

Preliminary draft; do not quote.

**VIOLENT CONFLICTS AND GOVERNANCE CHALLENGES IN  
WEST AFRICA: The Case of the Mano River Basin Area**

**Amos Sawyer**

**Workshop in Political Theory and Policy Analysis  
Indiana University**

**© 2003 Amos Sawyer**

## INTRODUCTION

Since the end of the Cold War, concerns have heightened about sustained violent conflicts in Africa. Conflict mitigation and resolution has become the dominant governance activity in almost every part of Africa. Many of these conflicts seem intractable; conflict mitigation and resolution initiatives are at best yielding modest successes. Even so, such successes typically provide peace in the short-term but hardly lay foundations for the reconstitution of order and the attainment of sustainable peace. Part of the problem is the failure to acquire a deep understanding of conflict challenges and to fashion appropriate responses.<sup>1</sup> This paper is an effort to advance understanding of the decade-old conflict system that has brought untold human tragedy to the people of the Mano river basin countries of Guinea, Liberia and Sierra Leone in West Africa. The task undertaken by the paper is to analyze the nature of the conflict and explore its magnitude and consequences as a means of assessing approaches to peacemaking and the reconstitution of order. I argue that sustained governance failures characterized by autocratic rule, exclusionist politics, excessive rent-seeking and repression and the vicissitudes of the international environment have produced a system of violent conflicts in the Mano basin area. Liberia is the epicenter of this conflict system and a bridge to conflicts elsewhere in the wider West African subregion. This system of violent conflicts and the attendant governance challenges are largely addressed through standard state-specific responses that have failed to foster long-term remedies. I argue for multiple-level institutional approaches that can address the challenges associated with conflict resolution and the reconstitution of order in the complex manner in which these challenges have unfolded.

I proceed first with a discussion of the nature of governance in Africa and the magnitude and consequences of conflicts derived generally from governance failure. I then turn more specifically to an examination of these challenges as they have unfolded in the Mano basin area by discussing how governance processes were shaped over time in Guinea, Liberia and Sierra Leone and how they became productive of destructive conflicts. I examine the nature of the conflict that ensues in the area and current approaches to conflict resolution and the reconstitution of order, noting their shortcomings. I then point to the way forward.

## CONFLICT AND GOVERNANCE

Conflict is an attendant feature of human interaction and cannot be eliminated; however, its proper management and transformation are essential for peace and progress in human society. This is why conflict resolution is one of the most important challenges of governance. Legitimacy of conflict management and resolution mechanisms is critical, especially in situations of diversity such as in multi-ethnic societies. When conflict resolution mechanisms fail or are considered untrustworthy, insecurity, including fears of physical insecurity can be heightened and individuals and groups are constrained to rely

on their own capabilities. Security initiatives undertaken under conditions of deep suspicion of the motives of others combine with limited information can produce security dilemmas (Posen, 1993). Other forms of insecurity such as food insecurity and famine that may induce desperation and violence are consequences rather than causes of governance failure (Sen, 1989). Poverty does not cause conflict; failure of governance mechanisms can produce distributional and related problems that accentuate cleavage and arouse conflict.

Contemporary conflicts in African societies are frequently categorized as ethnic conflicts even though most of them are caused by governance failure. Such categorization is due to the fact that ethnic factors are often mobilized as resources of conflict in zero-sum politics associated with highly centralized, autocratic and predatory regimes. Ethnic loyalties can claim primacy over other forms of group loyalty and protagonists in conflict can more easily take recourse in ethnic solidarity. Conditions of sustained marginalization or fears of assimilation can accentuate ethnic cleavages, and appeals to ethnic sentiments can prove to be a potent tool in conflict. As critical as is ethnicity to conflict, empirical evidence shows that ethnicity, itself, is not a source of violent conflict but can be used as an instrument of conflict (Lake and Rothchild 1998;). This is not to suggest that there are no purely ethnic-based conflicts. African societies are replete with ethnic conflicts between ethnic and cultural groups, pastoralists and agricultural groups, but these are hardly the arenas of the systemic breakdowns and cataclysmic violence that engulfs entire countries and regions; and even these are exacerbated by failure of governance mechanisms having to do with conflict resolution. Studies have shown that a mix of political and military factors having to do with overly-centralized governance structures, the use of military resources in support of arbitrary and autocratic governance and the implementation of policies and practices that sustain rent-seeking and predation are fundamental elements in most situations of institutional failure and violent conflicts. (Gurr, 2000; Nwokedi, 1998).

While state institutions constitute sites of governance failure, institutional failure at the supranational level often contributes substantially to governance failure resulting in violent conflicts. Institutions of national governance operate in larger regional and international environments to which they must respond. Thus, to investigate the roots of governance failure, we must examine the dynamics of governance at all levels, supranational, national and supra-national.

### Sources of Governance Failure

Governance failure in Africa have their roots in several sources, principal among which are the legacy of colonialism, the nature of the independence struggle, the character of the post-colonial state and their leaders, and the structure and requirements of the global order. Colonial governance institutions were designed to promote domination and extraction, these being colonialism's principle mission. Although these institutions were the target of the anti-colonial struggle, they ultimately became colonialism's legacy to post-colonial governance. Independence struggles around Africa required mobilization and produced movements in which, with few exceptions, decision-making was largely

plebiscitary. At independence, African countries maintained over-centralized state institutions that reposed enormous powers in the hands of their “founding fathers.” Political mobilization and plebiscitary decision-making conveniently dominate post-independence governance strategies, especially since the pursuit of development so as to “catch up” was the national preoccupation. Democracy was not a significant item on Africa’s post-independence governance agenda (Ake, 1996).

With ambitions of wielding disparate groups into a “nation-state,” Africa’s central states relied upon an appeal to the promise of development to sustain their legitimacy as they tightened their control as a governance device. Thus, in addition to over-centralization’s natural tendency to degenerate into arbitrary and autocratic rule, pressures to maintain control in the face of failed development initiatives quickened recourse to repression. Preventive detention laws, all-embracing sedition laws and increased presidential prerogatives drove governance processes. Regime maintenance became the most important if not the sole preoccupation of government.

External actors were very much a part of the governance arrangements that produced and maintained autocratic governance in Africa. Cold war machinations required responses that produced alignments that deepened divisions within and among countries, often creating a source of upward legitimacy and relieving leaders from any semblance of accountability to local populations. Cold war bipolarity was not the only external dynamic affecting African governance. Since independence, Africa’s development agenda has been determined either by the former colonial powers or by the Bretton Woods institutions. The dynamics of bipolarity combined with the prescriptions of the Bretton Woods institutions to produce what Vincent Ostrom (1993) has called “cryptoimperialism” as a form of governance intervention which has had a profound impact in strengthening autocracy as well as directly inducing conflict. Assessment of governance institutional failure in African countries remains incomplete unless the full impact of internal and external factors is considered.

### Consequences of Governance Failure

Governance failure can be progressive and its effects incremental. What appears to be a sudden implosion could in fact be a manifestation or consequence of half a century or more of failed governance. Some autocracies operating within the Cold War global order were such predators that they destroyed the very fabric of their societies but were propped up because of their strategic role in bipolar politics. Relying on external support and a well-catered-for but narrow internal constituency, such regimes existed for decades and became despotic. Zaire now the Democratic Republic of the Congo was one such regime; it only crumbled when the Cold War ended. Then there are cases like Sierra Leone with relatively little significance in bipolar politics but with predatory regimes that were perceived to be benign.<sup>2</sup> Seething in corruption, such regimes can grind to a halt and implode. Many others do not implode but totter on the brink while ordinary people struggle to find ways to cope with the dilemmas of daily living. Whatever the circumstance, human toll and social consequences of governance failure in Africa have been of staggering magnitudes.

