pints’, based on the standard beer bottle available locally. Leach, *Rainforest Relations*, xiv.

⁴⁵ 93.0131.PM.B.F.MANDU.36.

⁴⁶ Eddie Bockarie, IDU Commander; Bobson Bockarie, District MP Commander; Eric Bangura, Agriculture Secretariat/Humanitarian Commander.

⁴⁷ ‘Trading racket’ captures the power-broker-imposed security threats posed to lower-level participants and solved only through compliance with the brokers themselves. It was not a syndicate because the brokers—RUF commanders, Guinea soldiers, and business contractors—did not necessarily have shared interests. This is inspired by Tilly’s view of protection rackets in war-making and state-making; see, Tilly, “War-making and State-making.”

⁴⁸ Jinnah Brooks, Battalion G4 Commander.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*; John Saffa, Overall Signals Commander.

We called civilians in Kailahun for the town commanders to collect cocoa, coffee, each according to the population. The G2—at the time it was G2—marked down the amount collected and would go sell it at the waterside. The commanders, any money they capture at the frontline, they come with that money and present it to the contractors, because they run the mission to buy food, buy drugs.

Most of them, they were civilians...the only thing is they have security at the waterside, they have an area. So when [the RUF commanders] get there, they need to call them. The commanders say, “We want such-and-such things. We want so many drugs, we want so much rice, we want seed rice, we want clean rice...” So then, the contractors would go to negotiate. They would go cross into the Guinea side—all the crossings, from Koindu until you come down.⁵⁰

Food supplies were channelled through the G5, which distributed rice, salt, and maggi to civilians, chiefdom commanders, and the S4 to manage fighters’ supplies.⁵¹ In addition to procuring import-only goods for the frontline fighters and civilians in the RUF ‘liberated zone’, several units and committees—the trading unit, cash crop secretary, agricultural committee, contractors, S4, and RUF humanitarian arm—worked jointly to procure seed rice and other farming inputs.⁵²

By 1993, hunger and low food production rates, due to attack, destruction, and abandonment of farms, were of great concern to the RUF leadership. The Secretary General of Agriculture ordered the registration of all abandoned farms and plantations, and their goods, supplies, and productive capacity were reallocated through military and civilian commanders.⁵³ The Agricultural Committee organized planning meetings to mobilize all chiefdoms under RUF control toward their rehabilitation as seen in the memo below:

OFFICE OF REGIONAL SEC. AGRIC. COMMITTEE

20th February 1993.

To: The Chiefdom Commander.

Upper Bambara Chiefdom, Pendembu.

Subject: Emergency Meeting of All Heads of Unit, Chiefdom Authorities, Master and Lady Farmers and Farmers to be held on Thursday, 25th Feb. 93 at the N.A. Barry – Pendembu, at 9:00 a.m.

As an out-come of the Agric. Staff/Committee meeting held on the 19th. Feb. 93 attended by the Battle Group Commander, Major Rashid Mansaray, and heads of other units, it was agreed to summon an emergency meeting to discuss vital issues relating to the 1993 farming year.

⁵⁰ Mohamed Mundah, Overall Black Guard Commander.

⁵¹ Kai Fekkah, Vanguard/S4 Commander.

⁵² Bobson Bockarie, District MP Commander; Gasimu Komba, Strong Fighter.

⁵³ E.g. 93.0125.PM.B.F.MANDU.AGCOM.23.

By the direct directive of the Battle Group Commander, all heads of units, Chieftom Authorities, Master and Lady Farmers and Farmers must attend this meeting as stipulated on the above-mentioned date.

Kindly pass this message to all concerned.

Thanks for your usual co-operation.

Yours in The Struggle.

NB: Please make arrangement to bring some food for your people coming.⁵⁴

Chieftom commanders and Agricultural Committee members called increasingly on the RUF's guerrilla revolutionary notion of a 'self-reliant struggle'⁵⁵ to mobilize collective farming efforts. A fighter described, 'People made farms in Kailahun for a world effort food programme, because the food captured at the frontlines was not enough'.⁵⁶ Under the guidance of the Organization for the Survival of Mankind (OSM), a humanitarian corollary to SLUSH, civilian and combatant farming efforts were redoubled on food production. Frontline targets and military units organized their own farms and recruited civilian labour from chieftom commanders. A memo entitled 'A REQUEST' from the Internal Defence Unit commander to the Levuma Mandu chieftom commander reads:

As hunger has now become very much acute indeed within the liberated zone of RUF/SL, there is an urgent need to embark on some productive agricultural activities or "FEED YOURSELVES OPERATIONS". These operations take care of the growing of some food crops such as: Rice, Cassava, Potato, Pepper, etc.

Therefore to undertake the viable project in the cultivation of any one or two of the above mentioned crops, the above (IDU) Office is kindly imploring you to assist in providing at least 40 (forty) or at most 45 (forty-five) people to brush the farm for the said operations.

In addition to providing labour for military farming efforts, civilians could be requisitioned for urgent food provision for the frontlines (and conscripted, moreover, for carrying the load there).⁵⁷ Although the labour and food provision requirements levied on chieftom, section, and town commanders were onerous, the RUF revolution was supposed to be a collective effort. Fighters were regularly mobilized (commanded) to assist with civilian farming efforts, including brushing swamps and harvesting rice and other crops. Local

⁵⁴ 93.0220.PM.B.F.PNDMB.AGCOM.27. See also related Agenda, 93.0225.PM.B.F.PNDMB.28.

⁵⁵ E.g. Eric Bangura, Agriculture Secretariat/Humanitarian Commander; Daramy Kamanda, Signals.

⁵⁶ Bobson Bockarie, District MP Commander.

⁵⁷ E.g. 93.0408.M.B.F.MANDU.FRONT.39.

contributions to RUF meetings and for hosting visitors were ‘scheduled according to the availability of the commodity in (a given) area’.⁵⁸ When food and produce demands could not be met, chiefdom commanders could counter-propose or appeal on behalf of their people. For example, a request for a bag of rice from the Mandu chiefdom store was met with:

I am extremely sorry to tell you that we cannot afford to give you a bag of rice now after which the rice is being meant for farmers to buy by cup and especially for chiefdom matters and entertainment of very important R.U.F. personnel, which you have witnessed on two occasions. E.g. (1) the [muster parade] which took place on the 5th of April, (2) the zonal produce meeting held on the 15th of April. (3) the chiefdom celebration under chiefdom level, (4) the war council meeting held on the 19th. However, there are other areas where this office is to help where necessary including yourself but not now as we don’t have the upper hand.

We shall do our level best as time goes on but not now.

Hoping that this will not create any embarrassment.⁵⁹

The OSM undertook a seed multiplication assessment and registration process to document what farmers would be able to plant for the 1994 rice season. This effort was focused at Giema (known as ‘Burkina’) and Peyama (‘Cuba’), where military and civilian populations were strongest. Following the assessment, Foday Sankoh sent 250 bushels of seed rice. ‘Designed to protect civilians’, this concerted food production effort resulted in 71 farms and 44 swamps being planted with rice, along with *plawas* gardens for growing okra, peppers, and potato and cassava leaves, the main ingredients for Sierra Leonean sauces served with rice.⁶⁰ In addition to the combatant farms laid at Giema and Peyama, the Humanitarian Commander describes, ‘all organizations had farms: the women’s wing, the Christians, Muslims, section and chiefdom farms for strangers (war-displaced civilians), wounded soldiers, and fighters.’⁶¹

As fighting intensified following the expansion of the military under the NPRC, the civilian population became destabilized. Civilians who were in once-RUF-controlled territory fled the SLA for fear of execution for being suspected as rebels or collaborators. Civilians were brought by the G5 to a special zone to harvest rice and prepare food for the combat camps

⁵⁸ 93.0331.PM.B.F.WARCO.38; see also, TRC, “Volume 3A,” 481.

⁵⁹ 93.0426.PM.B.F.MANDU.1.

⁶⁰ Eric Bangura, Agriculture Secretariat/Humanitarian Commander.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*

nearer the front.⁶² From late 1994-1996, however, farming efforts had to be largely abandoned, with only small-scale subsistence efforts around the jungle base camps that the RUF had been pushed into.⁶³ To minimize hunger in the war zone and behind rebel lines, the Organization for the Survival of Mankind, which, like SLUSH, had a sister organization in Liberia, managed to establish a connection to International Alert and was resultantly linked with the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC). Food from ICRC was delivered to Giema via Guinea, and then distributed to the military targets and jungle camps where RUF fighters and civilians had taken cover.

At this time, the first battalion, which had been nearly incommunicado in Pujehun since the invading the country two years prior, reconnected with the much stronger second battalion in the East. The Pujehun battalion was small and moved fluidly between Sierra Leone and Liberia, where it enjoyed a close relationship with the NPFL commanders and base camps. RUF fighters in Pujehun survived by raiding towns and farms and through ‘jungle operations’—ambushing SLA supply lines. A limited amount of food production was implemented through paramount chiefs and the G5, who organized the harvest, salt processing, and fishing.⁶⁴ Along with community labour efforts, fighters would be sent to process salt and gari (dried and grated cassava) and to perform other hard labour as punishment, for example, for theft.⁶⁵ Food procurement and production in Pujehun was much more limited than the agricultural efforts organized in Kailahun District. As such, they presaged the survival tactics the movement as a whole would undertake from 1994-1996.

⁶² Sylvester Kabbia, Battalion Adjutant; Peter Kalawa, Training Commander.

⁶³ In his discussion of agriculture in the RUF, Peters identifies the jungle camp phase as when RUF farming began in earnest. But this is incorrect and appears to be due to vestigial biases in the data, Peters, *War and the Crisis of Youth*, 104–5.

⁶⁴ Sylvester Kabbia, Battalion Adjutant.

⁶⁵ In Pujehun, fishing and cassava farming are more prominent, as compared to the rice and cash crop production dominant in the East. Benjamin Swaray, Fighter; Sylvester Kabbia, Battalion Adjutant.

JAJA: FOOD-FINDING AT THE FRONTLINES

C'est la soupe qui fait le soldat.

Napoleon Bonaparte

From 1993-1994 the RUF changed its tactics drastically and began its 'jungle warfare' guerrilla phase. The RUF headquarters were re-located in March 1994 to 'Zogoda', a base hidden in heavily forested hills in south-west Kenema district. Zogoda served as the central command base for Foday Sankoh and headquarters of the RUF. In it, the RUF fused the communal agricultural food production efforts implemented in Phase I with the guerrilla tactics of Phase II, although the tightly controlled Zogoda environment was hardly representative of the war experience in the rest of the country. Zogoda was described by a training commander:

It was a place of rest...a cool, nice area with thousands of people; there were families there, people made farms – they were living by themselves not under threat. All of the frontlines were responsible to send food there. We were having all the food that we are having here: sugar, bread, general foods. People were living just like how we all are here.⁶⁶

The base had three military camps within it (Targets A, B, and C) with a separate civilian zone set apart from the combatant and headquarters areas. Civilians, many of whom were fighters' families and girlfriends, were responsible for farming, food preparation, and other domestic tasks.⁶⁷ According to Peters, cooking was centralized, with one meal every day, though this appears to have been the case for only the combatant camps, which had S4 and commander-managed food systems in place.⁶⁸

As described in the conflict mapping report, Zogoda provided the cover from which to launch numerous ambush missions along the Bo-Kenema highway.⁶⁹

In early 1994, RUF forces executed countless "hit and run" attacks on villages in the eastern chiefdoms of Bo District along the entire boundary with Kenema District. Initially these were "food-finding missions", mostly staged from Camp Zogoda. Between June and December, however, these missions became more

⁶⁶ Peter Kalawa, Training Commander.

⁶⁷ Yassir Kabbia, Combat Medic; Daramy Kamanda, Signals.

⁶⁸ Peters, *War and the Crisis of Youth*, 99–100.

⁶⁹ Smith, Gambette, and Longley, *Conflict Mapping in Sierra Leone*, 23.

substantial, with RUF forces attacking but not occupying towns.⁷⁰

Similar ambushes were staged along the Koidu-Makeni highway and other major routes from the RUF ‘jungles’ dispersed throughout the country. A drastic drop in food production and concurrent increase in ‘food-finding’ or *jaja* missions marked food and subsistence procurement during the hit and run warfare of Phase II. Unable to hold towns or control rural farmlands, the RUF relied increasingly on raiding food from civilian farms in the areas denoted as ‘frontlines’ or ‘no man’s lands’ and seizing goods from military and civilian highway convoys.

Food finding ranged from an informal survival tactic undertaken on low-level commanders’ directives, to an official guerrilla operation instructed from the top command. As such, it was carried out variously by battle-hardened fighters, wives and civilians, and children, with operations and tasks assigned according to skill and strength.⁷¹ At both the formal and informal level, the banner of ‘self-reliance struggle’ that had fuelled communal farming efforts came to describe fighters’ armed tactics for finding and procuring food in Phase II.⁷²

Underfinanced and rigorously trained in guerrilla tactics of ambush and cutting off enemy supply lines, RUF fighters focused their attacks on the SLA’s food and weapons supplies from the outset of the war. Sankoh followed the SLA radio communication to track the army’s supply movements and military plans.⁷³ He assigned missions accordingly, sending brigades out under his directive to supply Zogoda with supplies specifically required by the movement.⁷⁴ The S4, established during Phase I to provision the frontlines, remained responsible for supplying fighters and controlled food at all targets. Weekly target meetings were held to keep accounts of the number of bags of rice and other provisions in the store at each base.⁷⁵ These were in turn reported to the overall S4 commander, who reported to Sankoh. Following successful ambushes, supplies were moved to targets with shortages; similarly, food-finding missions were ordered according to need and availability of supplies.⁷⁶ ‘For food finding, you had a stated amount that you had to take to the ground commander,

⁷⁰ Ibid., 24.

⁷¹ Gasimu Komba, Strong Fighter.

⁷² Daramy Kamanda, Signals.

⁷³ Ibid.

⁷⁴ Thomas Amara, Junior commando.

⁷⁵ Kai Fekkah, Vanguard/S4 Commander

⁷⁶ Ibid.

but then the fighters could keep the balance’,⁷⁷ explains a fighter based at several jungles in the North during Phase II.

The commander would then keep some for immediate use and distribution, sending the rest to the S4 store. ‘If food runs out, then the commander can come and sign for it’, explains the overall S4 commander of the RUF.⁷⁸ All of the food provisioning and management under the S4 was carefully recorded in memos and accounts books not unlike those kept during Phase I. The signals corps was responsible for filing the IDU reports with headquarters after any food finding, ambush, or attack missions, detailing what supplies had been captured, as well as any casualties, injuries, and soldiers or civilians captured.⁷⁹ ‘Military and welfare’ messages were sent as well, to update Sankoh and later Mosquito about the supplies available at the targets.⁸⁰ The further away fighters were from headquarters supply lines, the more ‘self-reliant’ they had to be. Informants underscore the lack of support from central command and headquarters in statements of hardship, such as ‘we had to patrol for food; Foday Sankoh would not send food.’⁸¹

The military and group priorities—securing arms, supplying the group to ensure its survival, and pursuing military victory only secondarily—crystallize among fighters stationed at these ‘frontlines’ far from the leader. Without territory secured or civilians under their control, fighters in the strategic target bases and on missions, sometimes for months on end, relied almost exclusively on the power of being an armed group to secure their food and survival through skilled violence and coercion. When supplies dwindled, fighters organized their own food finding missions or sent the lowest ranking among them, the small boys unit (SBU), to dig for bush yams or cassava or search for bananas.⁸² The main road, the Freetown-Kono highway, was a regular point of ambush for brigades in the North.

We would set an ambush to attack vehicles along the Freetown-Kono Highway, firing at the tires...any food was government (RUF) property and would last us two or three days. Then we would go to other villages to find food. You only find living from that arm.⁸³

⁷⁷ Gasimu Komba, Strong Fighter.

⁷⁸ Kai Fekkah, Vanguard/S4 Commander.

⁷⁹ Eddie Bockarie, IDU Commander.

⁸⁰ Daramy Kamanda, Signals.

⁸¹ Romeo Amara, Fighter.

⁸² Obai Sumana, Fighter.

⁸³ Interview AF, October 2009.

Kono District was a particularly volatile place for RUF, both militarily and in terms of food security. From 1992 when RUF fighters, cut off from the headquarters at Pendembu, first fleetingly secured Koindu town under Mosquito's command, they depended on securing food and weapons from the SLA for their survival.⁸⁴ In 1995 and 1996, however, the RUF, having been expelled from the main towns following military pressure from the NPRC and their mercenary partners, were unable to secure territory or civilian agricultural labour.

'There was no food, so we moved on to Jegbwema Mimikoro on a mission to ambush for ammunition', explained a fighter who moved around Kono District in 1996 with his unit, struggling to find food.⁸⁵ Being outgunned and driven into ever-denser forest cover by EO's helicopter gunships and ECOMOG Alpha jets only heightened the group's dependence on arms for survival. The NPWJ Conflict Mapping Report notes frequent food finding missions in chiefdoms in the area in 1995, following the RUF's relative weakness after Executive Outcomes took control of the mining areas.⁸⁶

Whether in small bands striking out from forest camps in Kono or larger parties organized at the elaborate headquarters at Zogoda, because the tactics were taught in RUF training camps, food-finding missions followed a consistent formula. A female combatant and WACs commander described undertaking food finding when supplies ran low at the rear base where she was stationed:

Women would attack villages when we needed food. First you fire into the air—three shots, "pah-pah-pah!"—and the people all run. Then, we could enter to go and get food while the men were away fighting...We carried the food on our heads all the way back to camp.⁸⁷

Men and SBU were supposed to go on food finding missions, however, women not attached to high-ranking men often had to search for food themselves and go on food finding missions.⁸⁸ As one woman explains:

Because I was Superman's wife, I did not have to go on raids...Other girls who were not commanders' wives were not treated as well. They were flogged, abused, and had to go on ambushes and raids for food.⁸⁹

⁸⁴ Emmanuel Kallon, Signals to Leader.

⁸⁵ Obai Sumana, Fighter.

⁸⁶ Smith, Gambette, and Longley, *Conflict Mapping in Sierra Leone*, 27.

⁸⁷ Margaret Kanneh, Wife, as quoted in Marks, "Women in the War Zone," 35.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 34.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*

Frequently, when the quantity of captured supplies exceeded what the fighters and their SBU could carry, civilians were recruited under gunpoint to help carry the goods back to the base. As discussed in the preceding chapter, in battle and at the frontlines, fighters looted with relative impunity. RUF governance structures were not in place to monitor combatant behaviour, protect civilians, or sanction perpetrators. A Vanguard member who had been recruited from secondary school in Liberia, described the benefits of going for missions: ‘Some fighters, the commanders choose them (to go); some, they volunteer so they can get goods. I wanted to go because all my friends were going for missions and they have all these food and clothes.’⁹⁰ And although some targets and jungle bases established rotating systems for who was to conduct food finding, the majority carried out food finding missions as the need—or command or opportunity—arose.⁹¹

AFTER THE AFRC COUP

After the AFRC coup, the calculus of food production and procurement in the RUF changed radically, but the mechanisms and processes remained largely the same. With renewed strength in terms of both arms supplies and territorial control, many RUF commanders sought to re-establish the ‘revolutionary’ military order that had been in place in the eastern ‘liberated zones’ before the jungle phase pushed rebels into bush camps. These structures were adaptations of the initial governance hierarchies established in Phase I of the war. However, the fighting forces were also flooded with opportunistic joiners to the SLA-cum-AFRC regime, who had not spent many years fighting in the jungle under harsh punishment and strict ideological indoctrination. As a result, sustaining increased numbers of fighters off the land and its residents, after years of war had eviscerated agricultural production and trade, was completely unsustainable. Phase III generally saw greater destruction and disorganization than the first six years of the war, due to the poorly managed union between the RUF and AFRC forces and decapitation of the group’s centralized command.

The contradictory policies and inconsistent laws and rhetoric of the Phase III unification of the AFRC and RUF is no more clearly evidenced than in the food provision strategies of establishing communal farming while other units raided and marauded along main

⁹⁰ Mariatu Thomas, Vanguard/WACs; See also, Eddie Bockarie, IDU Commander.

⁹¹ Naberay Morrison, WACs Commander; Marks, “Women in the War Zone,” 39.

thoroughfares. Operation Pay Yourself inauspiciously marked the beginning of the last stage of the war and the avaricious shift from ‘food finding’ to rampant looting:

Following their ejection from Freetown and the commencement of ECOMOG provincial operations, RUF/AFRC forces launched “Operation Pay Yourself”...while retreating from the Western area...(between mid-February and mid-March) forces took anything that could be of use, from livestock and other food items, domestic items such as mattresses and cooking pots and motor vehicles, trucks, and motorcycles. Although looting had been standard practice throughout the previous RUF campaigns and “food finding missions” had been commonplace since 1992, the scale and intensity of “Operation Pay Yourself” was unprecedented in Sierra Leone.⁹²

Before being driven out of the capital, forces had been enjoying the relative luxuries of Freetown’s businesses, markets and port, after years of fighting in the bush. Retreating from their short-lived urban lifestyle of impunity, thousands of opportunistic joiners and hardened fighters travelled unimpeded along the main highways toward Koidu. Thus, fighters looting under the aegis of Operation Pay Yourself passed rapidly through main towns and business centres that were largely undefended. After their expulsion from Freetown, the RUF and AFRC established fairly broad control in the Northern Province. The NPWJ report describes the pattern of food finding missions carried out by the joint forces in this part of the country:

Since late May 1997, RUF/AFRC forces had occupied the town of Kamabai (Biriwa Chiefdom). From this location, RUF/AFRC forces were able to establish a strong presence in the area, bolstered by forces driven from Makeni in early March 1998 by ECOMOG forces. RUF/AFRC activities in the neighbouring town Karina and its environs was mainly limited to “food finding missions” or “Jar-Jar” [*jaja*]. The July 1998 attacks on Masiba (Gbendembu Ndowahun Chiefdom) and Karina (Biriwa Chiefdom) described above are good examples of “food finding missions”: civilians were captured and instructed to lead RUF/AFRC forces to sources of salt, livestock, crops and vegetables. The same civilians were taken by force by RUF/AFRC forces to transport the stolen food to RUF bases.⁹³

When RUF and AFRC forces retook Makeni in late 1998, convoys of hundreds of civilians were escorted from Kabala south through Binkolo, carrying food, rice, and livestock to the newly re-claimed Northern provincial capital.⁹⁴ After securing Makeni and Teko Barracks, the RUF established corridors to all of the major trading and transit town axes: Koidu-Sefadu, Magburaka, Kabala, Lunsar, Masiaka, and Waterloo. AFRC forces cleared

⁹² Smith, Gambette, and Longley, *Conflict Mapping in Sierra Leone*, 34.

⁹³ *Ibid.*, 137.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 140.

ECOMOG troops from Kamakwie and advanced to Port Loko, before launching the 6 January assault on Freetown.

Throughout the North civilians were regularly conscripted to help carry looted supplies from food finding missions to towns and bases. From camps set up outside of Kamakwie, the RUF and AFRC oriented trade and supply efforts toward the nearby Guinea border, which not only had freer trading patterns, but also had the population influx of refugee camps and attendant aid flows.⁹⁵ To the west in Kambia District RUF and AFRC forces moved freely across the Guinea border, trading looted properties in border towns until Guinean authorities cracked down with a 'hot pursuit' policy.⁹⁶

However, data from interviews and the Conflict Mapping Project suggest variation in governance and order. In addition to excessive food finding in the North, 'in some places, more sophisticated methods of extracting support from civilians were put into place...including local tax administrations and systems allowing the regime to communicate demands to civilians less violently.'⁹⁷ Civilian administrators were recruited into the G5 governance system and town and chiefdom commanders were again appointed in RUF-controlled areas.

Throughout Koinadugu, Bombali, and Kambia Districts, RUF/AFRC commanders selected individuals to form committees of G5 civil-military intermediaries, communicating RUF/AFRC demands for food and human resources to local communities. The G5 committees administered the collection of house and trade taxes, food and other financial contributions from the civilian population to the RUF/AFRC.⁹⁸

In Kono and Koinadugu Districts, G5 commanders and committees were set up in all towns under the jurisdiction of the Brigade Headquarters at Kayima (Sandor Chiefdom) in order to 'ensure the provision of foodstuff, manpower and other material needs of RUF/AFRC

⁹⁵ Before 1997 the RUF engaged in limited activities in Kambia or Port Loko, the north-western border and coastal districts, respectively, as they lacked the manpower to establish or maintain control. Notably, the Rokupr Rice Research Station was looted in February 1996, while peace talks were underway in Abidjan. See, *Ibid.*, 152.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, 143, 146. Border security checks were moved three miles into Sierra Leone, rebels were pursued within Guinean territory, and Guinean soldiers launched offensives on rebel bases in Sierra Leone, while tightening control over traders; See also, Yusuf Keita, AFRC Commander.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, 32.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, 37.

forces.⁹⁹ With combatants moving in increasing numbers throughout the region, civilian intermediaries provided a stable contact point for new units and those based in the area. Villagers had to provide hundreds of cups of rice to the brigades.¹⁰⁰ The G5 organized government farms and civilian labour as the rebels sought to consolidate control and have people return to the towns.¹⁰¹ A memo from the Director of Agriculture under the RUF/P (the newly formed political party) to Issa Sesay, the interim head of the RUF illustrates the concerted agriculture governance effort the rebels sought to reinstate in 2001:

DEFENCE HEADQUARTERS – MAKENI ; N/REGION

Date: 7th Aug. 2001

TO: General Issah H. Sesay – Interim Chairman – RUF/P/SL.

ATTENTION: Brigadier-General Morris Kallon – BFC – RUF/P/SL.

FROM: Lt. Col. XX – Director of Agric. – RUF/P/SL.

INFORMATION:

Sir,

The RUF/P/SL community farming activities was supposed to cover almost all the liberated districts of RUF/P/SL territories.

Unfortunately, at the time I assumed Office there were a lot of skirmishes in the Kambia district (axis) and such problems eventually interfered with their own Community farming activities.

Now that all is well and the atmosphere is still conducive, they came to my office recently with a list indicating interested Chiefdoms ready to engage themselves in this kind of Productive exercise.

In vain of this I therefore submit an attached copy of such list from them for the consent of Interim Chairman—RUF/P/SL, and hence seek for approval.

It is also imperative that before ever given consideration to the above, it is advisable for us to get them to know the aims and objectives of such Community farms and the role we expect the Community to play in terms of providing labour force.

Your usual co-operation is highly solicited and God bless.

Best regards.

Director of Agriculture, RUF/P/SL.¹⁰²

In Kailahun District, where RUF control was stronger and more consistent, civilian governance and agricultural initiatives had been sustained and managed by the G5 office

⁹⁹ Ibid., 179.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid.

¹⁰¹ Ibid.

¹⁰² 01.0807.PM.B.F.DHQ.KAMBIA.19a

reporting to Mosquito, who was based in Pendembu while head of the movement (prior to Issa Sesay's appointment as Interim Leader). Memos from the G5 commanders in 1999 and 2001 indicate an increased emphasis on military needs and a much diminished revolutionary orientation, as compared with the archival material from the same region and offices in Phase I. Orders were increasingly imposed upon the civilians, rather than framed through committees, meetings, and a collaborative 'struggle'. For example, a memo to the Mandu chiefdom commander reads: 'You are instructed to send in 20 able Civilian Manpowers...failing to comply, a drastic step will be taken against you.'¹⁰³ Others call for collecting all palm oil, mandatory attendance at meetings, and requisitioning of food supplies for brigades, rather than for centralized distribution to both combatants and civilians.¹⁰⁴ A memo from the overall G5 commander illustrates close similarities between Phase I and Phase III food production and provision efforts. However, it also captures the more unidirectional nature of the relationship between the RUF and civilians (see emphasis, mine):

To: All Chiefdom Commanders

Subj: INFORMATION/INSTRUCTION.

Be informed that the below listed indicates the last arrangement made at Kailahun which was *unanimously agreed upon by all Commanders for an immediate implementation by all Civilians*.¹⁰⁵

It goes on to requisition manpower per chiefdom, demanding anywhere from 20-100 people; specifies quantities of palm oil and bushels of rice to be provided; and even calls for cultural dance troupes to be in attendance.

As in Kailahun District, civilian registries were kept in Tonkolili District¹⁰⁶ to monitor and police residents (ostensibly weeding out spies and CDF interlopers), and allocate labour and responsibilities, rations and taxes. In Mateboi, Sanda Tendaren Chiefdom, the G5 was responsible for the collection of 30-cup contributions of rice and 5 litres of palm oil from civilians;¹⁰⁷ in Rosinor (Samu Chiefdom) RUF and AFRC fighters liaised with the traditional authorities and levied two cups of rice and Le 2,000 from every resident.¹⁰⁸ This was

¹⁰³ 99.0413.PM.B.F.PNDMB.15

¹⁰⁴ See e.g. 99.0705.PM.B.F.DHQ.17; 01.0127.PM.B.F.PNDMB.16; 01.0622.PM.B.F.MANDU.18.

¹⁰⁵ 01.0131.PM.B.F.PNDMB.30

¹⁰⁶ Brigade Commander BM, Interview, October 2009; also, Smith, Gambette, and Longley, *Conflict Mapping in Sierra Leone*, 37.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid., 142.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid., 156.

supplemented by trade and transport taxes at the wharf of Le 10,000-20,000 depending on a boat's goods and destination, vehicle taxes at checkpoints entering the town, and traders passing on the river.¹⁰⁹ What is notable is that, while this taxation scheme was arbitrarily implemented, extra-legal, and onerous, it was also supervised and had internal accountability mechanisms to ensure the proceeds went to the 'government' or commander.¹¹⁰

However, the increased numbers of fighters in villages and towns combined with the effects of the war drastically reduced food production and food security to below-subsistence levels. 'G5 committees proved to be inadequate in providing enough subsistence resources for the combined RUF/AFRC forces, and "food finding missions" again proliferated...(in which) the same commanders that supported the G5 system, by ordering their subordinates to cease looting and theft, also ordered the commission of food-finding missions, again increasing the levels of violence inflicted on civilians.'¹¹¹ In Binkolo, for example, the RUF G5 committee set up meetings between commanders and the civilians to 'discuss food contributions to the RUF/AFRC war effort'.¹¹² Yet, these semi-collaborative governance overtures culminated in an order levying daily food contributions from the civilian population and several months later, the commencement of officially ordered food-finding missions.

In the major trading town of Kambia, RUF/AFRC forces reassured the civilian population that they could return to the town, but as the population returned, fighters increasingly harassed people for food and residents had to pay for 'passports' to move freely.¹¹³ Thus, although indiscriminate violence was sharply curtailed, residents lived in fear of violent punishment if they could not produce food or money upon request. Taxation schemes continued after the signing of the Lomé Agreement in RUF/AFRC-controlled towns.

Herein lies the rub of food finding in the RUF and in the revolutionary project as a whole. The RUF, especially after uniting with the AFRC, could not sustain itself as a fighting force

¹⁰⁹ Ibid.

¹¹⁰ Incidentally, although the threat of extreme violence sets wartime practices apart, checkpoints in both pre- and post-war Sierra Leone remain a point of fines and taxation, where drivers and traders have to negotiate their passage as arbitrated by petty officers occasionally acting tangentially to their official capacity.

¹¹¹ Smith, Gambette, and Longley, *Conflict Mapping in Sierra Leone*, 37.

¹¹² Ibid., 143.

¹¹³ Ibid., 157.

without exploiting the local population. In addition to the disregard of property rights apparent in looting and theft, food finding was particularly destructive because it undermined the country's rural resource base. Productivity declined as a result of insecurity and displacement, which interfered with farm labour. Additionally, valuable inputs, including land, tools, and grain stores, were also destroyed, sometimes deliberately. The latter was a deliberate strategy in the 'no man's lands' between SLA and RUF controlled areas during Phase II. Rebels eliminated what they could not carry so that the enemy would not benefit from any food or supplies left behind.

The pursuit of military survival evidenced by the sanctioned waging of food finding missions throughout the second and third phases of the war highlights the prioritization of group survival and subjugation of revolutionary ideals or 'liberation' of the citizenry. But, the more dependent the RUF became on food finding, the more it weakened the agricultural resource base required to pull itself out of a destructive cycle of exploitation and establish sustainable civilian governance. Food finding thus not only broke trust with the local population through theft, it introduced hardship by heightening civilian hunger and starvation and undermined the agricultural policies attempted by the more politically committed members of the movement.

