OPERATION PALLISER: THE BRITISH MILITARY INTERVENTION INTO

SIERRA LEONE, A CASE OF A SUCCESSFUL USE OF WESTERN

MILITARY INTERDICTION IN A SUB-SAHARA

AFRICAN CIVIL WAR

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

5/8GR – 5 Gorkha Rifles and 8 Gorkha Rifles

AFRC – Armed Forces Ruling Council

APC – Armored Personnel Carrier

APC – All People's Congress

ARG – Amphibious Ready Group

BMATT – British Military Advisory Training Team

CDF – Civilian Defense Force

DDR – Disarmament, Demobilization, and Rehabilitation

DFID – Department for International Development

ECOMOG – Economic Community of West African States Military Observer Group

ECOWAS – Economic Community of West African States

EO – Executive Outcomes

EU – European Union

FCO – Foreign Commonwealth Office

Ghanbatt – Ghanaian Battalion

IMATT – International Military Advisory Training Team

IndBatt – Indian Battalion

JTFHQ – Joint Task Force Headquarters

KenBatt – Kenyan Battalion

NATO – North Atlantic Treaty Organization

NPFL – National Patriotic Front of Liberia

NGO – Nongovernmental Organization

NiBatt – Nigerian Battalion

MoD – Ministry of Defense

OLRT – Operational Liaison and Reconnaissance Team

PMC – Private Military Company

RAF – Royal Air Force

RFA – Royal Fleet Auxiliary

RN – Royal Navy

RM – Royal Marines

RUF – Revolutionary United Front

SLA – Sierra Leone Army

SAS – Special Air Service

SLST - Sierra Leone Selection Trust

STTTS – Short Term Training Teams

UK – United Kingdom

ULIMO – United Liberation Movement of Liberia

UN – United Nations

UNAMSIL – United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone

UNOMSIL – United Nations Observer Mission in Sierra Leone

US – United States

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

"The state of Africa is a scar on the conscience of the world. But if the world as a community focused on it, we could heal it. And if we don't, it will become deeper and angrier." – Tony Blair[1]

By the spring of 2000, the civil war in Sierra Leone had been underway for nearly a decade. The conflict was plagued by extreme violence and human rights abuses, ineffective regional and international intervention, and unproductive peace processes. Under a United Nations (UN) Security Council mandate, an international peacekeeping force was tasked with enforcing the tenuous Lomé Peace Accords of 1999 between the elected government of Sierra Leone and the Revolutionary United Front (RUF) led by Foday Sankoh.

Even with a sizable UN peacekeeping force and a Nigerian led Economic Community of African States Military Observer Group (ECOMOG) force numbering 6,000, containing the RUF and enforcing the almost nonexistent peace proved nearly impossible for the international forces. Clashes with rebels had exacted high casualties among the Nigerians. The final display of peacekeeping ineffectiveness occurred over a period of several days in early May of 2000 when RUF elements captured nearly 500 UN

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[1] Tony Blair. Address to Labor Party Conference. Brighton, England. October 2, 2001. http://archives.cnn.com/2001/WORLD/europe/10/02/ret.blair.address/

peacekeepers and their heavy equipment in several engagements. The UN appeared to be completely ineffective in its campaign to occupy the RUF's strong points, known for illegal diamond mines which had funded the rebels for the previous decade.

The situation in May continued to deteriorate as the RUF, now armed with captured UN armored vehicles launched an offensive towards the capital city of Freetown. With an impending threat of possible massacre in the capital, Tony Blair's government launched Operation Palliser on May 7, 2000, the largest British military overseas intervention since the war in the Falkland Islands in the 1980s. Operation Palliser was originally intended only to support the evacuation of British citizens from Freetown and not to draw British soldiers into the role of direct combatants in the war. The action became a poignant manifestation of Tony Blair's foreign policy of "enlightened intervention."

The spearhead insertion force of British "paras" from the 1st Battalion Parachute Regiment was closely followed by ground elements from the Royal Marines, air assets from the Royal Air Force (RAF), as well as a Royal Navy (RN) task force which included an aircraft carrier, helicopter assault ship, and other support ships. Reports of sightings of Special Air Service (SAS) operators also surfaced. Initially, the force took control and secured the airport at Lungi to allow evacuation aircraft to operate. As the threat to Freetown increased British forces' role expanded. They began bolstering UN and Nigerian troops by providing intelligence, airlift support, as well as planning assistance for the defense of Freetown and the surrounding areas. Despite statements from Blair's government that their forces would not become involved in the war, British troops dug-in to prepare for an RUF assault.

Less than two weeks after insertion, the British forces had not engaged in any major combat operations, but the situation in Sierra Leone had dramatically changed. The RUF's leader, Foday Sankoh was captured by Sierra Leonean government troops (but transported by British helicopter), the RUF advance towards Freetown had collapsed, and the country began to experience some degree of peace. The conditions on the ground set the stage for Sankoh's successor to sign a 2001 treaty which was followed by one of the United Nations' most successful disarmament and stabilization campaigns.

Since 2001, Sierra Leone has continued to maintain peace and stability. Two rounds of democratic elections have been held, civil society and infrastructure improvement programs have progressed, and the country has faced its own tragic past with a Truth and Reconciliation Commission. This begs the question as to why, after a decade of war and ineffective international interdiction, did peace come so suddenly? Once the British intervened with a modest show of force from one of the West's most formidable military powers, why was the stage set for the end of the war? This essay is intended to examine the specifics of case of Britain's intervention into Sierra Leone. The problem to be addressed is why, in this sub-Sahara African civil war, does it appears that Western military intervention was effective, while many other cases exist where the West failed to use its ability to project force to bring about the end of conflict in this area of the world.

Initially, I came across this topic while conducting research for a general essay on the subject of Sierra Leone's civil war. I found the particulars of the British military actions fascinating. Very little literature exists comprehensively exploring the specifics surrounding this topic. Much analysis has been produced examining the actions of

ECOMOG and the UN, but most sources dedicate little more that a few paragraphs to a few pages to the subject of the British intervention. Military analysts have looked at the operational, but did not fully link the military actions to the international political context and history of the conflict. It appeared that this subject, as important as it seems to the greater story of Sierra Leone's war, had not been paid its due attention and would be a fruitful avenue for research. Sierra Leone offers a unique case where different types of external military intervention were applied to a civil war in Sub-Saharan Africa: African regional, United Nations, Non-United Nations Western, and Private.

This essay dives deep into the British actions in Sierra Leone to understand why, in this case, does it appear that a Western power could use military force as an effective tool to help end a civil war in sub-Saharan Africa. It explores the historical, political, social, cultural, international, and military specifics to this scenario which created the conditions for intervention and subsequent peace. The essay seeks to answer why and how the decision was made in Tony Blair's government to commit United Kingdom's military resources to this bloody conflict, an action that was politically unpopular at home and appeared risky with "Black Hawk Down" still in the West's collective memory. With the British army troops on the ground and Royal Navy and RAF assets in country, was the British presence actually a catalyst for the cessation of violence or was it coincidental? Finally, the essay draws out lessons from the scenario and seeks to apply them to the question of how Western powers can effectively use their military power effectively to aid in conflict resolution in sub-Saharan Africa.

To accomplish these goals, this essay provides an in-depth case analysis of the civil war in Sierra Leone and the British actions. The final portion of this initial chapter

provides a concise overview of the complexities of humanitarian intervention. The second chapter more deeply examines problems and complexities with humanitarian intervention. In Chapter III the war in Sierra Leone is dissected and contextualized in the broader subject of conflict in sub-Saharan Africa. It looks at the war within the region and provides an explanatory model as to how its characteristics fit the broader framework of complex political emergencies. Chapter IV provides the historical context for the war in Sierra Leone. It traces Sierra Leone's history from its sixteenth century discovery and colonization until the days prior to the British paratroopers landing outside Freetown. The chapter explains important details related to the war and its actors. Chapter V gives the comprehensive look at British actions in Sierra Leone beginning in May, 2000 with Operation Palliser until today. Although Operation Palliser was the initial mission, one which produced many short term effects helping to end the war, the British actions were actually a chain of military operations coordinated with civilian nation-building efforts and diplomatic maneuvering. Chapter VI is an operational analysis which addresses the issues of short-term factors, long-term factors, Blair's decision-making, rapid reaction forces, and UN authorization.

The final chapter briefly applies the lessons from the British experience in Sierra Leone to other Western military interventions in the sub-Saharan region. It examines how the same success factors from Sierra Leone played into the triumphs and failures of other interdictions into civil wars. The presented cases are brief and intended to be illustrative of the essay's principles.

Through these exploratory avenues, the research and analysis suggests that the British military actions in Sierra Leone were successful in ending the violence and saving

the failing UN peacekeeping mission. The British brought in a competent professional

military, with a defined command structure, an array of force multipliers, as well as

assets and maneuvers displaying its military firepower through aggressive shows-of-

force. Although they avoided major combat operations, the British forces demonstrated

on several occasions that it was not averse to using that firepower.

As a military operation, Palliser was "as good as it gets." The quick insertion of

the spearhead units provided the "glass of water" to retard the flames and provide time

for the remainder of the rapid reaction forces to arrive.[2] The British provided the

leadership, logistical support, and intimidation factor that the failing UN mission lacked.

In addition to the short-term factors, the British put in place military, civilian, and

diplomatic resources to help build institutions to provide for a long-term successful peace

process. On several occasions, the British government displayed its resolve and

commitment for a lasting peace solution.

The military maneuvers alone were not the sole peace-maker in Sierra Leone.

Similar actions have failed in other countries and regions. The British encountered a

scenario where its modest force posture was able to bring about a calm. There were

several historical and contextual factors which made Sierra Leone's conflict an idea

scenario for a successful display of force by a Western power. Had the timing or the

characteristics of the war been different, the outcomes could have been dramatically

altered. Britain was an actor whose positive contribution helped to bring about the end of

Sierra Leone's war quickly. It was not, however, the singular factor to which to which

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[2] Connaughton, Richard M. "The Mechanics and Nature of British Interventions into Sierra Leone (2000) and Afghanistan (2001-2002)." Civil Wars. (Vol. 5, Issue 2, Summer, 2002), 77.

peace can be attributed. Their successes are truly owed to the multitude of circumstances in a multi-causal environment.

CHAPTER II

INTERVENTION IN HUMANITARIAN CRISES

Complexities of Peacekeeping and Humanitarian Intervention

Thomas Weiss, an expert on humanitarian intervention, explains that originally, peacekeeping was "developed to fit the realities of a world in which sovereignty and nonintervention were more privileged Charter values than human rights, and welfare was of the interstate variety."[3] Stepping into the affairs of another state went against the international norms. With the end of the Cold War, new conflicts emerged where the civilian populations began receiving the brunt of violence, atrocities, and war crimes. The nature of these conflicts is discussed in greater detail in the following chapter. The most vivid examples of these scenarios occurred in the former Yugoslavia, Somalia, and Rwanda. At the turn of the twentieth century, 15% of war casualties were civilians. In the 1990s, these conflicts saw 90% of the casualties fall on the civilian population.[4] With staggering numbers of killed, raped, and displaced peoples in these conflicts, it has become apparent that, in Thomas Weiss' words, "traditional peacekeeping and humanitarian principles often do not track well as antidotes to today's threats."[5] Changes in the paradigms and military doctrine for humanitarian intervention became necessary to

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[3] Weiss, Thomas G. Humanitarian Intervention: Ideas in Action. (Malden, MA: Polity Press, 2007), 59.
[4] Ibid., 69.
[5] Ibid.

 provide aid and protection for people caught in conflict areas. There is a distinct need in today's environment for humanitarian intervention when weak or failed states can no longer serve their function to protect their populations and leave civilians to bear the brunt of war's consequences.[6]

The prospect of military intervention into such a situation presents several difficulties and complexities to the intervening party. It is difficult to create the conditions on the ground where the initial problems' root causes can be properly addressed. This is not an easy task, especially when underlying historical and social issues combine with the chaos of conflict and insecurity. Intervention forces even with pure intentions can misdiagnose problems and either fail to end the crisis or exacerbate those problems. The intervening party's efforts can be further hamstrung by implementing "internally inconsistent strategies." Also, the transfer of military weaponry to a belligerent can inadvertently prolong the crisis.[7]

Then there is also the issue of the intervening party's political intent. Overarching policies can drive actions that worsen the situation. An example of this was how South Africa used its South African Defense Forces (SADF) in 1980s to intervene in Southern African conflicts as a way to promote its regional hegemonic interests.

In the case of the war in Sierra Leone, Nigerian ECOMOG forces failed to bring an end to the war. Nigeria's motivations have been scrutinized by critics who question whether Nigeria was acting to promote its own regional hegemony. Regardless of Nigeria's intent, it's military actions and the conduct of its forces failed to create

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[6] Ibid., 62, 72.
[7] Walter, Barbara and Jack Snyder. Civil Wars, Insecurity, and Intervention. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999), 27.

conditions for peace. When Nigerian forces were accused of committing atrocities against civilians and engaging in illegal diamond mining and smuggling, some believe that their presence further deteriorated an already horrible situation.

ECOMOG's credibility was hurt because of these actions. An intervening force's credibility will always be an issue with which it must contend.[8] This is as much an issue of public relations and perception as it is an issue of legitimate action. Without respect from the warring parties, local population, and international community, the intervening party is faced with a more difficult task.

The most significant issue an intervening force must contend with is the lack of security and conditions of anarchy. As described by Snyder and Walter, the solution to this problem is "the one recommended by Hobbes: establish a sovereign authority capable of enforcing hegemonic peace upon all the fearfully contending parties."[9] A robust military presence can accomplish this by establishing authority with the threat or use of force. It can help to provide secure separation for combatants and contested territory. In the case of a negotiated cease-fire, if parities perceive that they will receive overwhelming punishment by the military force for acting "provocatively" or reneging on conditions of the peace, then the intervention force can help create the security needed for the peace process to succeed.[10]

Although outside parties face a difficult task when committing their military forces to intervene in a humanitarian crisis, if they can use their ability to apply force as a means to provide security to civilian populations and make belligerent parties feel safe to

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[8] Ibid., 32.
[9] Ibid., 17.
[10] Ibid., 27.

disarm, then the intervention can have positive implications. Parties will always be faced with social, environmental, and international complexities which will challenge their credibility, strategy, and resolve. If policy makers and military planners fully understand the complexities of each scenario, they can make informed decisions on whether and how to act in order to make a beneficial impact.

<div align="center">Problems with United Nations Chapter VI Peacekeeping</div>

Sub-Saharan Africa can provide several examples of humanitarian crises where intervention by outside parties was inadequate, needed but nonexistent, or in a few cases successful. The region was rife with weak or failed states after the Cold War leaving security and power vacuums as well as vulnerable and destitute populations; the ideal conditions for humanitarian crises. Western governments have been reluctant to use authoritative force in these instances because their concerns are most often short-term: public opinion and future elections.[11] This has left the burden of intervention on the shoulders of the United Nations. The UN does have subordinate organizations with the capabilities to provide aid to populations in need, but security voids must be addressed before food and medical supplies can be effectively deployed.

The UN's peacekeeping history is filled with a mixture of successes and failures. One common theme is that when the application of force and an offensive stance is necessary to ensure security for populations, teams of 'blue helmets' have been largely ineffective. Only when major powers have fully thrown their weight behind a UN mission have there been military successes. UN multinational forces have been successful

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[11] Weiss, Thomas G., and Collins, Cindy. Humanitarian Challenges and Intervention. Second Edition. (Boulder: Westview Press, 2000), 156.

at monitoring conditions of cease-fires, but in that scenario, both belligerent parties have displayed a will to engage in the peace process. These peacekeeping missions fall under the jurisdiction of Chapter VI of the UN Charter. When a Chapter VI mission is appropriately authorized, UN member states contribute troops and equipment in a role which rarely requires the application of force.

Under Chapter VII of the UN Charter, the Security Council can authorize the use of force to enforce a Security Council resolution. The intent is to bring the full military brunt of the international community on belligerent or noncompliant parties. Historically, the UN has "outsourced" the use of force to a major power, such as the US in the case of the First Persian Gulf War. The problem with Chapter VII interventions is that they require unanimous authorization from the five permanent members of the Security Council, a difficult task given the diverging interests of those member states. A Chapter VI mission is intended to be neutral in nature, simply overseeing the provisions of a treaty to which both parties agreed. Chapter VII, on the other hand makes a definite statement as to which party is the "bad guy," a potentially difficult and dangerous political decision to make.[12]

One major problem exists in this system. This is when the scenario is a situation where its characteristics neither fit the conditions for a Chapter VI or Chapter VII intervention. This is the gray zone where the international community has the most difficulty determining its role and appropriateness of intervention. The UN also struggles with distinguishing its role and mandate as peacekeepers versus peace observers in "Chapter VI ½" situations. Unfortunately, this is the area where many humanitarian crises fall. Most of the failures by the UN and international community have been the

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[12] Ibid., 168.

result of inappropriate action or in-action in these other-than-Chapter VI or Chapter VII

scenarios.

There exists an action-void by the international community in these conditions.

History has demonstrated in places like Rwanda and the current genocide in Darfur that

these crises are not self-solving without the suffering of millions of civilians. Inaction has

been proven to not be an effective choice. A Chapter VI peacekeeping force neither has

the mandate or the offensive power to take on peace-enforcement actions necessary to

provide security for civilian populations. During a mandate's creation process, the

political interests of the drafting and voting parties are inserted, often creating ambiguity

which in turn leads to confusion in the field by peacekeepers.[13] International political

opposition often sidelines Chapter VII authorizations for use of force. This leaves the

burden of intervention on unilateral parties or 'coalitions of the willing'.

Diplomacy should always be the first option in an international crisis. In certain

humanitarian emergencies, military forces are necessary to provide security for civilian

populations and humanitarian relief efforts. Although the presence of troops for peace-

enforcement may further complicate the conflict resolution process, it is most important

to protect people, either with the threat or application of force.[14] Even when the UN

Security Council mandates an intervention with military force, the timeline for member

states to commit and deploy troops can have a longer lead-time than the unfolding crisis

would allow. For these reasons, the international community has struggled to use UN and

its governing framework as an effective tool to provide security for populations during

humanitarian crises.

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[13] Ibid., 169.
[14] Ibid., 159.

<u>Professional Western Militaries: a Tool for Humanitarian Intervention</u>

Nongovernmental Organizations (NGOs) and International Governmental Organizations (IGOs) have an important role to play in addressing needs during a humanitarian crisis. They can provide valuable services relating to conflict resolution and the application of aid. They fall short of possessing the full repertoire of tools necessary to protect populations and provide secure environments for peace processes to flurish. Military forces offer a set of capabilities required in many complex humanitarian emergencies.

A major roadblock to peace in civil wars is the fear by one or both parties that during the process of disarming, they make themselves vulnerable should a resurgence of hostilities occur. This creates the conditions where parties refuse to fully demobilize and flare-ups of violence sideline the peace process. Security provided by a third party with the ability to enforce peace and protect disarmed factions can help both sides trust that their wellbeing will be preserved throughout the disarmament process.[15] Because the UN has a history of mixed successes in its Chapter VI missions, belligerent parties are not always trusting of UN forces' willingness or ability to enforce peace conditions should hostilities reignite. A robust military presence and a will to use force is a necessity to gain confidence from belligerents that their security will be ensured while disarming. There must be a perception that the third party has the capability and will to enforce ceasefire conditions rather than simply observe them.

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[15] Walter, Barbara F. <u>Committing to Peace: The Successful Settlement of Civil Wars</u>. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002), 166.

The Western powers possess professional military forces which have several advantages over loose multinational coalitions: logistics, intelligence, defined chain of command, and the use of combined arms doctrine. When used in conjunction, these factors act as 'force multipliers'. Synchronization of capabilities and combined arms "compliment and reinforce each other, greatly magnifying their effects so that they may become more than the sum of their parts."[16] A professional military brings with it its own tempo of decision-making and action. It gathers and analyzes intelligence, distributes clear orders to its subordinates, and acts with the appropriate application of assets.[17] This quick look-think-act cycle gives today's professional military powers great agility which until recently has been unattainable throughout military history. It requires that "time, space, and purpose" are combined with the basic tenants of "initiative, depth, agility, and synchronization", and that "all subordinate leaders align their operations with the overall mission."[18] These tasks have been studied and indoctrinated into Western professional militaries over the last half-century.

This has proven to be a difficult process in loose multinational forces much like the one the UN placed in the field in Sierra Leone. These coalitions are often plagued with problems in chain of command, communications, and coordination of orders and efforts. Disjointed leadership acting on orders from their home countries can fail to take advantage of simultaneous military efforts to create simultaneous effects on the battlefield. They lack the decisiveness necessary to effectively apply force to dispel

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[16] Lock-Pullan, Richard. US Intervention Policy and Army Innovation: From Vietnam to Iraq. (New York: Routledge, 2006), 97.
[17] Ibid.
[18] Ibid., 97-98.

threats to the peace process or civilian populations. Professional unilateral intervention forces or coalitions with operational experience (like NATO) circumvent these problems.