*The Human Toll of Governance Failure:* The most visible consequence of governance failure can be seen the toll violent conflicts have taken on human beings. Most noted is the alarming level of conflict related deaths and displacement. Though estimates vary, it is generally agreed that there has been more than 6 million conflict-related deaths in Africa since 1983 (CSIS Report, 2000). There is an estimated 20 million conflict related displaced persons of whom 14 million are internally displaced. These figures constitute close to three percent of Africa's total population. (See *World Population Prospects*. UN Population Division 2000.) When disaggregated and their implications fully considered, they reveal a crisis of a profound proportions. In the region of the Central Africa and the Great Lakes, for example, they tell of a disruption of societies consisting of thousands of communities with linkages and spillovers that affect still thousands more. In Uganda, for example, internally displaced people (IDPs) account for close to 3 per cent of that country's population and with exponential impact on others. One quarter of Uganda's 45 districts (administrative jurisdictions) is in some form of upheaval. Warring factions operate in northern as well as western districts and sporadic conflicts involving pastoralists are waging in eastern districts. Food shortages and the HIV/AIDS pandemic have added further burdens especially on women and children. Uganda has become a strategic link between systems of conflict extending north in Sudan, west into the Great Lakes region and east into the Horn of Africa (*Global IDP*, 2001).

The problem of internal displacement has not been given the same level of international attention as the problem of refugees, i.e. the externally displaced. In Angola, one out of every four, in Sudan, one out of every 7 and in Eritrea one out of every 10 persons is internally displaced and destitute (*Global IDP*, 2001).<sup>3</sup> When circumstance and duration of displacement are considered, a bleaker picture emerges. Loss of dignity and diminished hope associated with prolonged displacement can erode self-confidence and optimism—predispositions that are vital for self-reliance and self-organization. Moreover, the impact of extensive societal trauma associated with gruesome massacres often witnessed by displaced people (internal and external) can hardly be fully assessed. Resettlement can also be hazardous and rife with insecurity, including insecurity stemming from landmines and other unexploded devices.

Inspection of indicators related to physical well-being and survival prospects reveal an unpleasant picture for Africa. For example, the indicators show that the average life expectancy at birth is 49; that 9 of the 10 countries with the highest under 5 mortality rates are in Africa, and 40 of the 50 in the bottom tier are African.<sup>4</sup> The indicators further show an alarmingly high incidence of moderate and severe stunting, evidence of years of chronic malnutrition. Forty per cent of African countries are yet to achieve 50 percent literacy among males while female literacy remaining discouragingly low. The basic challenges of survival confronting individuals and families in Africa are formidable. Statistics cannot tell the full story neither can the story be exaggerated. A good share of these challenges stem from breakdowns in governance, including breakdowns that do not produce violent upheavals.

*Social Dislocation:* Linked to the enormous toll in human life and suffering is the impact of governance failure on basic social institutions, especially those such as the family and other community-level institutions. Governance failure and violent conflicts often lead to the dispersal of people in ways that deeply affect families. Tracing of family members is one of the critical undertakings of international entities such as UNICEF and Red Cross and Red Crescent societies during conflicts. Although exact figures are not available estimates put missing individuals, mainly children, separated from families in the hundreds of thousands in Africa's many conflict zones.<sup>5</sup> Thousands of families are never reunited. There is the problem of the erosion of values stemming in part from declining capacity of the family to function as an effective socializing agent and the collapse of school systems in many African societies. One of the most pronounced signals of the erosion of values can be seen in the growing preference for the use of force and artifice than reliance on achievement through merit and mastery. Governance arrangements that are highly centralized, repressive or characterized by excessive rent seeking are more likely to offer rewards on the basis of factors other than achievement through merit (Szeftel, 2000). In circumstance of armed conflict, power and influence become directly related to capacity to use force and association with those who have acquired and are prepared to utilize those skills. Children choose as models those who carry weapons rather than those who excel in education and demonstrate productive skills.<sup>6</sup>

Experience has shown that where militia groups dominate government, youth typically constitute an important element in governance. The roles they play in violent conflicts including warring upon their own elders and villages, earn them access to power and resources. This generational shift in authority relations exacerbates the decline of the family and further erosion of values and, together with other factors, has become constitutive of the *crisis of youth* that now poses a fundamental challenge in the task of reconstituting order to ensure lasting peace and proper governance in Africa. Thus, the destructive impact of governance failure and associated violent conflict on the family as a social institution is deep and profound and requires measures that go beyond what can be achieved through programs of resettlement and the reconstitution of the central state. It is entirely possible that the central state may itself reinforce these problems.

*Crisis of Youth:* There is a growing body of literature on the impact of violent conflict on youth, more precisely, how children's participation in armed conflict affect their subsequent behavior. The notion of post-traumatic stress, for example, is validated by some researchers (Garbarino, 1991), contested by others (Boyden, 1994) and held yet by others to be conditioned by circumstance (Braken, 1998). West (2000) has argued that commitment to the liberation struggle in Mozambique provided for participating girls a steady rudder and a sense of empowerment leading to fulfillment of obligations considered constitutive of national service. Gable's (2000) study of a youth "culture development club" in Guinea Bissau shows how youth can be a source of change by their use of traditional institutions as instruments of change. While there are many examples of youth self-organizing potentials, I follow Gable in the view that in Africa today, the overall trend seems to support the notion of African youth in crisis. The collapse of educational systems, high levels of youth unemployment as evidence by the armies of idle youth to be found in virtually all African cities, the HIV/AIDS pandemic that is

taking a higher toll among women, children and youth, the rise in youth criminality and of what Ibrahim Abdullah (1998) has aptly called the political rise of the “lumpen youth,” all attest to a crisis whose depth has not been fathomed and whose consequences pose a serious threat to the Africa’s capacity to development and sustain a civilization.

*Eroding Sense of Shared Community of Understanding:* Another consequence of governance failure can be seen with respect to its impact on communities. Tocqueville (1969, pp. 61) has argued that the township or village is the most basic form of human association. “Local institutions are to liberty what primary schools are to science,” he asserted. What Vincent Ostrom has called “a shared community of understanding” is foundational to situations of collective choice: shared standard of judgment having to do with a common sense of justice (fairness) underpin interactions of mutual trust and accountability among members of a community. If these seem to evolve naturally as Tocqueville suggests, it is because local communities are typically initially characterized by cultural homogeneity with patterns of interaction girded by common history, norms and values. This is what in the case of Africa, Peter Ekeh’s (1975) celebrated article described as the “primordial public.” But institutions must be responsive to change and in the matrix of communities that are constitutive of human societies, engaging in patterns of interactions beyond the primordial is unavoidable.

Transcending the family and the larger kinship unit to other situations of collective choice require a broadened sense of “shared community of understanding.” Henry Sumner Maine (1960) has argued that human institutions evolved progressively from the family to other institutions of collective choice. Patterns of human interactions correspondingly evolved from interactions underpinned by *status* within the institution of the family to interactions governed by rules of contract. This is how patterns of human interaction transcended the primordial and established the autonomy of individual while still preserving social capital offered by family and culture. Tocqueville’s conception of the establishment of constitutional orders rooted in the principle of covenanting bears relevance. The point to be made is that Africa’s challenge is to transcend the primacy of the “primordial public” and elevate the “civic public”—to use Ekeh’s second phrase. Governance failure has challenges for the establishment of larger communities of understanding and developing appropriate institutional capacities.