The result was a bifurcated civilian population, in which those under G5 control in RUF-held zones had some recourse to protection and access to group farming supplies and inputs (such as seed rice). Civilians in rebel-controlled areas were forced to pay taxes and tributes, but in turn would not have all of their properties seized and destroyed. Civilians outside of 'liberated zones' were vulnerable to *jaja* attacks and worse if they were believed to be CDF collaborators.

BETWEEN AN AK AND A SINGLE-BARREL

The RUF was not unique in its taxation and looting practices. 'Upon entering a town or village, (any of) the (fighting) factions usually recruited all the able-bodied men and women as forced labour', notes the TRC report.¹¹⁴ Although the RUF controlled most of the country from 1998 until the war's end, Moyamba, Bonthe, Pujehun, Bo, and most of Kenema Districts were largely free of RUF/AFRC harassment because they were under

¹¹⁴ TRC, *Witness to Truth*.

CDF control. However, the CDF also carried out similarly disjointed looting and taxation that undermined the resilience (and confidence) of local populations. According to the TRC report, women were targeted in particular for fines, extortion, taxation, and theft, ‘as they were considered more vulnerable to this kind of demand than men’ and also practiced much of the petty trading during the war.¹¹⁵ According to the TRC database, the CDF was responsible for the greatest number of extortions on civilians under its areas of control.¹¹⁶

SLA forces also launched food finding missions and taxed travellers and traders at checkpoints it set up along main roads. An elderly civilian woman who fled Koidu town for the village reported to the TRC:

(The army) came to the village and took everything from us—sheep, goats, chickens, money. So we were really afraid. The rebels had been bringing food to the village from the town of Koidu—salt, rice, anything they can lay hands on. It was not too bad at that point. But these things were taken away by the army. We were more scared of the army than the rebels.¹¹⁷

Similar stories abound in rebel-held zones as well as in the ‘no man’s lands’ between RUF and SLA territory. In February 1995, for example, RUF forces arrived in Neya chiefdom and requested food and lodging from villagers. Passing through three villages in three days, they amassed 15 *bata* palm oil, four bags of husk rice, two bags of groundnuts (peanuts), two bags of salt, and one bag of beans, taking two local men to help carry the food on foot back to their base.¹¹⁸ The SLA was deployed in Neya Chiefdom in response, leading to looting incidents and requisition of livestock in February and March. Both forces reportedly raped women and abducted civilians.¹¹⁹ It is perhaps worth noting that in 1996 the RUF had ‘total freedom of movement’ throughout Neya chiefdom, but no violent incidents took place.¹²⁰ Instead, commanders met with the chiefs, who cooperated, ‘ordering villagers to provide food when requested by the RUF’.¹²¹

In addition to looting and appropriating food and civilian properties, SLA forces occasionally established arrangements with traditional leaders similar but less formal to those

¹¹⁵ TRC, “Volume 3B,” 183.

¹¹⁶ Ibid.

¹¹⁷ Keen, *Conflict and Collusion*, 112.

¹¹⁸ Smith, Gambette, and Longley, *Conflict Mapping in Sierra Leone*, 167.

¹¹⁹ Ibid., 168.

¹²⁰ Ibid.

¹²¹ Ibid.

under the RUF. In Yonibana Chiefdom, where the commercially and strategically important Mile 91 junction town is, community elders agreed to feed the soldiers, with Le 500 and two cups of rice to be collected from each household on a weekly basis.¹²² From July 1994 to January 1995, however, relations between the townspeople and SLA rapidly deteriorated, as checkpoints and forced labour became increasingly onerous. Soldiers required civilians to find and carry food from the surrounding area and began breaking into homes at night during the main harvest season (February and March).¹²³

The West Side Boys, the shortest-lived and most ideologically and politically vacuous of the armed groups, supplied itself by staging checkpoints and ambushes to levy transit fees and seize goods in and around their Occra Hills base.¹²⁴ Like the RUF, SLA, and RUF/AFRC forces, they conducted food-finding raids into the nearby villages and sought to establish taxation schemes to ensure steady food supplies.¹²⁵ Between October and December 1998, the group ‘attacked over 30 villages...there is little to distinguish any of these attacks from one another.’¹²⁶ These similarities between armed groups’ behaviour in procuring food and other supplies during the war illustrate the dangerous and vulnerable position civilians were in, but also demonstrate the rather complex processes and mechanisms put in place by the RUF to maintain the armed group and sustain the war effort.

CONCLUSION

The Sierra Leone war context was a highly constrained environment in which raiding and destruction quickly instigated food insecurity and agricultural crisis. Initially, the RUF sought to utilize civilian support and food tributes to sustain itself on the fast track to an efficient overthrow of the APC government. When that failed to materialize, the leadership began to organize the civilian population of Eastern Sierra Leone more concertedly toward the war effort.

¹²² Ibid., 222.

¹²³ Ibid., 225.

¹²⁴ The WSB were based in Gberibana with their ambush site along the Mile 38-Masiaka highway in Koya Chiefdom; the RUF were based in Makeni at the time, with an RUF/AFRC contingent in Port Loko and Rogberi Junction.

¹²⁵ Alfred Gbla, WSB Commander.

¹²⁶ Smith, Gambette, and Longley, *Conflict Mapping in Sierra Leone*, 214.

Under the dual military-civilian command structure of the RUF, the G5 was the primary branch responsible for collecting and disseminating food and other taxes. Every battalion was ordered to have its own rice swamp or farm at the rear to facilitate its food needs, but planting and harvesting depended on the security situation and whether fighters could be spared from the frontlines.¹²⁷ Throughout the war, military food rationing was managed by the S4, which oversaw the food stores and coordinated civilian production, food finding and ambush demands to fulfil supply orders from the top command. The S4 was designed to distribute provisions throughout the RUF, keeping the target and jungle bases and training camps well-supplied, providing food for Zogoda and the CIC, maintaining civilians and camp followers, and serving as ‘battalion quartermaster’¹²⁸ for fighting forces.

These food production and procurement mechanisms and processes illustrate the great extent to which the RUF went to keep its fighters and civilian followers fed and well-maintained in the insecure context of war. Although there is evidence of a modest revolutionary agrarian programme, the emphasis on productivity, efficiency and accountability in the agricultural project of the RUF are more convincingly indicative of an adept organizational effort to strengthen the armed group as a whole. Organising social, economic, and political support through civilian channels helped the movement to actualize its ideology, gain recruits and followers, and minimize internal security threats. Civilians in turn ordered themselves in pursuit of the group’s needs because it supported their own survival interests.

This interdependent relationship strengthened the cohesion and coherence of the RUF in the first phase of the war, despite the movement’s general political rhetoric and ambiguous objectives. It also provided organizational trust the rebel group could draw support from when SLA military pressure became more acute. As a result, many civilians and camp followers willingly followed the RUF fighters into the bush for the ‘jungle warfare’ of Phase II. As a top training commander phrased it unequivocally, ‘civilians supported the movement (RUF) because it supplied food’.¹²⁹

¹²⁷ Thomas Amara, Junior commando. See also, Peters, *War and the Crisis of Youth*, 105; Smith, Gambette, and Longley, *Conflict Mapping in Sierra Leone*, 46.

¹²⁸ Smith, Gambette, and Longley, *Conflict Mapping in Sierra Leone*, 46.

¹²⁹ Peter Kalawa, Training Commander.

The result was the formation of a society in the bush, in which the movement was dependent upon civilian support for its own survival, and RUF civilians—including wives, children, and camp followers—were similarly invested in the group’s welfare. Women were particularly critical to the logistical (or domestic) viability of the armed group. In Sierra Leone, women provide 60-80 percent of farming labour, including food production, processing, and distribution.¹³⁰ This was replicated in the RUF. As one female commander explained it, ‘the purpose of the women mostly was to prepare food for the frontlines, for the fighters. Only the few brave ones whose wish was to go to the frontline could go.’¹³¹ Many women stayed in the camps and with their RUF husbands and boyfriends because they provided food—or access to a better chance of food security—for themselves and their children. The result was a largely co-dependent ‘society in the bush’ that was ordered toward the armed group’s military survival needs. The ideological ambitions of the revolution were implemented when they reinforced the maintenance and survival of the group members, but when under pressure, the group was privileged over its averred revolution.

This is neither new nor evidence of ideological vacuity. On the French Revolution Barrington Moore, Jr. notes:

On the agrarian side, the key problems were to get grain to the armies first, secondly to Paris and the big cities, and finally to ensure its movement from areas where there was a surplus to areas where there was short supply...To solve this series of problems the revolutionary government resorted to requisitioning and price controls...Patriotic and Revolutionary necessity overcame the theoretical scruples of the leaders who were enthusiastic partisans of economic liberalism...there was some talk of turning big estates confiscated from the émigrés into national farms or some variety of communal undertaking in order to feed the cities...[and attempts to establish] national storage depots, *greniers d’abondance*, putting into effect, though probably not consciously and deliberately, one of the key notions of agrarian radicalism.¹³²

This chapter has illustrated a similar pattern in the RUF’s behaviour surrounding agriculture and food provision. It has sought to explain how and why food procurement and production mechanisms changed in the RUF over the course of the war, and the effect that this had on the movement’s organizational viability.

¹³⁰ TRC, *Witness to Truth*, 100.

¹³¹ Marks, “Women in the War Zone,” 32.

¹³² Moore, *Social Origins of Dictatorship and Democracy*, 83–7.

RUF TRADING SITES



Figure 11: Traders at the Guinea waterside ferry crossing (2010).

Figure 12: Kailahun town centre (2010).



CHAPTER 7

ARMS AND AMMUNITION

The more you go, the more you gain.

Andrew Mundah¹

Like most rebel groups, the RUF planned a well-armed rapid advance on the capital. Also like most rebel groups, they grossly underestimated both the strength of the state and the amount of external support required to overtake it. The RUF leaders planned to bolster their modest material capacity by working alongside Taylor's NPFL forces to overpower the ill-supplied and under-motivated SLA, capturing their weapons to use against them. However, after a well-coordinated first two years in which territorial control was gained incrementally, the warscape changed dramatically.

Examining the shifting firepower of the RUF over the course of the war reveals a great deal about the strength of their external support, the amount of military pressure they faced during different phases of the war, and the international political dimensions of the conflict, including the neighbouring war in Liberia. It also reveals the correlation between firepower and organizational cohesion, which in turn impacted the group's strategy and violence. Generally speaking, when the RUF were threatened by acute military supply shortages, the group became tighter and more disciplined, with a premium placed on securing equipment from military targets. Conversely, when replete with arms and ammunition, the group struggled to maintain control and cohesion. Particularly after the AFRC were driven out of Freetown, as weapon supplies increased so too did opportunism and abuse. At peak material capacity, the rebels were riven by fractionalization and command in-fighting that ultimately led to their surrender.

This chapter examines in five sections the strategies and tactics the RUF used to arm itself, adapting to a changing warscape and significant internal organizational challenges. The first

¹ Andrew Mundah, Adjutant.

section discusses weapon supplies and military challenges in the first two years, before ULIMO blocked the border with Liberia. The second looks at the ‘catch-up and destroy’ strategy the RUF switched to when this border closure cut external supply lines. It hones in on the three key attacks—Gbworbu Gao, Ngiehun, and Nomo Faama—that enabled the RUF to eke their way from near collapse to being a country-wide security threat. The third section discusses trade with Guinean and ULIMO ‘enemies’, which supplemented the supplies the RUF captured through raiding and ambush. The final two sections examine the group’s shifting arms network, both with and without Sankoh’s leadership. They detail the RUF’s relationship with Taylor, the access he provided to foreign support and business contacts, and the leadership problems that emerged amidst botched arms procurement efforts. The fifth section also emphasizes the quickening pace of arms transfers at the war’s end, and marks some similarities between the rebels’ and government’s efforts to gain military dominance. The RUF were a largely ‘self-reliant’ guerrilla force for the first two phases of the war; it was not until Phase III that big-name international arms dealers and global criminal networks began investing in the conflict. Despite the influx of arms and ammunition imports, however, Phase III also brought an eventual détente, as Sierra Leone’s weapons and warfare shifted back across the border and into Liberia.

SANKOH AND TAYLOR: ‘MARRIAGE’ AND SEPARATION

When the RUF first invaded Sierra Leone as two 180-strong Vanguard flanks bolstered by hundreds of NPFL fighters, they were supplied wholly by Charles Taylor. A Vanguard member describes arming during the invasion of Pujehun:

After opening the border, Foday Sankoh came with eight boxes of ammunition—AK rounds. He came with them from Namma for the target. He came out of Ivory Coast with the ammunition to Liberia...We were one squad and we each got one arm. One person would get one gun, with three magazines.²

However, for the first two years of the war, although Vanguard fighters were all armed and RUF ammunition arrived regularly from Liberia, firepower was concentrated in the hands of NPFL forces. Better-equipped, they had little vested interest in staying to fight their neighbours’ war and used their weapons to turn the Sierra Leone warfront into a looting ground, plundering goods to re-sell in their own war-stricken country.

² Kai Fekkah, Vanguard/S4 Commander.

Though the NPFL undermined the group ideology and organizational structure, the RUF remained dependent on them for armaments in the first years.³ Foday Sankoh spent as much time in Liberia as in Sierra Leone, and had his own ‘mansion ground’ compound set up in Gbarnga, Taylor’s NPFL headquarters. He also used the country for his frequent ventures to Côte d’Ivoire and Burkina Faso, the few external backers of the RUF.⁴ Even the overall radio commander for the RUF was an NPFL fighter, sent by Taylor, who had all communication routed back from Sierra Leone through Gbarnga. He describes RUF headquarters as Taylor’s ‘sub-base’:

We made Kailahun the sub-base to Gbarnga, and Foday Sankoh set up his headquarters at Pendembu from 1991 to 1993...The Special Forces returned to Liberia to resupply with arms and ammunition, take wounded soldiers, and give a situation report. General M. came with arms and ammunition inside Sierra Leone. Two to three trucks went to Gbarnga and returned after consulting with Taylor...they would move at night, taking cocoa, coffee, and other looted items—like oil, rice...—but it didn’t fit the ideology. The ideology was no looting, no raping, no killing.⁵

Despite the command and control problems, Sankoh and Taylor established a tightly coordinated communication and logistics machine. Radio operators were shared, situation reports regularly filed, and covert transfers of material and manpower maintained. Rather than simply well-armed banditry, the RUF was a highly coordinated, but amateur and ill-armed military venture. The vast majority of Sierra Leonean recruits were disempowered and struggled to get their own guns. In training camps, sticks were used as mock firearms,⁶ and at the frontlines, Liberian fighters overpowered the RUF. As a commander explains, the uneven distribution of weapons had a direct impact on the security situation, exacerbated by the in-fighting of the ‘Top’ operations:

After Top 20, Top 40, all of that, the boys were all afraid of the NPFL commandos because they didn’t have access to guns. The Pa hadn’t agreed to give them guns. But when the war turned against them, they began to see themselves as victims of the war, so they explained to the Pa their life wasn’t safe. So the Pa said, “As far as you all have been trained now, you’re going to be able to free this land, so let those other (NPFL) men go back.”⁷

³ Jacob Sesay, Brigade Commander.

⁴ Kai Fekkah, Vanguard/S4 Commander; Zainab Tarawalie, Senior civilian wife.

⁵ Morie Kamara, Overall Signals Commander.

⁶ Kai Fekkah, Vanguard/S4 Commander.

⁷ Eric Bangura, Agriculture Secretariat/Humanitarian Commander.

At the same time, over a hundred junior commandos were holding the NPFL defensive line in Bomi Hills as 'Black Gaddafi'.⁸ Marginalized from the mainstream NPFL and completely alienated from the RUF, they had relatively little knowledge about the larger strategies of the conflict around them. But, because they served Taylor, they were well-armed. When they were able to cross the Mano River back into Sierra Leone in the 1992 dry season, they raided villages and ambushed SLA convoys in Tonkia and Makpele chiefdoms, near Zimmi, before retreating to their jungle base.⁹ Their movements and supply lines foreshadowed two patterns in RUF arms procurement: a relative wealth of ammunition when the group was of strategic importance to Taylor, and the need for 'self-reliant' guerrilla tactics when cut off from his support.

Other RUF units based inside Sierra Leone in Soro Gbema chiefdom in the first two years were almost wholly self-supplied, as they were not under NPFL command and had lost their communication equipment. They had driven the Liberian commandos out of Southern Sierra Leone for the same problems that later led to Top Final in Kailahun District. As a fighter describes:

After we captured Pujehun in 1991, the Special Forces dominated the command. But they did bad, so we decided to push them out...There were more of them, we were there in the minority, but we used our own tactics because we knew the terrain.¹⁰

Led by Vanguard founder Patrick Lamin, the RUF then divided themselves into different operational targets. It was shortly after this that Lamin and 17 other Vanguard members were executed by two junior commandos who accused them of betraying the war. As a commander explains, their 'crime' hinged on lack of ammunition:

What really happened was, we were on a mission and the action picked up...We had captured some ammunition from Moalla, up to 76 boxes. But because the enemy had advanced, and then [the junior commandos] didn't get more ammunition [it reportedly fell into the river], they said the Vanguard had betrayed the war, they said they brought them into it for nothing and spoiled the war because they weren't getting more ammunition...We condemned the executions, because it was just a power struggle, but at that point, there was nothing we could do.¹¹

⁸ Amara Sumana, Fighter/Security to Leader.

⁹ Ibid; Augustine Tholley, Battalion Commander.

¹⁰ Jacob Sesay, Brigade Commander.

¹¹ Ibid.

Asked how they supplied themselves after the group was cut off from Second Battalion and had lost its top commanders to in-fighting and many fighters to the NPFL, the fighter continues:

When Foday Sankoh gave us the gun, he said, “food, anything, you get from the gun. This is a self-reliant struggle. Everything from the barrel of the gun.”...Already he told us, the barrel will give us everything.

Second Battalion in Kailahun also had to procure its own weapons, despite its easy access to Liberia, in order to arm its expanding number of Sierra Leonean cadres. Facing pressure on both the Eastern and Southern fronts from ULIMO,¹² the SLA, and Guinean artillery units, the RUF re-focused on government supply lines. Whether in the East or South, almost all fighters describe the war as a ‘self-reliant struggle’:

From 1991 we got most of the arms and ammunition from Liberia. But after that, 1992, ’93, ’94, ’95, ’96, we had to attack the soldiers’ supply.¹³

We were only getting arms from the government troops.¹⁴

Especially after Top Final...we were capturing everything for ourself, having manpower but lacking capacity.¹⁵

Most arms and ammunition came from attacks and ambushes—when we would gain area.¹⁶

For example, arms, ammunition, and three trucks that were seized from the SLA at Baiima, near Daru, formed the basis of the rebels’ supply for the 1992 attack on Kono. Top RUF commanders Sam ‘Mosquito’ Bockarie, Issa Sesay, Mohammed ‘Zino’ Tarawallie, and Dennis ‘Superman’ Mingo led the RUF in the largest operation of its young career. ‘Heavily armed’, their equipment at the time consisted of just 20 boxes of AK rounds, 10 boxes of G3 ammunition, and 5 boxes of grenades, all of which had been pulled from Baiima.¹⁷ Still,

¹² Organized in 1992 inside Sierra Leone by exiled former Liberian soldiers from the Doe regime, ULIMO received financial, logistical, and military support from the Sierra Leone government in return for fighting the RUF and the NPFL. They primarily recruited other Liberian refugees, but also incorporated a number of Sierra Leonean irregulars (Umaru Rogers, ULIMO-STF & RUF Artillery; see also, Richards, *Fighting for the Rain Forest*, 88–9.) With NPRC backing, ULIMO helped the SLA maintain control of provincial capitals Bo and Kenema, and push the RUF to the margins of the border with Liberia (Eddie Bockarie, IDU Commander; Abie Tamba, Adjutant).

¹³ Jacob Sesay, Brigade Commander.

¹⁴ Sylvester Kabbia, Adjutant to Battalion Commander.

¹⁵ Jinnah Brooks, Battalion G4 Commander.

¹⁶ Gasimu Komba, Fighter.

¹⁷ Mohamed Mundah, Overall Black Guard Commander. The Heckler and Koch G3 is a German-made automatic rifle; the AK-47 (Kalashnikov or AK) needs no introduction. See e.g. Kahaner, *AK-47*.

the RUF managed to hold the large mining capital for several weeks, giving Sankoh enough time to visit and make a speech to civilians in the town centre about the causes of the war and motives of the RUF. When ECOMOG air raids forced them out of the district, the RUF looted what portable food and equipment they could, sending it back to their Kailahun stronghold.¹⁸

The capture of Koidu brought significant quantities of looted food and other supplies for the group, but the military operation and subsequent push from the town also severely depleted the RUF's ammunition. Shortly after they were pushed from Koidu, government forces capitalized on RUF in-fighting and power struggles, to bring the heaviest assault of the war:

Our defensive position wasn't too strong. Information began to reach the enemy in Kailahun that we had begun to get internal problems. So the enemy used that to attack our position. People who escaped to the enemy zone were telling them, because at that time there wasn't total control...they pushed us all the way to the Liberia border and into...the bush in small small groups.¹⁹

This onslaught marked the first of two nadirs for the RUF in terms of its material strength and supplies. The RUF was first pushed from Pendumbu, where they lost much of their arms and ammunition, and then a month later from Kailahun, before Sankoh was forced to flee his base at Sandiallu.²⁰ Air raids cleared ambushes the rebels laid to re-arm.²¹ With no ammunition, they were forced to abandon their defensive positions with just light weapons and one or two radio sets, leaving behind all vehicles and other equipment.²²

Where was Taylor?

Taylor had promised to provide assistance, and indeed, in the first two years, the Sierra Leone civil war was all but inextricable from the war in Liberia. Taylor and Sankoh shared strategic aims, coordinated their travel to Burkina Faso and Côte d'Ivoire for military and political support,²³ and shared training commanders and radio operators. However, by all accounts, Taylor was the dominant figure. With greater territorial control and more manpower—partly secured by his head-start, and partly secured by the relative success of

¹⁸ Emmanuel Kallon, Signals to Leader.

¹⁹ Emmanuel Kallon, Signals to Leader; see also, Morie Kamara, Overall Signals Commander.

²⁰ Mohamed Mundah, Overall Black Guard Commander.

²¹ Ibid.

²² Sidie Dumana, Driver to Leader. Emmanuel Kallon, Signals to Leader; Mohamed Mundah, Overall Black Guard Commander.

²³ Morie Kamara, Overall Signals Commander.

the NPFL's war—Taylor had the upper hand. A Sierra Leonean radio operator, trained in Liberia, describes the relationship as inconsistent, but overall co-dependent:

Liberia and Sierra Leone war were sort of 'married', because the war inside Sierra Leone came out of Liberia and into Sierra Leone, and support of manpower, logistics, ammunition, we can get from Liberia...We do everything in common. If at times things look difficult for us, in terms of ammunition, we call and see if they can assist us a little, and if they have any to spare they can call people to collect them...

There was only one cut when ULIMO-K cut the supply line, but still that movement was there between us using bypasses...We say that relationship was more with Sankoh and Charles Taylor, because it was those two who came and had all types of relationships. It was only when Sankoh was under arrest that Mosquito began to take charge and he still established the relationship so things could still work. It was sour sometimes, but it still worked...

It was sour when they ran that Operation Top 20 and Top 40...and the last time, when the relationship looked a little sour was when Mosquito went to Liberia...From the start of the war to the end of the war, every [overall] commander had a direct link with Charles Taylor...Some fighters were based around Foya, so that up and down movement was there. He would come with the materials, not all the time, but when we have a shortage, he could come with materials. Depending when we need. Only that he didn't come with a large amount of ammunition.²⁴

As this illustrates, the centrality of the NPFL-RUF relationship cannot be overstated, but nor should the continuity and strength of external support be exaggerated. Throughout the war, the majority of ammunition came from seizure.²⁵ Most former RUF laugh wryly when asked if Taylor was supplying them with arms and ammunition. The shared sentiment is captured by this adjutant's assessment:

If Taylor was helping us, it would only have taken two months...we were fighting to get ammunition for ourselves...you know wherever soldiers live, they (the government) must bring them supplies.²⁶

Commanders and high-level radio operators confirm that periodic ammunition transfers took place when the border was open, from 1991 to early-1993 (and again from 1997 until the war's end). But many fighters insist they never saw this support, particularly once NPFL troops left Sierra Leone.

²⁴ John Saffa, Overall Signals Commander.

²⁵ E.g., Andrew Mundah, Adjutant; Abie Tamba, Adjutant; Berman, "Re-Armament in Sierra Leone."

²⁶ Sylvester Kabbia, Adjutant to Battalion Commander.

A former Black Guard commander recalls the tensions between Taylor and Sankoh as pressure from ULIMO was mounting:

There was not that cordiality again (between Sankoh and Taylor). There was not even access, because at that time the enemies had already occupied that area of the border.²⁷

For ordinary members of the RUF and civilians in the East, this meant access to military supplies and basic necessities dried up: ‘They had locked the border, so that time you couldn’t do any business. When you go there, you won’t see anybody.’²⁸ A town commander explains, ‘When the communication broke at the border, people were dying from hunger. They really strained (to find food).’²⁹ With ULIMO pressuring the border, the SLA and an increasing number of rag-tag local *kamajor* units were able to dominate the undersupplied RUF handily. After the dispute between Taylor and Sankoh following Top Final, Sankoh cut off contact with Gbarnga. According to the overall Intelligence Officer, even when faced with the prospect of imminent dissolution or surrender:

Foday Sankoh said he will not mind to stay in the bush until he died, but he will not go to Liberia...With all the other foreign forces, we were still fighting for ourselves, we will catch up weapons for ourselves.³⁰

MATERIEL GAIN: RUF RESURGENCE THROUGH ‘CATCH-UP AND DESTROY’

On the brink of extinction, without ammunition, the RUF still refused the NPRC’s proposal for unconditional surrender, convinced they would be executed if they came out of the bush.³¹ The Phase I strategy was abandoned and the group turned to guerrilla tactics to survive. The course of events that unfolded next, from November 1993 to early 1994, are presented here in detail because of their significance in re-arming the RUF—enabling and shaping Phase II—and because of the competing allegations surrounding them. In just a few months, the RUF re-grouped, re-strategized, and re-supplied without external support, transforming themselves from a group seemingly on the edge of defeat, to an indefatigable threat. Some sources hypothesize this resurgence was caused by the insincerity of NPRC efforts to ‘finish off’ the rebels militarily; others go further, suggesting it was caused by conniving between the RUF and disaffected SLA soldiers seeking to exploit the war for

²⁷ Bockarie Ngobeh, Black Guard.

²⁸ Mohamed Mundah, Overall Black Guard Commander.

²⁹ Alfred Wureh, Agricultural Agent (civilian).

³⁰ John Sesay, Overall Intelligence Officer/Joint Security.

³¹ e.g. Mariatu Thomas, Vanguard/WACs Commander.

personal gain.³² Peters writes, ‘much speculation has addressed whether...the NPRC allowed the all-but-defeated RUF to regroup.’³³ He goes on to quote a *kamajor* commander whose narrative strikingly parallels that given below by RUF fighters and commanders:

By the end of 1993 I was told there was a one-month ceasefire: whenever a rebel passed we had to let him go. By that time we had just captured Pendembu, Kailahun, Weidu, Koindu, and other places...It was confusing: there was an attack on Nomo Faama chiefdom, the next day there was an attack close to Bunumbu. The next day at Wuima, and after that at Tongo. And the rebels were disorganised by that time!³⁴

Peters floats the possibility that the RUF anticipated weakened resistance during the holidays, but also goes on to note the ‘suspicious ease’ with which the RUF captured a large quantity of weapons at Nomo Faama,³⁵ near Kenema. The narrative of overt collusion between the RUF and SLA for these attacks seems highly improbable, however. Not only is there no evidence to support it, but numerous accounts collected from diverse members of the missions (interviewed at different times and places during fieldwork) provide almost identical corroborative narratives, none of which point toward low-level collaboration or a high-level agreement. It is possible that the NPRC government decided against military victory, embroiled as they were in personal wartime enterprises,³⁶ but if so, the RUF were none the wiser.

Gbworbu Gao

The RUF’s resurgence began in 1993, with a last-gasp attack on Gbworbu Gao in Kailahun District. The RUF were so undersupplied they used stones to capture the town. ‘We had three RPGs and one tube for firing, and a little ammunition. It was the only time we had to use stones,’ describes one of the fighters.³⁷ Another fighter describes the rebels’ tactics in detail:

In Talia, we called a meeting with all of the top commanders...where we decided to use guerrilla tactics. We decided to go attack Gworbu Gao, beyond Giema. And there we went to attack with 150 armed men, with three GMG,³⁸ six mortar

³² See, e.g. Berman, “Re-Armament in Sierra Leone,” 18. For a neutral reading of Strasser’s ‘strategic blunder’ see, TRC, “Volume 3A,” 179.

³³ Peters, *War and the Crisis of Youth*, 65.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 65–6.

³⁵ There are various spellings for the headquarters of Nomo Chiefdom (Nomorfaama, Nomoh Faama, Nomo Farma)—I use the simplest and most common.

³⁶ Keen, “Aid and Violence,” 321; Keen, *Conflict and Collusion*, 119–20.

³⁷ Jinnah Brooks, Battalion G4 Commander.

³⁸ ‘GMG’ is grenade machine gun; it is referred to frequently in interviews, however the Heckler and Koch GMG only entered production in mid-1996. It is likely that ‘GMG’ here is a misidentification

RPG, and just one rocket. We divided the group into three parts, with 50 men in each group...Around sharp five o'clock in the morning, we attacked the town, and we fought until six o'clock in the morning, and the ammunition was finished. So we had pushed them, they were at the armour dome, and only one house was between us...

We who had come that far were never going to surrender, because we didn't even have ammunition for the defensive. So ourselves we *toma* [doubled-down] on the place; we said we aren't going to move...even though we didn't have any ammunition to advance on them. They launched grenades at us, fired upon us; so we assessed ourselves and we said, 'what do we do now?' We had three grenades. These three grenades, we said, 'let everyone take a stone in their hand'—and the ones that had ammunition left, some people had five rounds in their weapon, some people had three, some people had four—so they said, 'everybody take arm and stone'...they launched the three grenades together. And when the thing blasts, we begin to send the stones! We sent the stones on top of the house, we sent them upon the veranda. And then the guys ran away, so we ran to capture the armour dome...Using those tactics, we got about 12 boxes of AK rounds, five boxes of RPG rockets, three boxes of GMG rounds, four tins³⁹ of G3 rounds, and two boxes of grenades, and then we got arms—one GMG, one RPG rocket, and nine automatic rifles...we were too happy because of the quantity we received. So then, we took the material back to Giema; we set up defences and began to plan what will be the next target.⁴⁰

After their success, RUF fighters were sent to retrieve Sankoh near the Guinea border and ferry him to safety at Giema, the defensive position, while an advance team went to the next target. The RUF had the slimmest quantity of firepower necessary to launch more concerted attacks on two targets that would prove pivotal in re-arming the group: Ngiehun, with a major SLA arms store; and Nomo Faama, ULIMO's Kenema District base near the border with Liberia.⁴¹

Ngiehun

Around this time, the RUF had captured a soldier who went by the name 'Long-life'.⁴² Although he reportedly died in 1997, in return for his life in 1993, he had given Mosquito accurate information about the SLA arms store at Ngiehun, seven miles west of Kailahun town (Figure 13). He also informed the rebels that all of the government soldiers were concentrated in Koindu, Dia, Kangama, Buedu, and Nyandehun, while other areas were

of what is more commonly called 'GPMG', general-purpose machine gun; the RUF also used many G-3 rifles. Quotes herein retain the parlance of the fighters, though it is not always clear what weapons they are referring to. Where possible, weapons mentioned are presented in Appendix XX.

³⁹ A conversation followed, explaining there are two tins in a box.

⁴⁰ Mohamed Mundah, Overall Black Guard Commander.

⁴¹ Eric Bangura, Agriculture Secretariat/Humanitarian Commander.

⁴² Eddie Bockarie, IDU Commander.

defended largely by Military Police.⁴³ As fighters repeatedly point out, ‘the RUF had been hard up,’⁴⁴ making the Ngiehun cache a boon for the group. It provided enough supplies to launch Phase II. Mosquito led the attack on the warehouse, which was indeed guarded only by SLA Military Police at the time.⁴⁵ This time attacking in the afternoon, the tactics were similar:

We attacked at 2:00 pm and...attacked the town in three flanks. It wasn’t even up to 30 minutes and we conquered the town. There was one whole house full up with arms and ammunition. The ammunition [was over 100 boxes]...Then the arms, I won’t be able to tell the amount, because it was too many...And we got enough combats, new ones—that US one. Myself, I got about five suits of combat with my boots, all wrapped inside plastic...When we got this ammunition, we made a *zoe bush*. We withdrew all the arms and ammunition and carried them into the bush. From then, we kept strong defences.⁴⁶

After the success at Ngiehun, the rebels retreated with their supplies to the rear defensive at Giema, where the new arms, ammunition, and soldiers’ uniforms were distributed to commanders for the next operation: ‘Opening The Jungle.’⁴⁷ Mohammed Tarawallie was left to guard the rear, while the other top commanders went southwest with heavy forces, first to Nomo Faama, and then to reconnect with First Battalion, who it was said had found the site for a new jungle base—Zogoda.