Professional militaries also bring with them logistical capabilities and experience extremely valuable for operating as peace enforcers and providing humanitarian aid. Several NGOs and IGOs have their own logistics functions and have been very effective at moving critical supplies into crisis areas. However; the logistics infrastructure of today's great powers cannot begin to be matched in terms of reach, volume, and efficiency.

One problem that has plagued UN peacekeeping missions and those of less robust coalitions has been a lack of willingness to use force when necessary. As will be discussed later, UN troops in Sierra Leone often surrendered rather engage in combat. The British brought with them an unquestionable willingness to engage in combat if provoked. Professional militaries exist for the very purpose of extending national policy through the threat and use of force. They are structured and train for this reason. With clear direction from policymakers, this is another area where unilateral professional militaries enjoy an advantage over looser coalitions and UN Chapter VI blue helmets.

The Western military powers and NATO have also developed rapid reaction capabilities to meet the security challenges in the current geopolitical environment. Rapid reaction forces can be deployed around the globe at short notice to apply force or provide security to various situations to protect their states' interests. The forces are usually comprised of light infantry and Special Forces ground units supported by air and naval assets. While the initial team conducts operations, heavier and more permanent forces can be sent to reinforce the spearhead units. Rapid reaction capabilities have specifically been

developed by the US, UK, and France. NATO has also created its own Allied Rapid Reaction Corps, with an integrated command and headquarters structure, standing land components, air assets, and maritime Immediate Reaction Forces. Member countries commit permanent peacetime staff, as well as deployable units to support the needs of NATO, the EU, and member states. NATO regularly conducts training exercises to ensure the Rapid Reaction Corps effectiveness.[19]

Rapid reaction capabilities have given rise to the term "over the horizon" forces. This is the idea that militaries decreasingly need large regional garrisons to maintain the threat of force. With light and flexible forces, military powers can station standing units far from hot-spots but still have the ability to strike when necessary. With rapid reaction "over the horizon" forces, robust command and control, proficient use of force multipliers, competent logistics infrastructures, and the will to apply force the professional militaries of Western powers have the capabilities to be effective tools for providing security, peace enforcement, and relief in humanitarian emergencies.

Private Military Companies

Private Military Companies (PMCs) offer a new alternative to the security dilemma in humanitarian crises. Since the 1990s, corporate firms have emerged as a major player on the world political stage. Some have the capabilities to provide needed security in humanitarian crises, especially when outside governments fail or are slow to commit their forces. PMCs also bring with them international controversy. Several better known firms have committed to only serving legitimate governments, but in complex

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[19] NATO website. http://www.nato.int/

scenarios it can be difficult to identify a regime's legitimacy or validate its good intentions.

PMCs contract their services, often training, security, arms acquisition, consulting, or direct combat. With them they bring military expertise, but also the stigma from critics as mercenaries. The counterargument to the soldier of fortune accusation is that because PMCs are professional corporate organizations, their professional reputations and future business are based upon the successful completion of their contracted missions.[20] Some firms have been criticized for links between their parent companies and a tendency to conduct business in areas rich with natural resources. The firms Executive Outcomes and Sandline International, owned by Branch Energy, have operated extensively in African regions with an abundance of extractable and profitable natural resources.

The use of PMCs has not been limited to the governments in war-torn developing countries. First-world governments have begun outsourcing certain military roles to PMCs as a way to lessen the burden on their military resources. The US government has extensively used the services of several PMCs in the current Iraq War, most notably Blackwater. In the past, the US government also contracted with firms to deliver humanitarian aid in Russia as well as bolster UNAMSIL with logistical support.[21]

In humanitarian emergencies, PMCs have several potential upside factors. First, they can be hired at a lower price than the cost of deploying a large military garrison. They tend to be lean organizations and send the only resources to complete the contracted mission. Many have integrated logistics capabilities so they can quickly deploy to a crisis

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[20] David J. Francis et al., Dangers of Co-deployment: UN Co-operative Peacekeeping in Africa. (Burlington: Ashgate, 2005), 115.
[21] Ibid.

area. Their smaller force posture can also be an asset to provide security in situations

before a full-blown humanitarian crisis occurs. They have the ability to quickly move in

and make an impact on the ground in far shorter lead time than a full-blown coalition

intervention with a massive military footprint.

PMCs tend to be professional forces whose personal have military and combat

experience. This means they can offer valuable training to domestic militaries and local

militias to more effectively fight the other belligerent party. They also bring with them

the knowledge and expertise to use force multipliers like military intelligence, signals and

communication, command and control, and the implimentation of combined arms. PMCs

also pick sides and will take offensive actions to the enemy, a task where Chapter VI

multinational peacekeeping forces have historically had little success. As Herbert Howe

describes, there are advantages to using PMCs as tools in humanitarian crises:

> Private forces can start up and deploy faster than multinational forces, and may carry less political baggage, especially concerning casualties, than government militaries. Additionally, they have a clearer chain of command, more readily compatible military equipment and training, and greater experience working together than do ad hoc multinational forces…..[PMCs] accomplish tasks which African and Western governments have approved of, but have hesitated to attempt themselves because of financial or political costs. While the United Nations and some nations may deploy peacekeeping forces, they rarely agree to sending peace-enforcing, or combat units. EO, however, offers to do what the United Nations blue helmets cannot and will not do: take sides, deploy overwhelming force, and fire "pre-emptively" on its contractually designated enemy.[22]

PMCs are a fairly new actor in the politics of humanitarian intervention. In reality

they are mercenaries, fighting for a foreign government for a fee. Mercenaries are not a

new phenomena and 'hired guns' have been around as long as combat itself. Machiavelli

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[22] Howe, Herbert M. "Private Security Forces and African Stability: The Case of Executive Outcomes." The Journal of Modern African Studies. Vol. 36, No. 2, (Jun., 1998), 308-309.

warned against the use of mercenaries because their loyalty was suspect and their will to fight insufficient. Modern PMCs, on the other hand, offer a valuable set of capabilities and advantages to use in humanitarian crises, especially when foreign governments are slow or refuse to intervene. In the case of Sierra Leone, as discussed later, Executive Outcomes was able to make a significant impact while the international community failed to stop the RUF's campaign against the civilian population.

CHAPTER III

SIERRA LEONE IN THE CONTEXT OF AFRICAN CONFLICTS

The term 'civil war' is not often the best to describe many of the latest African conflicts over the last two decades. To classify a conflict a civil war gives it certain attributes which may not accurately capture the characteristic of the fighting and underlying issues. Many of the wars in Sub-Saharan Africa since the end of the Cold War have been more regional in nature rather than pure intrastate conflicts. Combat can oscillate between high-intensity and low-intensity phases. They have also resulted in horrible atrocities against non-combatant civilian populations, primarily women and children. In order to capture the intricacies of these conflicts, the term 'complex political emergency' was coined by the UN. They are "multi-causal, requiring a multidimensional international response including a combination of military intervention, peacekeeping and peace support operations, humanitarian relief programs, and high-level political intervention and diplomacy."[23]

Francis, Faal, Kabia, and Ramsbotham established a categorization scheme for the generations and evolution of conflict in sub-Saharan Africa in the post-colonial independence period. Many of the region's wars were not single dimensional, but had characteristics spanning several areas. *Wars of National Liberation* were struggles against colonial authority for independence; common during the 1950s through the 1980s. Africa

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[23] Francis et al., 74-75.

became a battlefield for *Cold War Proxy Wars* where the two superpowers and their allies backed different groups and factions to promote their political ideologies through conflict. Cold War conflicts brought with them an increase of armed groups, weapons, and free-lance soldiers throughout the region. *Secessionist Wars* were those where groups and regions sought to fight for self-determination from already independent post-colonial states. Surprisingly the least common war in sub-Saharan Africa, the *Inter-State/Conventional War* is the version of war with which Westerners most easily identify. Only a few inter-state wars have been fought in the region with the Ethiopian-Somalian War of 1977-78 and Uganda-Tanzania of 1978-79 being the prime examples. Some of the hardest images for the West to fathom and understand have been from the ethnic and tribal wars from Africa, or *Identity-base Wars*. The genocides in Rwanda and Burundi brought the horror of these wars to the forefront of the world's consciousness. The final category, and most important for the analysis of the conflict in Sierra Leone is to understand *Resource-based Wars* where greed, capitalization, and plundering of natural resources fuels violence.[24] Understanding this taxonomy of African wars from Francis et al is important to help frame Sierra Leone's war a resource war later in this chapter.

Thomas Weiss describes what he refers to a 'New Wars', another categorization that Sierra Leone's war appropriately fits. Weiss's 'new war' has four essential characteristics which differ from past armed conflicts.

> First, the locus of war no longer coincides with state borders – in areas of fragmented authority, in fact, borders are often meaningless. Second instead of states and their militaries being main agents, nonstate actors are playing an increasing role. Third, the economies of war are no longer financed principally from government tax revenues but increasingly from illicit activities, aid, and

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[24] Ibid., 76-82.

plunder. Fourth, instead of combatants being the main victims, civilians are increasingly paying the lion's share of costs.[25]

Non-state actors pay an increasing role as aggressors and as "spoilers," or those whose interests lie in the war as a means in and of itself. Their presence can usurp the power and role of the state and completely change the dynamics of the conduct of warfare and peace process. Where non-state actors are concerned, Weiss describes three important groups who play an important role in new wars.

> The first consists of belligerents, whether they are local militias, paramilitary groups, former members of the military, or the followers of warlords. The second group is composed of those whose primary economic interests are served by violence. Ranging from mafia, criminal gangs, and illegal businesses to opportunistic profiteers, they seek to sustain war and a humanitarian crisis which promote an economic agenda. The third group of "spoilers" consists of hybrids that blend military and economic agendas, including both mercenaries and a distinctly new creation: private military companies.[26]

For the world's mass media, the distinction between these wars is inconsequential; the images of war and suffering civilian are the same. To address the question of intervention, for this essay and more importantly for those governments contemplating committing resources and the lives of its soldiers, it is of the utmost importance to understand the nature of a conflict's origins and reasons for its continuation. Simply dumping troops and firepower on any conflict scenario does not guarantee success. Identifying and acting on the intricacies of a 'complex political emergency' has been a deciding factor in the successes and failures of international interventions.

As a region, over the last two decades, sub-Saharan Africa has been the most conflict ridden area of the world, with terrible costs in social and economic development

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[25] Weiss, 63.
[26] Ibid., 67.

and human suffering.[27] Most of the area's conflicts fit both models as 'complex political emergencies' and 'new wars.' The wars in Somalia, Rwanda, Burundi, Angola, Sierra Leone, Liberia, Côte d'Ivoire, the Congo, and the Sudan demonstrated that the traditional paradigms for understanding war and conflict are no longer sufficient in the modern world. Marilyn Silberfein attributes three factors to the prolonged nature of Sierra Leone's war. First, competition for diamonds was always connected to the war and increased over its duration. Second, the conflict was directly linked to the collapse of the state, "the emergence of pervasive criminality among state and non-state actors," as well as small arms proliferation. Third, was that the war was not truly a civil war but a regional complex conflict.[28] Applying Weiss' and Francis, Faal, Kabia, and Ramsbotham's models for complex political emergencies to the case of Sierra Leone's war can help to better understand the conflict's underlying issues.

<div align="center">Sierra Leone as a Resource War</div>

The war in Sierra Leone was at its core a conflict over natural resources. The 'greed and grievance' approach to analyzing resource wars in Africa is extremely useful in understanding the nature of the decade-long campaign of the RUF. This approach is based on the idea that "a country with large natural resources, many young men, and little education is very much more at risk of conflict than one with the opposite characteristic." In the event of a 'greed and grievance' resource war, rebels will "embed their behavior in a narrative of grievance" even though the greed for income from the resources becomes

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[27] Francis et al., 75.

[28] Silberfein, Marilyn. "The Geopolitics of Conflict and Diamonds in Sierra Leone." From Le Billon, Philippe (ed.). *The Geopolitics of Resource Wars: Resource Dependence, Governance, and Violence.* (New York: Frank Cass, 2005), 214.

the factor that protracts the war. By looting the resources and selling them for wealth and

weapons, they create a war economy which becomes a non-motivator for peace. Keeping

the war ongoing is more profitable to the rebels than peace.[29]

In these cases, the war takes on characteristics of organized crime, where the

leadership establishes and maintains a criminal empire. Although they publicly maintain

a political goal for their movements and feign a desire for a greater peace, they keep

waging war for their personal wealth and power. Negotiations are used as a tool to stop

opposition advances, stall for time, and give their troops time to regroup and supply.[30]

The RUF embodied this type of resource-extraction centered warfare. Where the

RUF diverted from a standard organized criminal empire was that it invoked massive

amounts of indiscriminant violence. The country's vast diamond resources funded the

RUF's decade-long campaign. When peace talks and cease-fire agreements included

provisions taking control of diamond mines from the RUF, the rebels would break the

agreement. The RUF outwardly claimed political grievances towards the historically

corrupt government, but behavior and actions showed that their effort was more an

organized criminal operation than an insurgency to gain a political end. Lansana Gberie

asserted that the RUF contained an aspect of "banditism," that the group also displayed

"a simple resentment and the urge to pillage and destroy."[31]

Assis Malaquias could not have better characterized the RUF's *modus operandi*

than in his general description of diamond wars:

> Current insurgent strategies focus on the pillaging of natural resources, not
> necessarily the toppling of existing governments. Unconventional force is no

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[29] Francis et al., 81.
[30] Walter, 40.
[31] Gberie, Lansana. *A Dirty War in West Africa: The RU and the Destruction of Sierra Leone*. (Indiana University Press: Bloomington, 2005), 204.

longer primarily used to erode the government's control of the countryside. Rather, it is used both to gain and secure areas rich in natural resources and to drive the rural population away from those areas and into government-controlled urban centers…..In other words, new internal wars in Africa are no longer fought at the military level to achieve political objectives..... War is no longer viewed as part of a broader contest for political loyalty… [32]

The RUF occupied the diamond rich areas of the country far away from Freetown, a traditionally difficult area for Freetown to govern. By controlling that territory, the RUF extracted and exported the diamonds for wealth, arms, and supplies. They focused their violence against the civilian population as a means to incite fear and further exert control over their territory. Without a government force with the ability to oust the RUF from the diamond rich areas and control smuggling routes, the RUF was able to fund and supply itself. In order to sustain their operations, according to Silberfein, the RUF only needed to control three elements: the resource base, one or more routes to move the diamonds out of the source area, and exchange points in order to obtain weapons, primarily small arms.[33]

<div align="center">Sierra Leone as a Regional Conflict</div>

To describe the war in Sierra Leone as an interstate conflict would be inaccurate because of its regional character. Its activities were not confined to a single state, but were actually a "regional process whereby boundaries have not impeded the flows of resources and weapons or movement of peoples."[34] The illegal diamond trade not only provided the RUF with the means to prolong its military campaign, but it had spill-over

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[32] Malaquias, Assis. "Diamonds are a Guerrilla's Best Friend: The Impact of Illicit Wealth on Insurgency Strategy." Third World Quarterly. (Vol. 22, No. 3, 2001), 317.
[33] Silberfein from Le Billon, 214.
[34] Ibid., 215.

impacts into Liberia. Charles Taylor used the diamonds from Sierra Leone through Liberia to fund his war efforts.

The initial 1991 insurgency into Sierra Leone by the RUF was set up by Taylor. Liberian and Sierra Leonean fighters, supported by mercenaries from Burkina-Fasso were trained, supplied, and dispatched from Liberia. Although Sankoh was the formal leader and figurehead of the RUF, it had been created by Charles Taylor to aid his political goals in Liberia. First, it was a way for Taylor to punish Sierra Leone's government for participating in ECOMOG's intervention into Liberia. The government of Sierra Leone also allowed sanctuary in its territory for the United Liberation Movement of Liberia (ULIMO), the remnants of former Liberian President Doe's army and opposition to Taylor.[35] By starting a war next door, Taylor hoped to create a distraction to divert ECOMOG's attention and resources from the conflict in Liberia.[36] He allowed Liberian territory to serve as sanctuary for the RUF from which they could launch offensives and raids.

The war in Sierra Leone started as a spill-over from Taylor's war, but it eventually bled into other parts of the region and drew other parties into combat. The interventions by Nigeria and other ECOMOG forces were the most pronounced examples. The RUF also periodically launched incursions over the Guinean border. Towards the end of the war, the Guinean government launched its own campaign against the RUF, first raiding camps within its territory, the pursuing the RUF over the border into Sierra Leone. Guinea also supported democratically elected President Kabbah by giving refuge and supporting his government in exile when they were forced to flee

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[35] Gberie, 65.
[36] Silberfein from Le Billon, 218.

Freetown in 1997. Hard-core RUF fighters like Samuel "Masquita" Brockerie were also known to have fought for Taylor in Liberia and also in Côte d'Ivoire following the wind-down of Sierra Leone's war in 2000. For these reasons it is apparent that the war in Sierra Leone was far from an insulated intrastate conflict.

<div align="center">Non-state Actors</div>

Sierra Leone's war was driven by a host of non-state actors which complicated the scenario. The entire RUF rebel movement operated outside the control of a state apparatus. At no point did it enjoy the formal backing of a legitimate government. The illegal diamond trade which motivated and gave the RUF its means to fight was conducted through a chain of non-state actors, from arms and diamond smugglers, to mainly Lebanese diamond dealers in Liberia and Freetown, to legitimate diamond cartels in major trading hubs like Antwerp and Tel Aviv.

The Sierra Leone Army (SLA) was completely ineffective at protecting the civilian populations against the RUF, especially in the rural areas far from large population centers. The villages in these areas began to form their own local militias to protect themselves from the RUF. They were bands of local hunters who organized themselves into fighting units. They became know as Kamajors from the Mende word *kamajoi* meaning "hunter." What began as disjointed defensive units became a major movement in the war. They were effective fighters in the bush because of their intimate knowledge of the environment. In combat, they operated with a "take no prisoners" attitude towards the RUF.[37] They were eventually recruited by the PMC Executive Outcomes, Kabbah's government, and later the British to server as offensive units against

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[37] Hirsch, John L. Sierra Leone: Diamonds and the Struggle for Democracy. (Boulder: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2001), 53.

the RUF. After Executive Outcomes formalized the Kamajors into defensive fighting units, they became know as Civilian Defense Forces (CDF). Some of the more successful campaigns against the RUF can be attributed to the fighting prowess of the CDF. Their numbers eventually reached a fighting strength of 10,000 towards the end of the war.[38]

Rogue rebel groups not associated with the RUF also operated in Sierra Leone adding to the situation's chaos and anarchy. They would swing allegiance depending on their interests and who held power in the government. The most notorious of these groups was the West Side Boys, also calling themselves "West Side Niggahz." They were more of a street gang of young men who took advantage of Sierra Leone's anarchy to conduct violent crime, thefts, and extortion at makeshift roadblocks and ambushes. The West Side Boys were known as much for their menacing presence and tendency to kill. Sometimes wearing wigs, flip-flops, and the uniforms of killed enemies they were often intoxicated with drugs and gin, making them both frightening and volatile.[39] They became famous when in late summer of 2000, they captured and held hostage eleven British soldiers, prompting London to launch Operation Barras, one of its most successful offensive missions in Sierra Leone.

Leading up to the war, pervasive deterioration and corruption in Sierra Leone's police and army resulted in ineffective and rogue elements becoming combatants in the war. Army elements took control of the government through coups three different times. Corrupt soldiers in the SLA engaged in illegal mining and fought on both sides of the war. This became so common that a term was coined for those engaged in these practices,

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[38] Howe, 316.
[39] McGreal, Chris. "Drinking gin and wearing flipflops, the bandits who ambushed the Royal Irish." *The Guardian.* (28 August, 2000).

the "sobel": soldier by day, rebel by night. A break-off faction of the SLA, the Armed

Forces Ruling Council (AFRC), led by Major Johnny Koroma became an independent

combatant in the war. At one point it took control of the government and joined forces

with the Sankoh and the RUF, but later it swore allegiance to Kabbah and the

democratically elected government and joined forces with the CDF under British

command to fight against the RUF.

The presence of PMCs in Sierra Leone's war provides an interesting case of a

non-state actor used as a force for stability in a humanitarian crisis. The controlling

military junta under Valintine Strasser hired the British-based Gurkha Security Group to

provide training and secure important highways for the government. The corporate

mercenary outfit, made up of demobilized units from the infamous Gurkhas, experienced

moderate success, but were short lived in Sierra Leone, withdrawing after their leader

was killed in a "suspicious ambush."[40]

The PMC with the greatest impact in Sierra Leone was Executive Outcomes. This

unit, discussed in greater detail later, was comprised of ex-members of the disbanded

Special Forces 32nd Parachute Battalion of the former South African Defense Forces. EO

was a left over remnant from the apartheid era, led by a Rhodesian Brigadier, with a

white officer corps, and black Angolan and Namibian infantry. These were a group of

"crack bush guerillas, mostly of whom served fifteen to twenty years in South Africa's

most notorious counter-insurgency units."[41] EO was also contracted by Strasser's

government, but they were able to bring their combat experience, force multipliers, and

the CDF to effectively push back the RUF in their 1995 offensive. EO's actions are

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[40] Gberie, 91-92.
[41] Ibid., 93.

discussed later in further detail, but the case of EO in Sierra Leone has become one of the textbook examples cited when arguing for PMCs as an effective intervention force in humanitarian emergencies.