Threat to local people’s sense of community has increased in many parts of Africa as a result of violent conflicts. Actions of armed groups and warring factions typically originate in rural areas and prey upon villagers long before they reach urban centers. Their hallmark of pillage and plunder is often more starkly visible in rural Africa where villages are frequently razed. Youth and others, operating under command, commit enormous atrocities: kill and demean elders, forcibly take teenage girls as “war wives,” and desecrate religious shrines, leaving multiethnic communities shattered into splinters. Any perception of orderly though brutal seizure of power is misleading. And yet there are differences in methods, degree of atrocious behavior and objectives of armed groups that need to be closely studied if appropriate solutions are to be found. (See Ayittey, 1992; Berkeley, 2001; Schwab, 2001.)

## THE MANO RIVER BASIN AREA

The Mano river basin area is a subregion of West Africa covering Guinea, Liberia and Sierra Leone.<sup>7</sup> The three countries (especially Guinea and northern Sierra Leone) are part of the region known since the 16<sup>th</sup> century as the Upper Guinea Coast. The southeastern section comprising of southern and eastern Sierra Leone and all of Liberia was considered the Lower Guinea Coast or Grain Coast.<sup>8</sup> In reality, the Mano River basin area defines an emergent political jurisdiction and not a unified ecological zone as may be assumed. An examination of its ecology shows a wide diversity of topographical conditions. The area includes the undulating plateau and rolling hills of the northwestern section, the savannah grasslands of the north; the elevated promontories, brilliant beaches and mangrove swamps along the Atlantic coast;<sup>9</sup> and the tropical rainforest in the south and southeast (Gwynne-Jones et al., 1978; Schulze, 1973).

### Ethnic Configuration

There are more than thirty ethnic groups in this area; they can be categorized in four major ethno-linguistic groups: the Fulbe, Malinke, Sousou and Mande-speaking peoples of the Forest region. The Fulbe and Malinke are the largest groups in the northern and northwestern regions; the Sousou occupy the southwestern coastal area and an assortment of Mande-speaking groups dominate the tropical forest region of the east and southeast (Greenberg, 1963). A cluster of Kwa-speaking people (Bassa, Kru, Grebo and Krahn) with close kinship ties with groups in the coastal region of Ivory Coast inhabit the southeastern outreaches of the area (Schulze, op cit.).

The Malinke and Fulbe of the northern sections of the region had developed major political formations prior to the colonial era. Malinke social organization was underpinned by principles of hierarchical order. Centralized Malinke formations and tributary orders are well known in the region; notable among these are Malinke claims to the Mali empire of the 15<sup>th</sup> century. In more recent times, during the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, the “state-building” and military exploits of Samoure Toure, including his resistance to French colonialism have become legendary.<sup>10</sup> Malinke influence spread widely over much of the tropical forest region of the southeast, an area inhabited from earliest times by lineage segments of groups that largely sought sanctuary there as a result of the dynamic processes of social interaction that took place elsewhere in the region.<sup>11</sup>

The Fulbe are perceived as new comers to the area. With roots further north in the Sudanic plain, Fulbe expansion through West Africa has been closely associated with the spread of Islam and long distance trading (Azarya, 1978; Dupire, 1962.) In successive waves, they settled in the Fouta highlands of northwestern Guinea as of the 17<sup>th</sup> century. Over a period of time, they established a “feudal” order that subsumed many local groups in a serfdom-like relationship, and became the principal rivals of the Malinke in the entire area. Like the Malinke, Fulbe civilization had been well established by the time of French colonization (Groelsema, 1998). Diallo (1985) has argued that, to a large extent, Fulbe culture and traditions have been dominated by Islam such that its constant *jihads* against its neighbors were only ended with colonialism imposition.

Sousou of the coast have been under influences of both Malinke and Fulbe political formations. Like their more powerful neighbors, they too are largely Islamized. The organizing principles of Sousou society are similarly to those of the people of the forest region that have been impacted by Malinke political formations since the days of the Mali Empire. The Mende, Tenme and Kissi are among the largest of the clusters of forest groups. All of the forest groups are sedentary and many are noted for having developed efficient agricultural methods (Richards, 1985). Their political formations constituted a mix of chiefdoms of various sizes organized on principles associated with a founding ancestor, thus, political formations are typically constitutive of lineages and lineage segments (Little, 1967; Wyllie, 1977).

The ending of the trans-Atlantic slave trade and the repatriation of former slaves to West Africa added to the clusters of groups of this area. The *evolue* of Guinea, *Creole* of Sierra Leone and *Americo-Liberians* of Liberia are products of this development. These groups consisted of both former slaves from French, British and American political jurisdictions elsewhere as well as *recaptives* (Porter, 1966; Delafosse, 1900). They lived in coastal communities organized around principles associated with western concepts of justice and equality.

#### Precolonial Patterns of Interaction

Prior to colonial imposition, a number of features could be discerned in patterns of interaction in the region. These include the dominant influence of the Malinke and Fulbe over other groups in the region as manifested in patterns of alliances, mergers, accommodations and conflict; the spread of Islam in the forest and coastal region; the fluidity of ethnic identities and boundaries; a mix of emergent small holder rights, tributary, and communal rights as the prevailing forms of property rights with communal rights being the dominant form of property rights in the forest region and small holder agriculture and tributary patterns in the northern areas. Slave raiding and the trans-Atlantic and trans-Sahara slave trade were major elements in Fulbe *jihads* and Malinke expansion, making for a rather fluid political and security environment. Stability rested on patterns of alliances and accompanying patterns of tributary governance. Except for Kwa groups that were located much too far from the direct orbit of Malinke and Fulbe influences and a spattering of groups that existed in semi-isolation deep within the rainforest, the processes of domination and centralization seemed to be the prevailing pattern of authority relations in this region during the precolonial era. (Davidson, op. cit.; Bah, 1998; Derman, 1973).

#### Colonial Patterns

*Aspects of French Colonial Governance in Guinea:* Colonial imposition in the Mano river basin area developed incrementally. Trade was at the foundation of colonialism. Trading patterns substantially changed in the late 18<sup>th</sup> century and early 19<sup>th</sup> century with the abolition of slavery. British and French political control of territory developed in

stages, first with the intensification of commodity trade and later with incremental establishment of full colonial occupation. French and British colonial approaches differed somewhat. In the case of the French, conquest of West African territory was virtually completed between 1895 and 1900. This saw sharp increases in trade. Fulbe chiefs now redeployed their coterie of vassals and captives from struggles to maintain forms external slave trading and “contract” labor to long distance trade serving as middle men in the expanding colonial trade. So also did a large number of Malinke traders known as *djoula*.<sup>12</sup> European trade goods were exchanged for African produce. Competitive trade gave way to monopoly trading as a few trading houses mainly from France, Britain, and Germany dominated trade.<sup>13</sup> Local middle men now experienced serious competition from Syrian, Lebanese and other middle eastern traders. Rubber, palm oil, timber and gum were the major exports. Until the Second World War not much investment was made in such trade. Suret-Canale (1964) has stressed that given their monopoly of such trade, French traders were content to enjoy levels of returns already reached. Mining was another colonial economic activity; but even there, French authorities issued licenses to individuals many of whom did not seem to take a serious interest in mining.