Nomo Faama

The attack on Nomo Faama was launched on Christmas Day. ‘The ULIMO and government soldiers were just relaxing—they were having a football game!’ recalls a fighter.⁴⁸ Caught off-guard, the soldiers quickly scattered. This prompted the rumours of collaboration between the government and rebels. A different account, provided by a civilian quoted by Keen, says the government troops vacated the town in advance, leaving their weapons behind after receiving a letter from the RUF on 25 December 1993 warning of their impending attack.⁴⁹ By all accounts, the assault proved a harbinger of the weeks to come. A frontline commander describes the sequence of attacks that followed, from Nomo Faama, to Bunumbu, and Wuima, before fanning out to establish jungle bases:

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ Jinnah Brooks, Battalion G4 Commander.

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ Mohamed Mundah, Overall Black Guard Commander.

⁴⁷ Bobson Bockarie, District MP Commander.

⁴⁸ Abie Tamba, Adjutant.

⁴⁹ Keen, *Conflict and Collusion*, 119–20.

Foday Sankoh said we have to go open a jungle now, and the first target would be Nomo Faama...they went with 400 armed men, and with 350 unarmed men, because not everyone was registered, but 400 were there when they called the formation in the morning. So they divided the group into three parts...When they moved from that area, they weren't to attack any other town, because we had information that Nomo Faama was the ULIMO base. And they weren't to move during the day at all. Only at night they would come out. Any town they met up, they were to bypass it, not to enter. When they attacked Nomo Faama they were able to get more than enough arms and ammunition...

Then, we attacked Bunumbu around 4:30 in the morning. We fought until, 6:00 am, we captured the town. The type of force we went with, no one would be able to stand us. The type of commanders we went with were the strongest...We held Bunumbu for about four days...Then we moved from Bunumbu to Wuima around 5:30 in the morning...SLA, *kamajors*, they couldn't withstand us. They didn't have that standing force in the interior.⁵⁰

When ex-combatants describe their 'self-reliant struggle,' these and other battles and ambushes are what they are referring to.⁵¹ Recall Peters's quote, above, of the *kamajor* commander shocked that 'disorganized' rebels could take Nomo Faama, Bunumbu, Wuima, and Tongo; this extended interview excerpt not only identifies these same targets, but it reveals the tightly organized command structure and deliberate planning through which they did it. These ambush and attack tactics underscore the importance of footpaths and bypasses in the rebels' war effort, as all of the supplies and materiel were carried on foot to various jungle bases. It provides a clearer picture of just how successful the RUF were at securing firepower from the enemy, particularly when the SLA was distracted by personal gain, or not committed to holding positions through armed confrontation.⁵²

Appropriately, these target-focused operations were called 'Catch-up and Destroy,' as fighters were to 'catch-up' all arms, ammunition, and other supplies, and 'destroy' the balance (Figure 14, 15). This may explain why a 1994 attempt by the Ministry of Defence to register RUF weapons fell short. If it had succeeded, it would have shown that the vast majority of RUF weapons were in fact the SLA's own.⁵³ As Keen writes of the failed ceasefire in 1993 that led to the RUF's re-armament, 'just when it seemed that a

⁵⁰ Mohamed Mundah, Overall Black Guard Commander.

⁵¹ Numerous detailed interviews were collected on these events, see e.g., Richie Amara, Fighter; Eric Bangura, Agriculture Secretariat/Humanitarian Commander; Emmanuel Kallon, Signals to Leader; Bobson Lamin, Black Guard Signals.

⁵² Keen, *Conflict and Collusion*, 119.

⁵³ Berman, "Re-Armament in Sierra Leone," 13.

combination of government and foreign troops had at last got on top of the problem, suddenly the rebels were everywhere and the country was in the grip of violence far worse than before.⁵⁴

SMALL-SCALE TRADE WITH ‘ENEMIES’

In addition to constant efforts to ‘catch-up’ arms and ammunition, high-level RUF leaders were given responsibility for developing and maintaining supply lines. One of the only successful supply lines running in Phase II was operated by the RUF’s most politically powerful woman, a Vanguard member who moved frequently between Sierra Leone and Côte d’Ivoire, ferrying supplies, including arms and ammunition, through Guinea with the help of high-level contractors.⁵⁵ Although her movements began as early as Phase I, the relationships only provided enough equipment to supplement what was captured at the frontlines.⁵⁶ The RUF’s foremost emissary and third-in-command at the start of the war, Mike Lamin, also spent extensive time in Liberia and travelling out of the country in pursuit of political, financial, and military support. He left First Battalion in 1992⁵⁷, and was not seen again in Sierra Leone until 1996, but it is unclear whether his extended forays had any results for fighters on the ground.⁵⁸ Another top commander, the General Adjutant who oversaw Phase I governance structures, was also dispatched in Phase II—reportedly to Burkina Faso—in search of external support to get the RUF out of their ‘self-reliant struggle’. He was given an unspecified amount of Leones, dollars, and diamonds, and was gone for two years, yet came back empty-handed.⁵⁹

Interviewees laugh when recounting his utter failure, but their bemusement belies the expectations that had been pinned on his return.⁶⁰ Other more bitter disappointments are attached to the rebels’ attempts to build airstrips for anticipated arms shipments.⁶¹ Today the makeshift airstrip in Buedu is little more than a fallow field, thick with elephant grass, where

⁵⁴ Keen, *Conflict and Collusion*, 119.

⁵⁵ Naomi Sankoh, Vanguard woman.

⁵⁶ Jinnah Brooks, Battalion G4 Commander.

⁵⁷ Jacob Sesay, Brigade Commander.

⁵⁸ Eddie Bockarie, IDU Commander.

⁵⁹ Daramy Kamanda, Signals.

⁶⁰ Bobson Bockarie, District MP Commander.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*

RUF MPs had once mobilized civilians and combatants to cut grass and clear rocks to create a suitable landing site.⁶² As the G4 commander ruefully describes:

With ULIMO, we were just exchanging. Not physical money, because you know the RUF were hard up. The international world said we had money, but really, we were hard up, it was sincere. I think that was in 1996, yeah...things were so stiff for us, and by then Foday Sankoh had gone to Ivory Coast. These negotiations were going on. We had hoped that—we made an airfield at Buedu—we had hoped that when he went yonder, if we made the airfield, maybe some ammunition could be brought for us. But that, it never came. By then these *kamajors* had re-grouped seriously. They attacked us and destabilized our positions.⁶³

Guinean soldiers and ULIMO forces provided a not insignificant source of ammunition for the rebels throughout the conflict. As two fighters discuss, quantities were limited, but at some points pivotal in sustaining the war effort:

With the Guineans, we didn't really go into that arms deal too much. Maybe just one or two boxes of ammunition, here and there.

[The other jumps in] But two boxes can cause a big problem! Until we reached Koindu during NPRC, we didn't even have two boxes. The more you go, you gain.⁶⁴

These small but steady transactions helped the RUF fill gaps in its ammunition supply throughout Phase II, when relations were cool with Taylor and transit routes from Liberia were blocked.

Guinea waterside

As described in the previous chapter, several formalized 'watersides' where large dugout canoes regularly ferried passengers and goods between Guinea and Sierra Leone, were open during the war. Manned on either side by Guinean or RUF soldiers, the trade was carefully orchestrated and supervised by the avowed 'enemy' groups. Borrowing from Biafra, Richards calls this the 'attack trade,'⁶⁵ but the name is a bit of a misnomer. What these trading patterns reveal, as much as anything, is the degree to which war economies, including that in Sierra Leone, adapt around and repurpose existing peacetime social and economic structures.

⁶² Dwight Mansaray, War Office Cartographer/RUF District Chairman.

⁶³ Jinnah Brooks, Battalion G4 Commander.

⁶⁴ Andrew Mundah, Adjutant.

⁶⁵ Richards, *Fighting for the Rain Forest*, 155–56.

While civilians scraped by on petty and cash crop trade, the RUF operated its own bulk purchases through the contractors. Most of the exchanges were small-scale and for non-materiel logistical supplies, such as food, medicine, fuel. But at least one relationship was established directly between Foday Sankoh and a Guinea Army Captain, who wanted to do business ‘soldier to soldier’ and would come under the cover of night with larger shipments of ammunition. The relationship was reportedly established with an initial good-faith ‘gift’ of Le 2 million to the captain from Sankoh, which was followed by a Le 10 million endowment to ‘go see what you can find.’⁶⁶ A commander who served as a part-time contractor also describes negotiating with the Guinea army for ammunition in exchange for large quantities (20-30 *bata*) of processed palm oil, coffee, and cocoa.⁶⁷ A dedicated radio operator was assigned to the trading business to connect the commanders with the contractors and relay messages about supplies needed.⁶⁸ Predictably, in addition to ammunition and food staples, narcotic staples—namely, rum and cigarettes—were sold as well.⁶⁹

In keeping with social habits, the waterside marketplace proved a prime location for information exchange, which the RUF used to gain intelligence about the war and occasionally their own battles. One fighter fondly describes learning the details of a major ambush he participated in from civilians at the waterside the next day:

There were a lot of areas where they did business. Even that time we destroyed the war tank and killed those soldiers, we went to the Guinea border and there they told us how many soldiers we killed. Even we, at the time, we didn’t know, but the civilians could tell us the next day.

We would leave our arms and just walk like ordinary boys. At that time we weren’t really doing business with the soldiers, but with the civilians. The soldiers were there at the border, but the civilians would ask permission and they allowed us to come across. Those border soldiers were not there to fight us, because we were locals. We would just go and buy cane juice for them, and they would just sit down and drink and start to talk a lot of French (laughs).⁷⁰

However, despite its relative tranquillity and trappings of normalcy compared to the frontline, the waterside trade was also a risky business and heavily militarised.

⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁷ Jinnah Brooks, Battalion G4 Commander.

⁶⁸ Bobson Bockarie, District MP Commander.

⁶⁹ Sylvester Kabbia, Adjutant to Battalion Commander; on the frequent connection between cigarette trade and arms shipments, see, Vines, “Combating Light Weapons,” 351.

⁷⁰ Abie Tamba, Adjutant.

While civilians were happy to trade goods and produce with the RUF, and the Guinean troops made small-scale arrangements ‘soldier to soldier’, they were also happy to trade information ‘soldier to soldier’ with the SLA. On several occasions, the soldiers shared information about the rebels’ positions, arms supplies, and manpower.⁷¹ This made working through the civilian contractors advantageous, as it displaced much of the risk of doing business with allies of the government or in Guinean territory, where RUF combatants would be targeted. Though the RUF depended on these civilian contractors and benefitted from local trading activities, they also posed their own security threats. Intelligence breaches, the ease with which contractors could cheat the RUF, their proximity to Guinean forces, and the very porosity of the border all reinforced the organization’s commitment to tightly regulating civilian activities in general and trade routes in particular.⁷²

ULIMO

In addition to the live-and-let-live policy and surreptitious trade between RUF and Guinea military troops, occasional trade occurred between the RUF and the better-equipped, government-backed ULIMO fighters:

We used to give them this jumbo maggi, we’d give them one packet for one arm, or for one box (of ammunition)...during the time they were attacking, we weren’t trading; but when they took over from Charles Taylor’s boys, that was the time we were doing the transactions with them.⁷³

Small-scale exchanges with ULIMO were most frequent after the disarmament process began in Liberia in 1996.⁷⁴ As the G4 commander describes, at this time, Sankoh had left the country for peace talks, bringing ‘everything to a standstill’:

You know, some revolutions have strong backers. If we were having that, we should have taken over this country a long time ago. We were having the capacity, we were having the manpower, but not the (material) capacity, especially this ammunition...That was why they formed the *kamajors*. When the government troops knew that we were dependent on them, getting arms from them, they formed these *kamajors* and gave them single-barrel shotguns. Because by then, we were not using shotguns. So they gave them machetes and shotguns. They used to attack us, and even if we cleared their base, we captured shotguns—we did not have any use of them.⁷⁵

⁷¹ Jinnah Brooks, Battalion G4 Commander.

⁷² Ibid.

⁷³ Johnny Kabbah, Medic.

⁷⁴ Thomas Alpha, Fighter; Bockarie Ngobeh, Black Guard.

⁷⁵ Jinnah Brooks, Battalion G4 Commander; see also, Usman Sumana, CDF Commander. Guinea also reportedly used the same strategy, equipping its local militias with single-barrel shotguns and cartridges to fight the RUF in 2000-2001 (Vines, “Combating Light Weapons,” 352).

The RUF arms store at Zogoda had been destroyed by the Executive Outcomes and *kamajor* attack, and the group was once again on the run without supplies from Taylor.⁷⁶ Mosquito negotiated with ULIMO-K out of desperation, bartering items from the Liberians' warfront wish list in exchange for ammunition:

Mosquito said, 'let us make peace with these ULIMO.' He went to Foya and they held him for a complete two weeks. By then, they were on peace, so he made a friendship with them; they arranged for the material issue. They had ammunition, but they didn't want to give it to ECOMOG—it was mostly ammunition, not arms. So we would take them that record player, those ten-battery stereos, even pistols, they said for self-defence. So we asked within (Sierra Leone) and we exchanged them for ammunitions...which we went and collected from Foya.⁷⁷

From 1996-1997, former ULIMO fighters regularly bartered military equipment for cash crops, clothes and shoes, and other consumer goods.⁷⁸ These exchanges further incentivized looting at the frontlines, and presaged Mosquito's ability to facilitate much larger weapons shipments in Phase III.

Foday Sankoh's driver, who was also the RUF Logistics Commander, oversaw the dismantling and repair of mechanical equipment to trade across the border, first at the Guinea waterside, and later with ULIMO:

Any money captured from the frontline, they used it to buy arms and ammunition, get rice and medicine. Not to pay soldiers...Anything they capture, they report them. They brought them from the frontline, and then come with them to Headquarters. Then they distribute them. Everything had to be recorded. The Pa called it "Operation Responsibility and Accountability".

Salt-n-Peppeh, the ULIMO commander, is the one they were buying from in Liberia, until 1996-1998, when AFRC had power. Then we didn't need to go yonder to buy ammunition.⁷⁹

As with Guinea waterside exchanges, combatants and RUF civilians were tasked during harvest season with reaping abandoned or seized cocoa and coffee plantations to pay in-kind for military equipment.⁸⁰

⁷⁶ Eddie Bockarie, IDU Commander.

⁷⁷ Jinnah Brooks, Battalion G4 Commander.

⁷⁸ Thomas Alpha, Junior Commando; Kai Fekkah, Vanguard/S4 Commander.

⁷⁹ Sidie Dumana, Driver to Leader.

⁸⁰ Augustine Tholley, Battalion Commander.

FOREIGN SUPPORT AND THE INTERNATIONAL ARMS TRADE

The second half of the war saw a marked shift in the RUF's weapons supply lines. From the time the AFRC took power in the war's second military coup, until the final ceasefire and peace agreements were signed at Ferry Junction in 2001, never again did the RUF severely want for arms and ammunition. Several factors account for the group's material fortitude. The first was the shift in leadership from Sankoh to Mosquito following Sankoh's arrest in Nigeria. This change was inextricably linked to the second factor: Charles Taylor's ascension to the Presidency in Liberia, which provided a willing patron for Mosquito's militarism. The third was the obvious advantage gained by joining forces with the mutinous SLA. This brought the government's military supplies within the rebels' own military sphere.

Finally, the epigraph that opens this chapter—the more you go, the more you gain—captures the multiplier effects that the RUF's military power, economic gains, and territorial control had on one another, which Sankoh pursued avidly after his release from prison in 1999. These three multipliers helped secure the RUF's status not only as a significant threat internally, but as a potential military and economic resource externally. In a conversation with colleagues, a former adjutant identified a similar trio of factors, revealing the intentionality behind the RUF's putatively 'chaotic' or 'greed'-driven strategy:

We fight along three phases: you fight the military; if you've fought the military and the resistance is very strong, then you try to attack the economic areas you capture to cut off the supply lines, because the economic areas make (the government) very strong to fight; then you cut off the social activity, the social life, the movement of vehicles and the highways between the main cities and towns. So we tried to fight the military for about two, three years, but then we saw that their power was still a problem for us, so we decided to capture the economic areas of the country. So that was why, in fact, after Kono, Tongo, the next area we went was Sierra Rutile. We went to Sierra Rutile to destabilize them, just cut off all economic areas so they don't have money again. They won't have resources to buy arms and ammunition.⁸¹

This is where the AFRC-RUF alliance proved so pivotal in reorienting RUF power: after the coup, the rebels did not need to hamstring the government or simply pillage economic centres it lacked the firepower to control. Instead, they could focus on maximising and repurposing the productivity of those economic centres to consolidate power. Legitimacy, however, remained elusive. The international community responded to the AFRC coup by imposing an arms embargo, oil embargo, and travel ban in October 1997.⁸²

⁸¹ Andrew Mundah, Adjutant; Benjamin Swaray, Fighter; and Abie Tamba, Adjutant.

⁸² *UN Security Council Resolution 1132*.

The embargo had several unintended side effects that weakened its overall success.⁸³ It retrenched illicit supply lines for the RUF; it raised the stakes for mining companies and their security affiliates (whether pro-government or pro-rebel); and it encouraged creative work-arounds by the elected government that led to the ‘arms for Africa’ scandal and full militarization of the CDF.⁸⁴ Perhaps because of the intensity of international attention following the embargo (and subsequently, not least because it represents the years under the purview of the SCSL), this third phase of the war is the best-known and -documented.

An odd outcome of the scrutiny, however, is the assumption that the weapons transfers and business deals identified from 1998-2001 are just the ‘tip of the iceberg’ and are representative of transactions throughout the war.⁸⁵ In reality, it seems almost all of the illicit networks and arms shipments enjoyed by the RUF during this time have been uncovered through multiple investigations and reports.⁸⁶ Their collective findings emphasize the prominence of Charles Taylor. However, his relevance to fighters on the ground was minimal.⁸⁷ Even as the war was becoming increasingly internationalized, implicating ever-larger sums of money, on the ground it would remain a provincial power struggle, riven by parochial in-fighting. This section describes the relationship re-established with Taylor, how it was used to arm the People’s Army, and the effects of internal discord on organizational cohesion and supplies.

‘The Father’ next door

Taylor’s assumption of the presidency in Liberia provided the RUF with an invaluable corridor for arms shipments structured around a classic patronage relationship.⁸⁸ Prior to Sankoh’s departure for the Abidjan peace talks, he had conducted directly or closely supervised all political and military transactions with external actors. He moved in and out of Liberia continually when relations with Taylor were good, orchestrated ‘diplomatic’

⁸³ Vines, “Combating Light Weapons.”

⁸⁴ Usman Sumana, CDF Commander.

⁸⁵ Berman, “Re-Armament in Sierra Leone,” 15.

⁸⁶ C.f. The investigative reports: on diamonds, Smillie et al., *Heart of the Matter*; on weapons, Panel of Experts, *Report*; on the relationship with Taylor, Prosecutor vs. Charles Ghankay Taylor, Judgment (2012).

⁸⁷ Rupert, “Diamond Hunters”; Berman, “Re-Armament in Sierra Leone,” 16, also quoting Rupert.

⁸⁸ On Taylor’s election, see, Harris, “From ‘Warlord’ to ‘Democratic’ President.”

missions for supplies, and took looted diamonds with him when he travelled by helicopter during the 1995-1996 negotiations.⁸⁹

After Sankoh was arrested in Abuja on weapons charges, Sam Bockarie turned to Taylor for support. According to some RUF, Sankoh was arrested while trying to broker an arms deal with the state of Nigeria and ECOMOG itself, rather than surreptitiously trying to access international arms dealers.⁹⁰ Mosquito warned him it could be a set-up and controversy surrounds the subsequent arrest⁹¹:

When they went to Nigeria, it was for ammunition. They went to this fellow, Obasanjo...no, Abacha. They went to arrange things with Abacha for ECOMOG troops to come with ammunition for him, because that was the arrangement they had made with the Liberians. ECOMOG supplied Charles Taylor, so why not have ECOMOG supply us too. But when he got to Nigeria, the thing backfired, and they arrested Foday Sankoh, because of the diamonds he had carried with him. They said they saw a pistol, but they planted the pistol on him. Because, he left Ivory Coast, he passed through security, through immigration, all these places—no pistol, no nothing, So how come he had a pistol on him when he reached Nigeria? They planted it. They arrested him, the diamonds went missing...

That was the time Mosquito came into the picture. He went directly to Charles Taylor! He said every little bit of resources we'd get from here, we'll send to him, Charles Taylor, so that he would supply us to fight.⁹²

In light of the RUF's struggle for ammunition in Phase II, Mosquito's desperation was logical. Without Taylor's assistance and with Sankoh in jail, the RUF would have been cut off completely. As described above, previous attempts to access international arms networks had proved dependent on Taylor's brokerage and, when transshipment through Liberia was blocked, had largely failed.⁹³ By the time Mosquito contacted Taylor, he was willing to go to any length to maintain the RUF's arms supply.

Arming the People's Army

The invitation to share power with the AFRC just after Sankoh's arrest increased the RUF's arms overnight. They no longer had to 'catch-up' government ammunition—they had full access to it. While some of the RUF commanders, including Issa Sesay, Dennis Mingo, and

⁸⁹ Mohammed Kembay, Fighter.

⁹⁰ Holtom, *Case Study: Sierra Leone*, 8, identifies the arrest as stemming from Sankoh's attempts to finalize a delivery of heavy artillery from Ukraine.

⁹¹ Dwight Mansaray, War Office Cartographer/RUF District Chairman.

⁹² Abie Tamba, Adjutant.

⁹³ Berman, "Re-Armament in Sierra Leone."

Morris Kallon, joined the AFRC Supreme Council in the capital, Mosquito preferred to stay in Kenema near the RUF stronghold, where he felt more secure and could maintain channels to Liberia.⁹⁴ The AFRC were slow to establish arrangements for new arms shipments, however, and the imposition of the arms embargo in October, with ECOMOG forces still controlling the airport, made it all the more difficult.

Johnny-Paul Koroma wrote and hand-delivered a letter to Taylor asking for his assistance. Although Taylor did not grant him and the Supreme Council members an audience in Monrovia,⁹⁵ he helped the junta secure arms through his top deputies. Taylor's deputies travelled to Sierra Leone to arrange shipments, escorting high-level RUF and AFRC officers to Côte d'Ivoire and Burkina Faso.⁹⁶ The UN Panel of Experts and Taylor Trial both document sanctions-breaching transfers delivered to an airfield outside Magburaka, Northern Province, in October 1997 during the junta interregnum.⁹⁷ An earlier shipment not mentioned in those reports also arrived by sea from Ukraine, off-loading rice, ammunition, and new AK-47s in Freetown harbour.⁹⁸ As ECOMOG began blockading the port, the planned second shipment never materialized, possibly accounting for the Ukrainian aerial drops at documented at Magburaka.⁹⁹

After the RUF and AFRC were pushed from Freetown, the RUF gained the upper hand in the partnership, which was itself rapidly deteriorating. Mosquito resumed control of the relationship with Taylor, which grew closer than ever. After several months of sporadic deliveries of food, medicine, and ammunition by pick-up and Land Cruiser, Mosquito arrived at RUF headquarters in Buedu in late 1998 with a huge shipment—reportedly several lorries—of arms and ammunition (Figure 16).¹⁰⁰ He called his battalion commanders together for a meeting with Taylor's top security advisors.¹⁰¹ And with an unprecedented

⁹⁴ Manfred Kamara, Adjutant General/Acting Battlefront Commander; Bockarie Ngobeh, Black Guard; Jacob Sesay, Brigade Commander.

⁹⁵ Prosecutor vs. Charles Ghankay Taylor, Judgment (2012).

⁹⁶ Kemoh Aruna, Signals to the Leader; Bockarie Ngobeh, Black Guard.

⁹⁷ Prosecutor vs. Charles Ghankay Taylor, Judgment, 1822–56 (2012), 1822–56; Panel of Experts, *Report*.

⁹⁸ Jinnah Brooks, Battalion G4 Commander.

⁹⁹ Although the shipment is not documented, the Taylor trial proceedings include reference to the ECOMOG blockade of ocean transport for arms (Prosecutor vs. Charles Ghankay Taylor, Judgment, 1832 (2012), 1832.) and also describe ECOMOG's bombing of the Magburaka airfield, leading to net-dropped deliveries.

¹⁰⁰ Thomas Alpha, Junior Commando.

¹⁰¹ Kemoh Aruna, Signals to the Leader; Jacob Sesay, Brigade Commander.

quantity of materiel, the strategy was drawn up and weapons distributed for a two-pronged assault taking Kono and Kenema.¹⁰²

Although this has been said to be the meeting wherein plans were drafted to capture Freetown, SAJ Musa, who commanded that AFRC assault, was not present, and no details were set. As a commander describes:

There was no plan to attack Freetown at the meeting. If we had been successful in the attacks on Kenema, Makeni, and Kono, we would have made a new plan to continue to advance...[When] Superman moved forward from Makeni to Lunsar and then on to Waterloo, it was not part of the original plan.¹⁰³

As was the case in 1992, again the troops heading to Kenema were rebuffed at Daru Barracks; but the assault on much harder-to-defend Koidu town, Kono, was successful.¹⁰⁴

Taylor sent a helicopter to Koidu to verify the RUF had genuine control over the area. Satisfied with his deputies' report after their three-day stay, he sent arms, ammunition, and other supplies to the rear.¹⁰⁵ Sankoh's US-based Belgian associate 'Michel' visited with Taylor's top representative, General Ibrahim Bah, to survey the diamond fields.¹⁰⁶ Proceeds pulled from diamond trading offices and RUF 'government' mining operations were used to buy additional equipment for the RUF, including a satellite, mobile phones, military uniforms, and FM radios for broadcasting propaganda messages.¹⁰⁷ These purchases were all conducted by Mosquito, through Taylor's interlocutors and closest advisors—Benjamin Yeaten¹⁰⁸ and General Ibrahim Bah.¹⁰⁹ Dozens of shipments, containing tens of boxes of ammunition, food, rum, drugs, and other equipment, were smuggled into the country from Foya, Liberia, through the border near Mosquito's headquarters at Buedu.¹¹⁰ RUF radio

¹⁰² Bockarie Ngobeh, Black Guard; Abie Tamba, Adjutant.

¹⁰³ "Mohamed Munday, Written Testimony," 46, 48.

¹⁰⁴ Bockarie Ngobeh, Black Guard.

¹⁰⁵ Abie Tamba, Adjutant.

¹⁰⁶ Bockarie Ngobeh, Black Guard; John Saffa, Overall Signals Commander; see also, Panel of Experts, *Report*, 20.

¹⁰⁷ Daramy Kamanda, Signals; Jacob Sesay, Brigade Commander.

¹⁰⁸ Anon., "Benjamin Yeaten's Return to Nimba."

¹⁰⁹ The UN Panel of Experts identifies Bah as Burkinabe, however multiple informants identified him as Gambian, and witness testimonies in the Taylor trial identify him as Gambian or Senegalese (Panel of Experts, *Report*; see also, "UN Experts Say Top Charles Taylor Associate Living Freely in Sierra Leone."

¹¹⁰ Bobson Bockarie, District MP Commander; Eddie Bockarie, IDU Commander; Jacob Sesay, Brigade Commander; Prosecutor vs. Charles Ghankay Taylor, Judgment (2012).

operators were posted to Yeaten's headquarters in Liberia, 'Base One', providing Mosquito a direct line to Taylor's security services.¹¹¹

Discord at the top

Despite open channels of communication and transshipment through Liberia, the international supply chain the RUF sought to build still suffered from the vagaries of war, crime, and incompetence. Several payments for supplies and ammunition were lost, misplaced, or embezzled, creating acute tension in the RUF's young leadership. The most high-profile incidents led to the in-fighting and ultimate dissolution of RUF top command. In 1997, during AFRC rule, Dennis 'Superman' Mingo was accused of embezzling millions of Leones from a diamond sale, the balance of which went to the AFRC government.¹¹²

When the junta was driven from Freetown, an unspecified number of diamonds, dollars, and Leones were seized from AFRC leader Johnny-Paul Koroma. Koroma was accused of treachery by Bockarie and Sesay and arrested for plotting to flee the country with the People's Army war chest.¹¹³ He and his wife later escaped, but not before both were beaten and his wife raped.¹¹⁴ Johnny-Paul's decision to follow Mosquito to Kailahun led to SAJ Musa's split¹¹⁵, which itself led to clashes between SAJ and Superman¹¹⁶ and the disarray of the 6 January 1999 attack on Freetown. Conflict over money, diamonds, and other goods was undermining both the material capacity of the RUF and the efficacy of its leadership.

Around the time of the disastrous (supremely for residents, but also militarily for all parties) siege of Freetown, Mosquito sent Issa to Monrovia with hundreds of dollars and a large parcel of diamonds to deliver to Taylor in exchange for food, medicine, ammunition, and other equipment. Issa said the money was lost or stolen.¹¹⁷ The overall Black Guard commander describes the tense situation when Issa returned to Sierra Leone empty-handed:

Issa Sesay said the parcel of diamonds fell from his hand and he lost them. Sam Bockarie wanted to shoot him and Issa was molested (beaten) in Buedu. I was not present...[the area Black Guard commander] sent a message to me asking

¹¹¹ Kemoh Aruna, Signals to the Leader; Jacob Sesay, Brigade Commander; also, Ibid.

¹¹² Bockarie Ngobeh, Black Guard; Panel of Experts, *Report*.

¹¹³ Jacob Sesay, Brigade Commander.

¹¹⁴ Bockarie Ngobeh, Black Guard.

¹¹⁵ Eddie Bockarie, IDU commander; Hakim Koroma, NPRC Security to the Leader; Abie Tamba, Adjutant.

¹¹⁶ Bockarie Ngobeh, Black Guard.

¹¹⁷ Eddie Bockarie, IDU commander; Jacob Sesay, Brigade Commander.

me to come immediately as Sam Bockarie was very angry with Issa and wanted to kill him. I came to Buedu [but] because of Sam Bockarie's behaviour, I was afraid to advise him. I secretly approached SYB Rogers, the Chairman of the War Council. I said (because) Foday Sankoh is not here and he is very influential [he] should speak to Sam Bockarie about not killing Issa Sesay but punish him himself. I met them in the night. I said if anything went wrong, Foday Sankoh would ask him what happened. SYB said he would do a follow-up. I went back to Kailahun Town that same night. I did not want Sam Bockarie to know what I had done as it would have caused problems. The next morning Pa Rogers and Pa B. met Sam Bockarie and told him not to kill Issa...they talked to him until he calmed down.¹¹⁸

Mosquito followed Sankoh's instruction not to punish Sesay, but, according to the UN report, this not only broke the friendship between Bockarie and Sesay, but also ignited a long-simmering feud between Issa and Superman, who had not been treated so compassionately following his 'embezzlement' indictment.¹¹⁹ The incident spiralled from passive aggression into mutual *fit-yai*,¹²⁰ in which all three top commanders mistrusted one another. The simplified narrative of their in-fighting is that Superman felt discriminated against for being Liberian; Mosquito felt betrayed by Issa, whom he believed was favoured by Sankoh for being from his Temne tribe; and Issa continued to proclaim his innocence, while increasingly harassing Superman and his bodyguards.¹²¹ As the Overall Black Guard Commander describes:

Superman was acting as his own commander at this time and was openly challenging Sam Bockarie's authority in the RUF...Superman said that... he wanted to humiliate everyone and he does not appreciate people's efforts and he is very ungrateful. Superman said he shed blood for this country and he would not accept Sam Bockarie's attitude. He also said he believed Sam Bockarie was high on leadership and wanted to overthrow Foday Sankoh...Superman said he would not submit to him until the return of Foday Sankoh, and if Sam Bockarie tried to overthrow Foday Sankoh, he would not take it lightly.¹²²

Unable to arrest Superman, Bockarie issued an order throughout the RUF that no one was to communicate by radio with him. These fissures in the RUF's leadership indicate the diverging interests and lack of consensus about the priority to be placed on military supplies. Mismanagement and disagreements were most acute when the organization had resources and options beyond its old 'fight for survival' strategy.