<u>True Cost of the War: Civilians</u>

One important aspect of Weiss' definition of 'new wars' is that they are characterized by increased violence falling on noncombatant populations. Although the RUF stated their war was aimed toward combating corruption of Sierra Leone's government, much of their violence was directed at local rural populations with no ties to the Freetown government. The RUF used terror to control the countryside. They commonly practiced mutilation against civilians to establish their dominance. Their calling card became amputating limbs of innocent civilians: hands, arms, legs, feet, and ears.

The RUF institutionalized within its ranks indiscriminate violence against civilians. As one report from the Human Rights Watch noted:

> Witnesses describe the existence of units for committing particular crimes, like the Burn House Unit, Cut Hands Commando, and Blood Shed Squad. Some squads had trademark way of killing, such as Kill Man No Blood unit, whose method was to beat people to death without shedding blood, or the Born Naked Squad, who stripped all their victims before killing them.[42]

After the initial insurgency of just one hundred rebels, the RUF had little trouble building its ranks. They recruited gangs of the state's unemployed, disenchanted youth or 'rarray boys' to fight against the government which the destitute perceived as having turned its back against them. Herein began the practice of recruiting child soldiers for the RUF. With Taylor's support, the RUF began abducting and recruiting children into its

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[42] Ibid., 130.

ranks. They underwent an indoctrination process, were forced to take narcotics to increase their aggression in combat, and were often forced to kill their relatives and parents. It was estimated that at one point almost one half of the RUF's ranks were comprised of soldiers between the ages of 8-14 years old.[43] To the child soldier, the RUF became his family and the war his reason for existence.

> Joining a militia group is both meal ticket and substitute education. The pay may be derisory, but weapons training pays quicker dividends than school ever did; soon the AK47 brings food, money, a warm bath and instant adult respect. The combat group substitutes for lost family and friends.[44]

Use of children as combatants was not limited to the RUF, both the Sierra Leone Army (SLA) and the Civilian Defense Forces, or Kamajors would later enlist children into their ranks. Further, the RUF used sex as a weapon against the population. Young girls were made into sex slaves for the insurgents. RUF fighters, including children, used rape as a form of psychological warfare against the population. There were also reports of violence and sexual assault against civilians amongst the EGOMOG forces. The loss of life in the war was staggering, but what made it all the more horrible was the widespread indiscriminant violence brought on noncombatants, especially women and children.

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[43] Meredith, Martin. The Fate of Africa: From Hopes of Freedom to the Heart of Despair, a History of Fifty Years of Independence. (New York: PublicAffairs, 2005), 563.
[44] Ibid.

CHAPTER IV

HISTORICAL CONTEXT OF SIERRA LEONE AND ITS WAR

Background and History

Today, Sierra Leone enjoys a tenuous peace after its decade-long brutal civil war. The country hopes to rebuild and seeks reconciliation with itself. Although many rebuilding and reintegration programs are underway with international support, resurgence of violence is always possible due to the large former warrior population living in poverty. Many worry that until economic conditions improve, a small spark could prompt former combatants to take up arms once again.

Sierra Leone's conflict did not develop in a vacuum. It was the culmination of trends, events, and other influences over time. This chapter seeks to provide the historical context in which the war developed as well as the events from its initiation in 1991 to the launch of Operation Palliser in May of 2000.

The story of this war does not begin in the years immediately before the conflict. The conditions that led to the collapse of the state throughout the 1970s and 1980s had been evolving since before its existence. The indigenous population had migrated to the region over a period of more than 2000 years. At the time of the arrival of the first Europeans in the 15th century, the area was inhabited by fourteen distinct ethno-linguistic groups. The majority of these groups followed traditional parochial socio-economic

systems based on the kingship model that latter evolved into paramount chief systems.[45] They practiced animism, but Islam had begun to move into the northern portions beginning in the 13th century and continued to spread through the 17th century. Christianity would be introduced by the European explorers and settlers.

The first Dutch and Portuguese explorers were interested in the large natural harbor located at modern Freetown. The initial Portuguese settlers intermarried with the local population and created a Creole (Krio) ethnic group with mixed catholic and African traditions. The Krios currently only make up 2 to 3 percent of Sierra Leone's population[46], but because of their Afro-European mixed ancestry they were favored by Europeans and despised by the indigenous population.

The British Navy moved into the area in 1784 and established the city of Freetown as a destination for freed slaves. In 1807, British parliament outlawed slavery in its colonial empire and looked to combat the slave trade in Africa. It used the port at Freetown as a base of operations to patrol the West African coast for slaving ships. Slaves liberated on such ships were released in Freetown in what was the third wave of freed slaves to immigrate to Sierra Leone. The first were former slaves were residing in Nova Scotia and had fought for the British in the American Revolution and had been granted freedom. The second wave was comprised of "maroons", or escapees who fled into the mountains in Jamaica. The city of Freetown became a heterogeneous city of European settlers, Krios, freed slaves, and indigenous peoples.[47]

Britain declared Freetown a Crown Colony in 1808 and established control over the city and the immediate surrounding area. The Krio population was placed in

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[45] Hirsch, 22.
[46] Ibid.
[47] Ibid., 23.

government administration positions because they were "more European." They also enjoyed upper class status behind the white Europeans. They held most of the professional positions as doctors, teachers, businessmen, and clergy. This situation created a racial and socioeconomic gap between the populations. The Africans resented the favoritism towards the Krios and referred to them as "black settlers." [48]

The British declared the area outside of Freetown, constituting the vast majority of modern Sierra Leone, as a protectorate in 1896. There the British practiced their common colonial indirect rule system to administer the land. Deals were brokered with the local paramount chiefs and governing bodies in order to protect trading routes and new railroads built to the eastern mining district. In return, the British allowed the traditional governing structures to remain intact and kept interference into local affairs to a minimum. The difference between Britain's direct involvement in Freetown's development and administration versus its hands-off approach to the remainder of the territory had significant effects that later contributed to factors leading to its civil war. First, the city of Freetown continued to modernize and bring wealth to the white settlers and the Krio population. The protectorate failed to develop and advance as Freetown did, evolving into a frontier-like state. Rule was maintained through traditional norms and strong parochial socio-economic structures. This later resulted in post-independence ethnic divides. Customary relationships among peoples across other colonial borders caused the boundaries to be notoriously porous. This would contribute to the ease with which illegal diamonds, weapons, supplies, and troops could move between Sierra Leone and Liberia during the war.[49]

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[48] Ibid., 22.
[49] Ibid., 24.

Until independence, despite its heterogeneous populations, Freetown and the protectorate existed in relative peace. There were several revolts to colonial rule from the Temne and Mende tribes as well as criminal activity typical of frontier-type settings; however, there was much promise for the success of Sierra Leone as an independent state.

<div align="center">Post-independence Corruption and Decline of the State</div>

In 1961, the British granted independence to Sierra Leone uniting Freetown and the protectorate into a single state. The modernity of Freetown, healthy mineral deposits, and relative harmony among peoples gave a false feeling to many that the country could become a prosperous modernized African state. However, under the surface lingered a massive class separation along racial lines, strong ethnic ties among tribes in the former indirectly ruled protectorate, and a lack of central government's control over the vast majority of the countryside. These issues became major contributors to the decline of the state and set the conditions for civil war. In his book, former US Ambassador to Sierra Leone, John Hirsch described this situation:

> Sierra Leone's history reflects a fundamental paradox: before independence it was, at one level, a remarkable example of peaceful coexistence among peoples of diverse religious beliefs and backgrounds. Fourteen different ethnic groups lived according to Islamic, Christian, and animist traditions. Intermarriage was common and there was little ethnic tension. Yet geographically base ethnic tensions between Mendes in the south and the Temnes and Limbas in the north, manipulated by politicians were to be at the root of the state's progressive collapse in the nearly four decades since independence.[50]

The post-independence government and businesses were dominated by the Krios. As the economic gap widened resentment towards them increased within dominant ethnic

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[50] Ibid., 24.

groups. The Mendes and Temnes gravitated towards differing political parties which eventually took power from the Krio elites. Sierra Leone's second prime minister took steps to Africanize the state by enacting voting and land reforms to limit the Krios' power.[51]

While ethnic favoritism practiced by the four prime ministers from independence until the war created ethnic divides and tension,[52] it was the corruption of these leaders and their governments which led to the state's collapse and brought on the conditions ripe for a civil war. The trend of authoritarian corrupt rule started with Albert Margai in the 1960s, but was expanded under the subsequent regimes of Sakia Stevens and Joseph Momoh. Stevens and Momoh eliminated the distinction between private and public funds and treated the state treasury as private bank accounts. As state power increased under these autocratic regimes, it offered more opportunities for corrupt practices between public and private sectors. Corruption in the Stevens and Momoh regimes was well organized at the state level and became "an activity where contracts were being rigged, decisions bought and sold, elections corrupted, and political rivals threatened and politically coerced."[53]

After independence, Stevens founded the All People's Congress (APC) as an opposition party to Margai. In 1967, Stevens took power, made himself president, and immediately dismantled the government and replaced it with a single party government under the APC. Stevens also used violent riots instigated by APC supported youths to

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[51] Kandeh, Jimmy D. "Politicization of Ethnic Identities in Sierra Leone." <u>African Studies Review.</u> Vol. 35, No. 1, (Apr., 1992), 93. Also, Hirsch, 24-25.

[52] Ibid., 93.

[53] Smith, Gerald H. "The Dichotomy of Politics and Corruption in a Neopatrimonial State: Evidence from Sierra Leone, 1968-1993." <u>Issue: A Journal of Opinion.</u> (Vol. 25, No. 1, Commentaries in African Studies: Essays about African Social Change and the Meaning of Our Professional Work, 1997), 58.

declare a state of emergency and justify the single-party government. Over his tenure, Stevens formalized his power by enacting a constitution that declared himself the "Executive President" and passed rigged referendums to establish a single party state in 1971 and 1978 respectively.[54]

While in power, Stevens created an "autocratic shadow state" based around his patrimonial control over the state and its resources. To accomplish this, he manipulated what state institutions he could, but then created organizations outside of government control who reported only to him. These extra-governmental entities operated outside of the law and were a part of the process by which he criminalized the state. Stevens created his own private army because he feared the ranks of the legitimate army. Joseph Momoh, Stevens henchman and later his handpicked successor, was made an unelected member of parliament and then head of the army.[55]

Gerald Smith describes the state of corruption in Sierra Leone from independence until the war as a process of neopatrimonialism. It was a system where corruption was organized as part of state affairs and leaders were the gatekeepers of the state for businesses and private individuals.[56] They effectively controlled the points of entry for business in the country and used this position to promote their personal wealth.

Stevens was intimately involved with illegal diamond trade. It was estimated that he built his personal wealth to over $500 million during his time in office. His reign was referred by Sierra Leoneans as the "seventeen year plague of locusts."[57] This trend of corruption and control was continued by Stevens successor, Momoh.

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[54] Gberie, 28.
[55] Gberie, 29.
[56] Smith, 58.
[57] Meredith, 562.

Joseph Momoh further drained the state coffers and practiced economic policies to build his personal wealth at the expense of the state's growth. As the state's economic viability deteriorated, Momoh cut funding to teachers and civil servants. Government bureaucracies were looted by those civil servants to whom the state owed money. Teachers abandoned the public schools and the education system completely collapsed. The class divide grew tremendously until the few at the top controlled the vast majority of wealth and the population lived in poverty. Many within the professional class left the country for Europe and North America. Jobless young men and children without schools took to the streets and formed criminal gangs known as the "rarray boys."[58] By the late 1980s, the state was in complete disarray.

<u>Diamonds</u>

Diamonds had been a primary export resource for Sierra Leone beginning with its commercial exploitation in the 1930s. Sierra Leone's diamonds, like most in West Africa, are found primarily in alluvial deposits, meaning the diamonds are near the surface and easily accessible. The deposits can be mined by digging pits in riverbeds or panning in the same manner one would pan for gold. Unlike kimberlite dikes in which the diamonds can only be extracted with expensive heavy machinery, alluvial diamonds can be mined by anyone with a shovel, pan, and access to the desired rivers. Because of the intense capital requirements, kimberlite mining is usually controlled through highly centralized organizations, but alluvial diamonds are easily looted by individuals and loose organizations.[59]

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[58] Meredith, 562.
[59] Silberfein from Le Billon, 215.

The diamond rich areas in Sierra Leone were primarily on the eastern forested side of the country in the Kono and Kenema districts. Legal mining operations were expanded during the colonial era by the Sierra Leone Selection Trust (SLST), a DeBeers subsidiary after it was granted concessions by the colonial government in 1934. The SLST paid income tax of 27% on its diamonds to the government in exchange for rights to mine.[60]

By the 1950s, illegal mining and smuggling were prevalent through channels into Liberia. There were an estimated 75,000 illegal miners in the Kono district as opposed to 75,000-80,000 legitimate diamond workers. The diamond boom also brought with it the beginnings of organized banditry and thuggery. Armed bands sometimes numbering up to 400-500 men began raiding areas controlled by SLST. The diamond producing areas were nearly lawless and could not be controlled by the government or the SLST.[61] By the 1980s illegal trade dominated the diamond industry. Legal mining and exporting all but ceased to exist, prompting the withdrawal of SLST in 1984.[62] Legitimate diamond exports declined from 2 million carats in 1970, to 595,000 carats in 1980, to a meager 48,000 carats in 1988.[63]

Diamonds were central to the political economics in Sierra Leone in its early post-independence period in the 1960s, but the illegal trade played a larger role in the patronage politics of the 1970s and 1980s. It became an integral part in the process of state collapse. With the formation of the Mano River Union in 1973, an economic cooperative agreement among Sierra Leone, Liberia, and Guinea, additional movements

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[60] Gberie, 25.
[61] Ibid., 24.
[62] Silberfein from Le Billon, 215-217.
[63] Gberie, 31.

of people and products over those states' borders increased their porosity, aiding illegal trade.[64]

During the war, weapons came through Liberia from Ukraine, Russia, Bulgaria, and Slovakia in exchange for diamonds from Kono and Kenema in Sierra Leone. Diamonds were not the sole cause of the war, but they served as motivation to prolong the conflict, and they underwrote the RUF.[65] The diamond trade created beneficiaries to the war and contributed to those profiting from smuggling and arms/diamond trading reluctant to end the war.[66]

The illegal diamond trade factored into the corrupt politics of Stevens and Momoh and played a key role in the state's collapse. Diamonds were the primary resource that became the means by which politicians could control the state's wealth, centralize power, fund their paternalistic regimes, and fill their personal coffers. Diamond and other mining exports accounted for 60% of the state's export earning at independence in 1961.[67] Controlling diamonds equated to controlling the economy.

This was not lost on Siaka Stevens, an Oxford educated politician, who was made Minister of Mines in 1951 by the British. Stevens understood the illegal diamond trade so once in power he built upon the already established illegal channels to build his own personal wealth. In 1971, President Stevens nationalized DeBeer's SLST, creating the National Diamond Mining Company with 51% of its shares owned by the government and 49% to SLST. An amount of 12% of the total shares, some of those under government's ownership, was taken by Steven personally. Much of the published

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[64] Silberfein from Le Billon, 219.
[65] Gberie, 13-14.
[66] Silberfein from Le Billon, 214.
[67] Gberie, 23.

literature on the Stevens regime described it as "kleptocratic," where there was little distinction between personal finances and those of the state; which resulted in a flow from the latter into the former. All of the states' natural resource industries became the criminal empire under Stevens control.[68]

Sierra Leone's economy was destroyed by the practices of the Stevens and later Momoh. As the state decayed and became bankrupt, Stevens maintained his power base in urban areas by keeping some social services and state institutions alive for those populations. Rural peoples were left to fend for themselves, opening the old colonial divide between the two populations. The urban and rural tension was furthered because the rural population viewed diamonds as their resource, stolen by the state without reciprocation of social services.[69] During the war, the RUF's recruiting would greatly benefit from this negative attitude towards the government by the rural population.

Originally the state benefited from taxes and fees foreign companies payed on Sierra Leone's resource based trade: cash crops, fisheries, rutile (titanium oxide), bauxite, and diamonds.[70] Corrupt practices between state operatives and foreign companies were common in the form of paybacks and bribes for those resources.

Before the diamond boom, agriculture had been the most substantial portion of Sierra Leone's economy, employing nearly half of its population. Like other colonial economies, Sierra Leone's was primarily extractive with a focus on cash crops. As a food producer, Sierra Leone had been an exporter of food crops, but as the state decayed through the 1970s and 1980s, it had to import rice to sustain its population.[71] As illegal

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[68] Gberie, 29-32.
[69] Ibid., 30, 32.
[70] Silberfein from Le Billon, 217.
[71] Gberie 23.

trade and government corruption increased, state funds decreased and subsequently state infrastructure declined, isolating markets, and increasing the cost for farmers. The farming crisis was further exacerbated an exodus of young men away from agriculture by legal and illegal diamond mining. This contributed to a shift in the agriculture sector to more to subsistence farming. This drove up food prices, forcing the government to further drain its strained budget to subsidize food prices.[72]

At the start of the war, diamonds were the most significant source of mineral wealth in Sierra Leone, accounting for an estimated $300-$450 million in revenue per year. One source estimated that less than 10 percent of that total flowed through legal channels while the vast majority was smuggled through Liberia, Côte d'Ivoire, and Burkina Fasso. The diamond producing regions were lawless, rife with corrupt businesses, mining gangs, and illegal diamond trade.

<div align="center">The RUF, its Origin, and the Start of the War</div>

The RUF's beginnings can be traced directly to two primary roots: disparity in Sierra Leone from complete state collapse due to government corruption, as well as the civil war in Liberia which had begun two years prior to the RUF's invasion in 1991. Although the movement did state grievances and principles at the outset of the war, as time progressed it became apparent that its motivations were more centered on the acquisition of wealth rather than political ideals.[73] As was previously mentioned, the war in Sierra Leone was as much a regional conflict and extension of Charles Taylor's war in Liberia as it was a civil war.

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[72] Silberfein from Le Billon, 218.
[73] Le Billon, 218.

The RUF's leader, Foday Sankoh, was an uneducated, ex-cameraman, and former army corporal who had been imprisoned for his role in an attempted coup against Siaka Stevens.[74] Sankoh made the acquaintance of Liberian ex-government minister Charles Taylor while the two spent time in Libya as guests of Momar Kaddafi. Kaddafi provided training, equipment, and financial support for rebel groups opposing "Western" governments, or those regimes he saw as aligned with Western countries.[75] Libya initially supported the RUF and Taylor's National Patriotic Front of Liberia (NPFL) to begin their insurgencies. Liberia's war had begun late in 1989 by the NPFL under Taylor.

In March of 1991 one hundred insurgents moved over the border from Liberia into eastern Sierra Leone. The small group was comprised of Sierra Leonean dissidents, battle hardened NPFL fighters loyal to Charles Taylor, and mercenaries from Burkina Fasso. This group, under the leadership of Sankoh was the seed of the RUF.[76] In their revolutionary declaration "Footpaths to Democracy" they stated that they opposed the "pattern of raping the countryside to feed the greed and caprice of the Freetown elite and their masters abroad."[77]

The RUF quickly took control of the eastern Kono district and its rich diamond mines. For the remainder of the war, the district and its associated mines became the focal point for both sides. When the RUF controlled the region, diamonds were smuggled out of the country to purchase weapons, ammunition, and supplies as well as fund Charles Taylor's NPFL in its war against the Liberian government. British intelligence estimated that 60 percent of the diamonds from RUF controlled regions was being

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[74] Keen, David. <u>Conflict and Collusion in Sierra Leone.</u> (New York: Palgrave, 2005), 36.
[75] Hirsch, 31.
[76] Ibid., 31.
[77] Keen, 39.

smuggled through Liberia, with the remainder through Burkina Fasso.[78] There were also

allegations that Nigerian ECOMOG officers had provided food and supplies to the RUF

in exchange for diamonds.[79] In later stages of the war, the RUF also took control of the

state's titanium and bauxite mines, which in conjunction with the loss of diamond

revenue, nearly cut off all of the government's funds.[80]

As previously discussed, the RUF's tactics were centered around shock and

terror.[81] They directed most of their violence against civilian populations. They

indoctrinated child soldiers, who would be sent into combat drugged-up to commit mass

murders, rapes, and mutilations. The RUF's calling card was mass amputation. Men,

women, and children lost their limbs and were left to live missing appendages as a

reminder of the power and horror of the RUF.

<u>International Involvement and Military Governments</u>

In the early 1990s, Sierra Leone had a mutual defense agreement with Nigeria.