Facilitating and protecting the few French commercial houses seemed to have been the major preoccupation of French colonial administration in Guinea since France’s colonial interests in West Africa were centered mainly in Senegal and Ivory Coast. This, however, did not alter the pattern of French colonial administration. In 1895, the French set up a highly centralized form of colonial administration. While over time policies vacillated between consolidation and some limited fragmentation of colonial territories, the system of centralized control remained essentially in tact. Through a series of decrees, French colonial administration evolved into an integral part of French homeland governance and was referred to as the “overseas department” of the government. Through policies of “assimilation” certain Africans qualified for French citizenship. Operating through the “overseas departments,” French functionaries were to be found deep within the administrative apparatus of colonial administration of Guinea by the 1930s. French colonial authorities tended, generally, to be more directly engaged at local levels administration. In the area of the Fouta Jallon, for example, French administrators appointed village *manga* (head men) and supervised them, often directly. (Derman, op cit.) The judicial powers of chiefs and local magistrates in customary courts were steadily reduced so that by 1942, the customary court of the second instance was presided over by a French administrator (Mamdani, op cit). Houseboys and others without standing were appointed chiefs, mainly in the forest region. (Suret-Canale, op. cit.)

The character of French colonial governance in Guinea is partially reflected in the marginal role of Guinea in the broader scheme of French colonial interest in West Africa. This was manifested in the limited economic investment made in Guinea and the predominance of commodity trade and a limited plantation economy sector as the major economic activity throughout the period of French occupation. Even in these economic activities, the French encouraged the substantial role played by Middle Eastern middlemen. French citizens were deeply involved in colonial administration even at rather low levels, with very little nurturing of Guineans. The suppression of Fulbe system of servitude and the dismantling or manipulation of indigenous authority structures

drastically transformed indigenous authority relations in large parts of Guinea. All of this occurred within a highly centralized system of colonial administration. This situation has had clear implications for post-independence governance.

*British Colonial Pattern in Sierra Leone:* British colonial imposition in Sierra Leone was driven by British interest in trade as well as by imperatives proceeding from responsibilities connected to the abolition of the slave trade. As a result of the latter, the settlement of Freetown was established in 1787 as a haven for freed British slaves. In 1808, Freetown became a Crown Colony, a direct “possession” of the British crown and not simply a settlement under sponsorship of British anti-slavery groups as had been the case. From the colony of Freetown and another in the Gambia, British traders expanded their activities into the West African interior. In 1896, the British declared the interior a protectorate. Much of British expansion into the interior involved a mixed strategy that included conquest, alliance formation and chicanery (Conteh-Morgan and Dixon-Fyle, 1999). French and British expansion into the interior of West Africa proceeded simultaneously. Ripples of French pressure and Malinke resistance had significant impact on the mode of British interaction with interior populations, especially those groups of the forest region that were in the path of British colonial expansion. European trading houses and *Creole* middlemen were the immediate beneficiaries of British pacification of the Sierra Leonean hinterland. Syrian and Lebanese challenges to *Creole* middlemen status soon emerged as most European traders never ventured beyond Sierra Leone’s coastal ports (Fyle, 1981).

British colonial administration was marked by what is called “indirect rule,” an arrangement that, in theory, allowed traditional authorities to govern their societies using customary law while ultimately reporting to British colonial authority. In reality, British colonial rule in Sierra Leone involved considerable manipulation so that neither chiefs nor customary legal institutions enjoyed much autonomy. Chiefdoms and independent villages that were previously autonomous were amalgamated, given ethnic classification and paramount chieftaincy status. Arthur Abraham (1978) has argued that the British administrative policy in Sierra Leone initially fragmented precolonial jurisdictions to ensure more effective control through “divide and rule” strategies. Amalgamation and consolidation, he stressed, were features of late colonialism as “development” became a policy concern. Another machination of British colonial administration, according to Abraham, was the appointment of chiefs who as individuals had no standing in their societies. In many cases, the British appointed ruling houses in society where leadership selection had followed a system of merit and achievement. Sierra Leone occupied a place in the British colonial scheme similar to that of Guinea in the colonial scheme of the French. Except for promoting British traders who sought a monopoly over the palm oil trade, and preserving the colony of Freetown and the protectorate from French encroachment, the British seemed not to have assigned to Sierra Leone the same level of importance as the Gold Coast, let alone Nigeria.

British and French colonial governance imposed, minimally, three essential extractive obligations on local societies: these included, labor obligations, payment of hut tax and

other tax levies and tributes, and conscription into colonial military forces. In meeting these obligations, societies were more often subject to greater hierarchical control and regimentation. To facilitate that control, ethnic identities and boundaries became more rigidly fixed. Both British and French colonialism employed enormous violence in their imposition of control. Beginning with campaigns of pacification, anti-slavery campaigns and in recruitment of labor to service plantation economies, engage in public works and to subdue uncooperative communities. All phases of colonial rule were accompanied by violent campaigns.

### The Liberia Anomaly

Although not a colonial power in the sense of the British and French, Liberian government's state-building strategies followed similar patterns of establishing instruments of command and control. These included the amalgamation of indigenous political formations into larger jurisdictions presided over by government-appointed or government-paid chiefs, requirements of labor recruitment, hut tax and other levies and the establishment of a military force initially with the assistance of British Colonial authorities in Sierra Leone. A native authority administration was put in place and directly supervised by the President. These were among the critical features of command and control that underpinned the emergence of autocracy in Liberia. (Sawyer, *op. cit.*). Planted fully by the end of the second decade of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, institutions of autocratic government incrementally strengthened their capacity in ways that resembled patterns set by the British in neighboring Sierra Leone. The establishment of Liberian government control over indigenous communities produced as much violence as did the British and French in their colonial adventures.

For both Sierra Leone and Guinea, patterns of governance set up by the British and French were not to be substantially altered at independence. As it would turn out, the anti-colonial struggle as demonstrated in all three countries was more demanding of a change of leadership than a change of governance system.

## POST COLONIAL GOVERNANCE

While the histories, colonial experiences and governance institutions established at independence are different among the three countries, their dynamics of governance and related outcomes are remarkably similarly. All reinforced highly centralized and personalized rule that grew more predatory and repressive. All reproduced violent conflicts and varying degrees of human tragedy.

### Nature of Post Colonial Governance

Post-colonial governance institutions in Guinea, Sierra Leone and Liberia have been shaped by their domestic and external contexts and circumstances. Among the relevant constituent factors, four seem critical: these include the nature of the colonial experience, the pattern of interaction among internal actors, the structure and response of the regional

and international environment within which they operate and the quality of leadership in each country. Although colonial experience initially helped to shape governance structures, other elements have become important since the attainment of independence. The degree of success in aligning and reconciling interests among various elites and the predispositions, orientations and leadership strategies employed by the leaders have elicited domestic and external responses that have not always ensured peace and advanced development.