¹¹⁸ "Mohamed Mundah, Written Testimony," 35.

¹¹⁹ Panel of Experts, *Report*, 16–17.

¹²⁰ 'Disrespect', with connotations of defiance and stubbornness.

¹²¹ Ricky Kamara, Security to Mosquito; Andrew Mundah, Adjutant; Mohamed Mundah, Overall Black Guard Commander; Bockarie Ngobeh, Black Guard; John Saffa, Overall Signals Commander.

¹²² "Mohamed Mundah, Written Testimony," 49.

ARMS RACE TO THE FINISH

Since 1996, Mosquito had dedicated himself to arming the RUF. When his top commanders appeared to show less commitment to the military cause than he, leadership frayed. Yet, neither infighting nor lost diamonds cost the RUF Taylor's patronage. Rather, Mosquito maintained active arms channels throughout the first half of 1999, bringing in the rebels' largest supply shipments just as peace talks were crystallizing into an accord.

The most proximate cause of the RUF's sudden influx of weapons and access from Liberia at the end of the war was the pressure Taylor was facing from LURD and MODEL rebel forces. He armed the RUF as he would his own forces to come fight as a proxy militia in border areas with Guinea. A signals commander describes:

At times, if the enemy threatens them and they need manpower, we can come out of Sierra Leone with our own troops and go fight for them. That was the incident with the Mosquito Spray incident, we went as reinforcements and stayed there until the chiefdom died down, and we then came back.¹²³

According to the RUF commander of the 'Cobra' mission to drive Mosquito Spray¹²⁴ (LURD) out of Lofa County, several loads of arms and ammunition were brought from Foya into Buedu before an entire battalion—400 troops—was sent to Voinjama and Kolahun near the Liberia-Guinea border.¹²⁵ Sixty-eight tonnes of arms and ammunition were transported via several illicit flights from Burkina Faso to Liberia in March 1999, a month before RUF forces were deployed to flush Mosquito Spray out of Lofa County, and a month before the Lomé ceasefire was signed.¹²⁶ It marks one of the largest arms shipments in the war and was arranged through Leonid Minin, 'business partner and confidant of Charles Taylor'.¹²⁷

¹²³ John Saffa, Overall Signals Commander.

¹²⁴ Interviewees generally identify 'Mosquito Spray' as the name of the commander of the rebels, however other sources identify 'Mosquito Spray' as a code name for the group itself (Prosecutor vs. Charles Ghankay Taylor, Judgment (2012).)

¹²⁵ Jacob Sesay, Brigade Commander.

¹²⁶ Ibid.; Lome, Togo, *Peace Agreement Between the GoSL and the RUF/SL*. The makeshift nature of illicit arms transfers is underscored by the use of an executive jet rather than purpose-built cargo carrier to bring the arms to Liberia, requiring several flights back and forth from Burkina Faso to the airfield in Foya, followed by convoys of material to the Sierra Leone border at Buedu.

¹²⁷ Prosecutor vs. Charles Ghankay Taylor, Judgment, 1737 (2012), 1737. Minin was implicated in a second arms shipment of 113 tons delivered to Côte d'Ivoire 12 July 2000 (Brunwasser, "Sierra Leone Gunrunners, Leonid Minin.")

Taylor both needed the RUF's military support, and he profited hugely from their clientelism.¹²⁸ Estimates of RUF diamond revenues are largely useless, partly because the quantity and value of diamonds procured through theft and mining varied widely over the course of the war, dictated by territorial control. Revenue estimates are also of little value because the arrangement with Taylor was not clearly recorded—like many West African political and social relationships, the dynamic was classically patron-client. Yet, as the UN Panel of Experts writes:

From as little as US\$25 million per annum to as much as US\$125 million, whatever the total, it represents a major and primary source of income for the RUF, and is more than enough to sustain its military activities.¹²⁹

It also represents a not-inconsequential degree of Taylor's military activities. Even if the lowest estimated revenues are taken for the last two or three years of the war (when Kono and Tongo mining regions were under the group's control) and the largest arms shipments used as representative of military supply costs, Taylor and the RUF would have had millions of dollars in surplus. For example, the AFRC arms shipment at Magburaka—which contained 200 AK-47 rifles, two anti-aircraft artillery, two 75-calibre machine guns, RPGs, and 80 boxes of ammunition¹³⁰—reportedly cost 90 carats of diamonds (of unspecified quality) to purchase and US\$90,000 to transport, a mere fraction of the US\$25 million minimum estimated annual revenue.¹³¹

Another lubricant for the RUF's increased access to international arms transfers was that, as Taylor profited, other junior investors began to put greater stock in the RUF's potential to provide reliable access to stones. Arms dealers entered on the ground floor with their highly flexible networks of illicit and money-laundering enterprises, as Smillie *et al.* describe:

An international criminal consortium of diamond dealers and cocaine traffickers were behind the attempt by Taylor to seize Sierra Leone's diamond fields through [RUF proxy]...A South African 'neo-Nazi' and...an Ecuadorian who was once in business with Colombian drug baron, Pablo Escobar...were the main figures in the consortium.¹³²

¹²⁸ Berman, "Re-Armament in Sierra Leone," 15.

¹²⁹ Estimates are formulated largely based on changes in exports from neighbouring, less-diamondiferous countries, such as Gambia and Liberia; Panel of Experts, *Report*, 17–18.

¹³⁰ Prosecutor vs. Charles Ghankay Taylor, Judgment, 1851, 1854 (2012), 1851, 1854.

¹³¹ *Ibid.*, 933, 1824–58.

¹³² Smillie et al., *Heart of the Matter*, 46.

Other major players in Sierra Leone's highly internationalized and militarized security-mining nexus include, on the RUF side: Israeli arms dealer Yair Klein;¹³³ Russian arms and aid dealer Viktor Bout, known as 'Lord of War' and 'Merchant of Death';¹³⁴ and Bout's associate, Kenyan Sanjivan Ruprah, who owned diamond mines in Liberia, where he was named 'Deputy Commissioner of Maritime Affairs.' Shipments to Liberia during the Sierra Leone civil war originated in numerous Eastern Bloc countries, including Bulgaria, Kyrgyzstan, Moldova, Slovakia, and Ukraine, and passed through Burkina Faso, Côte d'Ivoire, and Libya.¹³⁵

Sankoh's power play

Meanwhile, Sankoh sought to translate his post-Lomé freedom into personal clout and political autonomy, and continued pursuing arms supplies to secure militarily what he gained politically. Endowed by the accord with the power of the vice-presidency and oversight of the mining sector through his chairmanship of the CMRRD, Sankoh travelled widely. He made use of Taylor's connections in an attempt to establish both political credibility and reliable business deals for arms and diamonds.¹³⁶ Immediately following the peace talks, Sankoh toured ECOWAS member states. In addition to *de rigueur* flights in and out of Monrovia, he attended the OAU summit in Algiers on Togolese President Eyadema's plane.¹³⁷ He then visited Libya, where he met several times with Gaddafi, before going on a Hajj to Mecca. There, he and his small entourage were escorted by King Fahd's security, before returning to Libya to collect several bundles of cash.¹³⁸ On the party's return to Sierra Leone via Lomé, Sankoh split off to visit President Compaore in Burkina Faso and meet with Taylor and Johnny-Paul Koroma in Monrovia.

Finally, Sankoh returned to Sierra Leone, where he travelled throughout RUF strongholds to describe the peace process and endorse disarmament.¹³⁹ At the same time, however, he also

¹³³ Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs, "Press Statement of the Release of Yair Klein"; US Department of State, "Confidential Advisory on Arrest of Yair Klein."

¹³⁴ 'Gunrunners'; Ashley Hayes, 'Who Is the 'Merchant of Death'?', CNN, 17 November 2010.

¹³⁵ Vines, "Combating Light Weapons," 345.

¹³⁶ The same assessment of Sankoh's intentions and ambitions is made in, Panel of Experts, *Report*, 20. Taylor made conspicuously similar 'diplomatic' trips (to Burkina Faso, Libya, Niger, and South Africa), allegedly to negotiate arms deals (Prosecutor vs. Charles Ghankay Taylor, Judgment, 24 (2012), 24.)

¹³⁷ Bockarie Ngobeh, Black Guard.

¹³⁸ Ibid.

¹³⁹ Manfred Kamara, Adjutant General/Acting Battlefront Commander.

made time for a trip to South Africa, allegedly to make further diamonds-for-arms arrangements.¹⁴⁰ Shortly after he returned, the civil society protest outside his house on Spur Road on 8 May 2000 turned violent. After the melee, arms and documents were seized from the property, detailing some of Sankoh's dealings with European diamond dealers in the short period of time he had been out of prison.¹⁴¹

The defining feature of the RUF's international supply network is how small and tightly closed it was.¹⁴² Arms purchases were shrouded in secrecy and conducted largely by Sankoh and Taylor personally, until Taylor became president, by which time a small coterie of trusted deputies acted on his behalf. Although it didn't save him in his trial, this small degree of distance gave Taylor grounds on which to deny knowledge of the steady supply of arms shipments passing through his borders to the RUF.¹⁴³ As Berman notes, "Taylor (was) not only able to defy international arms embargoes, he...also managed to overcome significant logistical constraints."¹⁴⁴ Taylor skilfully facilitated transshipment of arms and ammunition from several countries of origin, and regularly from Libya and Burkina Faso.¹⁴⁵ Marsh describes:

Organizing illegal arms sales...involves a large amount of skill, organization, preparation, and financial resources. Documents need to be forged, officials bribed, legitimate arms companies persuaded to sell their weapons, money laundered, and aircrews recruited. As this process is illegal, there is no way that the knowledge and contacts required can be easily obtained. Brokers themselves generally do not take possession of the arms—they bring together the buyer and seller, and facilitate the deal.¹⁴⁶

This makes it all the more significant that the largest arms shipments to the RUF were not only after the arms embargo was in place, but that many arrived as fighting was supposedly being scaled down through Taylor's diplomatic brokerage with the RUF on behalf of ECOWAS.

¹⁴⁰ Musa Bangura, Security to the Leader; Mohamed Mundah, Overall Black Guard Commander; UN Panel of Experts.

¹⁴¹ See, Sankoh, "Correspondence Between Foday Sankoh and 'Michel'"; "Memorandum of Understanding Between CMRRD and London Diamond Dealer."

¹⁴² Vines, "Combating Light Weapons."

¹⁴³ Prosecutor vs. Charles Ghankay Taylor, Judgment (2012).

¹⁴⁴ Berman, "Re-Armament in Sierra Leone," 14.

¹⁴⁵ Panel of Experts, *Report*.

¹⁴⁶ Marsh, "Two Sides of the Same Coin," 225.

This could be seen as a sign that Sankoh was always disingenuous in ceasefires and peace accords, with no real intention of laying down arms. Or perhaps that, like Mosquito, he wanted to consolidate peace, but remained spectacularly mistrustful of the government after it had twice driven the rebels to the brink of extinction while under ‘ceasefire.’¹⁴⁷ Regardless of the motive, the RUF leadership had always tried to secure external supply routes. It was cynical factors late in the war—Taylor’s need of military reinforcement, and growing interest from mining firms and profiteers—that brought these arms trade overtures to fruition.

Government firepower

As the following chapter describes in greater detail, the rebels’ strategy of trading mining concessions and diamond revenues for military support was not novel. Pre-war regimes used mineral resources to consolidate power, brokering agreements that militarized mining areas. During the war, all governments (Momoh, Strasser, Koroma, and Kabbah) relied heavily on mining profits and prospecting concessions to finance the military. As Musah writes:

In exchange for weapons, hard-pressed leaders have mortgaged their countries’ natural resources to rogue arms brokers and their partner extracting companies in a Faustian pact contrived to secure regime survival...In return for an initial US\$10 million in arms and mercenary support to restore his administration, Kabbah agreed to cede 30 percent of the country’s diamondiferous landmass (worth US\$200 million) to the mining company.¹⁴⁸

Nigeria also provided some 2,500 automatic rifles and large amounts of ammunition to the government of Sierra Leone,¹⁴⁹ and facilitated various formal ECOMOG arrangements and private/state-to-state agreements to deploy its troops and provide aerial support.¹⁵⁰ The NPRC hired Ghurkha Security Guards and EO services at a monthly cost of roughly US\$1.7 million.¹⁵¹

Kabbah continued the tradition of mixing military capacity and mineral extraction in the ‘Arms to Africa’ scandal that briefly brought scrutiny to the British and Sierra Leonean governments’ own illicit arms deals. It entailed planned payment of US\$5 million from a mining investor to the government of Sierra Leone, ushered through a small but complex

¹⁴⁷ See, e.g., ‘Comprehensive Salute Report on the meeting held at Buedu Committee Centre Pertaining the Consultation of All RUF Authorities Both Soldiers and Civilians to the Delegates from Togo, Liberia, and Nigeria for Lasting Peace in Sierra Leone’, *Medic Notebook* (29 June 1999).

¹⁴⁸ Musah, “Small Arms,” 240.

¹⁴⁹ Berman, “Re-Armament in Sierra Leone,” 21.

¹⁵⁰ Douglas, “Fighting for Diamonds,” 197.

¹⁵¹ Davies, “Ironic Tragedy,” 363; Reno, “African Weak States and Commercial Alliances,” 183.

and incestuous web of mining companies and security firms. These funds were used to launch a military take-over of State House, key cities, and strategic mining areas during AFRC rule.¹⁵² Headed by Sandline International and arranged in collaboration with the British government, the deal was to facilitate training and aerial support, as well as an arms shipment of ‘2,500 assault rifles, 180 rocket launchers, 50 machine guns and ammunition to Sierra Leone in late February 1998’¹⁵³—by comparison, the RUF/AFRC Magburaka windfall contained 200 AK-47s.

However, while this sanctions-violating shipment grabbed international attention, it pales in comparison to the material support provided by the British Government after the embargo against Kabbah was lifted. At the time, Berman writes:

The United Kingdom has become Sierra Leone’s biggest arms supplier since UN sanctions were amended in 1998. In October 1999, the UK announced it would provide the government of Sierra Leone with 132 light machine guns with two million rounds of ammunition, 7,500 rifles, 800,000 rounds of training ammunition, 24 81mm mortars with 2,000 rounds of ammunition, and various gear, including uniforms and boots for 3,000 troops. In May 2000, London provided 10,000 self-loading rifles. In June it added five million rounds of ammunition and 4,000 mortars. In July it announced yet another shipment of five million rounds of ammunition.¹⁵⁴

These figures provide additional perspective on the RUF’s own large arms shipments. Armament patterns illustrate the increasing amplitude of the conflict after the AFRC junta, just as command and control was deteriorating for the RUF and factionalism was increasing for both pro-government and pro-rebel forces.

In late October 1999, 6,000 UN peacekeepers arrived to enforce the Lomé Agreement. By the war’s end, more than 17,500 UNAMSIL personnel were on the ground at a cumulative cost of US\$1.38 billion (1999-2002).¹⁵⁵ The RUF’s mining-dependent resources were a pittance by comparison. The last major party to enter the conflict was the UK, which sent some 4,500 military personnel to Sierra Leone from May to September 2000, to provide aerial and artillery support, some ground support, and military training to government and

¹⁵² Douglas, “Fighting for Diamonds.”

¹⁵³ Marsh, “Two Sides of the Same Coin,” 222–23.

¹⁵⁴ Berman, “Re-Armament in Sierra Leone,” 23.

¹⁵⁵ *UN Security Council Resolution 1270*; *UN Security Council Resolution 1289*; *UN Security Council Resolution 1346*. By 2005, the total estimated expenditures were \$2.8 billion, see, “UNAMSIL: Facts and Figures.”

UNAMSIL forces.¹⁵⁶ The pro-government forces—re-grouped SLA and West Side Boys, along with the CDF—were vastly outnumbered by their Nigerian, Guinean, British, mercenary, and UNAMSIL allies.¹⁵⁷ In the face of an increasingly well-trained, well-equipped adversary, the RUF continued seizing weapons to supplement supply lines; but stretched thinly through their own in-fighting and mission creep, they were hugely outgunned by the state and its sponsors.¹⁵⁸

CONCLUSION

Over the course of the war, the RUF's large arms shipments were the exception rather than the rule. Orchestrated in partnership with Taylor, his deputies, and business partners, they generally occurred in conjunction with major operations. Particularly in Phase III, when Taylor had secured the presidency and the border was open, supplies were sent regularly and played a pivotal role in the retaking of Koidu and other major towns. From 1993-1997, however, a negligible amount of materiel was secured through Liberia, reinforcing the group's 'self-reliant' dependency on attack and seizure, arming itself from government stores and supply lines. The rebels' ability to orchestrate strategic attacks with relative tactical success—but at the cost of huge, largely uncontrolled collateral damage—illustrates the strong organizational foundation they maintained, even amidst the shifting military environment of SLA defection,¹⁵⁹ Nigerian soldiers' mining, and widespread accounts of collusion and collaboration between various 'sobel' forces.

The pattern of rebel firepower thus reads simply. Military pressure, particularly in 1993 and 1996, dramatically decreased the group's weapons supplies. The RUF spent its ammunition and manpower holding defensive positions, they were unable to attack government supply lines, and battle losses led to destruction of their arms caches. The RUF response was to retract, re-group, and re-launch with guerrilla tactics. The boon of the AFRC coup meant the RUF could increase its territorial control, which in turn attracted external support.

¹⁵⁶ Berman and Labonte, "Sierra Leone."

¹⁵⁷ The alliance was imperfect. Entrepreneurial Guinean soldiers are alleged to have sold arms to the RUF (Berman, "Re-Armament in Sierra Leone."). And sharp allegations were exchanged between UNAMSIL Commander Gen. Vijay Jetley and Nigerian ECOMOG Commander Brig. Gen. Maxwell Khobe, with Jetley accusing Khobe of corrupt connivance with the RUF, and Khobe accusing Jetley of incompetence and undermining the mission (see e.g., Montague, "Business of War.")

¹⁵⁸ Hakim Vawah, Unit Commander, Head of security RUF Presidential lodge.

¹⁵⁹ At one point an entire battalion, 400 troops, left Tekko Barracks in Makeni and headed for the bush (Usman Sumana, CDF Commander).

Interestingly, major leadership changes did not alter the RUF's arms network, which remained small and tightly knit in and around Taylor's contacts. Both war and peace in neighbouring countries brought arms to the movement, albeit through different mechanisms. Access waned when ULIMO blocked the border, but after peace was declared in Liberia in 1996, ULIMO was ready to trade its leftover ammunition for other goods, and Taylor became a reliable, economically motivated patron. Conversely, when conflict picked up again in Liberia, Taylor re-doubled his support for supplying the RUF with armaments, this time as an urgent military investment.

The self-imposed exile of Mosquito was a fitting coda at the war's end. It again brought pique between Sankoh and Taylor, and marked the beginning of the end for Taylor, whose chickens were coming home to roost. Taylor's request for RUF reinforcements, first in Lofa County, and then for an assault in Guinean territory,¹⁶⁰ undermined his credibility with RUF battle front commanders, who felt exploited amidst growing 'mission creep'.¹⁶¹ The cost for logistical support seemed to outweigh the benefits in light of increasingly tangible possibilities for peace.

¹⁶⁰ Gasimu Komba, Fighter.

¹⁶¹ Jacob Sesay, Brigade Commander; also, Prosecutor vs. Charles Ghankay Taylor, Judgment (2012).

ARMS SUPPLY SITES



Figure 13: Ngichun armour dome (2010).



Figure 14: Segbwema town centre and the remains of 'catch up and destroy' (2010).



Figure 15: A major RUF ambush site on Kailahun highway, Segbwema (2010).



Figure 16: The former Seattle Supersonics executive jet used by Charles Taylor to shuttle arms from Burkina Faso to supply the RUF for the Kono assault (undated).

DIAMOND MINING SITES

Figure 17: 'Banana Island bypass'—the footpath thoroughfare through Peyama to Zogoda (2010).



Figure 18: Diamond offices in Tongo (2010).



CHAPTER 8

DIAMONDS: PERSONAL POWER, PUBLIC GOODS

In times of peace, prepare for war.

Government District Officer, Tongo¹

When fighting war, you must think about peace.

Fatou Sankoh, wife of Foday Sankoh²

Insofar as diamonds consume the heart of state politics in Sierra Leone, they constitute the ‘heart of the matter’ in the civil war. When Sierra Leone’s diamond fields were discovered in the 1930s, they were determined to be the richest alluvial diamond deposit in the world.³ Consequently, mining has always been economically, and therefore militarily, strategic; politically salient, to both the political elite and the marginalized masses; and the primary source of ‘government’ revenue, whether for the civilian government of Sierra Leone, the military junta, or the rebels. This chapter surveys the role of diamonds in the RUF throughout the war by looking at RUF management of the resource during the few periods the rebels controlled adequate territory to launch mining endeavours. It examines the effects of diamond wealth on power dynamics and organizational cohesion in the RUF, and the implications this had for provision of goods and services. Diamonds are presented as the paragon of the Janus-faced nature of intentions versus actions in the war. On the one hand, mining areas attracted Weinstein’s opportunistic joiners and were rife with economically desperate and socially alienated young men who made for easy-to-recruit, but hard-to-manage fighters.⁴ Their unruly violence and looting came to represent the group as a whole as no more than perpetrators of destructive large-scale banditry. On the other hand, the

¹ Fithen, “Diamonds and War,” 204–5.

² Quoted, in a conversation between Fatou and her husband while in South Africa, by his bodyguard; Musa Bangura, *Security to the Leader*.

³ Fithen, “Diamonds and War,” 64.

⁴ Abdullah, *Between Democracy and Terror*; Richards, *Fighting for the Rain Forest*; Boas and Hatloy, *Alcohol and Drug Consumption in Post-war Sierra Leone*.

RUF sought to strictly control and tax diamonds and other revenues to plough them back into military supplies, as well as medicines, food, and agricultural inputs. This chapter ends by looking at individual remuneration of fighters and provision of public goods, including education and medical care. In so doing, it examines the criminal nature of mining alongside the services toward which the RUF ostensibly sought to put diamond revenues toward. It shows, in many regards, disheartening continuities with the pre-war legacy of the mining sector in Sierra Leone—in spite of the RUF’s vociferous indictment of the government on that very measure—as well as the acute intensification of violence in an industry that had been long militarized.

DAIMON BISN&S: SIERRA LEONE’S MINING INDUSTRY

RUF mining can only be understood in the context of the overall diamond industry in Sierra Leone, which has been simultaneously under iron-fisted attempts at government control and rife with illicit mining and trading—both of which characterized mining during the war. Examining the RUF’s attempts to exploit the country’s mineral resources in light of preceding regimes’ efforts to do the same is all the more appropriate given that, once the RUF took control of diamond regions in 1999, they asserted themselves unambiguously as the ‘government’ authority.

Since the first diamond was discovered in 1930, access to the gemstones⁵ covering 25 percent of the country has been controlled by a small coterie of exclusive corporations, both private and state-owned. Their monopolies, first under DeBeers and then under the State, criminalized those who tried to access or bypass the system informally. Although this alienation of wealth from the people was formally codified, politicians made a habit of criticising it to mobilize popular support in political campaigns. Once in power, they often reinforced the diamond industry’s worst attributes of inequality and patrimonialism. As will be described below, the RUF followed this model closely.

Following the discovery of the then-protectorate’s geological riches, diamondiferous territory was quickly brought under control of a private company. The Sierra Leone Selection Trust (SLST), from 1932 onward, extended state control over all leasing and

⁵ Diamonds are categorized into gemstone and industrial grades; Sierra Leone has an exceptionally high ratio of gemstone-quality rough diamonds.

licensing for mining and trading, and concentrated buying in the DeBeers monopoly. As Fithen summarizes the SLST:

The Freetown government was to receive 27.5 percent of net profit and, to encourage the company to stay longer, lease conditions were expanded to include the entire country. It was a simple strategy: the engagement of an established and respected South African firm would ensure fiscal security for the colony.⁶

Thus, from the early 1930s, foreign—and particularly, South African—firms played a central role in the administration, exploitation, and security of mining endeavours in Sierra Leone. By the 1990s, a new generation of war-time South African companies were deploying Apartheid-trained counter-insurgency forces against the RUF. This use of private forces echoed a decades-old bargain by the State to generate reliable revenues from and maintain coercive control over diamond regions.

Local chiefs were brought into mining governance through the Native Administration Scheme in 1937, which was designed to exert greater state control over already rampant illicit mining. Instead, it hugely empowered and enriched chiefs as ‘uninvited economic intermediaries’ in the industry.⁷ The sector flourished during World War II, when South African mines closed and diamonds (somewhat presciently) gained strategic importance to the munitions industry.⁸ In the decade after the War, the Sierra Leone diamond rush flooded Kono District with an estimated 75,000 prospectors that caused ‘smuggling on a vast scale and a breakdown in law and order.’⁹ This nationwide redistribution of young male labour also precipitated a decline in rice production, thrusting the country from rice exporting to rice importing, making rural populations more cash-dependent.¹⁰

None of the government’s attempts to control the industry during the rush met much success, and illegal mining increased in the run-up to, and after, independence. A confidential report from the Inspector of Mines in 1956 reflects the futility of the state’s attempts to impose control, and the central cause of resistance to its claim to diamond

⁶ Fithen, “Diamonds and War,” 160.

⁷ Reno, *Corruption and State Politics in Sierra Leone*, 53–4. Chiefs’ salaries increased by as much as 2,000 percent from the late 1930s to the late 1940s. Moreover, unofficial payments increased by 500 percent as a result of chiefly control of licensing (Ibid., 63.)

⁸ Fithen, “Diamonds and War.”

⁹ Smillie et al., *Heart of the Matter*, 40.

¹⁰ Notably, this decline continued up to the war—1991 saw the country’s all-time low in agricultural production (Zack-Williams, “Sierra Leone,” 149.)

resources: ‘The police can do little to prevent this illicit mining, as practically the entire population of the areas concerned appeared to be of the belief that the diamonds were in reality their property’.¹¹ In an effort to increase control over the sector, the government introduced the Alluvial Diamond Mining Scheme in 1956. It legalized mining by Africans for the first time by granting private investors access to SLST concessions. Instead of increasing government control, however, it effectively redoubled the power of local chiefs and led to the consolidation of capital-rich foreigners’ dominance and influence in the industry.¹²

The ascent to power of Stevens, who had served as an industry-friendly Mining Minister under the colonial government, hinged on his populist anti-monopoly rhetoric. He drew on his APC labour organising days to call for a greater share of mineral wealth for the people, appealing to tens of thousands of marginalized miners as a political bloc.¹³ As Smillie, et al. describe, this ‘emboldened illicit miners and transformed their criminality into an ideological battle.’¹⁴ Yet, after Stevens took power, he struggled to gain political control of Kono, dominated as it was by SLPP-supporting chiefs and diamond barons. The transformation of the SLST into the nationalized National Diamond Mining Commission (NDMC) in 1971 granted 51 percent ownership to the state. Stevens promptly used this power to pack the Ministry of Mines with APC loyalists, who gained complete control over the issuance of mining and diamond-dealing licenses through the Government Gold and Diamond Office. These posts were plum appointments, and rather than the NDMC increasing public access to mining, diamond licenses and mining rights became the centre-piece of the one-party state’s patrimonial power. For all his populist appeal, Stevens ran government diamond revenues into the ground by unofficially re-privatising much of the NDMC when he put it in the hands of his business partner, Jamil Said Mohammed, who facilitated unprecedented levels of smuggling to Liberia on the president’s behalf.¹⁵

When Joseph Momoh took power, he sought to redeem his successor’s excesses—and more importantly, establish his own locus of power and revenues—by again reforming the mining

¹¹ Reno, *Corruption and State Politics in Sierra Leone*, 55.

¹² Lebanese and wealthy African traders; namely, Fula, Mandingo, and Maraka, but also others from as far afield as Angola. Smillie et al., *Heart of the Matter*; Fithen, “Diamonds and War,” 161, 200.

¹³ Smillie et al., *Heart of the Matter*, 43–4; Reno, *Corruption and State Politics in Sierra Leone*, 59, 99.

¹⁴ Smillie et al., *Heart of the Matter*, 44.

¹⁵ Reno, *Corruption and State Politics in Sierra Leone*, 109–16; Reno, *Warlord Politics*, 116–17.

sector. Under his none-too-subtle ‘State of Emergency,’¹⁶ he brought in an Israeli firm to try and break the hold of Stevens’s Lebanese mining cartel, overseen by Jamil.¹⁷ His appeals to the public, like those who came before him, focused on the popular right to mineral wealth and promised a ‘war on profiteers, hoarders, and smugglers.’¹⁸ His desperate attempt to use a foreign firm to impose control over Stevens’s thoroughly patrimonialized and militarized industry presaged even more aggressive pawning of government concessions by his successors once the war began. As Kandeh notes, ‘corruption as a mode of capital accumulation was central to APC domination in Sierra Leone’, and the NPRC failed to ‘break with the past and disavow a predatory regime imperative.’¹⁹ In turn, Strasser’s brokering of the diamond fields on behalf of the NPRC to Executive Outcomes,²⁰ and Kabbah’s Sandline-related dealings reflect the long-established practice of mortgaging the country’s natural resources for political control and regional security.

Not all mining areas were in the purview of the NDMC, however, and Mende elites maintained stronger local control over diamond mining in Tongo, Kenema District, and Zimmi, Pujehun District, than that seen in the Kono blocks. Much like the state, Mende chiefs used diamond revenues to maintain security and consolidate power before and during the war.²¹ Fithen describes how they armed local *kamajor* units:

During 1997, a secret flight linking Kenema, the Mendeland diamond capital, with Bamako, was laid on once a month for this purpose. Tongo Field diamond barons, bank-rolling the arms and ammunition supply to the anti-RUF *kamajoisia* militia, made night-time flights to trade with Mandingo arms traders in Mali.²²

Not surprisingly, *kamajors* prioritized maintaining control over their patrons’ mining territories throughout the war. *Kamajor* fighters were also obliged to mine for their Mende chiefs and sponsors under promises of future repayment. These joint mining-security operations sustained elite power structures and wealth, while also ensuring continued support of the militia, as Fithen describes:

¹⁶ Zack-Williams, “The Political Economy of Civil War,” 146.

¹⁷ It is worth noting that, not only were the Sierra Leone and Liberian civil wars funded largely through the country’s diamonds, but Lebanese militias, Amal and Hamas, had long been financed by the Lebanese diaspora that dominated the Sierra Leone mining sector. (Reno, *Corruption and State Politics in Sierra Leone*; Fithen, “Diamonds and War.”)

¹⁸ Smillie et al., *Heart of the Matter*, 45.

¹⁹ Kandeh, “What Does the ‘Militariat’ Do?,” 395.

²⁰ According to Fithen, EO’s services were contracted in return for a US\$30 million kimberlite concession in Kono, shares in Sieromco and Sierra Rutile and US\$1 million monthly, paid from IMF crisis loans (Fithen, “Diamonds and War,” 41.)

²¹ Reno, “Political Networks in a Failing Stage,” 54–5.

²² Fithen, “Diamonds and War,” 28.

Initially focused on beating out the RUF, *kamajoisia* mobilization using cultural resources has had far-reaching implications for diamond production. Elites have been able to employ *kamajoisia* fighters as trusted diggers, creating a socially-obligated workforce prepared to labour in return for future remuneration. This system has enabled production to continue through periods of almost complete economic breakdown. Capital generated from deploying armed *kamajoisia* has been reinvested in mining, thus generating more diamonds and further potential for *kamajoisia* recruitment.²³

One of the fiercest ground battles of the war did not involve the RUF at all, but was a conflict between the SLA and *kamajors* for control of Tongo Field. In one day of pitched fighting, government forces sustained an estimated 40 casualties, while *kamajors* lost over 20 fighters. The SLA prevailed and, in the days following the firefight, washed and cleared a season's worth of gravel dug in the Pump Station area before retreating and leaving the town once more to *kamajor* control.²⁴

As with Kono and the state, maintaining control of Tongo diamond revenues was of utmost importance for Mende micro-political and economic power. When rogue SLA forces stole diamonds or established illicit mining operations, they sold them to Lebanese dealers in Kono, diverting revenues away from Kenema and Mende elites.²⁵ This deprived the *kamajors* of arms, while also threatening delicately balanced regional power structures. Even the Lebanese diamond dealers in Kono had plans afoot at one point to establish their own militia to protect their own political and economic sphere of influence. With ties to resistance groups in Lebanon they had the military expertise to do so, but their request for automatic weapons was denied by the NPRC government.²⁶ They instead coordinated security with their mercenary-protected corporate neighbours.