Nigerian ECOMOG troops were already committed to the region to support Doe's regime

in Liberia against Taylor's NPFL.[82] In response to the extension of the Liberian war into

Sierra Leone and advance of the RUF, an ECOMOG force of mostly Nigerian forces and

some Guinean elements landed in Lungi, near Freetown. The SLA's ranks had

deteriorated and proved mostly ineffective against the RUF.

In response to the insurgency, Momoh increased the size of the SLA by recruiting

children and the unemployed. Corrupt senior officers also began to take their soldiers'

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[78] Ibid., 253.
[79] Ibid., 266.
[80] Meredith, 565.
[81] Gberie, 2.
[82] Keen, 39.

pay for themselves. Food rations were diverted to the black market to further increase those officers' wealth. As the government lost what little revenue it had, it could not afford to pay the army. Many soldiers, fed up with corruption, fought for the government, but would moonlight with the RUF.[83] All of these factors contributed to an utter unreliability in the state's military apparatuses as a force for stability.

In 1992, with the state in chaos, SLA elements staged a coup and gave power to a young officer, Valentine Strasser. He was a new hope for the country with a stated goal to eliminate the corruption in the government and take control of the war. While the government was able to take the war to the RUF under his rule, he would be later overthrown because of his reluctance to relinquish power to an elected government. The presence of competent Nigerian ECOMOG forces allowed the government under Strasser to launch somewhat effective offensives to retake Kono during 1993 and 1994. Each time, the RUF was able to regain control of the diamond fields and its life-sustaining revenue.

<div align="center">On the Offensive: Executive Outcomes and Kamajors</div>

By 1995, the gains from the Nigerian offensives had been lost and the RUF advanced to within twenty miles of Freetown. In a desperate move to push back the insurgents, Strasser entered into a contract with Executive Outcomes (EO) a private security firm to fight against the RUF. EO was part of the Branch Group, a British multinational holding company which also owned Branch Minerals and Branch Energy. Strasser didn't have enough government funds to cover the $15 million contract, so he

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[83] Ibid., 6.

granted Branch Minerals future diamond mining concessions.[84] EO was the first force able to put the RUF on the defensive in four years of fighting.

EO was comprised of former South African Defense Force (SADF) troops who had experienced substantial guerrilla combat in Angola, Namibia, and Mozambique prior to the collapse of South Africa's apartheid government. Most had served in SADF's former 32nd Battalion and paramilitary 'Koevoet' or 'Crowbar' units. The primarily Portuguese-speaking black 32nd Battalion spent significant time fighting in Angola and became the most highly decorated South African unit since the Second World War. The soldiers EO brought were some of the most experienced and knowledgeable soldiers in fighting African bush wars.[85]

With the arrival of twenty Afrikaner officers and 150 black troops in May 1995, EO immediately started training SLA units. They brought with them two MI-17 helicopters, an MI-24 Hind Russian-made gunship, a radio intercept system, two Boeing 727s for airlift and logistics support, casualty evacuation aircraft, as well as heavy infantry weapons. They were further supplied by Strasser with SLA Armored Personnel Carriers and Land Rovers.[86]

Despite its small numbers, EO made effective use of advanced command and control capabilities. EO kept its chain of command separate from the SLA and kept its operations room closed to its officers because of their rampant corruption. Radio operators performed signals intelligence by listened and jammed RUF communication. Air assets conducted long-range recon and aerial surveillance to find RUF camps and provide its photo interpretations capabilities with image intelligence. EO also conducted

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[84] Howe, 309.
[85] Ibid., 310.
[86] Gberie, 93.

its own human intelligence operations by using operators in the field to identify and

isolate potential informants, train, and supply them with communications equipment.[87]

EO quickly took the battle to the RUF and pushed the rebels back from Freetown.

Additionally, EO began to train and organize Kamajor units to attack the RUF. The

Kamjors had already been fighting against the RUF for years at the local level. EO

worked with community paramount chiefs to develop offensive guerrilla capabilities in

Kamajor units. The Kamajors already knew the environment and had relationships with

the civilian populations. With food, intelligence, training, and strategic planning from

EO, the Kamajors changed from defensive militias to offensive units.[88]

Under the guidance of EO, the Kamajors effectively pushed the RUF almost to

the Liberian border. By 1996, EO with support of SLA and Kamajors retook almost all of

the diamond mines in Kono and the rutile and bauxite mines in the southern coastal areas.

Because of the unreliability of the SLA, the government relied progressively more on the

Kamajor Civilian Defense Forces (CDF) forces. This eventually led to resentment within

the SLA towards the tribal combatants.

EO would be asked to leave Sierra Leone in January of 1997. In its eighteen

months of service, it had turned the tide of the war and placed the RUF on the defensive.

During that time, EO suffered only two killed-in-action. It used combined arms and force

multipliers to accomplish what the much larger ECOMOG force could not. Additionally,

it gained the reputation of acting well towards local civilians, which helped its credibility

and intelligence gathering in the field. EO's offensive provided the stability that would

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[87] Howe, 315-316, 322.
[88] Ibid., 316.

lead to the war's first cease-fire and a calm which allowed the government to hold

democratic elections.[89]

The peace that EO helped to create was not long-lived. When the conflict later re-

intensified, it led critics to argue that EO did not have a lasting impact on the conflict. To

this position, Herbert Howe points out:

> EO officials counter that the 1997 instability showed how effective EO had been,
> and that an extended EO presence would have provided breathing space for the
> Kabbah government. They also contend that they are not nation-builders; their
> role is only to obtain a military settlement, which hopefully will assist political
> reconciliation. They argue that a deployment of UN observers or a UN peace-
> keeping contingent could have provided stability after EO's departure.[90]

Despite its critics, EO was able to change the course of the war in Sierra Leone,

serving as an example of how a professional PMC may use its capabilities to create

stability in a humanitarian crisis.

Elections and New Peace Process

In 1996, Strasser was ousted in a peaceful coup and replaced by General Julius

Bio. The new leader intended to hold elections and return civilian rule to Sierra Leone.

He upheld his promise and held elections that same year. Despite attempts by the RUF to

disrupt the elections, Ahmed Tejan Kabbah was democratically elected President of

Sierra Leone. With the RUF backpedaling from the offensives from EO and the CDF,

Sankoh agreed to peace talks with the new president in Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire. During

this time the International Monetary Fund (IMF) ordered Kabbah to stop using EO before

international aid would be released to Sierra Leone's government. Kabbah obliged and

EO officially left Sierra Leone at the end of January, 1997.

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[89] Ibid., 314, 316.
[90] Ibid., 321.

<u>Renewed Violence</u>

The Abidjan Agreement's cease-fire provisions were short lived; as was Kabbah's government. In May 1997, army dissidents stormed a Freetown prison and freed the jailed Major Johnny Paul Koroma.[91] Koroma and his small contingent freed an additional 600 prisoners and took control of the state radio station. On the air he declared the formation of the Armed Forces Revolutionary Council (AFRC) and announced their control of the government. Koroma and his sympathizers were angry that the government had turned its back on the SLA and relied on the CDF as its principle fighting units. President Kabbah fled to Guinea as Freetown erupted in violence and the AFRC took control of the city. Once in power, Koroma offered terms with the RUF. Under a new AFRC/RUF junta RUF fighters strolled into Freetown for the first time in six years of war. The improvements the country had made during the short peace were immediately lost as Freetown erupted into chaos and violence. Over 400,000 people fled Freetown in the first three months of the AFRC's junta. Gberie said under the junta "governance became little more than a chaotic orgy of rape and terror and systematic intimidation."[92]

In July 1997, the foreign ministers from Nigerian, Ghana, Côte d'Ivoire, and Guinea met and came to an agreement that legitimate civilian rule should be restored to Sierra Leone. Nigeria had imposed a blockade and embargo against the junta. The UK took the lead proposing sanctions through the UN Security Council. The AFRC was convinced to enter talks with the regions' diplomats to restore civilian leadership. Under intense international diplomatic pressure Koroma agreed to hand over power in the following year by signing the Conakry Peace Plan.

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[91] Meredith, 569.
[92] Gberie, 102.

In January 1998, it appeared that Koroma would not adhere to the provisions of

Conakry. By then, Nigeria had amassed 10,000 troops around Freetown. In February,

ECOMOG launched Operation Sandstorm, where the Nigerians stormed the capital. The

operation was coordinated with the CDF to launch attacks on AFRC and RUF positions

throughout the countryside to prevent rebel reinforcements and supplies from reaching

the capital. The CDF was provided weapons by a British firm, Sandline International, to

aid in the offensive. In response to the Nigerian assault, Charles Taylor reinforced the

AFRC/RUF with NPFL units from Liberia. After several days of bloody street fighting,

AFRC/RUF forces were driven from the city and Kabbah was allowed to return to take

office. By April, 90% of Sierra Leone including the diamond mines were in control of

ECOMOG and CDF.[93]

<center>The Sandline Affair</center>

The efforts by the Nigerians and CDF to restore Kabbah to power also drew the

British for the first time directly into Sierra Leone's war. In its fight against the RUF and

AFRC, Kabbah's government employed security outfits to acquire weapons. With a lack

of sufficient government funds, mining concessions were granted in exchange for arms

through the firm Sandline International based out of Britain and founded by a former

British military officer.[94] The firm was the military advisory wing of the Branch Group,

also the parent company of Executive Outcomes.[95] This association led critics to call

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[93] Ibid., 116.
[94] Kampfner, John. <u>Blair's War.</u> (London: The Free Press, 2003), 66-7.
[95] Howe, 322.

Sandline a mercenary outfit. The Branch Group agreed to provide Kabbah with weapons and military expertise for the CDF in exchange for those diamond mining concessions.[96]

What brought world media attention to the situation was Sandline's relationship with the British government. Britain had written and sponsored UN Security Council Resolution 1132 in October of 1997 which called for an arms embargo for Sierra Leone. The wording on the resolution did not designate the embargo only to the RUF, but the verbiage left it open so that it may be interpreted to extend the moratorium to Kabbah's government.[97] The resolution stated:

> Decides that all States shall prevent the sale or supply to Sierra Leone, by their nationals or from their territories, or using their flag vessels or aircraft, of petroleum and petroleum products and arms and related materiel of all types, including weapons and ammunition, military vehicles and equipment, paramilitary equipment and spare parts for the aforementioned, whether or not originating in their territory;[98]

Later terms in the resolution only allowed the legitimate government of Sierra Leone petroleum imports when approved on a case-by-case basis. The news frenzy began in February 1998 when ECOMOG troops in Lungi seized a shipment of 58 tons of small arms from Bulgaria supposedly destined to supply Kabbah's CDF.[99]

Following Kabbah's exile to Conakry, he allegedly used his close relationship with friend and ally, Peter Penfold the British High Commissioner to Sierra, to contact Lieutenant-Colonel Tim Spicer, founder of Sandline. Spicer later claimed he had notified the Foreign Commonwealth Office (FCO) of his agreement with Kabbah and plans to import weapons to Sierra Leone. The issue with Sandline and Blair's government broke

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[96] Gberie, 115.
[97] Kampfner, 66-7.
[98] United Nations Security Council Resolution 1132. www.un.org
[99] Gberie, 115.

headlines when the British government opened an investigation on Sandline for violating the resolution. British Foreign Secretary Robin Cook denied that he had any previous knowledge of the weapons shipments, but the damage had been done. The media took the news and turned it into a headline scandal in Britain lasting several weeks. Blair's government took an onslaught of public criticism over the issue. It appeared that Britain had tacitly supported the violation of its own resolution.[100]

In the wake of the incident, a government inquiry found that the breakdown had been the fault of the FCO in the communication between the Africa Department and the High Commissioner. The issue became a sticking point between Cook and Blair. Blair supported the finding of the inquiry while Cook and his staff were furious that Blair was criticizing FCO personnel for doing their jobs. Blair publicly expressed that he believed that Britain was doing the right thing by supporting Kabbah and his government. To him, "this was a case of the Foreign Office being too absorbed in detail and failing to see the moral picture."[101]

The Sandline affair was a turning point in British involvement in Sierra Leone's war. Until that time, most of its involvement had been diplomatic. This was the first time that the Blair's government was directly linked, albeit through a third party, to military operations in the war.

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[100] Kampfner, 67-68.
[101] Ibid.

Operation No Living Thing

During the February 1998 ECOMOG offensive, AFRC and RUF leaders fled,

including Koroma and Sankoh. In October of 1998, Sankoh was captured by Nigerian

officials while allegedly trying to acquire arms in Nigeria. Although it appeared that the

RUF was nearly defeated, the tide was about to change yet again. The catalyst this time

was the act of the Nigerian government sending Sankoh back to Freetown to be put on

trial for treason, ending with his sentencing a month later to death by hanging.

In response, the RUF launched an offensive with coordinated assaults to take

back the diamond regions, where it was alleged that ECOMOG soldiers had been

conducting illegal mining of their own. The RUF eventually took back 70% of the

countryside and advanced on the capital.

The offensive culminated with the storming of Freetown, "Operation No Living

Thing" in January 1999. By then, Nigeria had 15,000 ECOMOG troops supported by

artillery, tanks, and air assets in Sierra Leone. Reinforced with Liberian rebels and

mercenaries from Burkina Fasso, the RUF clandestinely prepositioned themselves in

Freetown to launch the attack from within. Raids were conducted in areas outside of the

city to panic the civilians and cause them to flee into Freetown. The rebels disguised

themselves and snuck past Nigerian defenses into the city with the flow of refugees

seeking protection.[102]

The battle raged in Freetown for three weeks resulting in some 6,000 civilians

killed, thousands of homes destroyed, and an additional 100,000 people displaced by the

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[102] Gberie, 125.

fighting. A coordinated effort between the Nigerians and CDF beat back the RUF street

by street, resulting in an estimated 700 Nigerian soldiers killed.[103]

<u>Lomé and the United Nations</u>

Although the RUF withdrew from Freetown, the offensive had allowed the RUF

to take back its power base in the diamond districts. This gave Sankoh the bargaining

leverage he needed. Sankoh was allowed to travel to Lomé, Togo in 1999 to enter into

new peace negotiations with Kabbah. In what would become the Lomé Agreement, the

RUF agreed to disarm and demobilize as well as allow a sizeable UN peacekeeping force

into the country. In return, Sankoh would become Vice-President of Sierra Leone head of

the Strategic Materials Resource Commission. The latter appointment gave him *de facto*

control over the country's diamond mines. Both the RUF and CDF (the government

acting as its spokesman) agreed to a disarmament, demobilization, and rehabilitation

(DDR) campaign to be overseen by the UN. Despite the agreement, little progress was

made on the ground disarming each side.

Operation No Living Thing and Lomé were major victories for Sankoh and the

RUF. He was released from prison, he and his fighters were granted amnesty for crimes

committed during the war, he still controlled the diamonds, and now he was legitimized

as a leader in the government. The signing of the agreement also made the RUF appear as

a true player in world politics. In an uninformed gesture of support, Jesse Jackson, sent to

Sierra Leone as President Clinton's Special Envoy, compared Sankoh to Mandela as a

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[103] Ibid., 130-132. Also Meredith, 570.

"freedom fighter" and actually had President Clinton personally call to congratulate

Sankoh on the treaty.[104]

Prior to the Lomé Agreement, the United Nations Security Council had passed

Resolution 1181 in 1998 granting a mandate for the United Nations Observer Mission in

Sierra Leone (UNOMSIL), allowing a contingent of 70 military observers to monitor the

disarmament of all sides for a period of six months.[105] UNOMSIL was largely

ineffective. The UN and ECOMOG later agreed to support Lomé in October 1999 with

UN Security Council Resolution 1270 replacing UNOMSIL with the United Nations

Mission in Sierra Leone (UNAMSIL). Its mandate authorized a troop strength of 6,000 to

be comprised of 3,000 Nigerians, 2,000 Indians, and 1,000 Guineans. The force was also

to be joined by Kenyan troops and 15 British unarmed military observers.[106]

UNAMSIL in Crisis

The peace from Lomé was short lived. In December 1999, violence resurged with

attacks against UNAMSIL troops and RUF infighting. Forces in the RUF loyal to Sam

Brokerie, leader of a breakaway faction, engaged RUF troops loyal to Sankoh. Brokerie

had denounced Lomé and proclaimed that he would fight to the end.[107]

In the midst of the accelerating violence at the end of 1999, Nigeria announced

the withdrawal of most of its ECOMOG forces to meet its troop commitment to

UNAMSIL. As the Nigerians withdrew, the RUF furthered its attacks against UNAMSIL.

The situation went into a tailspin for UNAMSIL in April and May of 2000. The actions

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[104] Gberie, 158.
[105] United Nations. www.un.org
[106] Gberie, 162.
[107] Ibid.

in those few short weeks would finally prompt UN Secretary General Kofi Annan to ask for help and led to Britain launching a series of military operations to bolster UNAMSIL.

The April/May crisis began on 28 April with a scuffle between troops from ECOMOG's NiBatt-35 and some AFRC soldiers on the streets in Freetown. The AFRC troops were in possession of a stolen Nigerian vehicle which the NiBatt troops attempted to apprehend and resulted in a fight leaving one AFRC soldier dead. Protests and bad press for ECOMOG and UNAMSIL quickly ensued. Two days later, a Nigerian sergeant was seriously injured when NiBatt-2 troops deployed to deal with roadside robberies by ex-ARFC soldiers, were captured by those rebels. On May 2, the final ECOMOG troops not assimilated into UNAMSIL departed Sierra Leone. While ECOMOG withdrew, the RUF used the chaos and disorganization of the peacekeepers to launch an offensive against UNAMSIL.[108]

The day before ECOMOG officially departed, the RUF launched attacks against two interior DDR camps at Magburaka and Makeni. Magburaka was the sight of a previous encounter between UNAMSIL troops from KenBatt and the RUF in April. The May 1st offensive captured seven UNAMSIL personnel and resulted with the RUF destroying the two DDR camps. The situation quickly worsened over the following days when UNAMSIL engaged with the RUF in Makeni, followed by the RUF attack and capture of 30 UNAMSIL personnel and a UNAMSIL helicopter further east in Kailahun. Further engagements left Kenyans dead in Makeni, prompting UNAMSIL to send the

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[108] Olonisakin, iFunmi. Peacekeeping in Sierra Leone: The Story of UNAMSIL. (Boulder: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2008), 54.

newly arrived Zambian unity to reinforce the town.[109] Another 21 UN peacekeepers were captured in other skirmishes on May 3.

The most shocking attack on UN personnel and the action that prompted the launch of Operation Palliser was the ambush and capture of 208 Zambian UN troops and their 25 Armored Personnel Carriers (APCs) on May 5, 2000. The Zambians were sent to Makeni in force where the RUF held UNAMSIL prisoners. The Zambians had just recently arrived in theater following the February Security Council Resolution to increase UNAMSIL's presence from 6,000 to 11,000. The Zambian column was ambushed by the RUF as they maneuvered on a narrow winding road through dense rainforest. The column was unable to spread out in the surrounding jungle to take advantage of its firepower and numerical superiority to engage with the rebels. The 25 APCs effectively became one when only the lead vehicle could fire. The armored column was also plagued by poor communications between the vehicles and was unable to reverse course or turn around to break through a road block the rebels erected behind the column. Essentially, the Zambians were trapped and resorted to surrender allowing their weapons and APCs to fall into RUF hands. The capture of the Zambians along with all of the other April and May engagements left the RUF in control of 498 UNAMSIL peacekeepers and their equipment. Of the mandated 11,000 UNAMSIL troops, less than 9,000 were on the ground in Sierra Leone leaving it understaffed for the operations it had attempted.[110]

While UNAMSIL troops attempted to conduct their disarmament campaigns, Sankoh failed to fully stand by his commitments in Lomé by notoriously telling his fighters to disarm and not to disarm within the same radio address using two different

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[109] Ibid., 57-58.
[110] Gberie, 166.

languages (English and Temne/Mende respectively).[111] Kenyan blue helmets were attacked and disarmed and seized, while 500 AK-47s and tons of ammunition captured from Guinean peacekeepers. They stripped down UNAMSIL troops and used their weapons and uniforms to lure and ambush other UN troops.[112]

UNAMSIL's Indian Commander, Major-General Vijay Jetley later described the ineffectiveness of UNAMSIL troops in engagements with the RUF at the end of 1999 through early 2000:

> Most units under my command…..had not been properly briefed about their mandate…[and did not] have the mental aptitude or will to fight the rebels when the situation so demanded, and resorted to handing over their arms on the slightest danger to their life. This aspect enabled the rebels to gain a moral ascendancy and thereby emboldened them to take on the UN.[113]

Critics would later attack Resolution 1270, accusing its mandate of being weak. It did authorize action under Chapter VII to protect troops and civilians, but it appeared that the troops and leadership of UNAMSIL did not take decisive action when threatened.

The UN did provide documentation spelling out rules of engagement and describing use of force under the mandate to troop contributing countries. Later some countries like Nigeria claimed that it interpreted its role as a Chapter VI peacekeeping contingent, rather than one with more options for use of force.[114]

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[111] Ibid., 164.
[112] Ibid., 162, 163, 166.
[113] Ibid., 164.
[114] Olonisakin, 62-63.