*Guinea:* In Guinea, French colonialism was both crudely extractive and brutally repressive. The suppression of Fulbe servile institutions and Malinke expansionism had required considerable force. French administrative structures were highly centralized and penetrative of very low levels of administration. Because of its exceedingly repressive and backward nature, there was very little good will between French colonial authorities and Guinean elites. When presented with options of immediate independence or alternatively a process of gradual disengagement, Guinean leaders opted for the former. Responding angrily, French colonial authorities departed abruptly carrying with them every moveable object including light posts and bulbs and commodes. When such highly centralized and repressive structure is abruptly removed, forces hitherto subdued, especially those ethnically mobilized, can be unleashed. The Malinke-Fulbe leadership divide remained a permanent feature of Guinean social order.

Political party structures were relied upon to provide arenas for the articulation and alignment of interests. Founded by trade unionists and rooted in the urban work force, the Democratic Party of Guinea, was organized around principles of democratic centralism. Its mode of decision-making was largely plebiscitary and its initial preoccupation was to fill the void created by the abrupt exit of the French. Having incurred French displeasure, the Guinean regime received the snob from every western country. In response, it adopted a more competitive posture in bipolar politics, joined the ranks of the non-aligned countries and developed close economic ties with the Eastern bloc and some African countries, notably Ghana, which at this time was also a part of the non-aligned countries.

Alignment within the PDG reflected a broad coalition of Guinean leaders from most ethnic groups, though fewer from the Fulbe, the largest group (Morgenthau, 1964). Fears of French machinations and Fulbe disruptions induced intense preoccupation with regime security and made for wider exclusion and repression (Groelsema, op cit.;). Stories of Guinean prison camps have been widespread since the death of Sekou Toure in 1984.<sup>14</sup> Millions of Guineas lived in exile in France and in neighboring West African countries.

Economic policy seeking to stimulate increased agricultural production vacillated between programs of collectivization and small holder production; neither of which yielded any sustainable success. (Yansane, 1984).

Two aspects of Guinean leadership strategy seemed readily discernible. The first was the bringing together of select elites in a leadership coalition; the second was the use of mass mobilization as an instrument of legitimization. In the latter, Toure delivered speeches to

the Guinean people and wrote extensively on every domestic and international issue of the day. “Mobilization against imperialism” and the pursuit of decolonization were his ideological preoccupation. Deepening of a sense of Guinean identity through strong emphasis on cultural-related activities was part of his effort to sustain domestic support in the face of meager international cooperation and considerable subterranean discontent. His was an attempt at sustaining a regime by deepening sense of national identity and cultural pride.<sup>15</sup>

The 26-year rule of Sekou Toure did not yield governance institutions that could survive him. Shortly after his death in 1985, a military coup took place and put an end to the rule of the Democratic Party of Guinea. It is within this context that political reforms have been attempted in Guinea in the last ten years. After ruling as a military leader for eight years, President Conteh, urged by the Bretton Woods institutions, organized a democratization program in early 1990s. This program included the promulgation of a new constitution and the holding of multiparty elections. Because it lacks a full appreciation of the nature of the historical processes and social forces that have produced autocracy in Guinea, the program has not been able to substantially advance democratization. Other measures that constitute Guinea’s agenda for democracy and development include a set of macro-economic reform measures and a scheme for the deconcentration of authority. These have become the core of a program of *good governance* designed for Guinea.<sup>16</sup> Not surprising, violence and human misery are on the rise in Guinea. A recently held referendum amended the constitution to extend the tenure of the president for another five years.

*Sierra Leone:* Sierra Leone, by contrast has reached its descend into violence and human misery through extraordinary leadership failure and disintegration of patrimonial politics. In Sierra Leone, British colonialism was more manipulative than penetrative. By amalgamating and disaggregating political jurisdictions, the British created a chieftaincy culture in Sierra Leonean governance processes. In the struggle for independence, these chieftaincies were highly politicized and ethnically mobilized. Mende and other southern chiefs were fully mobilized behind the Sierra Leone People Party in a lackluster campaign for gradual and amicable disengagement of British colonialism. At independence in 1961, Sierra Leone’s patrimonial politics produced a multiparty governance arrangement that was reflective of an array of interests linked from the parliament and state house to the villages of most major ethnic groups. This arrangement was not sustainable because it relied upon constant dispensing of largesse. It was not long before struggles for redistribution developed as political elites of the north felt increasingly marginalized. Politics became more polarized, ethnicized, and centralized—a zero-sum game with high stakes. Successive military takeovers and ethnic-based mass protests made for a precarious political environment. In 1968, the ascendancy to power of a coalition of political elites from the north led by Siaka Stevens ended the perception of instability but speeded up the descend into greater ethnic-based political exclusion and higher levels of corruption and rent-seeking. Appropriation of public goods by political leaders operating in concert with Lebanese merchants seemed to attain legendary proportions. A veritable *kleptocracy* was created (Reno, 1995; Kpundeh, 1994).<sup>17</sup>

Throughout the late 1980s international efforts to revive the Sierra Leone economy were spearheaded by the African Development Bank and the Bretton Woods institutions. Successive missions failed to sufficiently impress Sierra Leonean authorities of the importance of a degree of probity in the management of public affairs. Successive rural development schemes implemented to promote small holder agriculture among communities traditionally known to be exceptional farmers could not achieve or sustain desired impact due to a variety of reasons prominent among which initially was the primacy of constituency cohesion as a criterion in resource allocation; later, the deteriorating security environment. (Kamarah, 2001)

Disintegration and decay caused by governance failure constituted the combustible material for the violence and atrocities that has made Sierra Leone such a tragedy. Self-serving political leaders, armed bands and related types have been quick to seize the opportunity to exploit the discontent of populations and pursue agendas of plunder and pillage and instilling terror. Sierra Leonean rebel leader Foday Sankoh is one such person. Framing such objectives in ideological slogans, and joining Liberia's Charles Taylor's rebel forces, he and Taylor were able to find initial support from sources such as Libya. Control over territory provided access to natural resources, especially diamonds to be used to fuel such greater conflicts and maintain control over territory.

*Liberia:* Many Liberians and others in the international community did not appreciate the full implications of the military takeover of 1980. Coups have occurred so frequently in Africa that they can be perceived as yet another change of regime. For Liberia, the military takeover of 1980 brought to an end a century-old oligarchy; Liberia's governance system was uprooted. Much has been written about this oligarchy and how it created the combustible environment in which it collapsed and of the consequent violence and human tragedy that continues to unfold a quarter century later. This tragic saga need not be repeated here.<sup>18</sup> What is important here is an understanding of how that oligarchy produced a military whose offshoots became the instrument of mayhem, plunder and pillage, making Liberia the epicenter of a system of violent conflict in the Mano River basin area of West Africa.

Until the mid-1970s, the rank and file of the Liberian military was recruited from Liberia's indigenous patrimonial orders that were linked in a subordinate relationship to the settler oligarchy. Patterns of recruitment to the military were linked to lineage patterns and controlled by chiefs and elders. In many indigenous societies, to become a soldier was to acquire status. Not only was it a means of avoiding portage duties, it also provided a place in official hierarchy of government at levels up to the district. Soldiers assisted district commissioners, paramount and clan chiefs in the collection of taxes, conscription of labor and served as government couriers. In urban areas, soldiers were often indistinguishable from household help in the homes of high officials of government. Their families linked to those of government officials and other influential people in a patron-client network. Thus, the military itself consisted of a patrimonial

system that constituted one of pillars that made for stability in the relationship between settler oligarchy and its indigenous clientele.