Several parallels exist between the relationships of mercenary forces and the State, Mende chiefs and their *kamajor* fighters, and RUF fighters and commanders. All were fighting to regain and reinforce control over diamond-producing areas on behalf of their respective patrons. In all three cases, the immediate benefit was the continued military and logistical sustenance of their armed group. The long-term benefit was the anticipated reward of controlling mining territory. Although EO was paid for its services, the company expected

²³ Ibid., 299.

²⁴ Ibid., 217–23.

²⁵ Ibid., 29 fn.

²⁶ Fithen, “Diamonds and War.”

to recoup millions by exploiting state-owned mining concessions in conquered territory.²⁷ Similarly, *kamajors* were promised their ‘payment’ after the war, first by Mende chiefs and later by the State itself, and RUF were promised their ‘benefit,’ first from Sankoh and then from Issa Sesay, after the war ended.

These political dynamics and parallels make it all the more surprising that one of the most overlooked aspects of the war-diamonds nexus in the literature is, oddly, the mining industry itself. The fact that a well-established economic sector full of local, regional, and international players remained active during the conflict, trying to eke out a living while protecting their substantial investments, is repeatedly elided. Their willingness to do business with changing players, and to shift or share trade networks (both official and illicit) plays an important role in the survival and transformation of the Sierra Leone diamond sector during the war. Unfortunately, little research looks at the interface between these civilian mine owners and brokers, and the armed groups that traversed their territory. This chapter provides the first systematic analysis of the RUF’s mining ventures over the course of the war.

DIAMONDS IN THE RUF

The RUF tactic was minerals. It was very minerals.

Bobson Bockarie²⁸

From its inception, diamonds and mineral resources were central to the RUF’s political and military platform. What is significant is not that they were important in the war, but how—and specifically, how their importance changed over time. In brief, the RUF first focused on diamond and mineral wealth as part of its political platform, calling for the return of the country’s resources to its people. In time, diamonds became central to procuring ammunition and other military supplies. As fighting tapered off, diamond mining picked up in frequency and intensity. No longer limited to fleeting theft and appropriation opportunities, mining efforts by RUF leaders looked like a more violent and coercive version of the extractive, patronage-based accumulation that had long characterised NDMC holdings.

²⁷ Reno, *Warlord Politics*, 131–2.

²⁸ Bobson Bockarie, District MP Commander.

Following in the footsteps of the very leaders he vilified, Sankoh's promise to bring 'power and minerals to the people' was neither original nor exceptional. In Sierra Leone, gold and diamonds have made a simple, compelling, and most importantly, familiar metonym for theft, corruption, and inequality. With diamonds providing more than 80 percent of the country's exports and a major locus of political power and patronage, a revolution that did not promise to affect the mining sector would have been practically irrelevant.

Thus, the RUF made the long-running plunder of the nation's natural resources by political elites one of the foremost justifications for armed revolution. It was enshrined in the group's founding ideology documents as well as in the anthem sung at daily muster parades, which intones:

Where is our diamond, Mr President?
Where is our gold, APC?
RUF²⁹ is hungry to know where they are
RUF is fighting to save Sierra Leone
(chorus)
Our people are suffering without survival
All our minerals have gone to foreign land
Our people are hungry to know where they are
RUF is fighting to save Sierra Leone
(chorus)
Sierra Leone is ready to utilize our own
All our minerals should be accounted for
The people will enjoy in their land
RUF the saviour we need right now
(chorus x2)³⁰

For many fighters, this anthem was the only ideology they knew. As mentioned in Chapter 4, for those who had more extended ideology training, geo-political and economic points were also introduced as necessary background to be studied before launching a revolution. The 'economic background' is particularly pertinent to the RUF's orientation toward resources. It condemns, 'All the precious minerals with special reference to our diamonds

²⁹ Pronounced 'roof.'

³⁰ This version is abbreviated from a complete transcription in archive notes, *Signals Training Manual*; other versions are available online and in, e.g., Gberie, with nearly identical lyrics. The anthem, though jingoistic, remains relevant to former members today, several of whom described it with fervour and even offered to sing it (wholly unprompted) during interviews.

were taken out of the country, e.g. the Star of Sierra Leone worth 969.9 carats without achieving any benefits of it (sic).³¹ Minerals and mining were not mentioned anywhere in the ‘Aims of the RUF’, but by 1999 ‘Minerals’ appeared as the last item on ‘Pillars of the Movement’—after Love and Justice—just at the time mining projects under RUF control skyrocketed.³²

Kono, 1992

The group’s first foray into mining areas was the surprisingly successful 1992 attack on Kono. As has been noted elsewhere,³³ this attack on Koidu town was militarily and logistically strategic. By heading north through the Eastern Province to Kono, they could cut off the government from its diamond revenues on their way to Freetown. Equally importantly, control of Kono could divert mining revenues to the rebels’ own cause. As a fighter describes:

Phase I, the guerrilla method wasn’t there at all. We fought just like infantry, like the government forces in our attack, firing, setting defensive...Second Battalion went to Kono...because anything is about money. That would prolong the war. If you get money, you can get more support...If we had gotten the money, then we would have gotten support from all over the world (laughs). But without money, you cannot get that. So the leader told us to try to take control of the mining areas.³⁴

Without adequate time, territorial control, or technical knowledge for mining, however, the group focused instead on transferring the material goods of one of the wealthiest economic centres in the country to the rear to be traded at the border.³⁵ Two friends laugh recounting the desperate jubilation with which fighters greeted their success:

We took Kono in 1992, but there was no mining business, only property. We would take food, medicines...all the shops were full! Supermarkets, Fullah shops, all the boys they just wanted to eat, they took all the mayonnaise, butter, all these things, they took sweets, chocolate (laughs and laughs). They thought cocoa butter was food! They put it on bread and tried to eat it. I said, “Don’t you see, it says ‘cream??’” (laughs) They thought it would all be gone the next day.³⁶

³¹ *Lion National Training Base*

³² *Ibid.*

³³ See, e.g. Richards, *Fighting for the Rain Forest*; Reno, *Warlord Politics*; Smillie et al., *Heart of the Matter*.

³⁴ Jacob Sesay, Brigade Commander.

³⁵ Sidie Dumana, Driver to Leader.

³⁶ Abie Tamba, Adjutant, and Andrew Mundah, Adjutant.

More concerted looting efforts focused on seizing food staples, fuel, generators, money, and diamonds, all of which were taken directly to be registered at headquarters for distribution or to be sold or bartered for other supplies, such as medicine and ammunition. Parallel quotes reinforce the emerging importance of diamonds at this time, when the RUF was just beginning to collect the stones and Sankoh was using them to purchase supplies with Taylor:

When we captured Kono, we didn't mine diamonds, but during the searching, we could find some. We would just capture diamonds from there, really, a lot of diamonds. So from that time until the NPRC chased us into the bush, Sankoh could use those. What really brought all the hurt was that ULIMO-K and ULIMO-J took the border, so there was no supply route between Sierra Leone and Liberia. In fact, at one time we tried to open the road, to force it, but there was no way.³⁷

I know diamonds were sent to Foday Sankoh in Pendembu. I went with Foday Sankoh to Gbarnga to take the diamonds. Charles Taylor was giving arms, ammunition, food, medicine, petrol, and diesel to come back to Pendembu. We were en route from Gbarnga to Pendembu when Top Final happened. When we were back to Pendembu, most of the Liberians were gone...ULIMO cut the supply road less than a month later.³⁸

Shortly after being driven out of Kono, the RUF were pushed to the Guinea border and lost any material gains that remained from the first Kono attack, as all of their arms and equipment were destroyed or seized.

Peyama, 1994; Sierra Rutile and Kono, 1995

With the border blocked and the group fighting a 'self-reliant struggle,' as described by fighters quoted in the preceding chapters, Phase II missions were increasingly targeted at crippling the government's military supply line and economic revenues. Jungle bases were set up with an eye to the country's key economic areas. The first sign of the strategic prominence of mining in the RUF's offensive strategy was the immediate establishment of Peyama—code-named 'Cuba'—as the central meeting point between all jungle bases (Figure 17). Located just outside of the Tongo mining area, it lies on the road connecting Kenema and Kono, the two mining capitals (Figure 18). It also provided the RUF with relatively 'easy' access to jungles in the North, East, and South—'easy' en-quoted because the primary criterion for jungle bases was inaccessibility. Peyama's three approaches provided ample bypasses while remaining defensively secure—there was only one route enemy forces could

³⁷ Abie Tamba, Adjutant.

³⁸ Jackson Statement Doc.

take from Kenema or Daru, and the target did not present such a strategic threat to SLA or *kamajor* forces as to compel them to flush out the RUF:

That's why Peyama was so important—no one was ever going to push us out of there. It was called the 'meeting point'. Whenever you come out of Zogoda, you have to come through Peyama; when you come out of Western Area, you have to come through Peyama; when you come out of Kailahun, you have to come through Peyama. Peyama had many routes passing through it. That was why we took that area.³⁹

Comparatively, Tongo, the adjacent mining centre, was deemed not viable because of its economic value. As the deputy target commander quoted above states matter-of-factly: "The RUF would never be allowed to hold it, and Foday Sankoh didn't want us to waste supplies."⁴⁰ With Peyama strongly secured to protect the footpath for goods and fighters on their way to Zogoda, small forays into the surrounding mining area began under dedicated commanders:⁴¹

When we first captured Peyama we had this mining committee. They were civilians and soldiers whose responsibility was to mine for the RUF. We sent the diamonds direct to Foday Sankoh. He was there in Zogoda. He would take them out to get arms and ammunition for us. He would...see where he could go with them. He would come back and say I went to such-and-such a place... He broke up with Taylor in early '93, 1993, '94, '95. RUF were all by ourself, that was the time we created these jungles. We created Peyama, Zogoda, Kangari Hills, Bo Jungle, Sierra Rutile...⁴²

The mining was a side-venture, however, and by no means ubiquitous. Average fighters were more affected by missions to the shifting frontlines and ventures like the combatant farming programme set up in 1994, which maintained 71 farms and 44 swamps, producing 144 bushels of rice until the RUF were driven out by *kamajor* attacks in late November 1996.⁴³

When offensive attacks scaled up in 1995, the largest targets were Koidu town and Sierra Rutile, the country's foremost mining areas. At the time of the attack, the rutile and bauxite mining area on the southeast coast employed over 3,000 people, including several dozen foreigners, and contributed roughly 40 percent of the government's annual foreign income

³⁹ Mohamed Mundah, Overall Black Guard Commander.

⁴⁰ Ibid..

⁴¹ Eddie Bockarie, IDU commander.

⁴² Abie Tamba, Adjutant.

⁴³ Eric Bangura, Agricultural Secretariat/Humanitarian Commander. Rice farming in Sierra Leone averages 30-35 bushels per hectare; a bushel is 27 kilograms (Johnny, Karimu, and Richards, "Upland and Swamp Rice Farming Systems in Sierra Leone," 601.)

earnings.⁴⁴ The assault was led by the RUF's four top commanders—Zino, Mosquito, Superman, and Papa—who brought forces from all over the country, including Kailahun, Peyama, Zogoda, and even as far as Northern Jungle.⁴⁵ Fighting lasted several weeks, advancing and retreating through surrounding villages, and was by all accounts chaotic, with hundreds of RUF dressed in military fatigues, while the state army was in organizational disarray, arriving late on the scene and also becoming implicated in looting in the area.⁴⁶ Like the first Kono assault, the attack on Sierra Rutile was focused on seizing property and supplies, not on mining. It also coincided with a strategic push toward hostage-taking.

At the Rutile compound, the head of Group Four security, Peter White, three local security guards, and a British mine employee joined five foreign staff and seven Sierra Leoneans who had been captured two days prior at the Sieromco (Sierra Leone Ore and Metal Company) mine.⁴⁷ According to several former RUF, White allegedly attempted to negotiate an arrangement with Sankoh to arm the RUF and give them a percentage of proceeds if the company was allowed to continue operating,⁴⁸ but Sankoh rejected the overture and sought instead to utilize the hostages as leverage to get ECOMOG troops out of Sierra Leone and end military supply lines to the government.⁴⁹ Neither gambit worked. As civilians evacuated by the thousands, the group's own attempts to mine in the area were false-starting.⁵⁰ The RUF held the strategic mining site for just a few months before retreating, damaging what equipment they were unable to carry as part of their attack on the 'state'. Company officials said the rebels left US\$25 million worth of destruction in their wake.⁵¹

RUF control in mining areas throughout Kono District was more stable and better organized. Rather than maintain control of Koidu town, which they held for only four months, *zoe bushes* were set up in the jungle, where fighters and their families could be protected from jet and gunship attacks. Tentative mining began at this time. Though it was

⁴⁴ About US\$108 million at the time (Fithen, "Diamonds and War," 71.).

⁴⁵ Jackson Witness Statement.

⁴⁶ Mohamed Mundah, Overall Black Guard Commander.

⁴⁷ Sierra Leone News, January 1995. Available at <<http://www.sierra-leone.org/Archives/slnews0195.html>>

⁴⁸ Jinnah Brooks, Battalion G4 Commander.

⁴⁹ Sierra Leone News, January 1995. Available at <<http://www.sierra-leone.org/Archives/slnews0195.html>>

⁵⁰ Abie Tamba, Adjutant.

⁵¹ Fithen, "Diamonds and War," 71.. The planned re-opening never materialized, despite Executive Outcomes being given shares in the foreign-owned Sieromco and Sierra Rutile (bauxite and rutile) mining companies (Ibid., 174.).

small in scale, what diamonds were secured were taken to Foday Sankoh at Zogoda, generating enough resources for the procurement of ammunition and medical supplies from Côte d'Ivoire and Guinea.⁵² A G4 commander and contractor reports that two Belgian investors and diamond buyers came to buy diamonds from the RUF via Côte d'Ivoire at this time.⁵³ According to the TRC report, Sankoh also used seized diamonds and promises of on-going mining efforts in his attempt to secure further financial and military support from Muammar Ghaddafi:

In a letter allegedly sent to Mohamed Talibi of the Libyan Arab Bureau in Ghana, Sankoh stated in June 1996 that he had been able 'to organize serious mining operations in precious minerals which [he] believes will help [them] generate the needed foreign exchange for [their] mission'.⁵⁴

Throughout this period, RUF fighters regularly targeted diamond miners, traders, and villagers in diamondiferous regions to seize any money or gemstones they might have, as well as gain knowledge and expertise about mining in a given area. The TRC reports that many impoverished miners, unable to produce diamonds on demand, were assaulted and tortured at this time by both RUF and SLA forces.⁵⁵

Kono and Tongo, 1998-2002

After the Abidjan Accord and before the AFRC coup, merchant capital was beginning to re-coalesce in Kono, and businesses were being reopened and newly established. As Fithen describes, 'when Kono was sporadically "liberated", it was only very powerful Lebanese players and army officers who continued to engage in mining,⁵⁶ leaving many key industry players 'critically short of capital' in the aftermath of the RUF's Phase I and II attacks.⁵⁷ But long-term foreign investors began surfacing⁵⁸ from Eastern Europe, looking to invest in mining, as well as aviation, medical, and security (including private arms dealing) businesses⁵⁹: 'All hoped that there would be a rapid increase of foreign investment in the wake of the arrival of multi-nationals like Diamondworks, Rex, and Am-Can Mining.'⁶⁰

⁵² Naomi Sankoh, Vanguard woman; Abie Tamba, Adjutant. TRC, "Volume 3A," para. 102.

⁵³ Jinnah Brooks, Battalion G4 Commander.

⁵⁴ TRC, "Volume 3A," fn 102.

⁵⁵ TRC, "Volume 3A."

⁵⁶ Fithen, "Diamonds and War," 186.

⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁸ Ibid., 54.

⁵⁹ Ibid.

⁶⁰ Ibid. (These were some of the firms implicated in the Sandline affair.)

When the junta seized power, however, investment again stalled, but a *pax commercius* appears to have been brokered between existing companies and the new government.⁶¹ According to Fithen, the multinationals held off on mining so as to avoid becoming targets for AFRC and RUF raids, but he also postulates that ‘some degree of negotiation took place between the AFRC/PA (People’s Army) leadership and their well-armed, highly-experienced expatriate neighbours’:

It is doubtful that either side relished the prospect of a pitched battle for complete control of Kono and what developed was an equilibrium of mutual toleration. Multi-national sites and equipment were left unmolested while AFRC/PA elites undertook to extract those diamonds that were left by the SLPP.⁶²

This tentative mining equilibrium was short-lived. After the AFRC and RUF were pushed out of Freetown and resettled in the bush, they set their sights on full control of Kono District. Re-supplied from the November 1998 arms shipment from Liberia, the strategy meeting at Waterworks, held under the tutelage of Taylor’s top two commanders, laid out the People’s Army’s largest and most ambitious mission yet. Issa Sesay was supposed to take Kono and Makeni, an AFRC commander was to split from Kono and move toward Tongo, and battalions in Kailahun were to attack Segbwema and hit Kenema, before doubling back to take Daru.⁶³ In late December, the RUF successfully captured Koidu from the ECOMOG forces defending it. Because gunship attacks and air raids were common, commanders had previously set up their own ‘grounds’ in the villages surrounding the town. Most of these *zoe bushes* were close to Kailahun and had paired leadership—if an RUF commander was in charge, his deputy was to be AFRC, and *vice versa*.⁶⁴ As a fighter describes, ‘You had Superman Ground, STF (Special Task Force) Ground, Yellow Mosque, Tombodu...mining was not happening at these bases. Just military. Mining began around 1999 after we captured the town (Koidu).’⁶⁵

Numerous fighters and commanders confirm that, though minerals and diamonds were always strategically important to the RUF, it was only once the group gained steadier control

⁶¹ Ibid., 188.

⁶² Ibid., 178–9.

⁶³ Mohamed Mundah, Overall Black Guard Commander; Bockarie Ngobeh, Black Guard; Jacob Sesay, Brigade Commander.

⁶⁴ Eddie Bockarie, IDU commander.

⁶⁵ Umaru Rogers, ULIMO-STF/RUF Artillery; see also, Prosecutor vs. Charles Ghankay Taylor, Judgment, 610–12 (2012), 610–12.

over mining areas, from 1999 to 2002, that mining ventures began in earnest.⁶⁶ Previously, the main objective had been simply capturing diamonds and money to buy munitions; but with control over larger swathes of Kono and Tongo, Sam Bockarie and Issa Sesay organized sustained mining efforts with mining units and commanders appointed in both areas.⁶⁷

Under Bockarie, while Sankoh was still in prison, mining efforts were directed almost exclusively at sourcing arms and ammunition. According to one adjutant, 80-85 percent of all revenues were taken to Taylor for supplies, while the balance was kept by Bockarie, who was saving money for elections.⁶⁸ Revenues captured from Koidu town also financed his trip to France, where he is said to have brokered a deal to bring a foreign company into Koidu to begin mining under RUF jurisdiction.⁶⁹ As one of his radio operators describes:

He told me about his trip to France to try to arrange for arms and ammunition. That was when the real fighting went on, when they tried to get the whole of Kono. So when they secure Kono, they'll be able to get a company where they'll earn money. They say they made arrangements for all that with the soldiers who are going to guard the place.⁷⁰

Notably, this shows the RUF pursuing the same strategy as previous regimes: outsourcing mining and security to foreign firms rather than managing it internally. Taylor's top business representatives and security advisers visited by helicopter with several foreigners—both European and West African—to survey the mining opportunities and assess the strength of the RUF's military position. Their operation was never launched, but under the advice of Taylor, the RUF continued to hold the area for small-scale mining while awaiting future investment.

HOW THE RUF STRUCTURED MINING VENTURES

The criminal aspects of the RUF's involvement in the industry have gotten the most attention, but there were also strong similarities between their mining and civilian practices, which often relied on illicit networks and illegal shortcuts. Smuggling, for example, was used widely by all players adapting to wartime constraints. Both regime-driven mining and illicit

⁶⁶ E.g., Sidie Dumana, Driver to Leader; Bobson Bockarie, District MP Commander.

⁶⁷ E.g., Prosecutor vs. Charles Ghankay Taylor, Judgment, 610–13 (2012), 610–13.

⁶⁸ Abie Tamba, Adjutant.

⁶⁹ Jinnah Brooks, Battalion G4 Commander.

⁷⁰ John Saffa, Overall Signals Commander. It is unclear whether this is the same agreement as that made with 'Michel' and Taylor's Belgian associates. See, Prosecutor vs. Charles Ghankay Taylor, Judgment (2012).

individual mining were well-established in Sierra Leone long before the war, which served to exacerbate both. The securitization of the mining sector and presence of thuggish guards was also a long-standing *modus operandi*. Land parcels and mining pits were claimed haphazardly by individual commanders, as well as centrally organized by high command, in a way that echoes other regimes' distribution of plots to the politically faithful and powerful. The group also adopted the tiered system of tribute (diggers), sponsorship (investors), and ownership (landholding elites), and its translation into incremental increases in payment in various forms and formulas.⁷¹ Cross-border smuggling networks used by the RUF also derived from or echoed what Fithen calls 'avoidance procedures,' which were long-established practices that circumvented government bureaucratic controls and avoided rivalries by adapting loopholes and work-arounds to changes in the political and commercial environment.⁷² RUF mining commanders successfully exploited these practices for personal and group gain and recruited knowledgeable civilians to manage mining ventures.

What they were less successful at preventing, and in some cases appeared to condone, was the forced mining and enslavement of civilian labourers by rogue commanders. This, combined with the high-profile smuggling of all stones to Monrovia for sanction-busting arms shipments, distinguished RUF mining from civilian/peacetime endeavours and caused the international outcry that ultimately led to the Kimberley Process. However, to speak of a single RUF mining project or uniform practices would be a gross oversimplification. Forced mining, for example, was the exception rather than the rule, whereas the violation of UN sanctions was official RUF policy when revenues could be effectively co-opted by the movement.

The wartime environment led to changes in labour practices and compensation systems throughout the industry. Fithen concisely describes the most prominent new model for compensating diggers, the 'two-pile' approach, first utilized by NPRC officers who were allocated former NDMC mining blocks:

A lack of merchant capital to invest in the mining process was a major problem for commanders who wished to enrich themselves. The answer was the recruitment of labourers (usually private soldiers) to do the digging and take a proportion of production in payment. It was soon realized, though, that it would be extremely difficult to divide up the diamonds between a large workforce fairly, and there was a likelihood that this could well lead to conflict between the

⁷¹ TRC, "Volume 3A."

⁷² Fithen, "Diamonds and War," 200.

supporting officers and the labouring other ranks. Rebellion in the ranks was obviously something that the NPRC was keen to avoid, and so a solution was found in the division of gravel. As each bucket of gravel came out of the pit it was deposited on one of two piles alternately. One was for the officer and the other was for the men. At the end of the extraction process each digger would receive a few buckets of gravel which he could then go off and wash himself; whatever he found was his to keep. The element of luck involved was central as a driving force for this system. Every now and then, some lowly conscript would find a 20-carat diamond in his bucket and promptly desert to Guinea; but for every lucky soldier there were 100 who found nothing and were forced to supplement their income by more anti-social means. The method was readily adopted by AFRC elements in their own attempts to secure personal wealth from diamonds.⁷³

An adaptation of the two-pile system was also developed by Lebanese miners in 1995, in which the supporter covered all costs of the mine—food, tools, medical care—and then purchased all diamonds produced from the mine, called ‘run of mine’, after it had been washed and valued. In this system, the miners were guaranteed basic provisions and at least some payment, although only at 10-15 percent of the market value, while the mine operator could avoid losing any good stones to chance.⁷⁴ According to Fithen, diggers also received a daily *poyo*, tobacco, and *jamba* ration.⁷⁵

The RUF implemented both of these systems in their own mining operations after 1999. During AFRC time, government mining was structured around a day system, in which four days of digging were allocated as government property, while two days were set aside for the labourers; the seventh day was ostensibly a day of rest.⁷⁶ When the group recaptured the Tongo fields after Lomé, however, it roughly followed the adapted two-pile approach. Many miners set up small pits in Tongo and acted as ‘supporters’, recruiting local people to mine in exchange for food and tools—a minimum standard in the mining sector—and recouping all stones at the end for a price. As described by the overall Black Guard Commander, ‘There was mining going on but there were conditions: you provided food, tools for the civilians and if they found the diamonds, they would negotiate on price.’ He recounts a friend’s mining venture amid the larger mining hubbub.⁷⁷

⁷³ Ibid., 67.

⁷⁴ Ibid., 68.

⁷⁵ Ibid. *Poyo* is palm wine; *jamba*, marijuana.

⁷⁶ Prosecutor vs. Charles Ghankay Taylor, Judgment, 579 (2012), 579; Peters, *War and the Crisis of Youth*, 114–15.

⁷⁷ Jackson Statement p. 27.

He had about eight people. He was responsible for feeding them and providing them working tools. When they found diamonds, he would negotiate the cost of the diamonds and buy it from them. There was also private mining going on: there were business people there. People were selling rice and palm wine in the market. Sam Bockarie had bodyguards in Tongo doing mining...I also saw some of Issa Sesay's bodyguards mining there, but do not know if it was for Issa...They said that they were working with civilians. The civilians were mining for themselves but they were responsible for their feeding and when they found a diamond they would negotiate the price...they had guns as Tongo was a terrible ground.⁷⁸ *Kamajors* were constantly attacking. It is a lie if someone says soldiers were walking in town without guns. That would have been foolish as you could not defend yourself...[Another commander also] had two to three people working under him. He said he was feeding them and would buy their stones for them. He provided accommodation for them: they were in his house. I saw them there. They seemed happy: they had returned from work and were eating food.⁷⁹

Tongo was much like Kono, in that the RUF had held nearby towns and villages during the Peyama jungle phase, with small mining ventures attempted around Wuima and Kombama village. But it was not until 1999, after the area was secured that mining increased to the scale described above.⁸⁰

A much smaller venture was also set up in Kailahun, apparently inspired by the RUF mining forays Mosquito was overseeing in Tongo. It demonstrates further the supporter arrangement and civilian-dependence of the mining system, as well as pitfalls faced in the group's attempt to harness mineral resources:

A civilian by the name of B.B. informed Sam Bockarie that he used to mine diamonds at Giema and he wanted Sam Bockarie's backing to start. The civilians who knew about mining were doing it...Sam Bockarie said he asked the civilians who knew about diamonds. They spoke to them and fed them and when they found diamonds, they would negotiate the prices. They did not find diamonds there and eventually they forgot about it...Sam Bockarie said he had an arrangement with the civilians. He would provide food and equipment for them and he would buy the diamonds from them. He had asked those who had knowledge of mining to work with him and they organized the conditions of the work.⁸¹

⁷⁸ It is worth noting Fithen's description of Tongo in 1997, the year of the SLA-*kamajor* fight, just before the RUF and AFRC forces took control of the area: 'During the early months of 1997, grisly gibbets greeted visitors on the approach tracks, many adorned with the body-parts of suspected rebels and bandits. Often, skulls and bones are painted in bright colours to add drama to objects that have become so commonplace they lack symbolic impact' (Fithen, "Diamonds and War," 192).

⁷⁹ "Mohamed Mundah, Written Testimony," 25-6.

⁸⁰ Eddie Bockarie, IDU commander.

⁸¹ "Mohamed Mundah, Written Testimony," 44.

The RUF relied on the expertise of civilian collaborators, some voluntary and some coerced, to know where to mine and how. Numerous failed attempts demonstrate the variable experience the RUF had with mining, which could be both time and resource intensive. Using civilian labour ensured that fighters were not taken away from the frontlines and defensive positions to work in diamond pits, but still rice and medicine had to be provided to diggers, cutting into the supplies available for combatants and their families.

While Mosquito delegated responsibilities in Kailahun and Tongo, Issa oversaw mining and security in Kono. As a fighter explains, ‘Any gold and diamonds went from Issa at Kono, to Mosquito at Kailahun, and they passed the information to Sankoh. All of the mining efforts (around Kono) reported to Issa.’⁸² The civilian commander appointed by Mosquito in Tongo similarly registered and transported all diamonds produced in the area.⁸³ These attempts to centralize mining met some resistance, however, and were difficult to implement in practice. The RUF faced three main problems in the diamond sector: abuse of civilians, the withholding of diamonds deemed ‘government property’, and growing infighting and competition between commanders.

Abuse of civilians

RUF and SLA/AFRC soldiers took abuse of civilians to a new low in a sector that already suffered from harsh and often inhumane labour conditions. Dry-land alluvial mining (as opposed to river mining) can only be done during the dry season in Sierra Leone, when the water table is low enough for diggers to remove the top layer of *san-san* (sand) from the pit, exposing the diamond-bearing gravel below. This gravel is then heaped outside the pit—into the ‘piles’ of the ‘two-pile’ system—where, at the end of the digging season, it is washed to separate the diamonds from dirt, rocks, and other sediment.⁸⁴ This hard labour is almost exclusively the preserve of young men, who toil for minimal pay under tight security, even in peacetime.

During the war, armed groups occupying mines illegally had a litany of incentives to use force. Gunmen surrounded mines to defend them from attack by *kamajors* and other enemy groups, to protect the piles from theft, and not least, to ensure the coerced diggers did not

⁸² Thomas Alpha, Fighter.

⁸³ Jinnah Brooks, Battalion G4 Commander.

⁸⁴ See Fithen, “Diamonds and War” for a detailed description of this process locally.

escape, particularly with gemstones they found. Civilians were supposed to be mining voluntarily for pay or for in-kind compensation, and with such limited options for survival many did, but many were also forced to mine, particularly under AFRC rule. Testimonies in the Taylor Trial, which found evidence of enslavement, describe horrendous conditions of civilians being forced to mine naked under gunpoint, and being beaten and accused of witchcraft if they resisted or if they did not find diamonds.⁸⁵ Some areas were particularly notorious for civilian abuse, while others, under more humane and law-abiding commanders, were relatively peaceful. Tombodu, for example, just outside Koidu, became notorious for civilian abuse, enslavement, torture, and ‘innocent killing’ under a commander who went mentally insane and was later chained to a tree in Koinadugu District, not just as punishment, but because he was deemed too dangerous and completely unmanageable.⁸⁶ While this was the most extreme case and by no means representative of violence against civilians, it highlights the variation in organizational control and treatment of civilians throughout the mining areas.

When it came to forced mining, there appears to have been a distinct policy gap much like that prohibiting rape but institutionalising coercive marriage. While forced mining was officially prohibited, this applied only to private ventures; ‘government’ mining fell under collective labour, which civilians were compelled to perform under threat of punishment. During the AFRC junta rule, the largest pit in Tongo was government-run ‘Cyborg Pit’ that stretched across the former airfield, big enough for 150-300 civilians to dig at a time.⁸⁷ Military police and commanders would organize civilian labour from local villages to mine under the supervision of both combatant and civilian overseers.

When the RUF re-captured Tongo in 1999, Mosquito appointed a new mining commander and called a meeting in which he threatened combatants against forcing civilians to mine. Cyborg Pit was closed, and Pump Station, which the SLA forces had battled the *kamajors* for pre-coup in 1997, became the new government mine for the RUF. Still, despite Tongo’s proximity to headquarters and tighter control by Mosquito, some commanders’ mining

⁸⁵ Prosecutor vs. Charles Ghankay Taylor, Judgment, 613 (2012), 613.

⁸⁶ Mohamed Mundah, Overall Black Guard Commander; Amara Sumana, Fighter/Security to Leader; Richie Kamara, Target Commander. See, TRC, “Volume 3A”; Prosecutor vs. Charles Ghankay Taylor, Judgment (2012) for reports of the abuse and mass grave, dubbed “Savage Pit” after the commander.

⁸⁷ Jacob Sesay, Brigade Commander; Prosecutor vs. Charles Ghankay Taylor, Judgment, 578–81 (2012), 578–81.

ventures straddled the imperceptible line between choice and coercion. As the Black Guard Commander describes:

I did not see any civilians forced to mine in Tongo: I never witnessed it...(and) I never got a report about forced mining in Tongo, not even about a vigilante commander, but I did hear rumours that was happening. It was very general information in Kenema; civilians and fighters were saying they had heard people were being forced to mine in Tongo. It made its way to Sam Bockarie who was very annoyed about it...(and) went to Tongo to investigate...Then Sam Bockarie held a meeting of civilians and told them he had put the situation under control and that anyone who forces a civilian to mine would be punished. He said the civilians should feel free...After he went to have the meeting I did not hear any rumours about forced mining again.⁸⁸

I was part of clearing Tongo and Sam Bockarie was also there. I was present at the muster parade at the brigade headquarters...Sam Bockarie said that he had information that soldiers were causing problems with civilians, and he was warning everyone, especially the SLA, because the RUF know who he is, that if he got reports that a person was harassing civilians, he would handle them seriously. He said if anyone had that habit, he should get out of it now.⁸⁹

Thus, abusive labour practices—including forced mining, harsh punishments, and inadequate remuneration—were tolerated when in the name of government mining. But, when used for private gain, forced mining and other abusive practices were seen as undermining the RUF government and organizational control, and were strictly prohibited.