CHAPTER V

BRITISH INTERVENTION

Operation Palliser

In May 2000, the British responded to the security concerns in Freetown and the struggles of UNAMSIL. The RUF was once again advancing on Freetown, taking advantage of the momentum it achieved from victories in clashes with UNAMSIL. The British response was Operation Palliser which started as a rescue and evacuation mission, but resulted in a broader mission to bolster UNAMSIL and provide calm in Sierra Leone. Palliser would become the largest deployment of British forces in nearly two decades since the Falklands War. The British demonstrated its new rapid reactionary force capabilities by deploying a spearhead battalion quickly followed by a Royal Navy task force with Royal Marines to relieve the initial insertion forces. The British military presence brought about an immediate change to the situation on the ground. British troops remained largely in security and training capacities, but the intervention of a major military power provided the needed catalyst to create a pause in the fighting.

In the first few days in May, as UNAMSIL lost its grip on the security situation in Sierra Leone and the RUF threatened to completely derail the DDR process, UN Secretary General Kofi Annan requested troops from France, the USA, and Britain to bolster UNAMSIL in Sierra Leone. These three countries possessed the rapid reaction capabilities to place boots on the ground at short notice to prevent a backslide into all-out

war. All three countries initially declined. Placing combat troops into an African civil war less than a decade after "Black Hawk Down" and Rwanda was a delicate subject for the Western powers. France and the US viewed Sierra Leone as a country with more political and historical ties to the British, a position with which British Foreign Secretary Robin Cook and the FCO agreed.[115] Defense Secretary Hoon and Cook convinced Blair to send in troops to Sierra Leone. They decided to evacuate British citizens and EU nationals from Freetown, but there wasn't a clear understanding of the mission's scope once the evacuation mission had been completed.[116]

On May 5, 2000, the same day as the of the Zambian column's ambush and capture, Cook announced a partial agreement to Annan's pleas in that Britain "would only provide technical and logistical support for the UN."[117] On the same day, the Ministry of Defence (MoD) initiated the deployment of its rapid reactionary forces to Sierra Leone. Brigadier David Richards, the Joint Task Force Headquarters (JTFHQ) commander was ordered to deploy in order to evacuate British, Commonwealth and EU nationals from Sierra Leone. This task had previously been practiced in Sierra Leone in December 1998 and twice in 1999 by British forces as part of JTFHQ's evacuation exercises for the world's hot-spots.[118]

Richard's first steps were to send an Operational Liaison and Reconnaissance Team (OLRT) to Sierra Leone and request the deployment of the "lead company of the spearhead land element," along with four Chinooks to provide the helicopter support required for an evacuation mission. Within eight hours, the OLRT's eight officers were

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[115] Coates, David and Joel Krieger. Blair's War. (Malden, MA: Polity Press, 2004),18.
[116] Kampfner, 70.
[117] Connaughton, "Mechanics", 83.
[118] Connaughton. "Mechanics", 84. Also, Connaughton, Richard M. "Organizing British Joint Rapid Reaction Forces." JFQ: Joint Force Quarterly. (Autumn 2000, Issue 26), 92.

flying to Sierra Leone, arriving midday May 6 at Lungi airport outside Freetown. The OLRT is a small team under the command of the JTFHQ commander which can be deployed to a hot spot within 24 hours, containing officers from any desired branch or area of expertise, who can advise head government and diplomatic personnel in the desired country. The OLRT's advisory role is intended to prepare for the incoming rapid reactionary force. [119]

On the evening of May 7, six hundred paratroopers or "paras" from the 1st Battalion Parachute Regiment and the Chinook helicopters arrived at Lungi airport acting as the spearhead of the joint rapid reactionary force. Only 36 hours earlier, the paras had been stationed at Aldershot, UK and the Chinooks arrived less than 30 hours after requested deployment.[120] Immediately the paras secured the airport and the surrounding vicinity.

Also on May 7, the Royal Navy's Amphibious Ready Group (ARG) was ordered to sail to Sierra Leone. The ARG was centered around the helicopter carrier *HMS Ocean*, supported by Type-22 frigate *HMS Chatham*, a resupply ship, and two Royal Fleet Auxiliary (RFA) landing ships. The ARG was anchored in Marseilles on its annual six month deployment in the Mediterranean. It immediately set sail towards Sierra Leone via Gibraltar. On board *HMS Ocean* were 600 of the 42 Royal Marine (RM) Commando Group with heavier weapons than the paras securing Lungi. Ten helicopters complimented the Royal Marines on *HMS Ocean*: four RM Sea Kings, two RM Lynx gunships, two RM Gazelles, and two RAF Chinooks. [121]

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[119] Connaughton, "Organizing", 91, 93.
[120] Kampfner, 70. Also Connaughton, "Organizing", 87, 93.
[121] Connaughton, "Mechanics", 85.

To provide close air support to the paras and the ARG, the aircraft carrier *HMS Illustrious* and its accompanying RFA ship were ordered to make the four day sail from its position off Lisbon to Sierra Leone. The *Illustrious* brought with it seven Sea Harrier and six RAF GR7 aircraft.[122]

That same day on May 7, a crowd of some 30,000 protesters demonstrated outside of Sankoh's home in Freetown. The crowd was calling for the release of UNAMSIL personnel held captive by the RUF. UNAMSIL troops guarding the house had trouble containing the crowd and the situation quickly deteriorated. Sankoh's bodyguards opened fire into the crowd killing twenty-one people and wounding many more. Sankoh managed to escape in the chaos by jumping over the home's back wall dressed as a woman. He would be captured from a hide-out 10 days later on May 17 by pro-government troops. He was beaten and paraded naked through the streets in Freetown before being turned over to the government to be put on trial. The British provided the helicopters for Sankoh's transportation following his arrest.[123]

On May 8 less than a day after their arrival, the paras, "which included strong special forces elements, began to dominate its tactical area of responsibility."[124] The evacuation of foreign nationals commenced from the secured Lungi airport. In the following 48 hours, 299 expatriates were evacuated by the British. Between the paras on the ground and the ARG steaming towards Sierra Leone, calm was reported to have fallen around Freetown and the numbers of evacuees dwindled. [125]

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[122] Ibid. Also Connaughton, "Organizing", 93.
[123] Meredith, 571.
[124] Connaughton, "Organizing", 93.
[125] Connaughton, "Mechanics", 85.

As the evacuation commenced, the London media questioned the role of British involvement. In a statement to the press on May 9, Foreign Secretary Cook stated "we are not going to commit British troops as combat troops as part of the UN force. They were sent in to supervise the evacuation and make sure that British nationals can leave safely. By their very presence, they also do secure the airport and make a real contribution to the UN force which is still building up and now has a secure bridgehead to do so." He followed the statement by expressing that he and Defence Secretary Hoon "would evaluate the troops' position on a 'day-to-day' basis and had no fixed timetable for their presence in Sierra Leone."[126]

Although the British were not to officially have a combat role, reporters spotted jeeploads of heavily armed British soldiers who objected to their pictures being taken. Upon questioning as to their unit's identity, one such soldier responded to the reporter that they were the "Hereford walking club," a reference to the home base of the Special Air Service (SAS).[127] It was later reported that the SAS were running operations well beyond Freetown.

With Palliser fully underway, Brigadier Richards transitioned the OLRT in Freetown into the JTFHQ. British officers integrated themselves into UNAMSIL's leadership structure and provided expertise, guidance, and planning to the struggling UN mission.

Between May 5 and May 11, the RUF advanced westward to within 25 miles of Freetown. RUF soldiers were using weapons and equipment captured from UNAMSIL as well as weapons they reacquired from DDR camps. Along the main roads to Freetown,

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[126] Tran, Mark, "No combat role for British troops, Cook says," *Guardian*, (9 May 2000).

[127] McGreal, Chris. "Get Back and Fight. Don't Run Away". *The Guardian.* www.guardianunlimited.co.uk. (12 May 2000).

the RUF attacked civilians and UNAMSIL forces. Even with the 1st Parachute Battalion

in Lungi, the UN and many in Freetown feared another RUF raid on the city reminiscent

of Operation No Living Thing. With the evacuation mission essentially complete, Blair

was faced with the issue that a pull-out of British forces could result in the total collapse

of UNAMSIL and destruction of Kabbah's government. The decision was made to

protect the airport, perform "protective operations", and provide aid to UNAMSIL. When

the order came from London, Richards had already initiated those actions as a response to

the conditions on the ground. [128]

With the British in control of the Lungi and having spread into protective

positions in Western parts of Freetown, UNAMSIL forces were able to redeploy to

Eastern parts of the city facing the impending RUF attack. The ARG and paras on the

ground provided logistical aid and "backbone", as one British officer stated to the media,

to help UNAMSIL and SLA units dig-in for the coming RUF attack. Later reports had the

British digging in beside UNAMSIL positions and preparing perimeter defenses.[129]

The British put the weight of their forces in Sierra Leone behind UNAMSIL.

With the arrival of the Royal Navy's ARG off the coast of Freetown on May 13, the

British had additional assets to bolster UNAMSIL. The Royal Marines of 42 Commando

did not move on shore to relieve the paratroopers until May 26. British helicopters

provided logistical aid to UNAMSIL, transporting troops, weapons, and supplies to

needed positions. British air assets began flying reconnaissance missions. SAS units were

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[128] Connaughton, "Organizing", 93.

[129] The Guardian. "Panic Usurps Peace As Rebels Close In." *The Guardian* . (11 May 2000). *See also,* MacAskill, Ewen and Norton-Taylor, Richard. "UN Sees British Forces As Only Hope." *The Guardian.* (12 May, 2000).

deployed to the countryside to gather intelligence on the RUF.[130] Harriers conducted low-level fly-bys over Freetown, throughout the countryside, and RUF positions as a show of force.[131] The naval group also conducted a number of off-shore fire power demonstrations. The aerial and naval displays were intended to show the "over-the-horizon" capabilities of the ARG.[132]

When questioned by the media about the obvious shift in stance by the British forces in Sierra Leone, Foreign Secretary Cook maintained that the mission was still only to secure the evacuation of British nationals and British military forces would not join UNAMSIL in a combat role. However, he did add that the British would aid UNAMSIL in any way it could and he outwardly warned the RUF with an ominous statement:

> If our troops are attacked, they will fight back, I don't want the rebels to be under any misunderstanding about that. They [the rebels] would be very wise not to attempt anything that posed any form of threat to our forces. When I say they will not be combat troops, I don't want any misunderstanding by the rebels that these people cannot hit back and cannot hit back hard if they are attacked, and that should be fully understood by the rebels. [133]

In one altercation, RUF forces launched a night attack against a British Pathfinder Platoon from the 1st Parachute Brigade outside of Lungi. In the ensuing exchange, twenty rebels were killed without a single British casualty. Cook's statement held true. They were not afraid to use the firepower at hand if instigated, a major change from RUF encounters with UNAMSIL.[134]

As the operation commenced, Blair came under criticism at home. The deployment was not popular with the public and the press chided the decision on the

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[130] Ibid.
[131] Keen, 273.
[132] Olonisakin, 63-64.
[133] MacAskill and Norton-Taylor.
[134] Gberie, 173.

grounds that the British were overextended militarily with concurrent ongoing deployments in Northern Ireland, Bosnia, and Kosovo. When the mission changed from simple evacuation to a support role for UNAMSIL, the public feared another "Black Hawk Down" type involvement in an African civil war and the media criticized Blair's with terms like "mission creep" and "overstretch" to describe the decision to bolster UNAMSIL positions.[135]

Major Johnny Koroma, now "apparently reformed" called on his former AFRC and the CDF to fight back the RUF. Richards, now also "quietly overseeing command" of UNMASIL, the SLA, CDF, and Koroma's ex-AFRC fighters, helped make the strategic and tactical plans as well as provided logistical support for an offensive to push back the RUF. The combined pro-government forces launched the attacks while the UN held key positions and followed to occupy captured territory. The offensive was under the command and supported by the British.[136]

The timing of Sankoh's arrest coincided with the successes of the offensive to push back the RUF. The previous perils of UNAMSIL appeared to have shifted with the British intervention. With the situation on the ground stabilizing and evacuation mission complete, the 1st Parachute Battalion was relieved by 42 Commando on May 26. Over the next several weeks, Richards faced the reality that with Palliser nearing completion, withdrawal of all British forces could again create a power vacuum and destabilize the improving conditions in Sierra Leone. He committed some of his forces to initiate a training program to prepare and discipline three battalions for the new SLA. This

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[135] Kampfner, 70.
[136] Chris McGreal, Richard Norton-Taylor and Ewen MacAskill. "Britain takes war to Sierra Leone rebels." *The Guardian.* (13 May, 2000).

program would be followed by the long term International Military Advisory and Training Teams (IMATTs) to build a capable SLA.[137]

The Royal Marines maintained their presence in and around Freetown until the official end of Operation Palliser on June 15, 2000. The end of Palliser resulted in withdrawal of the majority of fighting forces on the ground, but the British maintained a presence in Sierra Leone to continue its direct support UNAMSIL and build on the gains achieved by Palliser. A standby force of 200 Royal Marines remained off-shore and an instruction team of 90 continued the training program for the SLA. The British Joint Headquarters in Freetown became a permanent establishment in Freetown, operating outside of, but in close conjunction with UNAMSIL's command structure. It remained in Sierra Leone during the tenure of the British involvement.

<div align="center">Operation Basilica and the Continuing IMATT – Sierra Leone</div>

With the immediate security needs addressed and evacuations of Palliser completed, Brigadier Richards began transitioning the British military presence in Sierra Leone to an on-going security and training role. This mission was formalized with the creation of Operation Basilica in the summer of 2000. Brigadier Jonathon Riley was appointed commander soon after its establishment. Basilica was intended to create a more lasting stabilization effort in Sierra Leone to continue on the gains from Palliser. It "put in place a British one-star officer with a small staff as Military Adviser to the

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[137] Connaughton, "Mechanics", 85.

Government of Sierra Leone, a team of advisers and trainers, plus an infantry battalion, tasked with restructuring Sierra Leone's Army from top to bottom."[138]

The center of Basilica was its International Military Advisory Training Team – Sierra Leone (IMATT-SL, or IMATT). The IMATT program was a British Military Advisory Training Team (BMATT) created originally as bilateral programs between British and African militaries, beginning in Ghana in 1976, Zimbabwe in 1980, and South Africa in 1994 to train the armed forces in those countries. The BMATTs evolved to support peace-keeping related programs with the creation of BMATT-Kenya and IMATT-Sierra Leone. BMATT-Ghana was integrated with the Ghanaian Armed Forces Command and Staff College and became BMATT-West Africa, the regional center for training officers from West African nations. BMATTs draw on resources from the MoD, the FCO, Department for International Development (DFID).[139]

IMATT had two approaches: short term and long term. First, was the establishment of short-term training teams (STTTS) to teach basic infantry skills to the SLA. This was intended to place competent SLA soldiers quickly in the field. In July, a battalion from the 16 Air Assault Brigade of the Royal Irish Regiment set up jungle warfare training camps in the forest 15 miles outside Freetown. Half of the battalion was devoted to training while the other half conducted force protection exercises including

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[138] Riley, Jonathon Major-General. "The UK in Sierra Leone: a post-conflict operation success?" Major General Jonathon P. Riley, Senior British Military Adviser to U.S. Central Command. From his speech at *"Interagency Operations: Cultural Conflicts Past and Present, Future Perspectives*," a conference co-sponsored by the Strategic Studies Institute of the United States Army War College, the Ministère de la Défense, the Royal United Services Institute, the Association of the United States Army, the Förderkreis Deutsches Heer, the Heritage Foundation, and the United States Embassy Paris; held at the Sciences Po Center of History, Paris, France, 15 June 2006. Posted on the Heritage Foundation's website. http://www.heritage.org/Research/Africa/hl958.cfm

[139] Francis et al., 112.

vehicle and foot patrols through the surrounding jungle. The jungle training camps were rudimentary training centers, in the words of a British soldier, "the camp was basic and not unlike anything from a Vietnam War film, fox holes, perimeter wire, mortar pits etc, we even had to cut the palm trees down with chain saws to clear fields of fire for the 81mm mortars to fire."[140] In the first several months the STTTS trained 2,500 SLA troops to be put directly into the field to engage with the RUF and occupy former RUF territory.

For its long-term approach, IMATT focused on a 'train the trainer' methodology for SLA officers in order to create a competent officer corps and the training would affect more soldiers as the SLA officers moved into training roles.[141] By mid-2001, IBATT had trained 8,000 SLA troops and officers. After the official end of the war in late 2000, the British maintained a force of several hundred over the following years, with a team of training advisors and a token protection force. British advisors were reported to have deployed with Sierra Leone security forces leading up to the 2002 elections. The British army today still maintains the IMATT in Sierra Leone with plans to eventually draw down as the competency of the SLA increases over time.[142]

In addition to the bottom-up training aspect of the mission, Basilica also sought to rebuild the SLA's infrastructure, take command of pro-government fighting units advancing on the RUF, and ensuring that UNAMSIL did not fail. Brigadier Riley was tasked with this mission and given the assets and authority to do so:

> I was, simultaneously, Commander British Forces West Africa with about 1,000 British troops ashore on any given day; Commander Military Advisory and Training Team; Military Adviser to the Government of Sierra Leone, with a seat

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[140] Prichard (RSM), "Sierra Leone – 2000." *The Royal Irish Regiment Homepage.* www2.army.mod.uk/royalirish/operations/op_basilica/index.htm

[141] Francis et al., 113.

[142] British Army Website. "Overseas Deployments." http://www.army.mod.uk/operations-deployments/overseas-deployments/932.aspx

on the national security council, responsible for coordinating the military effort to support government objectives; and Commander Joint Task Force, the over-the-horizon reaction force of an embarked brigade, with supporting aviation, naval, and air firepower. I was also the *de facto* commander of the 14,000 strong Sierra Leone Army and its small air force and coastal navy. Quite a brief for a brigadier.[143]

As Riley pointed out, rebuilding the SLA as an "accountable instrument of democratic power was both an important part of nation-building, and one of the means by which the RUF would be defeated." The public distrust for the SLA still existed from the years of corruption, abuses, and coups. The image of the army had to be rebuilt and trust reestablished with the population. As part of Basilica, the infrastructure was rebuilt with special attention paid to solving equipment shortages, command structure, logistics, and human resources. The British saw a self-sufficient legitimate military in Sierra Leone as a key to the long-term viability of its democratic government.[144]

<div align="center">Operation Khukri</div>

In June of 2000, the British forces in Sierra Leone aided in the Indian led Operation Khukri to rescue the 223 men in two Indian companies of the 5 and 8 Gorkha Rifles (5/8 GR) who had been surrounded by RUF forces in the hostile eastern town of Kailahun for two months. Operation Khukri was a successful offensive action against the RUF in territory which had been within its zone of control for the greater part of 10 years. Although the vast majority of Khukri was executed by Indian UNAMSIL forces, the British offered planning and leadership resources, lent air support of Chinook helicopters a RAF C-130, and operators from SAS D Squadron took part in the mission.[145]

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[143] Riley.
[144] Ibid.
[145] Raman, Anil (Maj.). "Operation Khukri: Joint Excellence." USI Journal. Vol CXXXII, Oct-Dec 2002.

The Indian 5/8 GR had been incorporated into UNAMSIL in December 1999 and by April of 2000 was deployed within RUF controlled eastern territory as part of the disarming and rebuilding efforts as designated by the Lomé Accords. Redesignated as INDBATT-1 under UNAMSIL, 5/8 GR battalions were stationed 400 kilometers from Freetown in the town of Daru minus two companies, while the remaining two companies were stationed in Kailahun. The chaos in early May 2000 in which the RUF captured the 500 Zambian and Kenyan UNAMSIL peacekeepers, their vehicles, and weapons also spilled over to Daru and Kailahun. The commanders of 5/8 GR forces in Kailahun were taken hostage by the RUF along with military observers from 13 other countries when they went to meet with RUF leaders about a future disarmament event. The RUF then surrounded and demanded the surrender of Indian troops in Kailahun. Another leadership group was sent from the Battalion headquarters in Daru to negotiate the release of the Kailahun hostages. This group was also subsequently detained by the RUF. The situation had deteriorated for INDBATT-1 and other UNAMSIL units isolated, under siege, or captured by the RUF.[146]

Initially, INBATT-1's Quick Reaction Company (QRC) composed of two rifle companies, a wheeled company, tracked mechanized infantry, and 9 Special Force, made a 180 kilometer push through RUF territory to link up with and extract the overrun Kenyan Battalion at Makeni. This action along with the British deployment near Freetown was believed to have contributed to the subsequent withdrawal of RUF forces

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515-531. www.usiofindia.org/article_oct_dec02_6.htm#. Major Anil Raman from 5/8 Gorkha Rifles was adjutant of the Battalion Group in UNAMSIL.
[146] Ibid.

in early May. The UNAMSIL hostages were released, but not the Indians, ten days later after negotiations, but the 5/8 GR in Kailahun were still isolated.