These institutional ties and patterns of relationships were gradually undermined as changing property rights inflamed labor disputes that stemmed from the growth of the mining and plantation economies.<sup>19</sup> Also, by the early 1960s, the Congo Crisis triggered the need for Liberia's participation in international peacekeeping in the former Belgian Congo. This demand for peacekeepers raised concerns in official circles about the quality of the Liberian military. Thus, the demand for a professional military became apparent by the early 1960s; it was triggered by the need to quell perceived internal uprisings threatening to the state and by requirements thrust upon African statehood by an evolving international security regime.

With the establishment of a military academy in the late 1960s to improve the professional quality of the military came a major shift in the pattern of recruitment to the military and a transformation of Liberia's military culture. Lineages from rural patrimonial orders no longer supplied recruits to the military; instead recruits were now sought among literate and semi-literate youth of the urban and peri-urban areas. The military academy proved not to be exempt from the general decay that affected all public institutions in the last quarter of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The declining oligarchy proved incapable of establishing an effective military training program. The rank and file of the military did not develop loyalty to the oligarchy nor did they imbibe the qualities of a professional force. In its orientation it resembled those of the *lumpen* youth in Sierra Leone as described by Abdullah (1998).<sup>20</sup> The behavior of the military in quell street riots in 1979 foretold its undisciplined nature and disloyalty to the government. A year later, this military seized power and for almost a decade perpetrated acts of plunder and pillage and committed atrocities of extraordinary proportions. *Lumpen* militarism and brigandism became indistinguishable and officers of the *lumpen* military became the new leaders of Liberia in 1980.<sup>21</sup> It was also these soldiers and individuals drawn from the same social pool that were the recruits into the armed groups during the decade of violent conflicts beginning in 1989.

#### FROM *LUMPEN* MILITARY TO TERRORIST GANGS

African armed bands and their leaders are typically treated as if they are an undifferentiated bunch. The term *warlordism* is often used in scholarly studies and in the mass media to describe the activities of the leaders of such groups (Clapman, 1998; Berkeley, 2001; Ellis, 1999).<sup>22</sup> This characterization has not helped to deepen understanding of such groups or enhance efforts at peacemaking in conflicts in which they are involved. One has to understand the nature and composition of the National Patriot Front of Liberia (NPFL), the dominant armed group in the Liberian conflict, the character of its leader Charles Taylor and the environment within which they operated if one is to explain the conflict system in the Mano River Basin area and the monstrous atrocities committed. To call Taylor a warlord is to give the term new meaning.<sup>23</sup> Even the most sympathetic supporters of the NPFL had difficulty explaining why in seven years of control of anywhere from 40 per cent to 90 percent of Liberian territory and its

vast natural resource holdings, not a single school or clinic was established or maintained by the NPFL. The same can be said of the other armed bands whose leaders claimed to have been interested in ousting Taylor but whose behavior seemed largely to have been inspired by him.<sup>24</sup>

The point to be made here is that the concept of warlordism applies to a type of behavior that underpin a specific mode of rule and as much as certain elements of that pattern of control are reflected in the behavior of armed bands that operated in Liberia, the concept of warlordism does not fully apply to the mode of rule of such gangs and their leaders. The pervasiveness and intensity of looting, pillage, and plunder by the leaders and the rank and file, the lack of a stable and systematically organized structure of command and control among the armed bands, the criminal misuse of children, the employment of strategies of confidence artistry, the opportunistic use of a variety of cultural symbols, the orchestration of a state of anarchy as the normal environment of operation are all constitutive of the behavior of *gangsters who use terror* as their ultimate instruments of control. This mode of control draws from the worse aspects of an array of cultures ranging from the culture of urban gangsters and small town confidence artists of western society, and the *area boys and* swindlers of West African cities to marauding murderers. At various stages in the conflict, armed gangs opportunistically used a mix of symbols drawn out of context from various subcultures so as to establishment their legitimacy with one segment of society or another. Thus, we have a situation where rampant and unabashed opportunism combined with gratuitous use of violence to ensure that that which was culturally familiar and that which was feared became constitutive of Taylor's instruments of control.

Right from the start, Taylor's armed band consisted of individuals drawn from many West African countries. Several of his senior commanders were Sierra Leoneans, and Gambians. They had joined his group at the Libyan *Mathabat* where their training was sponsored by a Libyan government organization called *Maktub Tasdir al-Thawra* (literally translated "bureau for the export of the revolution.")<sup>25</sup> Whatever discipline and revolutionary principles instilled by such training seemed to have been undermined by the NPFL's leadership's exhortation to "capture what you can" and "keep what you capture." Thus, banditry was the ideology of the NPFL right from the start.<sup>26</sup> Confronted with rival armed bands and the resistance of a West African peacekeeping force that was frequently constrained to engage in peace enforcement, Taylor's NPFL needed to swell its ranks more quickly than had apparently been expected;<sup>27</sup> therefore, it resorted to indiscriminate recruitment and forced conscription. In the absence of a political ideology, terror, use of drugs and opportunity for booty served to drive the group and underpin personal loyalty to its leader. Children were the more vulnerable victims of this form of brutal control. NPFL commanders became their surrogate uncles and the *papay* became their father.<sup>28</sup> Far from seeking to establish a social order, educate or indoctrinate villagers and thereby win their support—behavior typical to the guerrilla movements of the 1970s—the NPFL and its cohorts in plunder so terrorized local populations that they fled in the rainforest and to refugee camps in Sierra Leone, Guinea and Ivory Coast.<sup>29</sup>

Thus, the objective of Charles Taylor was simply to seize power and not to reform society. And even in trying to seize power, the motive was not as much to conduct the affairs of government as to use government as an instrument of plunder.<sup>30</sup>

### Mode of Terror

For many observers, the viciousness and capriciousness of the killings have been difficult to explain. Some scholars have taken recourse to culture. None of the cultures to which such vicious killings are attributed have been known to permit such practices willy-nilly. In indigenous society, ritual killings under cultural institutions (*Poro*, *Gee* or otherwise) were never random and wanton. They were typically authoritatively carried out as sanctions within an institutional order. Condemnable and repugnant as such killings may be considered today, they are carried out under codes of sanctions having to do with the maintenance of patterns of rule-ordered relationships and the attainment of certain community goals. It is when rules break down that individuals run amok; determination of what is permitted or prohibited is then contingent upon personal and contextual circumstances. Gangsters turn terrorists drug children and young people, constitute their own “rules,” and use children and young people as perpetrators of crimes outside all norms. The drive of personal ambition, the availability of traumatized young people, knowledge of modes of destructive behavior from an array of situations, cultures and circumstances, and the opportunity provided by the collapse of order and lack of the restraining influences of regional or international communities, all combine to result in the humanitarian nightmare witnessed in Liberia and more monstrously in Sierra Leone.