Taxation and theft

The group's failure to protect civilians is indicative of a larger loss of control over fighters and mid-level commanders. With mining came theft, personal enrichment, and internal conflicts. Individual accumulation and in-fighting were exacerbated by the personalization of commanders' entourages of loyal bodyguards, supported through mining-derived patronage. As the TRC report describes, internal power struggles became an increasingly serious problem within the group and between AFRC and RUF fighters, who were more interested in mining than fighting. A RUF Joint Security Unit investigation conducted in Tongo, for example, concluded self-reflexively that "the administrative set-up within the Mining Unit was very poor."⁹⁰ The investigation, according to the TRC report, also called for tighter controls and more objective supervision processes, such as 'the daily weighing of diamonds

⁸⁸ "Mohamed Mundah, Written Testimony," 26.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 27.

⁹⁰ JSU report as cited by TRC, "Volume 3A."

in the presence of all the mining commanders, the issuance of receipts signed by witnesses and an increase in security within the Mining Unit'.⁹¹

In mining areas, the MP and Joint Security Unit was heavily preoccupied with diamond-related theft. However, the worst perpetrators were inevitably those with the greatest power and access to the gemstones. With diamond revenues flowing, but payment still not forthcoming from high command, a perversion of ownership and theft resulted in several commanders 'stealing' from the movement the diamonds they had in effect, themselves stolen. In addition to Superman's and Issa's alleged diamond thefts described in the previous chapter, several other high-profile incidents riddled the group's mining efforts. The first mining commander in Tongo escaped with an estimated 1,000 pieces during the AFRC junta.⁹² After being pushed out of Freetown, another AFRC commander was tracked down in Liberia attempting to flee with diamonds. The mining commander installed in Kono in 1999 also was accused of stealing diamonds.⁹³ And one of Taylor's top middlemen disappeared late in the war with an RUF diamond parcel destined for Taylor.

An internal security letter dated 16 January 2001 highlights one of the less high-profile cases of theft, again by those closest to RUF mining endeavours. It details the arrest of the overall mining commander, mining unit security commander, deputy security commander, mining unit operations, and the supervising military commanders in the area.⁹⁴ This case highlights the potential for theft and personal accumulation by those engaged in the RUF's diamond industry. Here, the overall mining commander and several of his mining security personnel were accused of stealing from the rebel government, apparently in collaboration with local areas commanders. Not all conflicts were straightforward contests between personal enrichment and group taxation or control, however. Many reflected larger power struggles within the rebel forces. The razing of Johnny Paul Koroma, described in the previous chapter, reflected extreme tension and mistrust between the leaders of the RUF and AFRC, and proved a portent of things to come.

⁹¹ Ibid., para. 107.

⁹² Prosecutor vs. Charles Ghankay Taylor, Judgment, 578 (2012), 578.

⁹³ Mohamed Mundah, Overall Black Guard Commander.

⁹⁴ 'Arrest of the Remaining Personnels', 01.0116.PM.B.MIL-DIA.KQMA.17. The relevant abbreviations in order of appearance are as follows: Bde, Brigade; BN, Battalion; Ops, Operations; HQ, Headquarters; A/coy, A Company; Maj, Major; Lt. Lieutenant; CSO, Chief Security Officer; 2Lt., second lieutenant.

When Issa Sesay took over mining and overall command in 2000, he effectively re-privatized the mining areas under RUF control, which had been ostensibly ‘government’-owned under Bockarie, and imposed a new taxation system.⁹⁵ As Peters writes, ‘[The RUF] now considered itself the legitimate government of [mining] territories, and organized diamond mining more systematically to raise ‘state’ revenues.’⁹⁶ Issa nominated his bodyguard ‘Peleto’ as overall mining commander for the movement.⁹⁷ Peleto, along with several other civilians, an RUF mining commander, and an AFRC commander, had previously overseen patchwork mining efforts for Bockarie, but his appointment by Sesay centralized control over mining and brought it all within Sesay’s personal purview. As a signals commander explains, Sesay’s leadership, combined with the war’s relative military stability,⁹⁸ brought diamonds to the fore at both the private and group level:

Issa was the leader, Issa was the finance...The time Mosquito was there, there was not a lot of *daimon bisnes* but the time Mosquito left was when diamonds began to be in the RUF.

[Q: But it wasn’t long, then? Just one or two years?] Exactly. That was the time excessive mining began to take place. Real, real excessive mining. Mosquito wasn’t there in mining areas—he was in Buedu. Issa was there in Kono—he was the one who took care of the mining. All the heavy, heavy diamonds we talk about inside the RUF at this time, that was him, during Issa’s regime.

[Q: And you don’t know what he did with them? If he bought more arms?] No, me, I don’t think he bought more arms. Because at that time, not much war had been there...Many commanders did their own mining. The only thing is, if at all diamonds come out and the group finds out, they’ll hold you and take it from your hand. If they know, they’ll hold them.⁹⁹

Unfortunately for high command, as territorial control expanded and security improved, oversight weakened and commanders became increasingly entrepreneurial and opportunistic. To minimize opportunities for theft from the government portion of mining production, a new pile system was introduced. It is described in Peters as a ‘three-pile’ system, with one pile for the supporter, one for labourers, and one for the government.¹⁰⁰ However, another commander who was mining privately in Kono from 2000 until disarmament describes it as a ‘four-pile system...the only system [he] knows of.’¹⁰¹

⁹⁵ E.g., Prosecutor vs. Charles Ghankay Taylor, Judgment, 612 (2012), 612.

⁹⁶ Peters, *War and the Crisis of Youth*, 114.

⁹⁷ Eddie Bockarie, IDU commander.

⁹⁸ Johnny Kabbah, Medic.

⁹⁹ John Saffa, Overall Signals Commander.

¹⁰⁰ Peters, *War and the Crisis of Youth*, 113.

¹⁰¹ Mohamed Mundah, Overall Black Guard Commander.

According to him, the mining was structured 5-5, 2-2: five buckets of gravel each were heaped on the labourers' pile and on the government pile, for every two heaped on the machinery pile and expenditure pile, respectively.

Under this system, the machinery and expenditures were supposed to be self-sustaining, with profits reinvested toward renting machines to pull water and sand from the pits, as well as tools, food, and medical care. After the labourer pile was washed, the diamonds were sold by the supporter (usually a commander, though civilian mining had also resumed), who negotiated the price with traders and then split the proceeds with the mining team. A Le 200,000 diamond parcel, for example, would net roughly Le 100,000 for the supporter, and the same amount to be split five ways for the tributors digging. The government gravel pile, equal in size to the pile of the supporter and his workers, was carried away and washed directly by Peleto's men so that nothing could be stolen.¹⁰² All diamonds in the government pile were delivered to Issa.

Like many politicians before him, Issa responded to perceived threats to his power—such as refusal to hand over government mining tributes—by tightening personal control. He moved Peleto to Tongo, where larger and more plentiful diamonds were being pulled from the Pump Station area, and appointed another bodyguard of his as the new mining commander in Kono.¹⁰³ The signals commander quoted above goes into some detail describing Peleto's quick confiscation of the most valuable stones:

They sent a message to take it to Liberia; they went with it to Benjamin Yeaten to give to Charles Taylor. It was about 52 carats...Yeah I saw it, it was something like this (shows thumb tip). That was in Kono. Tongo was a 37 carat. They took them to Liberia, it was in 2001, because at that time Mosquito had left already...the boy who took out that diamond, he lives in a village now near Sandiallu, he took the diamond, he danced with it [laughs, trails off shaking head]...eh, God. In the bush we suffered; in the bush we suffered. He gave the diamond to Issa...They say he got some small thing, but I don't know how much they gave him...

When we were in Kono, mining was going on. A lot, a lot of diamonds came out. Even in Tongo, they took diamonds from this fellow [commander's] hand. Many pieces of diamonds. The diamonds were plenty, but we don't really know what Issa did with them. When Peleto came with them out of Tongo, he'd come with them to Issa straight. More than 100 pieces of diamonds. He had one 52-carat diamond himself. I don't know what he did with it.

¹⁰² Ibid.

¹⁰³ Jacob Sesay, Brigade Commander.

[Q: Did you ask him?] (laughs and laughs) Me? Ask Issa about his diamond? (laughs)...[The commander] had been mining at Tongo...Since they arrested Sankoh, he said he'll keep them, the diamonds, and when they release Sankoh, he'll present them to him. When they mined this 52-carat diamond, he didn't agree to give much compensation to the miners. Any time they went to him, he would tell them to wait, wait. When they sent Peleto to Tongo as mining commander, those boys complained and said they took a big diamond and gave it to the commander. So, Peleto went to *raze*¹⁰⁴ the commander, go search his place...Peleto took them to Issa. And where he went with them, only he knows today.¹⁰⁵

The commander's refusal to hand over the stones to Issa Sesay (or his mining deputy) instead of Sankoh reveals the weakness of Sesay's authority over the RUF. As a peer in both age and experience to many of the other commanders, and lacking the battle and strategy renown of Bockarie, he struggled to assert his power. With fighting on the wane and territorial control dominated by the RUF, the collective military good was no longer a compelling reason to surrender all private property to the movement. Moreover, it was unclear what was being done with taxed and confiscated diamonds and money.

Personalization and in-fighting

By concentrating control of diamonds in the hands of a select few commanders, the RUF took existing patterns of secrecy and personalization of power in the diamond industry to new extremes. In Sierra Leone, the wealthiest dealers have immense power and can negotiate selectively and strategically. Accessing these upper echelons requires the right connections and 'secret' knowledge about the industry, such as where to mine, the market rate in Sierra Leone, the market value in Monrovia or Antwerp, and details about colour, clarity, and weight, which determine a rough stone's worth. As Fithen explains:

Diamonds are not a homogenous commodity. De Beers sort rough diamonds into about 8000 different categories, each with its own price in dollars per carat. Making money in diamonds requires this knowledge and the skill to 'move' stones between categories, thus increasing profits. In the Sierra Leonean bush, diamonds are traded as parcels—a variety of stones sold as one lot. The value of the parcel is determined by an average price, giving substantial room for price negotiation and profiteering.¹⁰⁶

¹⁰⁴ A Krio colloquialism meaning shakedown and usually implying a beating as well.

¹⁰⁵ John Saffa, Overall Signals Commander.

¹⁰⁶ Fithen, "Diamonds and War," 22 fn.

The commander operating pits in Kono, who describes the four-pile system above, echoes this when explaining why he managed all of the labourer pile negotiations instead of the diggers: ‘You can have a ten carat diamond that isn’t worth much, but then maybe a small one will be very fine and that one is worth more. But the boys, they don’t know.’¹⁰⁷ Indeed, while dozens of commanders began their own mining ventures from 2000 onward, many lower level fighters attest to knowing little of the group’s mining efforts.

Commanders who began to open their own mining pits in Kono and Tongo after the Lomé Accord operated as the ‘big man’ patrons they had become through force and fortune in the war. In addition to recruiting civilian miners, many had their bodyguards and junior fighters mine for them. Unlike loyalty to the movement, which rapidly frayed during the emergent peace, personal loyalty became increasingly important. The Overall Signals Commander describes how his own mining operation was undermined by his younger brother’s fealty to Issa Sesay—not because he was the overall commander, but because he was his direct patron:

I did mining—me and my small brother. The diamond we got was about six carats. And my small brother, he was Issa’s bodyguard. He was holding the diamond, and when Issa came out of Kailahun, he went and took the diamond and gave it to him. The next morning, when people came and told me, ‘Your brother gave the diamond to Issa’, I said, ‘Fine. He *don jentri* (is rich) now.’ ‘Til today my brother is in the diamond area and I am here. He doesn’t come—he says he doesn’t have money. I say, ‘You, you gave yours to Issa!’ (laughs) ‘The boy is crazy...Issa needs to account for RUF diamonds...He needs to account for RUF poverty. The sufferings of RUF soldiers, now it’s he who must account for them. Because if RUF suffer today, the entire minerals the RUF had, he held them.’¹⁰⁸

Centralized RUF mining was controlled directly by Issa and his two mining commanders—and by no more than half a dozen other individuals throughout the war, who dealt with an equally small number of representatives for Charles Taylor. Before peace settled in, dealing almost entirely with Taylor’s men in Monrovia enabled the RUF to sidestep the multinationals and government-friendly big men in Kono, as well as the Mende elites who dominated the diamond sector in Kenema and used their revenues to support the CDF.

With peace, however, the need for such tight control was ambiguous and the tension between increasing diamond revenues and increasing peace prospects created tension at the

¹⁰⁷ Mohamed Mundah, Overall Black Guard Commander.

¹⁰⁸ John Saffa, Overall Signals Commander.

top. The extreme concentration of Issa's diamond control rankled many of the top commanders, who met secretly to support Superman:

Issa gave diamonds to Benjamin Yeaten so that they wouldn't allow Superman to come here (Sierra Leone) and so they would execute him. Superman went to Liberia to undermine Issa. In the whole thing he (Superman) was the most senior man. Because he fought in Liberia, and then he came to join the Vanguard, so he was the most senior man left. Yeah, so we wanted to overthrow Issa. It was a secret meeting between all commanders within the RUF.

Even myself, I was involved...various top commanders, we were there on a mission just to liberate Super' from Liberia to Sierra Leone—60 to 70 percent of us were disgruntled. At one time they even put Issa under house arrest in Kono, Superman did, so that he would give account for all of the diamonds. He said to 'give account to the people, not to him Dennis Mingo, but for the people, to let them understand how they are working'. So for that he was under house arrest for one day, but he didn't give any account. So later [Superman] released him, and [Superman] left...They tarnished his character because Issa didn't want him to be leader...The Pa (Taylor) had called Superman and said he wanted to see him, so [Taylor's deputies] set up an ambush on the road...and killed him. They lied to the leader, Taylor. Charles Taylor never got that information. And Charles Taylor, he so believed in Super'.¹⁰⁹

Further efforts were made to change the leadership even after the assassination of Superman and the commanders' failed attempts to unseat Issa or hold him accountable for the group's resources. A meeting was called at White Flower, the executive mansion in Monrovia, with all top commanders, including Issa, to negotiate the return of Mosquito to lead the RUF.¹¹⁰ But Issa, who returned in advance of the other commanders, misrepresented the meeting to mid-level fighters and commanders at Buedu, undermining any chance of a transition of power. Amidst this internal dissension, with Sankoh in prison, Taylor seems to have become more interested in consolidating peace as a defensive manoeuvre to maintain what influence he could throughout the stuttering disarmament process. Smillie, et al. also note the advantages of a 'rebel peace' for Taylor, who needed to conserve resources to defend his own position in Monrovia, and would benefit from freeing RUF manpower from defensive positions in Sierra Leone to be reassigned to Liberian territory.¹¹¹

Already the improved productivity of stable diamond regions could be seen in the RUF's increased mining efforts and revenues in the post-Lomé years, when fighting tapered off significantly and the rebels were effectively permitted to control large swathes of the

¹⁰⁹ Jacob Sesay, Brigade Commander.

¹¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹¹ Smillie et al., *Heart of the Matter*, 49.

country. But, as in peacetime, increased commercial activity reinforced economic inequalities that had been temporarily upended by looting and crude rebel wealth redistribution. Pacification led to power shifts that side-lined many of the military commanders, leaving them deeply mistrustful of the group's high command, especially with the Special Court on the horizon. As a young fighter summarized, by the end of the war, "The fighting was only for position or diamonds...I gave all the diamonds to the senior commander, Issa."¹¹²

INDIVIDUAL PAYMENT: 'SELECTIVE INCENTIVES'

In exchange for handing over all diamonds to the mining unit or high command, commander-supporters were meant to receive some compensation, which was usually no more than a fraction of the market value of the gemstones. The appropriation of commanders' personal diamond mining proceeds by Peleto and Issa on behalf of the rebel government, with no tangible benefits to the supporters responsible for the mining venture or the fighters and civilians digging, is indicative of the paltry level of compensation received by members of the RUF throughout the war. For most of the conflict, all diamonds were 'government property,' channelled along the contours of the command hierarchy—first to Bockarie, then Zino, and finally directly to Sankoh to buy ammunition across the border.¹¹³ Any money seized in raids and ambushes was also handed over to the mission commander, who had to report it accordingly. One of Sankoh's bodyguards describes the carefully supervised distribution of money for resources:

[Foday Sankoh] gave me some money—more than Le 10 million—to give to Issa Sesay in Kailahun [in 1995]...The money was for soldiers and civilians. It was to be divided into two. Foday Sankoh gave me extra money to give to Issa Sesay to buy medical drugs for the medical unit in Kailahun...Foday Sankoh had introduced a system called 'Responsibility and Accountability'. You had to account for everything. The General Adjutant at Zogoda made a paper about the money and I signed it to say I have received the money. Foday Sankoh provided an armed escort for me...[He] had sent a message directly to Issa Sesay to say I was coming...I handed over the money to Issa and said we should make a document to say I handed the money to you. The document was prepared and Issa signed it. I sent a radio message to Foday Sankoh from Giema that I had arrived safely and handed the money over.

Issa divided the money and gave the civilians' share to the G5 to provide food for them. He did not follow up on it. Issa said that the G5 did not use all the money for the civilians. For this reason, Issa was called to Zogoda for an investigation for Failure to Follow Instructions. He was found guilty and was sent to the base for advanced training, as Foday Sankoh said he did not have the

¹¹² Alfred Kanneh, SBU.

¹¹³ Bobson Bockarie, District MP Commander.

proper ideology.¹¹⁴

According to commanders, the compensation system was largely effective for the first two phases of the war when oversight and control was strongest (with the notable exception of NPFL fighters in Phase I, who looted almost exclusively for personal gain).¹¹⁵ Fighters and commanders would be rewarded for capturing resources for the movement by getting a percentage of the money or material they handed in. These bonuses were a windfall compared to the Le 5,000 limit on personal cash fighters were allowed to keep. Commanders were allowed to keep incrementally larger amounts, which still made for fairly paltry sums, Le 20,000-100,0000 initially. But even the personnel closest to the leader were not compensated directly. As a senior signals commander and Foday Sankoh's driver both describe:

[Q: Did they pay you salary?] Ha! No. There was no salary. Sometimes our brothers at the frontline, they can send for us, so we can go buy cigarettes, maggi.

[Q: So there wasn't any provision for the fighters at the headquarters?] No, provision wasn't there. At times, when they send some items to the ground, they supply us, they give us food, condiments, the ones available, they would do that.¹¹⁶

[Q: Did you receive any payment?] No. The only thing was, the Pa said, "After the whole thing if there's anything you want to do, you want to go to school, you want to do business, there will be provision for that."

[Q: But he didn't pay you?] Not at all. He said he didn't have money for that.

[Q: What about the money they got from the frontline?] They used that to buy arms, ammunition; get rice and medicine. Not to pay soldiers. No...they said, "This is a self-reliant struggle."¹¹⁷

Unsurprisingly, practices changed significantly during the AFRC time, when a number of factors coalesced to enable and encourage personal enrichment. Sankoh was under arrest and no longer able to impose tight control over the movement. The RUF joined the mutinous army in Freetown as the 'rightful' rulers, commandeering property of both government and elites. The central prison at Pademba Road was opened, filling the streets with petty thieves and criminals, who mixed with the AFRC and RUF forces. Moreover,

¹¹⁴ "Mohamed Mundah, Written Testimony."

¹¹⁵ Bockarie Ngobeh, Black Guard.

¹¹⁶ John Saffa, Overall Signals Commander.

¹¹⁷ Sidie Dumana, Driver to Leader.

upon being driven from State House in 1998, Johnny Paul Koroma instructed soldiers to operate on a ‘pay yourself’ basis. As a Black Guard commander present in Freetown during the junta describes:

It was not that peaceful. Because civilians were not actually happy...You could see on people’s face they were not happy with the regime. And the attitude of the fighters, the AFRC officials, their attitude with looting, commandeering of vehicles during that regime—that was going on. They used to break people’s houses, especially people that were in top positions or were wealthy somehow. They would attack at night, ransack their houses, loot valuable properties, commandeer vehicles.

[Q: But I don’t understand. The soldiers had been under control for so long, what made them change so quickly?] Well, actually I would say the government was not able to control them. The prison was freed and given that power. So they were not having a grip over the men. They gave senior positions to young officers that were not matured enough. They were using that as a stick to terrorise people, enrich themselves...Some of the RUF officials were also involved into this commandeering of vehicles.¹¹⁸

Amidst this growing disarray and in-fighting between the barely aligned AFRC and RUF leaders, senior RUF attributed many of the problems and violence of Phase III to new ‘opportunistic joiners’. Some attribute it to the drug use introduced by the AFRC partnership, when previously only alcohol and marijuana had been available:

Before the AFRC, the NPRC (because most of those boys transformed later into AFRC) they used to go take drugs when they fought against us. Addicts—they called it brown brown—that would give them mind to go to the battlefield to fight against us. So most of those boys got used to this, they became drug addicts. It was only when we joined them that we began to know. So they become outcast, lawless, so they will do all kinds of things, they don’t even know. Even SAJ Musa he was in the habit of that. So that’s what caused most of those things there, like all those atrocities. If the war had been run only by trained RUF, it wouldn’t have taken that shape. Because we beat you, we even kill you, if you burn houses.¹¹⁹

The senior commander quoted above was appointed to the multilateral Ceasefire Monitoring Group on behalf of the RUF. By his estimation, during disarmament from 1999-2002, ‘It was mostly these mining boys causing problems—looting, taking goods forcibly, forcing people to mine, shakedown money...’¹²⁰ In this, the crudest of ways, the RUF and AFRC redistributed wealth to fighters and commanders through brute force outside of organizational control.

¹¹⁸ Bockarie Ngobeh, Black Guard.

¹¹⁹ Jinnah Brooks, Battalion G4 Commander.

¹²⁰ Ibid.

Though lower-level soldiers and ‘joiners’ were blamed for the looting, higher-level organizational actors were also responsible for the individual taking of property and resources. Within the confines of the group’s inconsistently enforced laws, members were to content themselves with the limited public goods the group was able to provide. The tension that emerged with increased diamond mining was between individuals and the larger organization. Classic principal-agent problems would apply, except that it was not always clear what the interests of the ‘principal’ (variously Sankoh, Bockarie, Sesay, or perhaps Taylor) were. What was apparent is the inseparability of consolidation of wealth and consolidation of power, whether in the hands of the RUF government, or in the hands of the individual commanders and their growing mining ventures and bodyguard entourages.

PUBLIC GOODS: ‘SELECTIVE BENEFITS’

As mentioned above, the majority of fighters and civilians in the RUF were not involved in mining at all, even at the war’s end. Consolidation of territorial control and increased access to diamond revenues and supplies facilitated more ambitious governance activities, including an exponential growth in public goods provision. Militarily, combatants were busy being deployed to Guinea and Liberia on Taylor’s behalf and holding defensive positions against CDF, British, and UN forces. The MP and IDU security branches sought to enforce law and order in rebel-controlled areas (see Appendix I), and served increasingly familiar civic roles, such as checkpoint and traffic control, and petty crime investigation.¹²¹

Ministerial branches of the RUF were developed on shoestring budgets to strengthen the organization’s political side and increase its credibility. The G5 commander was reappointed as Humanitarian Coordinator to liaise with relief organizations and provide access to high-need groups, such as children and amputees, in RUF territory.¹²² The Women’s Task Force was transformed into a gender ministry,¹²³ and a political committee, the Revolutionary United Sisters’ Organization (RUSO), was set up jointly by senior civilian women in the AFRC and RUF.¹²⁴ While the gender ministry coordinated high-level women’s representation at peace talks, RUSO initiated local fund-raising projects, such as soap-selling

¹²¹ ‘Minutes on Forum Held at The Military Police Mess Office’, 00.1211.PM.B.MIL-MP.MKNI-DHQ/MP.13.

¹²² ‘Information’, 01.0422.JN.K.HUM-NGO.MKNI-DHQ.35.

¹²³ Fatimah Bangura, Senior civilian woman.

¹²⁴ Fatu Sannoh, Senior civilian woman/RUSO.

and a variety show to raise money for humanitarian projects.¹²⁵ RUSO also became involved in expanding nursing staff and running a home economics adult education programme in Kailahun.¹²⁶

Free healthcare and education had long been the centrepiece of the RUF political agenda. The 'home ec.' programme was launched as part of the overall Education Unit in Kailahun in February 1999 alongside an adult literacy programme and primary and secondary community schools.¹²⁷ An animal husbandry education programme was later added to the education portfolio as well.¹²⁸ School attendance was compulsory in all RUF-held towns. Although the RUF operated schools throughout the war, during Phase II and from 1998-1999 air raids made many mothers unwilling to send their children to the makeshift learning structures set up in the bush.¹²⁹ However, improved security and increasing repatriation of local populations after the Lomé Accord led to flourishing demand, with which the Education Unit struggled to keep up. In Tongo Field, for example, primary school attendance ballooned from over 100 pupils in the 2000-2001 school year, to almost 300 in 2001-2002.¹³⁰ Both civilian and military personnel were appointed as teachers and administrators throughout the country. In accordance with basic administrative best practices, careful registers were kept of teachers' rank and qualification, as well as separate files with each student's name, age, gender, class, last school attended, and parents' address. In Kailahun District, the RUF stronghold, over 7,500 students were registered in 92 RUF primary schools, which employed 333 teachers, of whom 85 were formally qualified.¹³¹ Even in Bombali District, which the organization controlled only from late-1999, over 6,000 pupils were registered under the tutelage of 167 teachers by 2001.¹³² These numbers are not so much reflective of the RUF's ability to found and populate schools overnight, but rather of the group's willingness, and perhaps commitment to, facilitating community efforts at

¹²⁵ 'Information', 99.0907.JN.K.RUSO.KAIL-DHQ.18.

¹²⁶ 'Opening of the Education Office, Home Economics and Literacy Class', 99.0213.JN.K.EDU-MTG.KAIL.30; Alice Kargbo, Women's Deputy Overall Medical Commander.

¹²⁷ 99.0213.JN.K.EDU-MTG.KAIL.30.

¹²⁸ 'Free Education for the Poor Application for Animal Husbandry Project Assistance', 00.XXXX.JN.K.EDU-SUPP/CIC.KAIL.31.

¹²⁹ E.g. Kadajah Aruna, Civilian wife.

¹³⁰ 'RUF Primary School Register, Tongo Field 2000-2001', 01.0110.PM.B.EDU-ROLL.TONG.50; '10th September 2001 to July 2002 School Year', 01.0910.PM.B.EDU-ROLL.TONG.51.

¹³¹ 'Nominal Roll for Pupils, Qualified and Unqualified Teachers', 99.11XX.JN.K.EDU-ROLL.KAIL.22.

¹³² 'Report: Statistics of RUF/SL Free Education Primary Schools Functioning in Bombali District', 01.0430.JN.K.EDU-ROLL/IHS.MKNI-DHQ.7.

reconstruction and development. The Education Unit provided the administrative structure to manage this process, providing teachers, supplies, and funds where it could, imposing a degree of control over the newly reopened education sector.

Comments and praise noted down during the ‘AOB’ (any other business) portion of the Education Unit launch meeting illustrate the idealism with which education was welcomed by RUF/P (party) elites. The combat medic commander noted in lofty terms the very halting attempts throughout the war to provide education: “The RUF has given us a great chance. The leader CIC forced us to attend school even when in the jungle. Without education one is to be a servant to others.”¹³³ Others, such as the G5 commander, appealed to the founding motives for the war, and applauded what was viewed as a decade of rebel ideology seemingly being brought to fruition:

In 1985, President J.S. Momoh made education a privilege and not a right. [This was] the reason for us to have taken arms. Momoh advised us in Kailahun to stop sending our children to school while they sent theirs overseas. Even Vamboi is educated—to trap, hunt, lay farms, etc. But this type is Western education...English should not be the only language to be taught but French and Arabic also for better development for all.¹³⁴

The education programme run by the RUF(P) after the Lomé accord was the first time the group was able to fully actualize the ‘free education’ part of its platform. During most of the war, bush camps had presented an almost insurmountably inhospitable environment for schools and medical care. Still, after the post-Lomé shift to urban areas, war-related challenges persisted, including: curtailed mobility for students and teachers, who often faced harassment at checkpoints on their way to reach schools; the continued closure of Koidu town schools,¹³⁵ despite more than 40 operating throughout Kono District¹³⁶; and ‘acute’ lack of supplies.¹³⁷ Several INGOs were taken on sponsored visits to schools in RUF territory as the group appealed for education funds and supplies,¹³⁸ but security problems cut

¹³³ ‘Opening of the Education Office, Home Economics and Literacy Class’, 99.0213.JN.K.EDU-MTG.KAIL.30, 7.

¹³⁴ *Ibid.*, 8.

¹³⁵ ‘Report: Observational, Situational, Operational’, 00.10XX.JN.K.EDU-REP.KOIDU-HQ.24.

¹³⁶ ‘List of Free Primary Schools in the Liberated Zones, Kono District’, XX.XXXX.JN.K.EDU-ROLL/SCH.KONO.28.

¹³⁷ ‘Problems affecting schools’, XX.XXXX.JN.K.EDU-REP.MKNI-DHQ.16.

¹³⁸ ‘Letter/information’, 01.0827.JN.K.EDU-REP/NGO.MKNI-DHQ.33; ‘Information’, 01.0422.JN.K.HUM-NGO.MKNI-DHQ.35; ‘REPORT ON UNICEF SCHOOLS ASSESSMENT VISIT TO MAKENT’, 01.0329.JN.K.EDU-REP/NGO.MKNI-DHQ.12.

short their travel.¹³⁹ As acting commanders in chief, both Sam Bockarie and Issa Sesay provided the Education Unit with building materials, learning supplies, rice for students and teachers, and money. But this support was inconsistent, an occasional windfall rather than an organized budget. Archive documents attest to numerous failures to provide what was needed or promised, while other memos confirm transfer of goods. The Director of Education, appointed by Bockarie, became increasingly insistent that schools be built and adequately supplied, and that class sizes be limited and teachers properly compensated, but her office was over-extended. Basic problems, such as lack of transportation in what still operated as a war zone, made management exceedingly difficult.¹⁴⁰

Medical staff faced similarly daunting challenges. Throughout the war, basic drugs and supplies were purchased for the hundreds of doctors, nurses, and medics operating within the RUF. Many of them were trained within the jungle by doctors-made-medical commanders (see Chapter 4). Hodgepodge treatment notes in the archive illustrate the staff's continued efforts to maintain basic medical protocols, such as detailing diagnosis and treatment on whatever paper was available. They also attest to the wide array of medical problems faced in Sierra Leone, and particularly in war. In camps, the primary diseases and medical conditions were dysentery, parasitic worms, and pregnancy.¹⁴¹ 'Native herbs' and local medicine was frowned upon, but the standards of care for Western medicine was constrained by lack of supplies; often there was not even soap.¹⁴² Basic drugs—painkillers (panadol, ibuprofen, aspirin) and antibiotics—were applied to a range of maladies.

Provision of medical care came under the greatest strain when fighting was active, as it scattered medics on missions to the frontlines, increased the number of injuries, and made safe passage between bases incredibly difficult. Unlike those documented at base camps and headquarters towns, medical reports from military missions detail scores of wounded and killed in action. Medical care at the frontlines involved removing bullets and fragments, and triage before the fighters were transported for further treatment at the rear.¹⁴³ Communication and medical supply lines were further inhibited by inter-unit tensions, as medical officers struggled to move freely through their own colleagues' checkpoints. Several

¹³⁹ E.g., 'Appreciation', 01.0329.JN.K.EDU-SUPP/IHS.KONO.32.

¹⁴⁰ Hawa Vandy, Educational Coordinator/Senior civilian woman.

¹⁴¹ 'Requisition for Drugs', XX.XXXX.PM.B.MED.XX.24.

¹⁴² Zainab Sallah, Medic/Matron.

¹⁴³ Archive documents, various. E.g., 'Medical Report from Yesterday's Attack', 98.0802.PM.B.MED-REP.DHQ.11.

memos to the overall medic commander read like this one, detailing supply shortages and coordination challenges:

15 September 1998

Dear Cpt. XX,

I made a note to you the last time that am short of drugs. And am still putting it to you that am still short of drugs. Please Cpt., do as a brother and assist me in getting some. Since that Kabala mission, I have waited but all in vain. So please assist me. I made a draft of all the medicines I needed but I got none. Although as you know there is always no peace b/w the medics and the soldiers. But we are still patienting. We do the job in the name of God. I don't know what is really wrong with the signalas, even is you send a message they will never pass it through. So I will be writing instead. Send me some medicines please. Many thanks. From the CMC.¹⁴⁴

Like schooling, as control improved, medical care became more structured. Bureaucratic trappings followed: patient registries, drug supply lists, ICRC waybills, medical personnel roles, and even designated clinic hours.