Operation Khukri was a breakout maneuver in which the Indian forces would take control of the road and towns, including the RUF Eastern Headquarters in Pendembu, linking Daru and Kailahun. Because the entire area of operation was behind RUF lines, the entirety of forces to compliment INDBATT-1 was airlifted into Daru and Kailahun on 13 and 14 of July. Over the next two days, British Chinooks aided in the deployment of forces and equipment, as well as the extraction of hostages from Kailahun. Over the following two days of 15 and 16 July, combined operations from Indian Aviation Unit Mi-8 and Mi-35 attack helicopters, INDBATT-1 units from both cities, INDBATT-2 (Indian 18 Grenadiers), Indian mechanized infantry, Company 2 Para of the Indian Special Forces, and 4 companies from UNAMSIL NIBATT and GHANBATT, and British SAS operators were able to take control of the road between Daru and Kaiilahun, evacuate 5/8 GR, and fought back RUF counter attacks and ambushes.[147]

The mission was successful in that it broke through RUF resistance in the area, took control of RUF strongholds, and proved that UNAMSIL could mount intricate, large-scale, offensive operations against battle hardened RUF in their own backyard. Major Anil Raman attributed the success of Operation Khukri to effective use and implementation of human intelligence (HUMINT), signal intelligence (SIGINT), understanding RUF operations, superiour sub-unit leadership, and effective planning and use of combined arms which included use of tactical close air support from helicopter gun ships. Khukri added a significant link in a chain of several powerful shows of force by intervening powers in the summer of 2000. It was a show by the UN, supported by the

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[147] Ibid.

British further demoralizing the RUF and demonstrating that offensive operations by the rebels would be met with overwhelming military force.

<div align="center">Operation Barras</div>

Operation Barras otherwise known as the Gun Fight at Rorkel Creek was a single military engagement between British forces and the West Side Boys. Though Barras was small on the scale of military operations, it proved to be a huge public relations victory in the press. Despite the West Side Boys not having formal ties to the RUF, the operation demonstrated the British government's resolve to use deadly force and its military capabilities against rebels at its discretion. They were not averse to combat or casualties if provoked by the rebels. It showed that the British could successfully fight in the rebels terrain using special operations warfare tactics.

On August 25, 2000, a force of West Side Boys captured a patrol of eleven men from the 1st Royal Irish Regiment and their three Land Rovers while on a strategic road in territory which had experienced recent hostile rebel activity.[148] The West Side Boys claimed allegiance to Johnny Koroma and his AFRC, which at that time was supposed to be loyal with Kabbah's government. They had not been written as a party into the Lomé Accords and were not considered a party to the agreement. They were therefore not eligible for DDR program benefits and because of the criminal elements in their membership, they were not allowed to be integrated into the SLA.[149] West Side Boys acted independently outside of the peace process.

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[148] The West Side Boys were not associated with the RUF, rather they were more of a street gang of young men who took advantage of the anarchy of Sierra Leone during the war through violent crime, thefts, and extortion at makeshift roadblocks and ambushes.

[149] Olonisakin, 99-100.

The captured members of the 1st Irish Regiment had been part of a force of 400 that London left in Sierra Leone as part of its IMATT training program. The hostage crisis closely followed an announcement by British Foreign Secretary Robin Cook that Britain would be drawing down its forces in country.[150] One week later, five of the eleven hostages were released after negotiations through Kabbah's government's ties to the rebels. They were requesting the release of some of their members and leaders being held in prison.

The hostages were held at a West Side Boys base in Occra Hills 80 kilometers east of Freetown. The force of 100-120 rebels was split among two camps on either side of the 300 meter wide river, bordered by mangrove swamps, mud flats, and dense jungles. British intelligence also believed another 200 rebels could be within the immediate vicinity. The terrain and rebel numbers added tactical complexity to the already difficult situation after the rebels announcement that the hostages would be killed at the first sound of helicopters and after they conducted "mock executions."[151]

Squadron D of the 22nd SAS and 150 paras from the 1st Battalion Parachute Regiment who had previously served in Operation Palliser that summer were assigned to the rescue mission. The mission's preparation began by quietly brining the paras into Freetown via Senegal and moving SAS recon into the bush to track the hostages and gather intelligence on the enemy.

The attack was a simultaneous maneuver to rescue the remaining hostages, retrieve the captured Land Rovers, and engage with the West Side Boys; a display to the

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[150] Burke, Jason and Walsh, Nick Paton. "Rebels Seize British Troops." *The Guardian*. www.guardian.co.uk. (27 August, 2000).

[151] McGreal, Chris. "After 16 Long Days, Free in 20 Minutes" *The Guardian*. www.guardian.co.uk. (11 September, 2000).

rebels that the capture of British soldiers was not taken lightly by the Blair government. The engagement opened with coordinated movements to prevent harm to the hostages if the rebels held true to their threats. Just after 6:00 am local time on September 10th, 2000, SAS operators moved from their observation positions in the jungle into the northern portion of the village on the north bank of the river, where the hostages were held. At the same time, frogmen from the Special Boat Service clandestinely moved into the same village from across the river into its south side.[152]

While these teams were maneuvering into positions to secure the prisoners, two Linx attack helicopters moved up the river to the two villages flying at high speed and low level in order to be on top of the rebel positions and engaging before the rebels were able to wake-up and mobilize. While the gun-ships engaged the rebel positions, the 150 paras were flown in on three Chinook helicopters and fast-roped into positions on both sides of the river to engage with the enemy and prevent reinforcements from entering into the fight. The paras were also equipped with mortar teams who also engaged with enemy positions.[153]

Within twenty minutes of its start, the hostages were safely on a helicopter flying back to Freetown. The gun battle in the villages and surrounding jungle continued for another ten hours. By the afternoon, the missing Land Rovers were secured to the Chinooks and airlifted out along with the British troops. The rebels put up unexpectedly stiff resistance to the raid. The British casualties amounted to one paratrooper killed and

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[152] Burke, Jason and Beaumont, Peter. "Close Call in the Battle of Rokel Creek." *The Observer*. www.guardian.co.uk. 17 September, 2000.
[153] Ibid.

eleven wounded. Twenty five of the West Side Boys were killed and another eighteen including their leader, "Brigadier" Foday Kallay were captured.[154]

Following Barras, there was a mixed response in the media to the operation. Supporters praised it as a success and a demonstration that the rebels were not safe even in their own territory from British firepower if they instigated hostilities. Detractors noted the high casualty rate[155] among British troops and criticized British command and the government for underestimating the West Side Boys as a fighting force. Despite the condemning remarks in the British media, it appeared that the message from Operation Barras was not missed by the rebels when several hundred of the West Side Boys following the operation, reported to become part of the demobilization process.[156] Barras was another clear demonstration by Blair's government that the British were committed to the continuation of the peace process and demobilization efforts by UNAMSIL.

Ending the Conflict

In response to the ineffectiveness of the UN forces to this time, the Security Council changed UNAMSIL's mandate and upped the troop presence another 6,000 soldiers. The peacekeeping contingent in Sierra Leone would eventually reach 17,500 to carry out UNAMSIL's mandate.[157] Also during this time, the Guinean government intervened by conducting raids and air strikes on RUF camps near the Guinean border. This further demoralized RUF forces.

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[154] McGreal, "After 16 Long Days, Free in 20 Minutes."
[155] In military terns, casualty rate refers to the combination of killed, wounded, captured, and missing in action. Although only one British soldier was killed in Operation Barras, it was the additional 11 wounded that was criticized.
[156] Olonisakin, 100.
[157] United Nations. www.un.org

The RUF began to splinter when Sankoh fell from power in 2000. In August 2000, with Sankoh in custody and the RUF in a leadership crisis, Issa Sesay was appointed as head of the movement. Sesay differed in his approach to the UN, initiating peace talks and eventually signed a ceasefire on November 10, 2000. The agreement between the government and the RUF maintained UNAMSIL to monitor the peace and continue to oversee the DDR program.

A little over a year later, the civil war was declared by Kabbah as officially over and the disarmament process complete on January 18, 2002. UNAMSIL stayed in Sierra Leone until 2005 to ensure a lasting peace and oversee nation building programs. At it's peak, UNAMSIL had over 17,500 troops in Sierra Leone at a cost of $700 million a year. Over 47,000 former combatants were disarmed and reintegrated into society through UN programs.[158] The RUF reformed into a political party, but received only 1.7% of the presidential vote and failed to win a parliamentary seat in the 2002 democratic election. UNAMSIL oversaw the mostly peaceful and fair elections where Kabbah won another presidential term. Sankoh later died while in custody in 2003. Brokerie and Koroma left Sierra Leone to escape justice. Brockerie was believed to have continued fighting with his troops in Liberia and Côte d'Ivoire but died in the process. Koroma was indicted, but his whereabouts remain unknown.

<div align="center">Operation Silkman</div>

The British continued to show a commitment to stability and security in Sierra Leone by mounting a large-scale amphibious assault exercise, Operation Silkman, on November 13, 2000. In the previous month the British troop strength in Sierra Leone was

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[158] Olonisakin, 111.

around 1000 as part of Operation Basilica. Silkman was the next step to maintain

Britain's show of force in Sierra Leone. It commenced three days after the November 10

ceasefire between the Sierra Leone government and the RUF, now under the control of

Issay Sassay. The operation included continued training for the SLA, but more

importantly included a major show of force to follow Palliser. Silkman, which lasted

through December 8, 2000, was a "controlled and understated display which,

undoubtedly proved Britain's ability to deploy troops rapidly" in Sierra Leone. Again like

Palliser, it provided a calming presence in the country and showed a lasting commitment

and presence of British firepower.[159]

     During Silkman, the Amphibious Ready Group exhibited its strength by rapidly

deploying 600 Royal Marines from 42 Commando and artillery assets throughout

Freetown and its surrounding area. Silkman also included artillery displays, air assault

demonstrations, and helicopter over flights throughout the capital's area and surrounding

countryside. Silkman was "a gentle reminder of Britain's resolve in supporting President

Kabbah and his government and sent a gentle reminder to the RUF that only a stable and

democratic Sierra Leone reached by peaceful means is the only acceptable outcome."[160]

     Silkman also coincided with an the announcement of an increase in UNAMSIL's

size, the replacement of Indian and Jordanian peacekeepers with two Bangladeshi

battalions, and the inclusion of British Brigadier Alastair Duncan as Chief of Staff to

UNAMSIL's new commander Gereral Opande. Duncan came with a reputation of

success from his command of British troops in Bosnia. The timing of Silkman also

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[159] United Kingdom Ministry of Defense Website. Defense images database. www.defenceimages.mod.uk.
Image 45110298. "Royal Navy has Role to Play Ashore in Sierra Leone." Navy News. 07 September 2001.
www.navynews.co.uk/articles/2001/0109/0001090701.asp
[160] United Kingdom Ministry of Defense Website. Defense images database. www.defenceimages.mod.uk.
Image 45110298

corresponded with British diplomatic pressure from the Foreign Commonwealth Office

and Ministry of Defense on Charles Taylor to cease his support for RUF's war. During

that same period, newly trained SLA units increasingly showed presence on the ground,

Guinean forces had seen success in counter RUF operations within its borders, and the

"Unholy Alliance" between Johnny Koroma and Kabbah's government continued to hold

together.[161] At a time when the peace process could have experienced relapse due to the

RUF's leadership crisis, Operation Silkman continued the progression that Palliser,

Barras, and Khukri had begun; Britain was committed to using its military power to

bolster UNAMSIL until the peace process could run its course.

Nation-building, Aid, and Long-Term Involvement

Britain's involvement in Sierra Leone went beyond rhetoric in the press, the series

of military actions, and IMATT teams. Blair's government used the breadth of its foreign

policy tools to help maintain peace and contribute to the nation-building process in Sierra

Leone. London bankrolled Kabbah's government through the Department for

International Development (DFID) following its initial victory, through its exile, and

through his reelection. They committed resources towards rebuilding civil society by

"embedding civil service advisers; running courses for Sierra Leone civil servants;

sending Sierra Leone civil servants and senior officers on courses at British universities

and defense institutions; and using Department for International Development funds for

selected projects like infrastructure, communications, and information technology."[162]

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[161] Prins, Gwyn. The Heart of War: On Power, conflict and obligation in the twenty-first century. (London: Rutledge, 2002), 208-209.
[162] Riley.

The DFID also funded community rehabilitation projects building small homes in previously war-ravaged areas. The British set up an anti-corruption unit in Freetown whose sole purpose was to expose corrupt practices of government officials. The British called on former colonial government officials to return to help rebuild the country. The former Colonial District Officer returned to lead a chieftaincy rehabilitation project in the countryside.[163]

In diplomatic circles, the British sponsored the UN Security Council resolution to increase UNAMSIL's mandate until it reached a troop strength of 17,500 to maintain the peace effectively and DDR programs through 2002. Through the UN, the British sponsored the establishment of a panel of experts whose recommendations led to the imposition of sanctions on Liberia, helping to cut funding to Taylor and the RUF.

In addition to the IMATT's support for rebuilding the SLA, the British also bankrolled and trained a new Sierra Leone Police force between 2001 and 2003. They provided uniforms, vehicles, and funding for increases in officers pay. The pay increases were seen as a necessity to help stop the cycle of corruption and increase officer effectiveness. SLA and police officer pay before 1991 had been almost nonexistent leading many to accept corrupt practices in order to survive. They also rebuilt the Sierra Leone Supreme Court. The Sierra Leone legal and police system had been modeled after the British systems left-over from the colonial era. This made the task of rebuilding each well suited for the British.[164]

In February 2001, a Franco-British summit was held in Cahors, France on the commitment to jointly work towards peace and security issue resolution in Africa

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[163] Gberie, 175-176.
[164] Ibid., 175-177.

focusing on conflict, natural resource-related wars, and arms trafficking.[165] From all of these actions, it is evident that the British understood that lasting peace and security required efforts beyond military intervention. Security and stability were necessary to allow the important civil and political changes to be made.

<p style="text-align:center">Operation Vela</p>

In the autumn of 2006, the Royal Navy conducted another show of force in Sierra Leone. Although the country had been at peace for nearly four years, Sierra Leone was chosen for the Royal Navy's amphibious assault exercises named Operation Vela. Vela was the largest amphibious exercise since 2001. It was divided into two exercises. The first, Exercise Grey Cormorant 06, was the preparation for deployment to Sierra Leone conducted off the coast of Britain in September. The second phase, Exercise Green Eagle 06, took place in Sierra Leone from October 11 until November 5, 2006. Green Eagle was intended to demonstrate the Royal Navy's ability to conduct assault operations in the challenging environment of equatorial rainforests.[166] The exercise included airborne and landing craft raids, as well as jungle training, support operations for IMATT, and activities to provide aid to civilians. In addition to the direct operations, the Royal Navy also saw Vela as a way, to give aid to a national security activity by "supporting the continuing efforts of the UK government to foster stability in the region. Maintaining and demonstrating this in the wider west and Sub-Saharan Africa region with Global Counter Terrorism and the Royal Navy's enduring Maritime Security Operations."[167]

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[165] Ibid.

[166] Defence News. "Sierra Leone deployment provides valuable lessons for Royal Navy Amphibious Task Group." British Ministry of Defence. www.mod.uk. (6 November 2006).

[167] Royal Navy News and Events. "Vela Deployment 2006." Royal Navy. www.royalnavy.mod.uk

Green Eagle included all elements of the Amphibious Task Group which included deployments from five Royal Navy ships, six Royal Fleet Auxiliary ships, a fleet submarine, Royal Navy air squadrons, several Royal Marine Commando and Royal Navy helicopter squadrons, diving units, Royal Marine Commandos, engineering, artillery, and assault units. Overall, Green Eagle deployed a force of 3000 personnel to Sierra Leone.[168]

During Green Eagle, Royal Marines conducted exercises on the beaches outside of Freetown and throughout the countryside. The exercises included amphibious assaults, heliborne assaults, artillery displays, and logistical movements of troops, supplies, and weaponry. These actions were not conducted solely in remote regions, but troop movements and weaponry were clearly visible to the population. Operation Vela, though a training exercise sent poignant messages to Sierra Leone. First, the British were committed to continue its military support and presence in the country. Also, with the ARG, Britain had the capability to still bring firepower in country quickly from an 'over-the-horizon' posture; almost a reminder to the population that Blair's government was still watching and could appear at any time if there were threats to country's peace. Vela was as much a psychological operation for Sierra Leone as it was a training exercise for the Royal Navy.

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[168] Ibid.

CHAPTER VI

ANALYSIS OF BRITISH ACTIONS

Failures of ECOMOG and UNAMSIL

Before launching into an analysis of the British actions in Sierra Leone, it's beneficial to first answer the question of if intervention was necessary. The international community had already helped Kabbah and Sankoh negotiate a treaty at Lomé. ECOMOG and the UN had military forces in Sierra Leone in 2000. With a familiarization of the events of April and May of 2000, the obvious answer is that the provisions of Lomé were in shambles and the international forces were unable to control the upswing in provocative offensive actions by the RUF. It is important to understand the deficiencies of UNAMSIL and ECOMOG to establish factors that led to the British success.

Although London was looking to support Kabbah, it would not provide aid to the logical recipient, ECOMOG. Britain refused to support the organization with Nigeria's dictator General Sani Abacha as its head. This position was a protest over his human rights violations.[169] The war had been an incredible burden on Nigeria and it was eager to withdraw and let other countries take some of the peacekeeping burden.

UNAMSIL's tribulations in the first half of 2000, as previously discussed, could partially be attributed to the weak mandate in Resolution 1270 and UNAMSIL's

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[169] Coates and Krieger, 19.

interpretation and understanding of that mandate and its role in theater. The mandate alone cannot be blamed for the failures of UNAMSIL. Poor troop strength, substandard troop preparation and resolve, weak planning and leadership, lack of chain of command, and deficiencies in proper logistical support all played a role in its plight. Had the RUF and other belligerent parties been truly committed to the provisions of Lomé, UNAMSIL most likely would not have struggled, but facing a still volatile environment and determine enemy, UNAMSIL's deficiencies quickly became self-destructive liabilities. Those capability gaps would later be filled with Britain's military presence.

The assumptions made by the international community about the RUF were tragically wrong. The RUF's actions demonstrated it had no plans to fully abide by Lomé. Despite some initial participation in DDR programs, the RUF's ranks remained heavily armed. As they attacked and captured UNAMSIL units, their access to heavy weaponry increased. Despite splintering in the RUF's leadership between Sankoh and Brockerie, its military structure and capabilities were very much in tact. The coordinated attacks and offensive operations in April and May of 2000 verified their military planning and operational capabilities. Most importantly, even following Lomé, the RUF controlled the bulk of the diamond mining areas which helped to maintain its funding and supply via Liberia. Attacks against UNAMSIL along the major control routes into the diamond-rich areas showed the RUF's reluctance to surrender its power base to the UN.[170]

UNAMSIL's original mandated troop strength of 6,000 peacekeepers was insufficient to conduct all DDR operations and provide enough force to create the needed calming affect among the population and intimidation for the rebels. This should have been evident from ECOMOG's previous struggles even when it had a contingency of

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[170] Olonisakin, 61.

15,000 in Sierra Leone. When ECOMOG drew down its forces in early 2000 without a sizeable UN replacing force present, a power vacuum formed in Sierra Leone. It wasn't until February 2000 with Resolution 1270 that UNAMSIL's troop strength was authorized to 11,100. The shortage of international peacekeepers worsened with each Nigerian unit's withdrawal.

With virtually no legitimate government army or police force, the job of conducting the DDR for the RUF, AFRC, CDF, and other groups like the West Side Boys fell completely on UNAMSIL. In order to maintain the tenuous peace following Lomé, Sierra Leone not only needed the DDR, but also required secure borders, legitimate forces in control of the diamond mining areas and the major supply routes, and protective forces around population centers so-as not to need the CDF for their protection. With 6,000 troops on the ground and reinforcements slowly arriving, UNAMSIL was undermanned for all of the needs on the ground regardless of the scope of its mandate.

UNAMSIL's troop strength was determined by the Security Council based upon the recommendations by the Secretariate's Department of Peacekeeping Operations. Their recommendations were not based on the requirements on the ground, rather by "an assessment of the financial and troop burdens that key member states and their domestic publics would accept."[171] IFunmi Olonisakin points out in his book about UNAMSIL that 6,000 troops was all that funding countries would accept for the burden of peacekeeping in Sierra Leone because the country was not a high priority in 1999 for the major powers, with the obvious exception of Britain.[172]

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[171] Ibid., 62.
[172] Ibid.

The troops on the ground suffered from lack of robust logistical support, planning, and command. UNAMSIL suffered from units taking orders directly from their home countries rather than following the established UN chain of command. This has always been a problem for international coalitions. Each state brings its own politics into the united operations, sometimes creating difficulties.[173] UNAMSIL's poor planning and preparation also contributed to the crisis in 2000. The leadership sent ill-equipped units to control the most contested areas of in hinterland. If UNAMSIL command truly understood the intricacies of the conflict, it would not have sent green units to the most contested areas without the training, offensive capabilities, and instructions to truly take Chapter VII offensive actions against the rebels. That so many UNAMSIL units surrendered is indicative that UNAMSIL lacked these required traits of a cohesive professional military unit tasked with such a large undertaking in a hostile of an environment.