As undisputed leader, Taylor was the only one in the NPFL who issued orders determining mode of warfare and internal discipline. His strategy of imposing terror as observed by both those who broke away from his organization as well as his loyal functionaries reflected a cruel disingenuousness. He maintained a small group of fighters for his most vicious of covert operations.<sup>31</sup> Young fighters were encouraged to rival each other with more gruesome killings as demonstration of battle prowess and loyalty to him. As each gruesome act earned recognition for its perpetrator, a cycle of gruesome acts escalates setting newer thresholds of brutality as “norms” of war. Ever escalating terror without rules exposes both victims as well as perpetrators: targets of terror became perpetrators of terror and a cycle of violence engulfed larger and larger areas.<sup>32</sup>

### A ‘Favorable’ Regional Environment

The carnage and plunder that has taken place in the Mano basin areas could not have continued for more than a decade in the absence of a conducive West African regional environment. With the ending of the Cold War, the vulnerability of African regimes was exposed. Disgruntled opponents of regimes could adopt opportunistic behaviors of regional scope and wealth-seeking leaders could accrue benefits by cooperating with such individuals.<sup>33</sup> The internal character of West African regimes (problems of over-centralization, personal rule and corruption) and the nature of their interaction among themselves (often characterized by personal friendships and bitter antagonisms) made for

an ideal environment for complex intrigues and machinations.<sup>34</sup> This was a conducive environment for Taylor's confidence artistry. Changing his colors and becoming all things to all West African leaders, Taylor presented himself as an understudy to Ghana's Jerry Rawlings, a son to Cote d'Ivoire's Houphuet Boigny, a Francophile to Togo's Eyadema, and a business partner to Burkina Faso's Compaore. To the military commanders of many of these countries, he strove to become an admired acquaintance, if not a close friend.<sup>35</sup> To Libya's Gaddafi, he portrayed himself as an anti-Western revolutionary. Thus, he was able to receive support from such a diverse group of leaders, many of whom did not see eye to eye.<sup>36</sup> Once he got started, access to natural resources provided the leverage he needed to deal with a wider range of actors.

Thus, the West African regional order, dominated by over-centralized, predatory regimes with leaders divided by colonial history, personal ambition and greed, proved to be fertile ground for conflict, including cross-border conflicts waged by armed bands led by opportunistic gangsters who could play on the fears, greed and personal ambitions of individual leaders whose countries were veritable powder kegs and could recruit from among their wretched but youthful populations. Over a decade of violent conflict, plunder and pillage, and illicit trade in drugs and natural resources, the region, at least the Mano basin area became a gangster's paradise.

### Gangsterism and Globalization

Gangster rule could not be sustained as a "governing" order in the Mano basin area without the supported of a conducive international environment. The nature of globalization and its impact on Africa is an issue of much contestation.<sup>37</sup> The persistence of violent conflicts and the emergence of what is called war economies have added new dimensions to the debate.<sup>38</sup> The role of economic incentives in sustaining, if not causing, such conflicts and the nature of the integration of war economies into the global economy are the subjects of scholarly analyses (Collier, 1998, 2000; Reno, 2000; Duffield; 2000). Shadow states with personalized or gangster-rulers may adopt their own pattern of interaction in the global order. Liberia presents a case that crystallizes the global context within which a gangster regime provides the nexus where the underworld economy of illicit trade merges with legitimate international trade and where functionary of states, including European states, operate in the twilight, at the nexus where economic transactions involving legitimate parties and rogue parties (whether private entities or state parties) become intertwined.

The economic role of the French government in the Liberian conflict clarifies how state parties can become promoters of economic interests of unsavory private entities operating in collaboration with gangsters-regimes. French policy toward Liberia throughout the Liberian conflict was formulated in the Elysee Palace and driven by French business interests including those of associates of French foreign policy functionaries such as Jean-Christophe Mitterand, former African policy advisor to the president of France and Michel Dupuch, France's ambassador to Cote d'Ivoire who has now moved into the position of African policy advisor.<sup>39</sup> Such foreign policy functionaries collaborating with

French and Ivoirian partners resident in Cote d'Ivoire—some of the latter having direct links to the household of Ivoirian President Houphuet Boigny—were involved in logging and minerals ventures with gangster-leaders of Liberia while advocating policies designed to ensure international acceptance of a prolonged state of balkanization of Liberia as an intermediate stage in the process of reaching a political settlement.<sup>40</sup>

When Taylor became president of Liberia in 1997, the marriage between gangster-rule and elements in the global community became official and the criminalization of the state was formalized. State structures were appropriated, as in the case of national security agencies that have been taken over by uniformed and non-uniformed armed gangs, or otherwise disregarded, as is the case with the legislature that should be exercising oversight of executive actions. In such circumstance, the nature of economic transactions conforms to the predisposition of the ruler. Playing conflicting sides and seeking opportunities from every quarter is much the style of Taylor. Contemporary global economic order operates to accommodate such behavior. Thus, in Liberia, diverse groups such as Christian fundamentalists of evangelist Pat Robertson, Al Qaeda operatives, Ukrainian underworld figures and multinational corporations such as DeBeers, operate together in the same market and under the same rules.<sup>41</sup>

International norms designed to address genocide, curtail human rights abuses, protect minority rights seem to be developing at a rate that outpaces the development of norm having to do with economic transactions that sustain violent conflicts and the atrocities associated with them. International initiative to curtail trade in “conflict diamonds” recognizes and seeks to address this gap. In some situations, economic entities have become integral parts of the machinery that fuels violence and commits atrocities. In Liberia, for example, the Oriental Timber Company operates an armed band that is integrated into and indistinguishable from state security forces. Privileged by both the government and company, this force contains elements of armed groups that operated with the RUF in Sierra Leone and are now in western Cote d'Ivoire. The company is known to be a partner of the Taylor regime in illicit arms trafficking.<sup>42</sup> What is needed to address the economic dimensions of violent conflicts is an international legal regime similar to that established to address gross violations of human rights.

### Bridging Conflicts

The “Taylor Factor” is much noted in West African conflicts. This factor manifests itself in several ways. First, Taylor became an inspiration to those who sought power by force and hoped that they would be able to legitimize their quest in a tolerant international climate, as did Taylor. (Kovsted and Tarp, 1999). Secondly, Taylor’s access to small arms through his connection with Libya and others linked him in a wider system of arms exchange and violent conflicts.<sup>43</sup> Thirdly, the involvement in the Ivorien conflict of armed Liberians and Sierra Leoneans associated with Taylor’s security forces has been established. Although there are Liberian free-lance mercenaries in many parts of West Africa, there is also a structure of command and control maintained by Taylor that links armed groups to illicit economic undertakings in other parts of the West African sub-region. Thus, while the Mano basin area remains the core area of operation, Taylor’s network seems to extent far beyond the

immediate area. His relationships with Idris Debbi of Chad and Lauren Kabila could not be explained except that all three of them were cohorts in Libya and may well have maintained commercial and military contacts.

## FALSE PEACE

Peace settlements agreed negotiated to end the violence in Liberia and Sierra Leone conformed to the standard peace making formula. The Abuja Agreement for Liberia provided for (a) a negotiated ceasefire (b) disarming and demobilizing of armed groups (c) a transitional government formed through a power-sharing arrangement among armed groups (d) presidential and parliamentary elections.<sup>44</sup> One of the differences between the Abuja Agreement for Liberia and the Lome Agreement for Sierra Leone, was that units of the army loyal to the government of Sierra Leone were not to be disarmed. In Liberia, only 40 per cent of the arms were collected and 60 per cent demobilization completed. During the transition, armed groups divided up executive and civil service positions among themselves while maintaining control of territory and continuing illicit trade in natural resources. Elections were held in an environment awash in arms. In many places, ex-combatants posing as local government functionaries kept a watchful eye over fearful voters.