In context, neither the RUF's functionality nor dysfunction is particularly remarkable. One of the primary claims of this chapter is that both the illicit practices and state-like overtures of the group in the diamond sector, and in public goods provision, show striking continuities with previous regimes' practices and shortcomings. Examining these continuities and parallels up close as they changed over time reveals the importance of leadership, self-interest, and organizational culture in encouraging, alternately, cohesion and dissolution. This chapter has shown that selective incentives for combatants were scarce until the final phase of the war, when opportunism and personal accumulation began to rapidly supplant group cohesion and military objectives. Yet, the management of diamond revenues also tells a story of how, just as war creates opportunities for criminality, it creates opportunities for citizenship and governance. As the epigraph alludes, those who controlled resources before the war were prepared militarily to defend them, while the RUF sought to capture those resources to consolidate power both militarily and institutionally. Ironically, the RUF, so focused on diamonds, were unable to capitalize on their value to implement the 'revolutionary' agenda, reflecting a chasm between rhetoric and action familiar in the country's diamond politics.

¹⁴⁴ 'Note', 98.0915.PM.B.MED-SUPP.YOMAN.9. (CMC, Chief Medical Commander; BC/MC, Battalion Chief Medical Commander.)

RUBBER STAMP: BUREAUCRACY OF ATROCITY

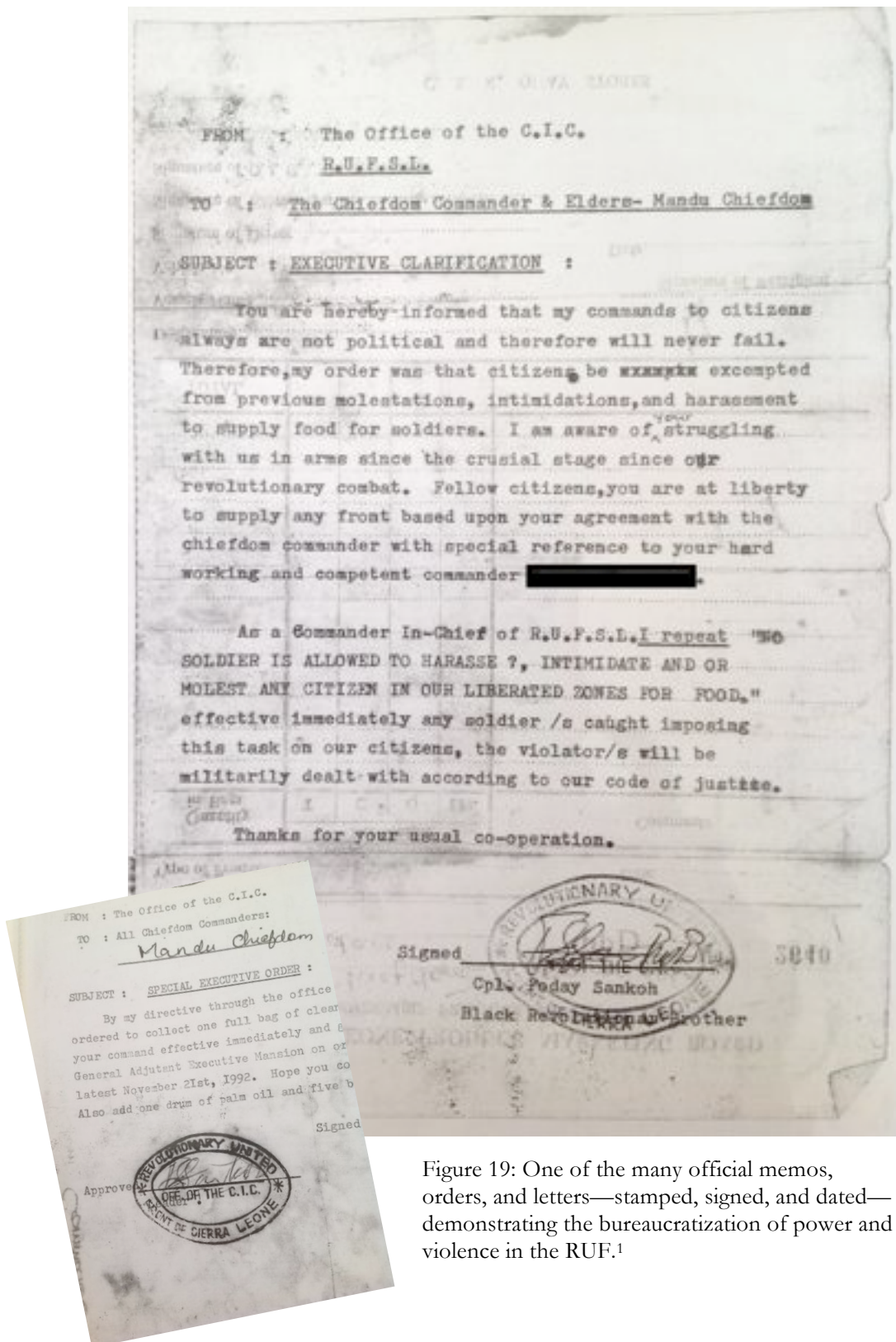


Figure 19: One of the many official memos, orders, and letters—stamped, signed, and dated—demonstrating the bureaucratization of power and violence in the RUF.¹

¹ 'Executive clarification', 92.XXXX.PM.B.F.CIC.MANDU.21

CONCLUSION

This thesis has examined a deceptively simple question often overlooked in the literature on civil war and rebel groups: how do rebels sustain a war they are responsible for bringing? Embedded in it are questions of how the group is created, how its members are retained, how their behaviour is controlled toward collective ends, how the organization itself is structured, and how military and civilian power are delegated within it. It is difficult to accomplish these things—to mobilize a society and deploy a military for war—in any context. The RUF represents a peculiarly difficult case. As Abdullah notes, ‘it [was] neither a separatist insurgency...nor a reformist insurgency...it [was] a guerrilla movement without any significant national following nor ethnic support.’² Participants were forced to rebel; the stated objective of overthrowing the government was accomplished quickly, but by the state military, not by the rebels; and for years, the group’s avowed supporters stopped sending supplies, until diamonds were on the table. Moreover, once built, the motley and abusive guerrilla outfit had to withstand the military assault not only of the Sierra Leone army, but also of the Guinean artillery, Nigerian aerial and ground forces, Nepalese Ghurkhas, and South African special ops mercenaries. They came back twice from the brink of defeat, and twice withstood the decapitation of their leadership when Foday Sankoh was arrested. In this respect, just as the ‘how’ is complex, the why is simple—caught in a warzone, RUF members fought for three things: their *bossman* (commander), their *bra dem* (compatriots), and survival.³

This reveals the limitations of debates about ‘greed or grievance’, selective incentives, and resource endowments, which focus on motivation yet fail to capture fear, coercion, and survival in war. Prevailing frameworks also do not account for the immense variations in rebel behaviour, both between individuals within the group, and in the group’s strategies and tactics over time. Examining the organization’s aims—what it is trying to do—and claims about what it is doing, enables us to go beyond rationalizing observed violence from without and instead understand the group from within. This reveals the nature and distribution of power in the organization, and the disconnect between rhetoric and action at the ground

² Abdullah and Muana, “A Revolt of the Lumpenproletariat,” 191.

³ On similar relationships in the CDF, see, Hoffman, *The War Machines*; also, Utas, *African Conflicts and Informal Power*.

level. It helps explain how fear, coercion, and the fight for survival become tools of control and contribute to processes of violence.

One of the central contributions of this thesis is thus its examination of rebel command and control mechanisms beyond the traditional selective incentives framework, through the identification of extensive state-like power structures in the RUF. To capture how they change over time, these mechanisms are examined in relation to the organization as a whole, throughout the country and throughout the war. This rather ambitious task has been tackled in the simplest way possible—by looking at the two basic components of rebel group survival: organizational capacity, and material and logistical viability. While organizational capacity addresses order, control, and violence, the material dimension contextualizes these micropolitics through the key ingredients of warfare—food, weapons, and revenues.⁴

The larger context for understanding both is the political history of the country. The historical overview provided in Chapter 2 analysed underlying causes, and in so doing, identified continuities between pre-war and wartime politics. The prominence of patronage politics and the personalization of power in Sierra Leone are central to understanding three things in the RUF: the group's leadership, the relationship it had with Charles Taylor, and the infighting that plagued organizational control. Similarly, the prevalence of violence and illicit practices in the mining sector sheds light on how the RUF was able so easily to step into and exploit existing roles and patterns in the industry.

The organizational capacity of the armed group was described through three processes by which individual civilians became the militarized collective of the RUF: the mobilization and recruitment of fighters; the establishment of a military order and governance structures; and the enforcement of this order through often-violent punishment and reward systems. As outlined in the introduction, the vast majority of literature on armed groups, and on rebels in particular, focuses on rationality. In mobilization, from deciding to go to war writ large, to joining as an individual, much of what we understand about armed conflict is predicated on cost-benefit calculations, utility maximization, and information asymmetries.⁵ In addition to

⁴ 'Micropolitics' comes from Weinstein, *Inside Rebellion*; on logistics see, van Creveld, *Supplying War*.

⁵ For a summary, see, Sambanis, "A Review of Recent Advances and Future Directions in the Quantitative Literature on Civil War"; for the preeminent macro-level opportunity model, see, Collier, Hoeffler, and Rohner, "Beyond Greed and Grievance"; at the micro-level, on recruitment see, Weinstein, "Resources and the Information Problem in Rebel Recruitment"; connecting

rational choice motivation, increasingly prominent emphasis has been placed on how incentives structure or control rebel behaviour and violence once war has begun, particularly through the principal-agent model.⁶ In light of these complementary rational actor frameworks, the primary contribution of the analysis of the RUF's organizational capacity is that it elucidates a level of structures and state-like governance systems that directly influence the allocation of power in rebellion. In their success and in their failings, the RUF's internal security structures mediated both the mobilization and the control of violence, with which most of the literature is concerned. Aimed at establishing rational-legal legitimacy of the rebel group and its use of force, bureaucratic mechanisms do not fit easily into prevailing political-economic models of war-making.⁷

The second component, the examination of material viability, illustrates how and when control waned and governance failed at both the group and individual levels. The production and procurement of food was one of the RUF's primary concerns throughout the war and intimately affected the group's relationship with civilians. Rather than revolutionizing the provinces, rebel governance simply repurposed existing institutions, such as chieftaincy and town councils, to requisition goods and manpower for the war effort. For much of the conflict, food-finding missions drove violence and exploitation of the civilian population, as the RUF lacked adequate territorial control to farm or tax for provisions sustainably.

Arms and ammunition procurement followed a similar pattern. When co-conspirators Sankoh and Taylor were separated by mistrust and closed borders, the RUF was forced to pursue a guerrilla strategy, gaining its weapons and materiel by attacking the enemy. Still, top-down provisioning systems were in place. Food and arms distribution was centralized under the S4 and G4, and strict limits were placed on how much property fighters and commanders could keep; the rest had to be reported and handed over to high command. As a result of the tight-fisted guerrilla struggle and attempted imposition of 'total control' over

incentives directly with violence see, Wood, "Rebel Capability and Strategic Violence Against Civilians" and; Humphreys and Weinstein, "Handling and Manhandling Civilians in Civil War"; on the nature and logic of violence, Kalyvas, *The Logic of Violence in Civil War*.

⁶ On recruitment and retention, see, e.g., Gates, "Recruitment and Allegiance"; Weinstein, *Inside Rebellion*; on control of violence, see also, Lidow, *Violent Order*; Butler, Gluch, and Mitchell, "Security Forces and Sexual Violence"; Johnston, "The Geography of Insurgent Organization and Its Consequences for Civil Wars."

⁷ Weber, *The Essential Weber*.

fighters and followers, selective incentives played almost no role in the mobilization of fighters. They did, however, play a central role in the personalization of power, entrenchment of mistrust, and ultimately, in the loss of organizational cohesion.

The final chapter on diamonds provides a prism for examining the findings of the thesis in light of prevailing debates, because so much of the literature focuses on the RUF as a paragon of banditry and predation. The behaviour of the SLA, under the NPRC, and then as the AFRC, illustrates that resource control and opportunistic violence are not just problems for rebels, but for any armed group. When the state was overthrown in 1992, so too was its partisan grip on diamond concessions. With control of towns and government supply lines to their advantage, soldiers had more time and better access for violent entrepreneurship. Resultantly, the heavily policed, tenuously power-balanced patronage fields of Sierra Leone's mining industry attracted and distracted the soldiers even more than they did the rebels for much of the war.⁸

This could be read two ways. Does it prove Weinstein's theory of the path-dependent 'rebel resource curse' and demonstrate, moreover, that it also applies to state military organizations?⁹ Or, does it suggest that the model is inverted, and that it is the management and distribution of military resources that, when done poorly, personalizes power and leads to opportunism? The findings of this thesis suggest the latter. The key variable is not simply the presence of resources, as in the initial endowments model, but the (in)effective management and control of them. The loss of control and opportunistic violence that followed was attached to the abundance of lootable commodities. However, it was particularly the way in which these resources were distributed—from the top-down machine politics of the shadow state, to the opaque collection of 'government diamonds' by Issa Sesay—that encouraged violence.¹⁰ It created a zero-sum situation that upped the ante for competition, commercializing in the RUF what was previously a military operation. As soon as rebellion became a business, it failed.

With the exception of mercenary firms, none of the existing models of selective incentives or principal-agent solutions demonstrate that private goods and market forces can

⁸ Kandeh, "Ransoming the State"; Fithen, "Diamonds and War."

⁹ Weinstein, *Inside Rebellion*; c.f., Weinstein, "Resources and the Information Problem in Rebel Recruitment."

¹⁰ Reno, *Corruption and State Politics in Sierra Leone*.

effectively manage recruitment and retention in civil war. To the contrary, they all purport to explain excessive violence and rebel dysfunction. What this thesis has examined, however, is the converse—how, amidst the fog and chaos of war, an unlikely rebel group did function. Under Sankoh and Bockarie, absolute control over revenues and the visible channelling of resources into supplies created a semblance of collective purpose. For a decade, under duress, members of the RUF fought within the framework of a revolutionary organization for virtually no pay. The state-like apparatus of a militarized system implemented clearly defined and harshly enforced laws to create in-group power and authority, and to legitimize violence and the war effort as a whole through its bureaucratization—seen in its distribution and literal rubber-stamping of titular power (Figure 19). Compared to remuneration and violent punishment, bureaucracy has been almost wholly unexplored as a rebel ‘enforcement technology’.¹¹ Yet, the institutionalization of power and violence within a military organization is its primary source of stability and cohesion, speaking directly to Gates’s point that it is not just the severity of punishment, but the probability of meeting it that acts as a deterrent to control behaviour.¹² As this research has emphasized, the inconsistency of punishment in the RUF exacerbated violence and mismanagement.

To summarize, the principal findings of the thesis can best be read sequentially. The first is that a rebel ‘state’ existed in the RUF that was focused primarily on internal governance of fighters and RUF civilians, and was only marginally attuned to the possibility of extending that governance to surrounding territory non-militarily.¹³ Second, the primary objective of the group was its own survival at all costs. At the individual level this helped adhere members to the group under the threat of death, either at the hands of their own commanders for attempted escape, or by the enemy should escape succeed. At the group level, military pressure fostered in turn, military cohesion, as collective and coordinated action was the only option for survival. Third, channelling the group’s organizational capacity toward its material viability—as seen, for example, in the emphasis on communal labour by both combatants and civilians—reinforced members’ commitment to the group as it generated a marginal degree of food and physical security in return for their investment, and exempted them from violent punishment. It also led to the creation of the RUF’s

¹¹ Gates, “Recruitment and Allegiance.”

¹² Ibid.

¹³ On the comparative study of ‘governmental functions by violent non-state actors across the ideological spectrum’, see, Mampilly, *Rebel Rulers*, 2.

parallel society in the bush, in which household units and gendered division of labour provided a source of social cohesion outside the centralized hierarchy.

Identifying the survival imperative as the driving force for cohesion reveals not only why members continued to participate despite almost no pecuniary reward, but also why, as the group became flush with resources, fractionalization and infighting became an increasing threat. Once the RUF took control of trading routes and diamond areas in 1999, combatants and civilians were no longer mobilized for the express preservation of the group. The primary objective became enrichment, not survival. Accordingly, the governance apparatus of the RUF became less concerned with organizing the labour of its members and more concerned with extracting revenues from its own members' and civilians' growing business activities. This broke the military-social contract between the RUF leadership and its followers. The more accessible peace and wealth became, the more urgent and possible were private accumulation and personal power.

IMPLICATIONS

The findings of this thesis amplify several patterns that have been identified in previous research on the Sierra Leone civil war. Moreover, while the broad-brush findings have been outlined above, much of the value of the approach taken lies in its detailed look at internal dynamics, which raises new questions, and urges revisiting some familiar debates and frameworks. Peters has done similar fieldwork to that underpinning this study, and the empirical commonalities between both accounts of the RUF are valuable for cross-referencing some of the more contentious claims about the group's military logic and political structure.¹⁴ Our respective points of analytical departure are quite different, however, leading to divergent conclusions. Peters, focusing on fighters as individual participants, sees the war as patronage in reverse: as the patrimonial system began to collapse, young rural men became increasingly marginalized, and thus, ready candidates for self-actualization through the RUF. He uses a highly mutable neo-Durkheimian approach to explain the integration of youth into a collective that was 'glued' together by the shared sentiment of marginality.¹⁵ Conversely, this thesis focuses on the organization as a whole, which demonstrates, on the one hand, the centrality of formal military and governance

¹⁴ Peters, *War and the Crisis of Youth*.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 232–5.

structures, which Peters identifies but downplays; and on the other hand, the pre-eminence of personal power and patron-client relations—not its reversal—from the lowliest apprentice-bodyguard, to Mosquito’s relationship with ‘The Father’.

Alternatively, Reno’s conception of warlord politics, which looks primarily at the state rather than the rebels, reflects much of the RUF strategy by the war’s end. He identifies warlord politics through their evisceration of bureaucratic structures and public goods, and in rulers’ acute orientation toward global markets, which become the engines for patronage power.¹⁶ Among other things, this captures well Issa Sesay’s exquisitely centralized taxation system, and Sankoh’s attempted mortgaging of diamond concessions—what Ross calls ‘booty futures’—to international partners.¹⁷ Yet, while Reno’s expertise on elite politics in Sierra Leone extends incisively to the leaders of the RUF, it does not explain either the militarization of power or the extensive internal governance structures that characterized the rebel group for most of the conflict. These organizational strategies could be seen as weapons of the politically weak (i.e. those without access to mining or foreign exchange), but then, it cannot explain why vast civilian governance and public goods were also doggedly pursued by RUF administrators—civilian and military alike—up to and after the signing of the Lomé Peace Accord.

Herbst picks up where Reno leaves off, and connects elite entrepreneurs and organizational dynamics through the form of the (weak) state itself. His assertion that rebel organizations are determined by the structure of the state they seek to overthrow holds in Sierra Leone, and reminds researchers to be attuned to the first lesson of rebellion, clearly articulated in the RUF’s own training manuals (see Chapter 4): that ‘the terrain of struggle must be understood.’¹⁸ While Reno describes elite responses to global political-economic opportunities and pressures, Herbst identifies resultant state weakness as the primary determinant of ill-disciplined, loosely structured rebellion.¹⁹ Indeed, this thesis reflects both patterns, and expands on Herbst in its description of how not only state, but local power structures—such as Mende control of Tongo mining, or the Joso Group militia in Pujehun—inform the nature of the conflict and its actors.

¹⁶ Reno, *Warlord Politics*.

¹⁷ Ross, “What Do We Know About Natural Resources and Civil War?” 57.

¹⁸ Herbst, “Economic Incentives, Natural Resources and Conflict in Africa,” 282.

¹⁹ Reno, “African Weak States and Commercial Alliances”; Herbst, “Economic Incentives, Natural Resources and Conflict in Africa.”

Keen's formulation of war as 'economics by other means' has influenced both macro-level approaches.²⁰ Yet, his own analysis of the Sierra Leone civil war goes beyond the political and economic dimensions of conflict to reassert the salience of social and emotive aspects of violence, such as shame, anger, and humiliation, in explaining extreme brutality and futility.²¹ Richards also stresses that violence can be meaningful and communicative, without being 'rational' in the utility-maximizing sense.²² This thesis provides a complement to individual-oriented approaches to understanding violence, by locating it in the repertoire of the group, and framing it within patterns of violent socialization and coercive power.²³ Understanding violence not just as a tool to be used against the enemy or in exploitation of civilians dramatically sharpens our understanding of power and coercion within the armed group, and makes more legible how and why previously non-violent citizens—and notoriously, even children—can become ruthless killers.

The above studies focus more on the 'why' of mobilization and violence than on the 'how' of productive, functional, and mundane aspects of the RUF's rebellion. Indeed, the vast majority of social science research seeks to explain causality. One of the key contributions of this internal dynamics-based approach, however, is that it reminds us of the utility of inductive case study research for both theory-building and –testing. In its non-prescriptive approach, Kandeh's research similarly brings together several themes and commonalities across armed groups and places them in political context. He describes *lumpenization* as an elite-led process, as the country's political leaders multiplied their pre-war exploitation of young people for violence once the conflict began.²⁴ His approach foregrounds processes of immiseration and in so doing avoids essentializing either patronage politics or youth politics as immutable forces. His work, which scrutinizes the army, read alongside that of Hoffman on the *kamajors*, and Utas and Jörgel on the West Side Boys, underscores the similarities between the armed groups in the war, the demographic aspect of which has been

²⁰ Keen, "Incentives and Disincentives for Violence," 27.

²¹ Keen, *Conflict and Collusion*.

²² Richards, *Fighting for the Rain Forest*; Keen, *Conflict and Collusion*; see also, Peters, *War and the Crisis of Youth*; Mitton, "Irrational Actors and the Process of Brutalisation."

²³ Wood, "Sexual Violence During War: Variation and Accountability," 298.

²⁴ Kandeh, "Ransoming the State."

documented by Humphreys and Weinstein.²⁵ This thesis underscores these political parallels, and suggests that Kandeh's description of the state military—in which 'organized pillage became part of the survival repertoire of renegade soldiers'—perhaps applies even better to the RUF.²⁶ Yet, the organizational-level approach also helps identify meaningful differences between putatively similar groups of poor young men fighting each other (or avoiding fights with each other) for uncertain benefit.

First, it identifies the primary function of rebel groups in war, which is not the violence we see, but the maintenance of members. This makes more visible the gender dimensions of war-making. The RUF was nearly 50 percent female, yet most of these women and girls were not on the frontlines fighting, they were at the rear, in bush camps or villages, providing the social structure and labour infrastructure that kept the war machine running. Second, unlike the other groups in the war, the in-group policing system in the RUF functioned on both a military and societal level. It sought to control all relations through the G5, and was thus a much more intrusive military apparatus than any of the other armed groups in the war. Incidentally, the other side of this coin is that the RUF sought to provide public goods and services as a way of both actualizing its revolutionary agenda and streamlining control over life in 'liberated zones'. Mampilly, drawing on Tilly in his comparative study of rebel governance, notes that “most people most of the time are interacting in non-violent ways”...[Accordingly] attempting to understand civilian experiences in war without a grasp of insurgent governance practices requires a wilful ignorance of the majority of interactions that shape life in contemporary zones of conflict.²⁷

From the same fundamental observation, this thesis demonstrates that understanding combatant experiences in war without a grasp of organizational processes is equally short-sighted. How non-state military organizations structure their daily survival, division of military and civilian labour, and delegation of political responsibilities provides a valuable starting point for addressing some of the significant lacunae in our understanding of rebel groups. With Mampilly's admonition in mind, can we understand external coercion and control efforts without first identifying the internal mechanisms of the same nature? What

²⁵ Kandeh, “What Does the ‘Militariat’ Do?”; Kandeh, “Ransoming the State”; Hoffman, *The War Machines*; Utas and Jörgel, “The West Side Boys”; Humphreys and Weinstein, “What the Fighters Say.”

²⁶ Kandeh, “Ransoming the State,” 359.

²⁷ Mampilly, *Rebel Rulers*, 6–7 (quoting Tilly 2003, 12).

can we learn about a rebel group from observing its violence, if we do not also explore how it justifies and manages coercive power, and the ends for which its use is sanctioned, or prohibited? To do so we must grapple with in-group power dynamics—both formal and informal—which requires differentiating between participants in the group’s own terms. Whether this means going beyond *lumpen*- and youth-centric explanations of conflict, or demanding more from our two-dimensional formulation of the rational actor, our understanding of war-making in Africa will be hamstrung if we mistake demographic similarity for in-group uniformity in power, aims, and functions.

Ultimately, for all of its self-perpetuating tendencies, war is only an economic pursuit insofar as money buys power. In the land of patronage politics and shadow states, money can take power quite far indeed, but the business of the Sierra Leone civil war was not business itself. Even at war’s end, control of the state was the driving objective, from the micro-, civic level—as seen in the RUF’s substantial organization and provision of free education and healthcare—to the State House, exemplified by Sankoh’s assumption of the CMRRD-based vice-presidency. Counter-intuitive though it may be, armed struggle for control of the state illustrates a fundamental buy-in to the conception of the state, and claim-staking for citizenship and representation by its antagonists. Careful examination of how militarized challenges to state authority are structured at the ground-level can reveal both the ideals of group members, and the patterns and pitfalls through which not only rebellion, but often the state itself, falls short.

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Note: Archive document numbering system

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Spaces A-E catalogue the document source (all retrieved in Sierra Leone from personal contacts in Freetown, and Bo, Kailahun, and Kenema Districts, 2010).

Spaces F-I code the content of the documents with respect to their wartime content.

'J' is the file number according to where it was found in the archive.

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| A | <i>Year</i> |
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| E | <i>Archive location</i> |
| F | Theme |
| G | Topic |
| H | Location it pertains to (e.g. PNDMB = Pendembu; MKNI = Makeni) |
| I | Relevant office (e.g. 'BGC' = Battle group commander; 'CIC' = Commander in Chief, etc.) |
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28/01/1992	Approval 92.0128.PM.B.MIL-MTG.PNDMB-BGC.34
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20/10/1992	Executive Forum 92.1020.PM.B.MIL-MTG/CIC.PNDMB-CIC.30
16/12/1992	Invitation To The Installation Ceremony of The War Council Members 92.1216.PM.B.MIL-MTG.KAILH-WO.4
25/01/1993	(None) 93.0125.PM.B.MIL-ORD.PNDMB-MP.27
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03/03/1993	Information 93.0303.PM.B.MIL-IDU.MANDU.15
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--/--/1992	G2 Office meeting 92.XXXX.PM.B.F.SLUSH.10
--/--/1992	Agricultural subcommittee membership list 92.XXXX.PM.B.F.AGCOM.12
--/--/1992	Urgent information (cash crop secretary) 92.XXXX.PM.B.F.MANDU.13
--/--/1992	Return of civilians to their normal home areas and governmental areas of operation 92.XXXX.PM.B.F.PNDMB.14
--/--/1992	Executive Clarification 92.XXXX.PM.B.F.CIC.MANDU.21
2/01/1992	Official Gate Pass 92.0102.PM.B.TRVL.PNDMB.XX
15/01/1992	Road Work 92.0615.PM.B.RD.PNDMB.24
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17/02/1999	Report on The Gbalahun Free Primary School 99.0217.JN.K.EDU-REP.LUAWA.40
22/02/1999	Report on The Free Primary School Sakiema 99.0222.JN.K.EDU-REP.LUAWA.39
04/03/1999	Report on The Mambona Free Primary School 99.0304.JN.K.EDU-REP.LUAWA.38
10/03/1999	Report on The Talia Free Primary School 99.0310.JN.K.EDU-REP.LUAWA.42
13/03/1999	Report on The Sembemhun Free Primary School 99.0313.JN.K.EDU-REP.LUAWA.41

15/03/1999 Report on The Mendekeima Free Primary School
99.0315.JN.K.EDU-REP.LUAWA.46

21/03/1999 Report on The Fandu Free Primary School
99.0321.JN.K.EDU-REP.LUAWA.43

22/03/1999 Report on The Dodo-Katuma Free Primary School
99.0322.JN.K.EDU-REP.LUAWA.44

24/03/1999 Report on The Sandeyalu Free Primary School
99.0324.JN.K.EDU-REP.LUAWA.45

17/07/1999 Meeting Held In Kailahun To Explain The Details of The Lome Peace
Accord
99.0717.JN.K.DDR/LOME-MTG.KAIL.15

22/07/1999 Information
99.0722.JN.K.EDU-CERTIF.KAIL-DHQ.21

07/09/1999 Information
99.0907.JN.K.RUSO.KAIL-DHQ.18

19/09/1999 Infos and Report
99.0919.JN.K.EDU-REP.KONO-BDEHQ.9

30/09/1999 The Arrival of Cpl. Foday Saybana Sankoh
99.0930.JN.K.EDU-MTG/CIC.KISSIB.4

30/09/1999 RUF Free Pri Existing Schools In Kailahun District
99.09XX.JN.K.EDU-ROLL.KAIL.17

01/10/1999 RUF Free Primary Schools For The Poor, Names and Particulars of
Officers
99.10XX.JN.K.EDU-ROLL.KONO.36

11/10/1999 Clearance
99.1011.JN.K.EDU-SUPP.KAIL.10

01/11/1999 Nominal Roll For Pupils, Qualified And Unqualified Teachers
99.11XX.JN.K.EDU-ROLL.KAIL.22

14/07/2000 School Closing Function
00.0714.JN.K.EDU-DISCO.KAIL.37

21/07/2000 RUF Free Sec. School, Kailahun Annual Examination
00.0721.JN.K.EDU-ROLL/EXAM.KAIL.23

30/08/2000 Master Sheet For Civilian Teachers
00.0830.JN.K.EDU-ROLL/CIV.KAIL.27

30/08/2000 Military Personnels Serving The Education Unit, Kailahun District
00.0830.JN.K.EDU-ROLL/MIL.KAIL.26

15/09/2000 Match-Pass Address By the Director
00.0915.JN.K.EDU-ADD.KONO.8

01/10/2000 Report: Observational, Situational, Operational
00.1025.JN.K.EDU-SUPP.XX.34

25/10/2000 Supplies needed
01.0110.PM.B.EDU-ROLL.TONG.50

--/--/2001 Information/Report
01.XXXX.JN.K.EDU-ROLL/SCH.MKNI.29

10/01/2001 RUF Primary School Tongo Field
01.0119.JN.K.EDU-TRVL.KAIL.47

19/01/2001 Receive
01.0119.JN.K.EDU-TRVL.KAIL.47

03/02/2001 Message and Instruction
01.0203.JN.K.EDU-ATTEND.KONO.49

29/03/2001 Report on UNICEF Schools Assessment Visit To Makeni
01.0329.JN.K.EDU-REP/NGO.MKNI-DHQ.12

29/03/2001 Appreciation
01.0329.JN.K.EDU-SUPP/IHS.KONO.32

22/04/2001 Information
01.0422.JN.K.HUM-NGO.MKNI-DHQ.35

30/04/2001 Report: Statistics of RUF/SL Free Education Primary Schools
Functioning In Bombali District
01.0430.JN.K.EDU-ROLL/IHS.MKNI-DHQ.7

02/06/2001 DHQ, Travel pass for school supplies
01.0602.JN.K.EDU-SUPP/TRVL.MKNI-DHQ.48

12/06/2001 Refusal of one Mr. XX to enhance the possibility of getting the required
exchange commodity to purchase stationery for the printing of the End of
Year School Sheets.
01.0612.JN.K.EDU-SUPP.KAIL-HQ.3