<div align="center">Decision to Intervene: Blair's 'Ethical Foreign Policy'</div>

PDD-25 or Presidential Directive 25, published on May 5, 1994 by the Clinton Administration during the Rwandan crisis was a list of 16 criteria for policy makers to determine whether to intervene in a foreign country and support peacekeeping operations.[174] It was a signal that Western governments wanted a quantitative way to make the decision whether to commit forces for a humanitarian intervention. In the case of Sierra Leone, there is the question as to why was this a case where the British decided to commit its forces?

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[173] Ibid., 63.
[174] Kampfner, 63.

The answer to this starts with the leadership of Tony Blair, his perceptions, and values. The New Labor party under Blair shifted its foreign policy, giving much more attention to the developing world than the Major government had done. From the beginnings of his political career, Blair showed an affinity towards promoting change in Africa. His decision to take action in Sierra Leone can be traced to his so-called "ethical foreign policy" and even deeper to his personal values.

Blair was an outspoken advocate of basing his political decisions on his morals. This was a reoccurring theme throughout his career and helped shape his leadership style. Early on, he published a collection of essays *Reclaiming the Ground: Christianity and Socialism.* In it he revealed some perspectives that would later affect his decision to use military force on moral grounds.

> Christianity is a very tough religion…..It is judgmental. There is right and wrong. There is good and bad. We all know this, of course, but it has become fashionable to be uncomfortable with such language. But when we look at our world today and know how much needs to be done, we should not hesitate to make such judgments. And then follow them with determined action.[175]

His foreign policy decisions often reflected these convictions. Blair was adamant about taking on poverty and debt relief. He championed and economic reform program called the New Partnership for Africa's Development through the G8. He believed the West had a responsibility to "develop a doctrine of international community…..a community based on the equal worth of all, on the foundation of mutual rights and mutual responsibility."[176]

Two themes were evident in Blair's foreign policy, his 'ethical foreign policy' and the New Labor Party's so-called 'third way.' These two ideas pervaded his decisions

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[175] Ibid., 74.
[176] Ibid., 75.

and rhetoric during his tenure. The 'third way' was a term to describe left-center political approach. For Blair's foreign policy, it denoted an approach to bridge the gap between economic globalization and political democratization.[177] As Coates and Krieger described, "the Third Way is premised on the assumption that it is necessary to carve out a route between the extremes of indifference to the plight of others and a moral crusade to put the wrongs of the world to right."[178]

In his 'ethical foreign policy' he sought to take an internationalist's approach to the world's problems. He once said "we can no longer separate what we want to achieve within our borders from what we face across our borders."[179] Internationalism was a way he believed the United Kingdom could use its prosperity and abilities to be a positive influence on the world, especially in developing countries. To him, humanitarian crises were opportunities for the major powers to help the rest of the world. His cabinet shared a conviction towards internationalism. Blair said at the Economic Club of Chicago during the Kosovo crisis "non-interference has long been considered an important principle of international order…..the principle of non-interference must be qualified in important respects. Acts of genocide can never be a purely internal matter."[180] He was an outspoken advocate for the use of British power for humanitarian purposes.

> Britain has a national interest in the promotion of our values and confidence in our identity. That is why the fourth goal of our foreign policy is to secure the respect of other nations for Britain's contribution to keeping the peace of the world and promoting democracy around the world. The Labour Government does not accept that political values can be left behind when we check in our passports to travel on diplomatic business. Our foreign policy must have an ethical dimension and must support the demands of other peoples for the democratic

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[177] Coates and Krieger, 13.
[178] Ibid., 17.
[179] Ibid., 16.
[180] Ibid., 12.

rights on which we insist for ourselves. The Labour Government will put human rights at the heart of our foreign policy.[181]

As Coates and Krieger point out from this Blair speech to reporters in 1997, his new Labor Government would keep human rights as a focus of its foreign policy and that he "recognized that national interests cannot be defined only by narrow *realpolitik*.' The aim, he said, was to make Britain once again a force for good in the world."[182] Blair's Foreign Secretary Robin Cook echoed these same themes:

> We live in a modern world in which nation states are interdependent. In that modern world foreign policy is not divorced from domestic policy but a central part of any political programme. In order to achieve our goals for the people of Britain we need a foreign strategy that supports the same goals.[183]

Blair's Third Way and 'ethical foreign policy' was a manifestation of British pragmatism to take on the human rights issues in foreign policy. He integrated his moral beliefs into his decision-making. He didn't advocate sending the Royal Marines into every global hot spot where civilians were suffering, rather he used the Ministry of Defence as it should, as one tool of foreign policy to be applied when and where it could show the most effectiveness.

<u>Decision to Intervene: The Case of Sierra Leone</u>

Blair's commitment to support the peace process in Sierra Leone demonstrated Blair's dedication to change in Africa. The UK joined with NATO to provide humanitarian intervention in the former Yugoslavia, but Sierra Leone offered him an opportunity to back his rhetoric in the African context. This not to say that he would have

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[181] Ibid., 16.
[182] Ibid.
[183] Ibid.

thrown the Royal Marines into any conflict, rather the circumstances and timing of the

conflict gave him an appropriate chance to back his pledge for an 'ethical foreign policy.'

Blair did not follow the leftist dependency theory or "the idea that the continent

was underdeveloped due to the exploitative West…He took a more straightforward

approach. He would work to protect and help African leaders he regarded as

"modernizers" who wanted to clean up corruption, open up their economies and work

towards some form of democracy."[184] The FCO viewed Kabbah, following the 1996

elections, as this very type of "modernizer" for Africa. When Kabbah retreated to exile in

Guinea in 1997, Blair in a display of support for returning Kabbah to power, Blair invited

Kabbah as his guest to the Commonwealth conference in Edinburgh that October.[185]

Kabbah's government in exile was maintained by Britain and it spearheaded gathering

international support for him. A British funded a radio station in Sierra Leone was also

used to bolster support for Kabbah and his forces.[186]

Publicly, Operation Palliser began as solely a rescue mission for British and

foreign nationals in Freetown, but within Blair's cabinet the deliberations took a different

tone. Britain's colonial legacy played a definite role for Blair. The British also had the

backing of the international community, several UN resolutions, and the direct request for

assistance from Annan.[187] When the Americans and French refused Annan's calls for

help, Britain was left as the only major power with both historical ties and the military

capabilities to aid the floundering UNAMSIL. Blair, Hoon, and Cook all told the media

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[184] Kampfner, 65.
[185] Ibid., 66.
[186] Coates and Krieger, 18.
[187] Kampfner, 71.

that Britain would not become involved in the civil war[188] but Blair's inner meetings took

a different tone.

> Hoon, Cook, and Short advised Blair that the situation was volatile, that British
> troops could not stand by and watch atrocities take place. Someone had to keep
> order. "It would be disgraceful to pull them [the spearhead unit] out now," Short
> told Blair. His reply was succinct. 'Let them stay.' John Sawers, Blair's principle
> private secretary told a succession of ministerial meetings that the instruction
> from the Prime Minister was to 'go for the radical option.' Blair was confident
> that the cause outweighed the criticisms and dangers. [189]

Bilateral and multi-lateral interventions were too complex and un-timely for the

need to immediately bolster Freetown from the RUF advance. Palliser was also an

opportunity also to test of Britain's post-Cold War military capabilities.[190] The US and

NATO's militaries had spent the previous decade essentially retooling for the new face of

warfare following the fall of the Soviet Union. The combined arms doctrine developed

for the foreseen tank battles across Europe were replaced by rapid reactionary forces to

be deployed at short notice to hot spots around the world. This was the essence behind

the "glass of water" strategy described by Caughtenton. Light airmobile or amphibious

forces would be inserted quickly in-theater to act as the glass of water thrown on a small

fire to help stop its spread, allowing time for heavier forces to mobilize. Sierra Leone

offered the Ministry of Defence the opportunity to test these capabilities in a combat

situation, with the legitimization of the international community, and acting in the

interests of Blair's foreign policy. Following Palliser, Blair received accolades from the

Clinton administration that "you guys have got the rapid reaction with a reach which

nobody else has." Blair had shown the world that not only did the British possess the

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[188] Tran, Mark, "No combat role for British troops, Cook says," *Guardian*, (9 May 2000).
[189] Kampfner, 71.
[190] Ibid., 70.

capabilities to project force around the world, but it had the willingness and resolve to use it.[191]

The British had the capabilities to intervene, the conviction of its head of government, the historical ties to Sierra Leone, and the request for aid from the international community. There was the immediate need to address the problem of British citizens' lives at risk. Britain's reputation was also on the line after having been implicated in the support of Sandline's mercenary actions. Earlier in 2000, Britain had been criticized for its belated action in response to floods in Mozambique. These two recent events tarnished the credibility of Tony Blair's vision for Africa. Nigeria, also a former British colony and the regional power, had also become part of the problem in Sierra Leone. The final issue was that conditions on the ground suggested that although the RUF was on the offensive, the country was very close to a final peace. The UN had been requested by both parties and the RUF had begun disarming. The British enjoyed the support of the legitimate government and its civilian population. [192]

<center>UNAMSIL and British Tensions</center>

The arrival of the British made UNAMSIL appear completely ineffective. The UN force had been abused by the RUF and did not enjoy the respect of the public in Sierra Leonean. The British brought a clearly professional fighting force with the leadership, planning, intelligence, logistics, and firepower to command respect from the rebels. "The UK troops were treated like heroes who had come to clean-up UNAMSIL's

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[191] Ibid., 72.
[192] Connaughton, "Organizing", 92. Also, Connaughton, "Mechanics", 83.

mess."[193] For the public, there must have been a major juxtaposition between the patchwork of blue-helmets who were now chided in the Sierra Leone press as "U-NASTY" and "UNAMSILLY", against the professional appearance of the red berets of the 1st Parachute Battalion, ARG naval gun displays, helicopter and harrier flybys, and the menacing specter of SAS units. The press in London also played up the image of UNAMSIL as useless while the paras, Royal Navy, and Royal Marines received accolades as the cavalry saving the day.

The UN and British did not agree on the best way in which to deal with the RUF. There were several key issues where their perspectives differed. In each area, the British position made them appear more competent, a fact that offended many UN personnel. British leadership believed that offensive military pressure should have been applied against the rebels with UNAMSIL troops, new SLA battalions, and the remaining CDF. At UN headquarters, head of UNAMSIL, Oluyemi Adeniji argued in favor of reengaging in peace talks with the RUF to try to reinstitute the provisions of Lomé. This hurt UNAMSIL's perception among the population in Sierra Leone. To them, it appeared by trying to reinitiate Lomé, the UN viewed the RUF as equals with the democratically elected government of Kabbah.[194] The British took a more concrete stance backing Kabbah and opposing the RUF.

Officers in the SLA felt UNAMSIL underutilized the army. Though the SLA's numbers were not great, they still had a small contingent of loyal and competent troops with the capability to operate against the RUF. They had better knowledge of the culture and countryside and with improved training from the British, but UNAMSIL failed to

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[193] Olonisakin, 65.
[194] Ibid., 66-67.

fully utilize the SLA.[195] The IMATTs on the other hand demonstrated to the public that the British not only viewed the SLA as competent, but by investing in training the British believed the army could be a long-term stabilizing force. Otherwise, the Ministry of Defence would not have dedicated its resources to IMATTs.

With its large footprint, UNAMSIL was viewed as a bloated bureaucracy with little military punch. On the other hand, the IMATTs remaining in country after cessation of hostilities had a lean operating structure, but were viewed as extremely effective. The British intervention was a double edged sword for UNAMSIL. On one hand, the British had helped to prevent UNAMSIL's failure, but on the other, the professionalism and efficiency of the British forces hurt the UN's image.

<u>Short Term Factors</u>

The uniqueness of Operation Palliser was that the British were able to create an immediate impact on the situation in Sierra Leone with the presence of their military. It was a catalyst that turned the tide of the RUF's advance and the failures of UNAMSIL. There were several short term factors that created this effect. The British produced a psychological impact in Sierra Leone, took advantage of the capabilities of its rapid reaction forces, created short term tactical advantages, and used force multipliers.

Psychological Impact

When the paras arrived, the UN forces were demoralized, the RUF was on the offensive, and the civilian population of Freetown was in a panic over the prospect of a repeat of Operation No Living Thing. In the short term, the British troops acted as

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[195] Ibid., 66.

catalyst to provide calm in Sierra Leone, stop the rebel's advance, and create the conditions where the UN could accomplish its mandate. Their impact on the conflict's parties was predominantly psychological, as it "raised morale of people and bolstered the confidence of UNAMSIL and provided the foundation for the development of a political initiative."[196]

In this case, the threat of force was as effective, or arguably even more effective than the use of force. The British showed they had the will to use force and were not averse to engaging with the enemy. Officially, the British were not to become direct combat troops, but they were not reluctant to engage with the enemy with deadly force, an important characteristic where UNAMSIL fell short. They benefited from an intimidation factor that escaped UNAMSIL forces during the May crisis. In the words of Brigadier Riley, commander of Operation Basilica, "I decided on an approach of good cop/bad cop with the rebels: They could either fight me and get killed, or go to the UN and enter the DDR process. I did not really mind which."[197]

On the tactical level, British troops addressed immediate security concerns at important strategic points in and around the capital, allowing UNAMSIL to redeploy and take defensive positions in anticipation of the coming offensive. British command displayed competence for achieving its missions and addressing the needs on the ground. The paratroopers moved quickly and decisively "keen to engage in the business for which they were trained."[198] The special operations success of Operation Barras was a poignant lesson to the rebels of both principles, that Britain had the will to use its forces and that it possessed a tactical advantage over the rebels.

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[196] Connaughton, "Mechanics", 85.
[197] Riley.
[198] Connaughton, "Organizing", 93.

The British presence made a significant psychological impact on all parties of the conflict. UNAMSIL gained an immediate morale boost with the prospect that the tide would change with the British forces. The civilian population benefited from a feeling of security in Freetown, one which may have emboldened the people to confront and eventually hunt down Sankoh, another contributing factor for the war's end. The RUF suffered from the intimidation factor of the UK's professionalism and firepower, attributes that halted the RUF's advance on Freetown.

Rapid Reaction

A key factor in the UK's ability to make a profound impact during the May crisis was that its rapid reaction force capabilities enabled placing British forces where they needed to be, when they needed to be there. Before the development of rapid reaction forces, long lead times for build-up and deployment severely limited states' abilities to impose force during quick flare-ups of humanitarian crises. It was the perfect implementation of the 'glass of water' strategy. Timing was critical to the success of the mission: the spearhead unit's immediate arrival to douse the fire until the subsequent arrival of the ARG off the coast. The airborne units were able to take the "operational and tactical initiative" while the ARG' arrival maintained the mission's momentum by arriving with heavy weaponry and firepower[199]

The 1st Parachute Battalion arrived and took control of the airport in Lungi while the RUF was still outside of Freetown. This was obviously important because the evacuation mission would have been much more difficult and dangerous had there been an urban battle waging throughout Freetown. Their hasty appearance allowed UNAMSIL

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[199] Connaughton, "Mechanics", 84-85.

and CDF several days of positioning and defensive preparations with British expertise and logistical support. Again, had the paras arrived as the RUF moved into Freetown, those advantages would have been lost.

The timely arrival of the ARG off Freetown's coast was just as important as the insertion of the spearhead battalion. While highly skilled and proficient, the 1st Parachute Battalion and supporting SAS elements were light infantry, ideal for rapid deployment, but they required heavy weaponry support for long-term combat operations. The RUF had fought successfully against a contingent of 15,000 ECOMOG troops during Operation No Living Thing in 1999. Without the support of the ARG, the 600 paratroopers did not possess the same intimidation factor as it did when combined with the entire Joint Task Force. The presence of naval gun displays, Harrier flybys, and helicopter gun ships brought a clear message to the RUF. Had the ARG sat off the coast without the presence of the paratroopers in and around Freetown, a different message could have been received by the rebels. Unfortunately the West's reputation for engaging in combat in African civil wars was less than stellar. It is possible the RUF would have gambled that the ARG was only a threat and would have advanced on Freetown under the presumption that the ARG wouldn't deploy into a messy urban fight. The 600 British soldiers in and around Freetown made a definite statement that the RUF would have to contend with the entire Joint Task Force, CDF, and UNAMSIL in order to take Freetown.

This issue of timing and rapid deployment was something of which the UN was well aware, but fell short on implementation and execution. Prior to the Rwandan tragedy, the UN developed a database with details of high-readiness units in nineteen member states. The idea being that the UN could call on those countries to quickly

deploy in a timely manner during humanitarian crises. As the genocide unfolded in

Rwanda, calls went out the members in the standby system, but none deployed their

forces. "All the database did was provide swifter negative responses."[200]

Following the Rwandan episode, the UN replaced the database the with a high

readiness brigade (SHIRBRIG), where units would be assigned from traditional Chapter

VI contributing states. During the May crisis in Sierra Leone, SHIRBRIG made no

attempt to deploy to save UNAMSIL and stabilize the situation. Connaughton provides

explanation for SHIRBRIG's inaction by quoting Leutenant General Giulio Fraticello,

military advisor to the head of UN Department of Peacekeeping Operations, Bernard

Miyet:

> There are two issues related to the employment of SHIRBRIG. Firstly, it is not an
> entity that is currently under the control of the U.N. Each deployment needs the
> approval of the individual contributors. Secondly, the current advice we have
> from SHIRBRIG is that it will only be made available for operations mandated
> under Chapter VI of the U.N. Charter, although we believe the SHIRBRIG
> nations are reviewing this policy. The mission in Sierra Leone . . . is mandated
> under chapter VII of the Charter (enforcement).[201]

During the May crisis, the UN fell victim again to its own definitions of Chapter

VI versus Chapter VII mandates while simultaneously being plagued by the traditional

multilateral coalition hindrance of gaining individual state's political consent to

operations. For these reasons, the unilateral rapid deployment capabilities of the British

Joint Task Force were critical to prevent UNAMSIL's failure.

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[200] Connaughton, "Organizing", 92.
[201] Ibid.

Tactical Advantages and Force Multipliers

Freetown's coastal location gave the Royal Navy the advantage that it could position its ships and Royal Marine reinforcements off short, safe from rebel engagement, but still visible and well within striking distance. The presence of the ARG may not have had the same intimidation affect had the intervention been far inland or in a land locked country. It was able to maintain its position without support from the government of Sierra Leone or UNAMSIL. This way it could maintain a smaller presence on shore, which gave them more exit strategy options. [202]

British command was able to make an immediate impact by taking close advisory and operational control positions in UNAMSIL, the SLA, and CDF. The British brought with them their counter-insurgency doctrine, a set of principles and operational processes honed over generations of combat experience. They immersed themselves in the command and planning for pro-government and UNAMSIL counter-insurgency operations operations. "Their aim was penetrating the rebel decision cycle. Key considerations in that effort are the media; legal means; tasking special forces; information operations; liaison with coalition, political, and civil agencies; campaign planning; and force level logistics."[203] This was a level of expertise that had not existed in the fight against the RUF since 1995-1996 when Executive Outcomes used its counter-insurgency doctrine to push back the RUF.

The British also benefited from the fact that the RUF did not possess much with respect to heavy weaponry. As a fighting force, it subsisted primarily AK-47s, machetes,

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[202] Connaughton, "Mechanics", 85.
[203] Connaughton, "Organizing", 93-94.

and technicals.[204] Although the RUF gained some arms upgrades from captured

UNAMSIL weapons and Armored Personnel Carriers, these did not truly enhance the

sophistication of the RUF's warfare capabilities and tactics. Had the RUF possessed

significant antiaircraft weapons or robust artillery, the threat to RN and RAF aircraft and

land forces may have changed the tactical environment. The US Special Forces

experience in "Black Hawk Down" showed how simple knowledge of how to use RPGs

as antiaircraft weapons against helicopters significantly changed the initiative on the

battlefield. The lack of heavy weaponry and advanced infantry tactics by the RUF

definitely benefited the British mission in Sierra Leone.

British forces also enjoyed the advantage of force multipliers. The battlefield

significance of this factor had already been proven in Sierra Leone by Executive

Outcomes. Integrated command and control, use of combined arms, and advanced

intelligence capabilities greatly enhanced the posture of the British presence. The

professional communications capabilities brought by the British was a tool imperative to

waging a coordinated combined arms campaign against the RUF. Command and control

has traditionally lacked in the sub-Saharan region. Outside of Egypt and South Africa, no

brigade-level communications system exists in any of Africa's militaries.[205] Palliser

numbered little more than 1,200 troops between 1st Parachute and 42 Commando, but

through the effective use of force multipliers they had the capability of creating the

presence of a force much greater in size.

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[204] The term "technical" is in reference to a vehicle common to many conflicts in the developing world. Technicals are normally made of a pick-up truck with a heavy machine gun mounted in the bed.
[205] Gordon, D.S. and Toase, F.H (ed.). Aspects of Peacekeeping. (Portland: Frank Cass, 2001), 86.