16/06/2001 Request For Assistance
01.0616.JN.K.EDU-SUPP/IHS/UNAMSIL.KONO.20

10/09/2001 September 2001 To July 2002 School Year

	01.0910.PM.B.EDU-ROLL.TONG.51
11/09/2001	Programme: Visit of The Force Commander to The Friendship Free Primary School
	01.0911.JN.K.EDU-MTG.XX.19
2001	Information/Report
	01.XXXX.JN.K.EDU-ROLL/SCH.MKNI.29
27/08/2002	Letter/Information
	01.0827.JN.K.EDU-REP/NGO.MKNI-DHQ.33
--/--/99	Warning
	99.XXXX.JN.K.EDU-RATIO.KAIL.11
--/--/00	From the Director of Schools for the UNICEF—Assessment of Schools, Kailahun District
	00.XXXX.JN.K.EDU-ADD/NGO.KAIL.6
--/--/00	Nominal Roll of Military Personnels Serving The Education Unit
	00.XXXX.JN.K.EDU-ROLL.KAIL-HQ.13
--/--/00	Application for Project Assistance
	00.XXXX.JN.K.EDU-SUPP/CIC.KAIL.31
n.d.	The Supervisor of Schools Address on the occasion of the arrival of his excellency and chairman of strategic minerals and delegates
	XX.XXXX.JN.K.EDU-ADD.KONO.5
n.d.	Free Secondary School Closing Programme, Kailahun Town
	XX.XXXX.JN.K.EDU-MTG.KAIL.25
n.d.	DHQ, Acute problems facing schools
	XX.XXXX.JN.K.EDU-REP.MKNI-DHQ.16
n.d.	List of Free Primary Schools in The Liberated Zones, Kono District
	XX.XXXX.JN.K.EDU-ROLL/SCH.KONO.28

Medical and humanitarian documents

<i>DATE</i>	<i>SUBJECT</i>	<i>DOCUMENT No.</i>
18/01/1998	Information	98.0118.PM.B.MIL-PCGRD/MED.XX.22
27/06/1998	Information	

98.0627.PM.B.MED-PERS.PNDMB.1
 18/07/1998 Tx
 98.0718.PM.B.MED-TX.XXXX.6
 26/07/1998 Drugs requisition
 98.0726.PM.B.MED-DRUGS.XXXX.2
 31/07/1998 Tx
 98.0731.PM.B.MED-TX.XXXX.10
 02/08/1998 Medical Report from Yesterday's Attack
 98.0802.PM.B.MED-REP.DHQ.11
 03/08/1998 Drugs return for august
 98.0803.PM.B.MED-DRUGS.XXXX.4
 09/09/1998 Refer
 98.0909.PM.B.MED-REF/SUPP.KSSYT.5
 15/09/1998 Note
 98.0915.PM.B.MED-SUPP.YOMAN.9
 --/10/1998 (Wife of Lt Col Rambo labour)
 98.1000.PM.B.MED-OB.HQ.4
 09/11/1998 Official travelling pass
 98.1109.PM.B.MED-TRVL.KONO.8
 17/03/1999 Officer travelling pass
 99.0317.PM.B.MED-TRVL.KOIDU.7
 11/07/1999 Note
 98.0711.PM.B.MED-SUPP.KOIDU.14
 30/08/1999 Medical Department Public Notice
 99.0830.PM.B.MED-CLINIC.SEGB.13
 02/10/1999 Patient Registry
 99.1002.PM.B.MED-ROLL.DHQ.12
 03/03/2000 ICRC Medical Waybill
 00.0303.PM.B.MED-DRUGS/SUPP/ICRC.SEGB.18
 11/04/2000 ICRC Drug Supply
 00.0411.PM.B.MED-DRUGS/SUPP/ICRC.SEGB.16
 13/09/2000 Drug Supply
 00.0913.PM.B.MED-DRUGS.XXXX.15
 21/09/2000 Drugs Arrested from Daru

00.0921.PM.B.MED-DRUGS/UNOMSIL.DARU.17

--/--/1999 Comprehensive nimirroll of medical personnels (Kayeima)

99.XXXX.PM.B.MED-ROLL.KYMA.23

n.d. Requisition for drugs

XX.XXXX.PM.B.MED.XX.24

INTERVIEWS

Ex-combatant interviews

	<i>PSEUDONYM</i>	<i>DATE</i>	<i>LOCATION</i>	<i>POSITION</i>
1	Abdullai Conteh	Jul. 2010	Buedu	HQ Medic Commander
2	Abibatu Gbla	Apr. 2008	Makeni	Civilian girl
3	Abibatu Kabbia	Apr. 2008	Makeni	Civilian wife
4	Abie Tamba	Jun. 2010	Bo	Adjutant
5	Abubakarr Daboh	Nov. 2010	Freetown	AFRC follower
6	Abubakarr Kallon	Apr. 2008	Mile 91	Fighter
7	Adama Gbla	Apr. 2008	Makeni	Civilian girl
8	Adama Stevens	Nov. 2009	Koidu	Civilian wife
9	Agnes Sumana	Apr. 2008	Makali	Fighter
10	Alex Lansana	Jul. 2010	Pendembu	G5 Commander
11	Alfred Gbla	Aug. 2010	Freetown	WSB Commander
12	Alfred Kanneh	Apr. 2008	Makeni	Fighter
13	Alfred Wureh	Jul. 2010	Ngiehun	Civilian, Agriculture Agent
14	Alice Kargbo	Jul. 2010	Kailahun	Women's Deputy Overall Medical Commander
15	Alpha Daboh	Oct. 2010	Makeni	Battalion Commander
16	Alusine Kandeh	Apr. 2008	Mile 91	Fighter
17	Amadou Fofanah	Apr. 2008	Mile 91	SBU Commander
18	Amara Sumana	Jul. 2010	Freetown	Fighter, security to Leader
19	Aminata Turay	Apr. 2008	Makeni	Target WACs Commander
20	Andrew Mundah	Jun. 2010	Bo	Adjutant
21	Augustine Tholley	Jun. 2010	Bo	Battalion Commander
22	Augustine Vandy	Jul. 2010	Kailahun	Chairman
23	Bakarr Dumbuya	Apr. 2008	Mile 91	Adjutant
24	Bangali Rogers	Apr. 2008	Makeni	Fighter
25	Ben Keita	Aug. 2010	Bo	Fighter
26	Benjamin Swaray	Jun. 2010	Bo	Fighter
27	Bernadette Abdullah	Jul. 2010	Kailahun	Nurse
28	Bill Wureh	Jun. 2010	Kenema	Mining Commander
29	Bintu Sallah	Apr. 2008	Makeni	Civilian wife
30	Bobson Bockarie	Jun. 2010	Bo	District MP Commander
31	Bobson Lamin	Nov. 2009	Koidu	Blackguard Signals
32	Bobson Sallah	Apr. 2008	Mile 91	SBU Commander
33	Bockarie Ngobeh	Jul. 2010	Freetown	Black Guard Commander
34	Christopher Summa	Jun. 2010	Makeni	Medic
35	Claude Pearce	Jun. 2010	Bo	CDF Battalion Commander

36	Daramy Kamanda	Jun. 2010	Kenema	Signals
37	Dennis Kargbo	Apr. 2008	Mile 91	Fighter
38	Dwight Mansaray	Jul. 2010	Kailahun	Military Intelligence Cartographer, RUF District Chairman
39	Eddie Bockarie	Oct. 2009	Makeni	IDU Commander
40	Elizabeth Sesay	Apr. 2008	Makeni	Civilian wife
41	Emmanuel Kallon	Jun. 2010	Kenema	Signals to Leader
42	Emmanuel Sandi	Aug. 2010	Bo	Unit Commander
43	Eric Bangura	Oct. 2009	Makeni	Agriculture Secretariat, Humanitarian Commander
44	Fanta Massaquoi	Apr. 2008	Mile 91	SGU/Wife
45	Fanta Sumana	Apr. 2008	Makali	AFRC wife
46	Fatimah Bangura	Jul. 2010	Freetown	Senior civilian woman, worked with IDU
47	Fatmatah Conteh	Apr. 2008	Mapaki	Civilian girl
48	Fatu Sankoh	Oct. 2009	Makeni	Vanguard woman
49	Fatu Sannoh	Apr. 2008	Freetown	Women's Wing/RUSO Secretary General
50	Fatu Tucker	Apr. 2008	Freetown	Vanguard WACs Commander
51	Florence Banda	Jul. 2010	Kailahun	Nurse Giema hospital
52	Gasimu Komba	Oct. 2009	Makeni	Strong fighter
53	Haja Musa	Oct. 2009	Makeni	WACs
54	Hakim Vawah	Jun. 2010	Kailahun	Unit Commander, Head of Security RUF Presidential Lodge
55	Hawa Vandy	Jul. 2010	Kailahun	Educational Coordinator, Senior civilian woman
56	Isha Sewa	Apr. 2008	Makeni	Civilian girl
57	Jacob Sesay	Jun. 2010	Kenema	Brigade Commander
58	Janet Kallon	Apr. 2008	Mile 91	Civilian wife
59	Jemba Lakoh	Apr. 2008	Magburaka	Civilian girl
60	Jinnah Brooks	Jun. 2010	Tongo	Battalion G4 Commander
61	John Saffa	Jul. 2010	Ngiehun	Signals Commander
62	John Sesay	Jun. 2010	Kailahun	Overall IO Commander
63	Johnny Jalloh	Jun. 2010	Kenema	CDF Commander
64	Johnny Kabbah	Oct. 2009	Makeni	Medic
65	Johnny Stevens	Jul. 2010	Ngiehun	Ngiehun Town Chief
66	Kadijah Aruna	Apr. 2008	Mile 91	Civilian wife
67	Kai Fekkah	Oct. 2009	Makeni	Vanguard, S4 Commander
68	Kai Sesay	Apr. 2008	Mile 91	AFRC/RUF
69	Kemoh Aruna	Aug. 2010	Bo	Signals to Leader

70	Koomba Sama	Apr. 2008	Mile 91	Civilian wife
71	Lettitia Ballah	Apr. 2008	Mile 91	Civilian wife
72	Manfred Kamara	Jul. 2010	Kenema	Adjutant General, Acting Battlefront Commander
73	Margaret Kanneh	Apr. 2008	Mile 91	Civilian wife
74	Margaret Sewa	Apr. 2008	Makali	Female fighter
75	Mariatu Thomas	Apr. 2008	Makeni	Vanguard WACs commander
76	Mariatu Thomas	Jun. 2010	Makeni	Vanguard WACs
77	Matthew Kargbo	Apr. 2008	Makeni	SBU
78	Maxwell Parker	Aug. 2010	Freetown	Unit Commander
79	Mohamed Mundah	Jun. 2010	Freetown	Overall Blackguard Commander
80	Mohammed Kembay	Nov. 2009	Koidu	Fighter
81	Morie Kamara	Jun. 2010	Freetown	Overall Signals Commander
82	Moses Parker	Nov. 2009	Koidu	Overall Blackguard Commander
83	Musa Bangura	Jul. 2010	Kailahun	Security to Leader
84	Naberay Morrison	Apr. 2008	Makeni	WACs Commander
85	Nana Lansana	Apr. 2008	Makeni	Civilian wife
86	Obai Fobay	Jul. 2010	Kailahun	Black Guard
87	Obai Sumana	Jun. 2010	Bumbuna	Fighter
88	Paul Gouldson	Nov. 2009	Koidu	Fighter, bodyguard
89	Paul Sannoh	Apr. 2008	Freetown	SBU
90	Peter Kalawa	Jun. 2010	Bo	Training Commander
91	Ramatu Fofanah	Jul. 2010	Pendembu	Senior civilian wife
92	Ramatu Kallon	Apr. 2008	Makali	Female fighter
93	Rashid Sankoh	Jul. 2010	Bomaru	Civilian, Bomaru resident
94	Richie Amara	Jun. 2010	Freetown	Fighter
95	Richie Kamara	Aug 2010	Freetown	Target Commander
96	Ricky Kamara	Jul. 2010	Kailahun	Security to Mosquito
97	Romeo Amara	Jun. 2010	Bumbuna	Fighter
98	Saccoh Kamara	Jun. 2010	Bumbuna	Fighter
99	Safi Kanneh	Apr. 2008	Mile 91	Civilian wife
100	Sheku Conteh	Jul. 2010	Kailahun	Fighter
101	Siaka Koroma	Jun. 2010	Freetown	AFRC Commander/Supreme Council
102	Sidie Dumana	Jul. 2010	Freetown	Driver to Leader, Logistics Commander
103	Sidie Kamara	Nov. 2009	Koidu	SBU
104	Sidikie Siaka	Aug. 2010	Freetown	Target Commander
105	Sisco Brooks	Jul. 2010	Freetown	Special Task Force
106	Stephen Sumana	Nov. 2009	Koidu	Civilian elder

107	Stephen Tarawallie	Apr. 2008	Makeni	WSB SBU
108	Sylvester Kabbia	Oct. 2009	Makeni	Adjutant to Battalion Commander
109	Thomas Alpha	Oct. 2009	Makeni	Fighter
110	Thomas Amara	Jun. 2010	Bumbuna	Junior commando
111	Thomas Kandeh	Jul. 2010	Kailahun	RUF Paramount Chief
112	Thomas Smart	Nov. 2009	Koidu	Training instructor/Adjutant
113	Tina Sumana	Apr. 2008	Makeni	Civilian wife
114	Umar Fofanah	Oct. 2009	Makeni	Fighter (POW)
115	Umaru Rogers	Nov. 2009	Koidu	ULIMO/STF; RUF Artillery
116	Umaru Sallah	Apr. 2008	Makeni	Fighter
117	Umu Swaray	Jun. 2010	Bo	CDF Battlefield Commander
118	Usman Kabbia	Nov. 2009	Koidu	SLA
119	Usman Sumana	Jun. 2010	Kenema	CDF District Commander
120	Yassir Kabbia	Nov. 2009	Koidu	Combat Medic
121	Yusuf Keita	Aug. 2010	Freetown	AFRC Commander/ WSB Commander
122	Zachary Johnson	Oct. 2009	Freetown	SLA/NPRC Leader
123	Zainab Sallah	Oct. 2009	Makeni	Medic/Matron
124	Zainab Sundifu	Jun. 2010	Bo	CDF Initiator
125	Zainab Tarawallie	Jul. 2010	Freetown	Senior civilian wife
126	Zaria Kallon	Jul. 2010	Kailahun	Senior civilian wife

Note: Locations provide nearest major town to protect anonymity.
See Figure 1 for field sites.

Select named interviews*

<i>NAME</i>	<i>DATE</i>	<i>LOCATION</i>	<i>POSITION</i>
Peter Anderson	Various	Freetown	Spokesman SCSL/Founder < www.sierra-leone.org >
Ibrahim Bangura	Apr. 2008	Freetown	Director PRIDE SL
Eldred Collins	Jul. 2010	Freetown	RUF/P Chairman
Dr Edward Nahim	Apr. 2008	Freetown	Psychiatrist
Muckson Sesay	Apr. 2008	Mile 91	Civilian Negotiator
SIM Turay	Aug. 2010	Freetown	Head of Military Intelligence (GoSL under Momoh)

*Only a small number of named informants were interviewed formally for this thesis. Numerous other individuals assisted with the research by providing their insights on the war in personal conversations and other settings.

APPENDIX I

KEY DOCUMENTS

AIMS OF THE REVOLUTION

Medic training manual, October 1991

CERTAIN AIMS AND OBJECTIVES OR POINTS OF REVOLUTION

1. Free education, freedom of speech and [association]
2. Medical facilities free
3. Good roads and better international (sic) bridges and development
4. Respect to human dignity
5. Equal right and justice before the law
6. Speed economic recovery
7. To create better lives in Sierra Leone, which every one can live freely without harassment or molestation.

Signals training manual, 1995

- (1) AIMS OF RUF → WE WANT FREEDOM OF ASSOCIATION
- (2) WE WANT FREE EDUCATION
- (3) WE WANT BETTER MEDICAL AND HEALTH FACILITY
- (4) WE WANT BETTER ROADS & BETTER INFRASTRUCTURAL DEVELOPMENT
- (5) WE WANT RESPECT FOR HUMAN RIGHT & DIGNITY.
- (6) WE WANT EQUAL RIGHT AND JUSTICE BEFORE THE LAW.
- (7) WE WANT SPEEDY RECOVERY OF THE ECONOMY
- (8) WE DON'T WANT TRIBALISM NEITHER SECTIONALISM.
- (9) WE WANT FREE SOCIETY IN SIERRA LEONE, WHEREIN OUR PEOPLE CAN MOVE FREELY WITHOUT FEAR OR MOLESTATION INTIMIDATION OR EMBARRASSMENT.

War Office 'Notes on the RUF/S/L Guerrilla Warfare for the Lion National Training Base', 1999

THE AIMS OF THE RUF MOVEMENT

1. Arms and Ammunition.
2. Free Better Education.
3. Better Medical and Health facilities of the people.
4. Good roads and better infrastructural development.
5. Respect for human right and dignity.
6. Equal justice before the law.
7. Speedy Economic Recovery.
8. To wipe out tribalism, sectionalism and sentiment.
9. Free society for Sierra Leoneans wherein our people can live freely without fear of molestation, intimidation or embarrassment.

MAOIST PRINCIPLES IN RUF DOCTRINE

Maoist principles of guerrilla warfare were circulated widely in political discussions and student groups in 1970s and 1980s West Africa. Seen from Kwame Nkrumah's *Handbook of Revolutionary Warfare: A guide to the armed phase of the African Revolution* (1968), to the Black Panthers' organizational rules of discipline in the US, the presence of these principles does not indicate a larger Maoist political framework, but rather the repurposing and universalization of Mao's notes on guerrilla warfare.

THE THREE RULES OF DISCIPLINE

Signals training manual, 1995

THE POINTS OF ATTENTION

- 1 – To obey all orders in action (obey & obey)
- 2 – To report everything that you captured, e.g. be honest.
- 3 – Do not take a piece of thread or needle from the masses, e.g. do not steal.

Medic training manual, (February 1996)

Code of Conduct – Disciplinary Virtues

1. Obey orders in all your actions. Obey, obey, and obey.
2. Do not take a single piece of thread or single needle from the masses don't loot from the poor.
3. Turn in all that is captured, be honest to the movement.

The Three Main Rules of Discipline are as follows:

- (1) Obey orders in all your actions.
- (2) Do not take a single needle piece of thread from the masses.
- (3) Turn in everything captured.

FACTS TO BE REMEMBERED

Signals training manual, 1995

FACTS TO BE REMEMBERED:

- (1) Weapon: when we talk of weapon, it means anything that is used to destroy and save life.
- (2) Lower class is subordinate to the higher class.
- (3) An individual is subordinate to the minority.

- (4) Minority is subordinate to majority.
- (5) The majority is subordinate to the revolutionary committee.
- (6) The revolutionary committee is subordinate to the movement.
- (7) He who fails to adhere to all these is an enemy to the movement.

Medic training manual, (February 1996)

FACTS TO BE REMEMBERED

1. The individual is subordinate to the minority.
2. The minority is subordinate to the majority.
3. The lower class is subordinate to the upper class.
4. The majority is subordinate to the movement
5. The movement is subordinate to the central committee.
6. The central committee is subordinate to the nation.

Whoever fails to hear or abide with these principles is an enemy to the movement.

We must affirm anew the discipline of the Party, namely:

(1) the individual is subordinate to the organization; (2) the minority is subordinate to the majority; (3) the lower level is subordinate to the higher level; and (4) the entire membership is subordinate to the Central Committee.

Whoever violates these articles of discipline disrupts Party unity.

'The Role of the Chinese Communist Party in the National War' (October 1938), Selected Works, Vol. II, pp. 203-4.

THE RANKS OF THE PEOPLE

Signals training manual, 1995

SOLUTION TO AFRICAN PROBLEMS

1 - The solution to Africa problem is violence and the key to this violence is armed struggle.

2 – In the rank of the people, we cannot do without freedom, nor can we do without discipline.

3 – Every generation has a mission, you either fulfil or betray.

Medic training manual, (February 1996)

In the rank of the people, we cannot do without freedom nor can we do without discipline.

...Within the ranks of the people, we cannot do without freedom, nor can we do without discipline; we cannot do without democracy, nor can we do without centralism. ...

On the Correct Handling of Contradictions Among the People (February 27, 1957), 1st pocket ed., pp. 10-11.

THE EIGHT POINTS FOR ATTENTION

Signals training manual, 1995

THE EIGHT CODES OF CONDUCT

- 1 – TO SPEAK POLITELY TO THE MASSES.
- 2 - TO PAY FAIRLY FOR ALL WHAT YOU BUY.
- 3 - TO RETURN EVERYTHING THAT YOU BORROW.
- 4 – TO PAY FOR ANYTHING THAT YOU DEMAND OR DAMAGE.
- 5 – DO NOT DAMAGE CROPS.
- 6 – DO NOT TAKE LIBERTY FROM WOMEN.
- 7 – DO NOT ILL-TREAT CAPTIVES.
- 8 - DO NOT HATE OR SWEAR PEOPLE.

Medic training manual, (February 1996)

Eight Points of Attention

1. Obey all orders in your actions.
2. Speak politely
3. Pay fairly for what you buy.
4. Thou shall not take a single piece of thread from the masses
5. Do not take liberty in women.
6. Thou shall not damage crops.

7. Do not hit or swear at people, especially the old and the young.
8. Return everything that you borrow.

The Eight Points for Attention are as follows:

(1) Speak politely. (2) Pay fairly for what you buy. (3) Return everything you borrow. (4) Pay for anything you damage. (5) Do not hit or swear at people. (6) Do not damage crops. (7) Do not take liberties with women. (8) Do not ill-treat captives.

‘On the Reissue of the Three Main Rules of Discipline and the Eight Points for Attention - Instruction of the General Headquarters of the Chinese People's Liberation Army’ (October 10, 1947), Selected Military Writings, 2nd ed., p. 343.

Notably, the ‘Rules and Regulations Guiding Commission Officers in the RUF/SL’ were distinct from the Code of Conduct—the three rules of discipline and eight points of attention:

War Office ‘Notes on the RUF/S/L Guerrilla Warfare for the Lion National Training Base’, 1999

- 1) Beware women and intoxications.
- 2) Abstain from public marijuana smoking, drinking and drugging.
- 3) Encourage the non-commissioned officers for smooth operations.
- 4) Regard military laws to be strict as they are natural laws.
- 5) Do not love the wives of junior soldiers (Immorality).
- 6) Have due respect for one another.
- 7) Study the characters of the various soldiers so that you will be able to administer them.
- 8) Do not beat the NCOs to death or disgrace them in front of civilians.
- 9) Do not force soldiers on battles most especially when the soldier is sick or weak on that day.
- 10) You should not be materialistic or weak-minded.

SAM BOCKARIE, LETTER OF RESIGNATION

From: Major General Sam Bockarie
To: RUF/SL
Subject: INFORMATION

On this 14th day of December 1999 as a result of increasing tension within the RUF and in bid to prevent more bloodshed in this, our beloved country, I, Major General Sam Bockarie, Mosquito, declare that I am no longer a member of the RUF/SL. I thank all the gallant men and women of the movement for their nine years of struggle. May God bless you all. I leave with clear conscience knowing that I always worked in the interests of the movement and it is my love for the combatants and civilians that has caused me all these actions against me. I remain brave, strong, intelligent.

Signed,
Major General S. Bockarie

LEGITIMIZING VIOLENCE: PUNISHMENT AND EXECUTION

THE PEOPLE'S COURT

Sentencing Order, from the Leader, 1995

REVOLUTIONARY UNITED FRONT OF SIERRA LEONE

GENERAL WAR OFFICE

PART I (ONE) ORDER PUBLICATION: No. Date: 15th March 1993

S/No. & Rank. Name:

Occurrence:

- Captain A.C.: Sentenced to 6 (six) months imprisonment by the People's Court on the 25th Feb. 1993, charged with the murdering of Pvt. S. B. and wounding Pvt. F.S. After thorough investigation by the People's Court, the accused Captain A.C. pleaded guilty and asked for mercy. Captain C. was granted PAROLE until the Mercy Committee be constituted to consider his case.
- Pvt S.N.: Final verdict on the trial of Pvt. S.N. charged with sabotage of operation, ended on 25th Feb. 1993. Verdict: Pvt. S.N. was found guilty of sabotaging the RUFSL operation. He as ambush commander between Jokibu and Pujehun moved all the soldiers from the ambush and brought them to the rear at Manowa Ferry, thus opening the way for the enemy to advance. Therefore, according to RUFSL Code of Military justice, Pvt. S.N. should be executed by firing squad, to be confirmed by the Mercy Committee.
- Pvt. S.W.: Final verdict on the trial of Pvt. S.W. charged with retreating from the front line with a G-3 arm without obtaining permission from his Commander, and in addition created panic and confusion among civilians by telling them that the enemies have crossed the Moa River through the Manowa Ferry Crossing Point. Pvt. S.W. was found guilty by The People's Court, and therefore according to RUFSL Code of Military justice, Pvt. S.W. should be executed by firing squad, to be confirmed by the Mercy Committee.

Signed: ___Foday Sankoh_____

REVOLUTIONARY LEADER.

Distribution/All Target Commanders
and Departments

THE OVERALL MP COMMANDER

Situation Report, 1999 – fortnightly

R E S T R I C T E D

REVOLUTIONARY UNITED FRONT OF SIERRA LEONE

RUF/SL

To: The Chief of Defence Staff - RUF/SL
Thro: The Overall MP Commander - RUF/SL
From: The Deputy Overall MP Commander - RUF/SL
Info: B.F.C. CMM B.G.C. CMM BRIG. G.S.T. XX CMM GEN. XX CMM B.F.I.
CMM 2ND BRIGADE COMMANDER CMM I.O. UNIT CMM I.D.U. CMM
WACS UNIT CMM G5 AND FILE
Subj: COMPREHENSIVE MP SITUATION REPORT AS OF 17TH JANUARY
1999 TO DATE AS MENTIONED BELOW.

11th February, 1999

Sir,

DUTIES AND OPERATIONS

The performance of the principal duties of the protection of life and property, the detection of crime and the execution of law and order cannot be overemphasized in the Military Police operations for the past weeks. There is not a single nook or cranny of the Makeni township and its environs that has not been visited by my personnel in re-enforcing law and order.

The Unit has been able in its endeavours, to detect crimes that are against the movement. This of course has been as a result of its vast knowledge of the standing orders, the codes of conduct and the principles of the Revolutionary United Front of Sierra Leone. Numerous arrests of those personnels who have been acting contrary to above legislations have been made. Based on the justice as it is in the RUF/SL charter, culprits have been released and punished as prescribed therein.

Of the three principal duties of the Military Police, that that has been proving hard to perform and thus becoming a nut that cannot be totally cracked has been the protection of life and property. Most of the cases that have been brought to our desk would either have had dealings with the protection of life or the protection of property. Such cases as have been in receipt by this Headquarters as of 21st January 1999 on to this time of writing have been ranging from mostly raping, murder, impersonation, harassment, to looting of people's properties. For details as indicated in attached list of 'ANNEX A', retributions as befit the crimes committed have been meted out to culprits accordingly. Please note that culprits include both soldiers and civilians.

HANDLING OF SURRENDERED SLAs, STFs, AND CDFs AND VOLUNTEER CIVILIANS WISHING TO JOIN THE REVOLUTIONARY UNITED FRONT OF SIERRA LEONE

Sir, where no one of the RUF's Rank and File can bluntly put it that the SLA, CDF, and SLP and the civilians of this Region are not with us, the Military Police Unit can boastfully announce to you that there is that seeming tendency that they are with us. Their co-operation in terms of surrendering and performing military duties on the part of the SLA/CDF and coming out of the bush and performing Governmental duties on the part of the SLP and civilians is a clear manifestation of their being loyal this time round. They should only continue for God's sake.

- 2 -

Registered figures of surrendered SLAs, SLPs, and CDFs so far stand at SLA 30+, SLP 85+, and CDF 836+.

Among the civilians who have been coming out of the bush, manifested loyalty has not only been limited to performing Governmental duties, but there has also been those who have been volunteering to join the RUF/SL to be combatants. Such civilians have been enlisted, encamped, and subsequently sent to the training base for basic ideology. Some SLA/CDF personnels have also been treated likewise.

The implementation of law and order, a designated duty of the Military police used as an instrument in protecting life and property and halting crimes has always been performed on a daily basis as and when crimes are reported. 'ANNEX A' as attached also spells out law and order as implemented in terms of retribution to crimes that have been brought to the desk for treatment.

MILITARY POLICE DEPLOYMENTS

The deployments of my men at strategic positions in and around Makeni town has gone a long way in maintaining security, law and order. Because of their significance, some deployment have been deliberately made to ensure the security of these areas. Other deployments have been made to enforce law and order. For details, please see attached list of 'ANNEX B'.

Sir, while I faithfully submit this fortnightly situation report as requested by the RUF/SL Admin Office – Northern Region, (reference that Office's letter dated sometimes early January I also faithfully submit same to you for your necessary attention.

With the firmest of regards Sir.

Approved __ (Stamped 11/02/99) __
Deputy Overall MP Commander
RUF/SL – Makeni

Signed _____
Military Police Clerk
Military Police Headquarters
Makeni

'ANNEXE A'

SOME OF THE CASES THAT HAVE BEEN BROUGHT TO THE MP UNIT AS OF
21ST JANUARY 1999

WHICH RECEIVED THE RETRIBUTION OF EXECUTION AFTER
INVESTIGATION

Ser.	Name	Personality Status	Crime Committed	Retribution
1.	XX	Civilian	Impersonation	Execution
2.	XX	Soldier	Raping	Execution
3.	XX	Soldier	Raping	Execution
4.	XX	Civilian	Arson/Raping	Execution
5.	XX	Civilian	Impersonation/ Harassment	Execution
6.	XX	Civilian	Corruption	Execution
7.	XX	Civilian	Impersonation/ Harassment	Execution
8.	XX	Civilian	Impersonation/ Harassment	Execution
9.	XX	Civilian	Impersonation/ Harassment	Died a natural death

Please note that the retribution of flogging, changing of assignment areas, detention and deployment and sending to the training base for more ideology have also been meted out for crimes that have not had a very serious impact on the complainants.

APPENDIX II

TRAINING DRILLS

I was trained at Bayama, ‘Camp Llama’, in 1991...They had us jogging first, then rolling, then you crawl. You make a big circle, with a small circle inside of ten big commanders. The circle is called ‘Halaka’ so that we can be strong. Eight recruits have to run around the halaka while they beat you with a whip. Then you lay flat, then you have to crawl. The whole time they are flogging us, and they don’t look where they are hitting, even your face.

Another one, they dig a hole and put broken glass inside with barbed wire, and you have to jump the hole. When you fall into the hole because you can’t jump over it, you are ‘wounded soldier’. Most of the men, they jump, but the women, they strain and most of the time, they fall inside. If you don’t jump, they flog you.

...During training the women have their own huts, separate from the men. At 2:00am they came to take us to start crawling again. We had to jog to the first village, about three miles away. Then you come back for muster parade.

...Another one is ‘Monkey Bridge’ training. It is long and straight and it shows us an example of how to go to the frontline without the enemy attacking. They would dig four long trenches and put barbed wire all around it (across the top of the trench) and show us how to manoeuvre. After we get inside the hole, they fired live bullets at you. Live bullets. These weren’t the blind bullets, but real fire. You have to lie down in the trench so they don’t hit you. It did hit me one time. On my foot, see? (Shows where the bullet grazed her heel.) I had eight months of training. We the women were more than 100; some of them were hiding because the training was very hard. There were about 200 men; some hide, but especially the women.

Another training was called ‘Jump In’, where you use your arms to get across a ladder of high sticks laid flat in the air across a big hole filled with broken glass.

Another training was called ‘Escape for Survival’, where they took us to the middle of the bush. We couldn’t eat or drink for three days, so that at the frontline we can take hunger. They divided the group into two mock groups, the RUF and the ‘SLA’. There were two commanders and they gave us sticks as mock arms. We had to lay ambush while the other group makes like they’re passing the road. The commander fired up with a real gun to show the ambush. We would call the password, ‘commando!’, and they had to say ‘brave, strong, intelligent’. If the group does not answer, you know it’s the ‘SLA’.

There was another training—you have to leave at 6:00pm in rags (camouflage), and we go and surround the village. You lie down for 12 hours and you don’t move; even if a snake comes around; even if you need to piss, you lay in your piss. If they see you get up, they will kill you—they shoot you, just like that. At 6:00am they attack the town. When they call prayer, one person gets up and they call ‘pooooo-oe’, and then everyone fires with their mouths: ‘pa-pow, pow, pa-pa-pa...’ The people run, then we go inside the houses and eat any food they have left. After that the people come back. They were scared at first, but then they see it is just us, and they know the RUF are there to train. They have gotten used to us.

One other training, called ‘Crawl on Your Knees’: you have to go two miles, the whole way they are flogging us. I got the *real* training because the RUF was just new. We had no food; just bananas with no salt. We would boil the bananas in old pans and drink dirty water. After training finished, they took us to Kailahun District. They took us to the frontline to go fight.²⁸

²⁸ Naberay Morrison, WACs commander.