Long Term Factors

On the strategic level, Palliser demonstrated the capabilities of Britain's over the horizon forces. Britain's multiple engagements, missions, and exercises reinforced the notion that although the British didn't maintain a sizable garrison in Sierra Leone, it could return with overwhelming force if the rebels re-initiated violence. The long-term threat of force was taken as credible because Blair had demonstrated several times he had the political will to use force there. It reinforced the perception of his commitment to see the through the successful resolution of the DDR process.

The initial pause and subsequent retreat by the RUF helped UNAMSIL by giving the mission the time and space it needed to correctly implement its mandate. It eventually increased its troop presence to 17,500 to ensure that it could adequately provide the resources and security required for a successful DDR campaign.

The military successes of Palliser and the follow-up operations did not go unnoticed by the UN. In January 2001, it took advantage of Britain's expertise and willingness to assist in the situation in Sierra Leone by appointing Alan Doss from the UK to the senior leadership positions in UNAMSIL as the Deputy Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Governance and Stabilization and also to multiple roles as Humanitarian Coordinator and Resident Coordinator as well as the Resident Representative for the United Nations Development Program for Sierra Leone.[206]

Militarily, UNAMSIL implemented some of the successful approaches used by the British. Lessons learned from communications issues encountered during the May crisis resulted in the addition of a full signals battalion to the mandate. UNAMSIL also began purchasing commercial satellite imagery. Intelligence gathering capabilities were

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[206] Olonisakin, 98.

improved with the addition of a Military Information Cell at UNAMSIL headquarters in Freetown. Helicopter gunships were brought in for additional firepower and tactical initiative on the battlefield. With new military and civilian leadership, increased firepower, and new communications and intelligence capabilities, UNAMSIL was able to change its posture in Sierra Leone.

Operation Basilica was the crucial link between the crisis management of Palliser and the long-term stability of Sierra Leone. It kept a full-time presence in the country after the Joint Task Force had withdrawn. With the battalion-sized force still in-country, if a May-like crisis were to reoccur, the troops, with pro-government forces and UNAMSIL would have been able to manage the situation until the arrival of the British over-the-horizon forces. With British military leadership taking command in both UNAMSIL and the SLA, there was better coordinated planning and effort among the multiple fighting forces. Britain also showed a long-term commitment to the SLA. British officers became so integrated with the SLA that some British officers wore the Royal Sierra Leone Forces insignia on their uniforms and held positions not just as advisors, but as key leaders directly in the SLA's command structure.[207]

There is a belief in counter-insurgency doctrine that successful resolution of insurgencies is 80% political and 20% military. The military portion is centered primarily around creating a secure environment so the political process can take place. The ongoing British presence in Sierra Leone helped UNAMSIL put in place a long-term secure environment so that the RUF and CDF could safely disarm and re-enter civil society. Blair's commitment helped to put in place short-term solutions to problems on the ground and follow with long-term processes to help foster the peace process.

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[207] Doyale, Mark. "UK backs Sierra Leone border force." *BBC News.* www.bbc.com. (16 January 2002).

CHAPTER VII

APPLYING LESSONS TO WESTERN INTERVENTIONS

With an understanding of the underlying issues, conditions on the ground, and political and military actions in Sierra Leone, lessons learned there can be applied to other cases of military interventions in sub-Saharan Africa. The UN and the West have a mixed record of success in the region. With respect to Western military interventions into civil wars, the British experience in Sierra Leone offers several points of insight applicable to other historical cases. In the following examples, there are key conditions of success or failure that share commonalities with Sierra Leone.

International interventions and peace efforts were aided when the war was not an identity-based conflict: centered not on race/ethnicity, religion, or tribal/clan affiliation. Also, success has been experienced when military interventions have been led by a major military power, with the endorsement of the UN, and the backing of a competent and appropriately sized international coalition force. Additionally, their successes on the ground have been followed by a seamless transfer of power between the leading state and the international coalition to prevent any power vacuums. Finally, success has also been experienced when the lead military power has been able to deploy a professional combined arms force quickly to the crisis spot once international approval has been gained. Timing has been just as important as military power in these cases.

One of the most famous Western military interventions in sub-Saharan Africa was the military action by the US in Somalia in 1992-3. In this case there are arguments that if a decisive military action been taken by the international community in the late 1980s as violence in Somalia escalated, the war could have been nipped in the bud. It is impossible to know whether this indeed would have been the outcome, but as in Sierra Leone, several years passed before the West took an interest in stopping the conflict for humanitarian reasons. The initial UN cease-fire observer mission in Somalia, UNOSOM I was not only far short in its manpower, but the UN mission couldn't even deploy past the airport into the areas where international presence was required. When the US backed the effort with Operation Restore Hope, it sent in 24,000 Marines in conjunction with 12,000 international forces under the UN name UNITAF.

The initial mission of UNITAF and Restore Hope was a success in that it created a secure zones and corridors where aid and supplies could be delivered to those in need. The utter failure of the mission came later when the US withdrew its troops in the wake of the "Black Hawk Down" incident. The expectation by the Bush administration was that once the humanitarian mission of UNOSOM I had been completed, allowing aid to flow to civilians, the UN would take over responsibility for the peace solution and disarmament process through UNOSOM II.[208]

Restore Hope went in with the required military muscle to create security and stability, but the quick withdrawal of US troops left the UN unable to maintain that military security for the peace process. The US's limited humanitarian mission followed by a quick pull-out gave the belligerents the space to restart the war. This was quite

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[208] Lahneman, William J. (ed.). Military Intervention: Cases in Context for the Twenty-First Century. (Lanham, MD: Rouman & Littlefield Publishers, 2004), 39.

different from British actions in Sierra Leone, where the British ensured that the UN had

the necessary military power and leadership to maintain security upon British withdrawal.

Through the British follow-up missions, Blair also demonstrated his resolve to return and

enforce peace if the RUF failed to adhere to the DDR process. When President Clinton

withdrew troops after "Black Hawk Down", it emboldened Somali warlords because it

was a display of lack of resolve by the Americans.

Thomas Weiss also points to Somalia as an example where there was a display of

force, but not an effective use of force. The nearly 36,000 troops in Somalia were an

impressive display by the international community, but when that massive force failed to

capture one warlord, it made the mission appear incompetent.[209] In order to appear

legitimate, intervening forces must show the will to use force to accomplish its mission.

Another important factor contributing to the failures in Somalia was the deep-

seeded historical and identity-based tensions between belligerents. The Somali war

structured around warlord led clans. The clan structure was an integral part of the identity

of Somalis. The war brought old clan rivalries to the surface creating a difficult situation

for a simple peaceful solution. The war in Sierra Leone was not based on ethnicity or

tribal affiliations so peace process didn't threaten the very basic identity of the peoples.

The Rwandan case was another scenario where the Hutu/Tutsi rivalry complicated the

peace process. Future interventions must take into account the complexities of identity

among populations in a civil war. When race, ethnicity, religion, or tribal affiliation are a

key underlying issue, the international community must be more diligent at maintaining

security because there can be rapid swings between peace and violence when the identity

of people is threatened.

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[209] Weiss and Collins, 168.

In Somalia, the slow action by the international community seemed to result in a missed opportunity to prevent violence against the civilian population. In no other place was this case of slow action more pronounced than in the Rwandan genocide. As the tribal violence spread, the Western military powers had the opportunity to act with their rapid reaction capabilities and possibly limit the violence which eventually left 800,000 people dead. Action finally came from France with Operation Turquoise, but it was a case of too little too late. The UN mission UNAMIR I was ineffective, and UNAMIR II was bogged down in the UN, prompting the French to act.

Operation Turquoise sent in nearly 3,000 French and Senegalese troops into Rwanda with a humanitarian mission to "secure and protect displaced persons and civilians, notably Tutsi and moderate Hutus, the main targets of government militias." The French failed to coordinate with UNAMIR II despite a UN mandate to do so. It was a gesture by the UN to attempt to stop the prevailing (but not necessarily untrue) perception that the French were continuing to support the Hutus.[210]

The French deployment was immediate, but several months too late into the genocide. This again demonstrated that when the West is motivated, it has the ability to deploy forces for stability very rapidly. The actions of Turquoise did help stop the advance to Tutsi forces from pushing refugees into Zaire. The problem was that French troops, acting to protect fleeing civilians, also protected fleeing Hutu militias and allowed them to operate a radio station which continued to broadcast messages to slaughter Tutsis.[211] The French did save lives, but for the intervention to have truly halted the humanitarian crisis, it would have been much larger, much sooner, and have had a large

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[210] Lahneman, 85.
[211] Weiss and Collins, 103.

scope. Operation Turquoise was also seen by the international community as selfish act of self aggrandizement rather than a true attempt to provide security in the genocide. French troops were accused of only protecting French nationals and facilities while ignoring the atrocities committed throughout the French troops' area of influence.[212]

Rwanda demonstrated, like Sierra Leone, that Western forces can be effective at protecting civilian populations and creating secure environments. The failure of Turquoise was in its small scope and that France's history there made its motivations appear suspect. Had Turquoise been launched earlier and acted as a peace enforcement unit while the UN coordinated a larger effort to operate under French military leadership and backfilling for French spearhead units, the outcome in Rwanda could have been much different.

In 2003, President George W. Bush sent a US naval task force with 2300 Marines to provide security in Monrovia, Liberia. Operation Shining Express was an example of Western military display of force much like Operation Palliser by the British. This wasn't the first time the USA had acted in the Liberian civil war. In 1990, forces from the 22nd and 26th Marine Expeditionary Units took part in Operation Sharp Edge. As the war there threatened US nationals' safety there, Sharp Edge was a rescue and evacuation mission. Operation Shining Express had a more pronounced impact. A Marine force of 200 troops was sent ashore in the capital city, Monrovia. Their goal was to support the ECOMOG force there, secure the port, and set up operations at the airport to allow aid and supplies to flow into the city.[213] The remainder of the Marines sat off-shore in the US Navy ships awaiting deployment if the situation were to flare up. The presence of US helicopters,

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[212] Gordon and Toase, 84.
[213] Weiner, Tim, "200 U.S. Marines Land in Liberia to Aid African Force." *The New York Times*. 15 August 2003.

marines, and warships was reported to have created a calm and lifted the spirits

Monrovia's population. In this scenario, a modest show of force by the US, like the

British in Sierra Leone, was enough to persuade the rebels from attacking the capital. The

US was reluctant to send in an overwhelming ground force for fear that the situation in

Haiti would be repeated with a deluge of asylum seekers at the US Embassy.[214]

Like Sierra Leone, the Liberian civil war was a warlord insurgency led by Charles

Taylor. When the Marines landed, Taylor was in the custody of Nigeria. So, like Sierra

Leone, when the rebels faced a leadership crisis, at the end of a prolonged war, and had

the prospect of facing ECOMOG forces backed by US firepower, security was quickly

restored in Monrovia. Like Sierra Leone, the conditions on the ground were favorable for

a successful display of force by the US. What is not clear in the Liberian case is whether

the US would have had the resolve to launch offensive operations inland if the situation

had deteriorated.

Actions by the West and the UN in East Timor have been considered by many a

successful intervention to stop a civil war. Although the case of East Timor is outside of

the region of interest here, its successes share commonalities with the successes in Sierra

Leone. In this case, like Sierra Leone, the UN was able to complete its mission once the

INTERFET military intervention led by Australia created a situation where stability and

security were adequate for the UN to do its job. The original UN Mission in East Timor

(UNAMET) like other failed missions, was undermanned for its mission and the hostile

operating environment. Indonesian-back militias attacked civilians and pro-independence

groups. With backing by the UN, Australia volunteered to lead the military effort to

resort security. In the East Timor case "the muscular requirement of the peacekeeping

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[214] Gordon and Toase, 266.

presence as well as, in this instance, the speed with which it would need to deploy in view of the urgency of the situation, convinced the international community that a multinational coalition operation was required."[215] Australia led the 9,400 coalition forces, 4,500 of which were Australian, but the remainder came from other contributing countries. The leadership from a competent professional military was important, but also the presence of other countries' forces was just as important for the credibility and legitimization of the mission. Francis et al. highlight this very argument:

> …while a strong lead nation is important to centralize the command and control structure – vital for the effective peace enforcement capability – this can compromise the force's perceived impartiality, particularly as the lead nation's role through the incorporation of contributions of troops from other nations with perhaps less apparent partiality in the eyes of the parties to the conflict can help to offset such negative perceptions.[216]

This is an area where there is an important correlation between East Timor and Sierra Leone. While British actions were unilateral, they enjoyed the backing of the UN and UNAMSIL forces. There was a perception of legitimization by the international community. By taking on leadership positions as well as command and control roles within UNAMSIL, the British were able to leverage their military competencies while operating in conjunction with the UN framework. Similarly, Australia could provide leadership and heavy-lifting for the UN in East Timor.

The East Timor experience also demonstrated another principle common with the success in Sierra Leone: effective transfer of authority. The British military worked closely with the UN to ensure a power vacuum didn't open as the paras and Royal Marines withdrew. INTERFET and Australian leadership ensured a similar transfer of

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[215] Francis et al., 69.
[216] Francis et al., 70.

operations back to UNTAET. There was a slow change-over to UNTAET authority, moving many of INTERFET's forces under UNTAET leadership over time. This prevented a gap in perceptions of the presence of military force necessary to maintain security and stability.[217]

The transfer of power process in East Timor stands in stark contrast to the experience in Somalia. When Operation Restore Hope ended, the US quickly withdrew its 24,000 Marines. There was an immediate power and security gap where the violence could resurge without threat of reprisal from the international community on belligerents. The residing UN mission in Somalia simply didn't have the firepower to maintain the threat of force on the warlords and clans.

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[217] Francis et al., 70.

CHAPTER VIII

CONCLUSIONS

Tony Blair made a visit to Sierra Leone in 2002 as a symbolic gesture of solidarity to the Sierra Leone government and to show further British commitment to the peace process. The quick end to the war between 2000 and 2001 took some by surprise, but the speed at which it happened is not unreasonable after understanding the factors that led to the collapse of the RUF.

The series of British military operations, civil development activity, and diplomatic efforts were keys to the war's resolution and post-conflict rebuilding process. The British successes were not achieved in a vacuum and were far from the only factors leading to peace. They enjoyed a set of circumstances that greatly benefited their efforts. The RUF had grown weary after years of conflict and a change of leadership. Sankoh's replacement Issa Sesay seemed more interested in peaceful resolution to the long war than had his predecessor.[218] Although Nigerian ECOMOG forces have received a great deal of criticism, their prolonged combat with the RUF helped to wear down the movement's resolve. Guinea's intervention across the border inflicted heavy casualties on the RUF and demoralized its ranks.[219] Keen makes the point that "together with the offensive from Guinea, the weakening of Liberian support and the modification of

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[218] Keen., 273.
[219] Ibid., 268-269.

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UNAMSIL's mandate and strength, the British intervention does seem to have convinced the RUF that the war was unwinnable and that Freetown could not be taken."[220]

Further international pressure on illegal diamond trade helped to choke off the RUF's funding. International sanctions and pressure on Charles Taylor eventually led him to participate in the peace negotiations. Additionally, the increased UN presence may have provided a stabilizing agent that gave RUF fighters confidence that after disarming they were safe from Guinean and CDF elements, thus fostering an environment where demobilizing did not leave one vulnerable to attacks by lingering enemy elements.[221] These events took hold between 2000 and 2001 and set the stage for the disintegration of the RUF.

Also the war's political characteristics helped create the conditions for British success. The resource-dependent nature of the RUF and its nature as a criminal enterprise helped to unravel the RUF. Had it been an insurgency of a different character, like motivated by religious fundamentals, ethnic or tribal history, or political ideology, it is possible the RUF would have been able to maintain its cohesion under the pressure of CDF, British, Guinean, and UNAMSIL forces. The RUF was a glorified gang with a warlord leader. Its cohesion was based on money and its manpower drawn from disenchanted young men and indoctrinated children. It ranks were comprised of children and young men with little prospect for life in a civil society. It was not a group with deep seeded ethnic, political, or religious fervor. Once Sankoh was captured and the RUF's members trusted that they would be protected through the DDR program, the movement almost completely ceased to exist. The warlord/criminal empire character of the RUF was

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[220] Ibid., 273.
[221] Ibid., 272.

one of the most important factors that allowed the war to so suddenly halt and a successful peace process to proceed.

The war left tremendous devastation. War crimes were not only committed by the RUF, but also by the SLA, ECOMOG, and Kamajors. For instance, during Operation No Living Thing, Human Rights Watch documented the execution of 180 RUF prisoners by ECOMOG forces.[222] An international war crimes tribunal has since been established to try and punish those leaders responsible for crimes against humanity. Sankoh died in prison in 2003 while on trial with the tribunal.

In 2004 the UNHCR reported that 280,000 refugees had been repatriated back into Sierra Leone since the war's end.[223] The United Nations reports that UNAMSIL successfully disarmed 72,500 former combatants, 55,000 of whom have now received reintegration benefits. A further 15,000 have been enrolled in formal educational programs.[224] The United Nations touts UNAMSIL as a textbook successful disarmament and demobilization mission. Unfortunately it took years of violence, external intervention, and the failure of previous UN peacekeeping and ECOMOG missions before success could be achieved.

In 2008, the country successfully held its second round of peaceful elections. It appears that peace has taken hold in Sierra Leone. This peace is tenuous. Poor economic conditions leave some weary that unrest could reignite war. There still remains a large warrior population that could easily take up arms if instigated. Today, Sierra Leone ranks 176th out of 177 countries on the United Nations Development Program's Human

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[222] Country Watch.
[223] Ibid.
[224] United Nations. www.un.org

Development Index.[225] Until economic conditions improve, the state risks resurgence in violence.

<div align="center">Problems with Peacekeeping and the International Community</div>

Some of UNAMSIL's shortcomings were the fault of its leadership, some were the result of structural problems with the UN's approach to peacekeeping, but some were due to the lack of will from the international community to take action. As Connaughton argues:

> While it is true that the organization can be blamed for its over-willingness to take peacekeeping into environments for which it was never intended and where there was no peace to be kept, it cannot be blamed for the tendency among governments to use the UN as a dumping ground for hot potatoes and problems they ought to face but do not wish to confront."[226]

In the case of Sierra Leone, after the mixed results of ECOMOG, the international community attempted to place the burden of the peacekeeping on the UN. This was a situation where, despite Lomé, there really wasn't a peace to keep. UNAMSIL initially entered Sierra Leone with a Chapter VII mandate, but with a force posture and leadership ready to do a Chapter VI job. This is what truly led to the need for Britain to intervene. Had UNAMSIL truly been a Chapter VII force with Chapter VII intent, it would have should have brought with it the robust firepower needed to truly defeat an enemy.

The lesson of the British and UNAMSIL in Sierra Leone is clear. During a humanitarian crisis, there is a critical need for fast and decisive military action to ensure the safety of civilian populations. The other African cases discussed here and East Timor provide further examples where successes and failures of interventions were hinged on

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[225] Country Watch.
[226] Connaughton, "Mechanics", 83.

timing of deployment, will to use force, understanding the conditions on the ground, and coordinating transfer of power to an appropriately mandated and sized UN force to see-through the peace process. The UN has demonstrated time and again that the roles of peace maker, peace enforcer, and peace keepers are ones for which it does not have the appropriate set of resources, ability to make the political decisions, and deliver force to the crisis area. Until a viable alternative exists to address this problem, the burden must be taken by those who have those capabilities. The Western military powers, namely the US, UK, and France have the capabilities and political will to use force for humanitarian intervention. These states will need to take on the challenges of public condemnation, accusations of neocolonialism, and imperialism. Though a politically difficult move, these states must realize what Tony Blair did about Africa: "The state of Africa is a scar on the conscience of the world. But if the world as a community focused on it, we could heal it. And if we don't, it will become deeper and angrier."[227]

Productive Future Research Avenues

During the research and writing process for this essay, I came across several topics whose inclusion here would have been either off-topic or too lengthy and complex for their inclusion. These topics may provide fruitful future research for those willing to explore their details.

The successes of both the British Joint Task Force and EO at different points in the conflict in Sierra Leone demonstrated the effectiveness of small professional forces.

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[227] Tony Blair. Address to Labor Party Conference. Brighton, England. October 2, 2001.
http://archives.cnn.com/2001/WORLD/europe/10/02/ret.blair.address/

A cost study analysis of the strategic application of small-mobile forces in complex political crises could prove to be an interesting and valuable topic to explore.

Along those same lines, in some conflicts, the UN has begun to authorize other parties to conduct the job for which it was originally designed. NATO's involvement in Kosovo and the British in Sierra Leone are examples of this idea. The proven effectiveness of EO in Angola and Sierra Leone present questions about the prospects of the UN outsourcing its non-Chapter VII operations, a fascinating and complex topic.

Finally, an important question to answer is if the Western military powers do begin to take a larger role in humanitarian interventions, how then do they cope with the political intricacies associated with accusations of neocolonial and imperialistic ambitions?

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This thesis was typed by Patrick J. Evoe