Immediately following his election as president, Taylor embarked upon a witch hunting campaign. Within a year, many of those who fought against him and were now his targets had commenced an underground resistance called Liberian United for Reconciliation and Democracy (LURD). Now operating from bases in the southeastern forest region of Guinea, LURD's pronounced objective is to unseat Taylor. Southeastern Guinea provides an ideal environment for LURD not only because of its ecology but also because it is the area within which the Guinean army has been pursuing dissent soldiers who tried to overthrow President Conteh in 1998. These dissidents had linked up with Taylor's armed bands that operated in support of the RUF in Sierra Leone. And so there now exists in southeastern Guinea, eastern Sierra Leone and Liberia a theatre of war within a larger arena of violence and plunder and an even larger catchment area of illicit trade. The electoral victory of Taylor now provides a legal veneer under which much of the illicit trade takes place.

In Sierra Leone, under the Lome Agreement, the RUF of Foday Sankoh was allowed to take control of a number of government ministries including the public corporation that is responsible for the diamond trade. Sankoh himself was given the status equivalent to vice president of Sierra Leone.<sup>45</sup> Not totally pleased with his lot, and apparently unsure of his electoral prospects, Sankoh attempted to stall the disarming process and ordered his fighters into Freetown, a move designed to destabilize the transitional government. With his arrest as a result of a show of force by British and UN peacekeeping forces and public demonstrations by civil society groups, implementation of the peace settlement was not unduly disrupted. Elections were held and the RUF did not win a single seat in the new parliament. To bolster the fragile peace, the Sierra Leone government has established a process of reconciliation. With the support of the United Nations and external assistance,

a Truth and Reconciliation Commission has been established. Urged on by Britain, the United Nations has established a Special Court to prosecute perpetrators of war crimes and crimes against humanity and serious violations of human rights as identified in international criminal law. Yet the prospects for peace in Sierra Leone remain shaky as long as it is situated within a combustible environment that is gangsters' paradise.

There are several reasons why the peace settlements for Liberia and Sierra Leone produced false peace. First, the agreements were intended to provide practical measures designed to address the immediate situation of conflict by appeasing the belligerent parties. The peace prescriptions sought to address the urgent problem of silencing the weapons of violence and giving armed groups a stake in governance as a means of assuaging their desire for power. Secondly, implicit in this formula is the assumption that the power sought by the leaders of armed bands was the power to govern society. For groups that plundered and pillaged society for a decade, no evidence could be found in their behavior to justify this assumption. Thirdly, the notion of power sharing is underpinned by values of trust, tolerance and cooperation—values totally absent in the violence that characterized the relationships among belligerent groups on the one hand and their treatment of non-combatants and ordinary people on the other hand. Fourthly, the view that elections provide the best exit from violent conflict and the appropriate starting point in a process of democratization is contested. Electoral contests can themselves produce conflict that could shatter a fragile peace. Fifthly, the peace settlements failed to address the interconnectedness of the two conflicts. The intermingling of armed groups and the raiding of Sierra Leonean resources were already occurring at the time the Abuja Agreement for Liberia was concluded. Finally, anxious to appease the armed groups, the peace agreements totally ignored the interests of the people of the two countries. In the case of Liberia, the expectation that a transition process dominated by armed groups would yield democracy was wholly unfounded.

## THE WAY FORWARD

What we have seen in the Mano basin area of Guinea, Liberia and Sierra Leone is a conflict system with multiple flashpoints: armed bands of Liberians and Sierra Leoneans fighting each other and making forays into Guinea assisted by renegade Guinean soldiers and resisted by the Guinean military. From Liberia, the epicenter of the conflict system, freelance mercenaries as well as Liberian government supported bands have linked up with dissidents from the Ivoirian military and other armed groups in a widening arena of conflict in Cote d'Ivoire. At least 200,000 people have been killed in more than a decade of such conflicts and more than a million have been displaced. Fuelled by a robust international trade, both legitimate and illicit, this system of conflict can be sustained for decades. Given the magnitude and complexity of the conflict system, only a sustained multifaceted conflict resolution approach of regional scope involving local, national, regional and international actors can provide an appropriate and effective response. The first critical challenge is to create a sustainable security arrangement that can create an environment within which democratic governance arrangements can be established at multiple levels (local to regional) through processes of constitutional choice.

## Creating a Mano Basin Security Arrangement

Establishing and maintaining a security arrangement for the Mano basin area is an enormous undertaking that requires a significant international initiative. It involves the undertaking of multiple tasks designed first of all to restore order to the region and create an environment within which appropriate governance institutions can be established. Both the initial security arrangement as well as subsequent governance arrangements must be established at multiple levels by a variety of local, provincial, national, regional and international actors. There are several critical tasks that must be completed in establishing an initial security arrangement. The first is to ***disarm and demobilize*** all armed bands, including those associated with the Liberian government. Effective disarming and demobilization requires organized efforts to uncover hidden weapons and disguised forms of command and control. Demobilization can only be assured when ex-combatants are engaged in alternative activities that are productive; thus, rehabilitation and training are essential activities that must be very closely associated with successful demobilization. Engagement of a West African regional force with full logistical and financial support of the international community is required to mount a successful disarmament and demobilization campaign in the Mano basin area.

The establishment of an ***early warning and early action system*** is another critical task in establishing a security arrangement appropriate for the Mano basin area. Early detection makes possible early intervention; in this way, disputes and unseemly behavior can be addressed before they develop into violent conflicts. Effective early warning and early action require local knowledge of dispute patterns, effective local mechanisms of conflict resolution and local monitoring of the gathering storms. Constant vigilance and careful analysis of signals are critical. In some instances, the establishment of an early warning system requires setting up observatories with capabilities for analyzing information gathered through monitoring.<sup>46</sup> One of the major challenges of early warning and early action in the Mano basin area will be to address the numerous ethnic-based disputes and conflicts that have been caused or exacerbated by over a decade of violent conflicts. Notable among these are conflicts between the Mandingo and Lorma; the Grebo and Krahn; and the Mano and Gio on the one hand and the Mandingo on the other. Many of these involve cross-border ethnic communities. Thus, pan-ethnic and inter-ethnic associations, community-based organizations, and, where appropriate, religious bodies may will be needed to assist in this task.<sup>47</sup>

One of the more delicate issues associated with the reconstitution of order in a war-ravaged environment such as the Mano river basin area relates to the question of how to treat those who have committed war crimes. Many of those who have committed such crimes stand poised in national leadership positions. They have been rewarded with positions of authority as a tradeoff for ending the fighting. There are strong moral arguments against impunity and these are buttressed by practical concerns about how impunity can undermine post-conflict security arrangements. ***Addressing impunity*** through an international system of justice having to do with war crimes is an important responsibility of the international order. Fulfillment of that responsibility by the

international community will help to reinforce confidence of local people in their local and national security arrangements. When people who commit mass murder, amputate the arms of babies and disembowel women are felt to go scot-free, and in some cases, rewarded with high offices, there is no reason for ordinary people to have confidence in a national security arrangement. In Liberia, local people face their killers, harassers and intimidators daily. Such perpetrators of crimes are the influential businesses, leaders of the national security forces, deputy ministers and the most senior officials of government. A few are leaders of what seems to be itinerant armed bands that have been involved in bloody orgies in Sierra Leone and now the Cote d'Ivoire. Fragile national institutions cannot bring such people to justice nor can regional institutions. Local organizations and civil society organizations at all levels can provide evidence of the commission of such crimes but an international criminal tribunal has to be established to prosecute those against whom charges can be brought.<sup>48</sup>

Truth and reconciliation commissions are another important mechanism that should be a part of a regional security arrangement for the Mano River basin area. The purging of the national soul through confessions of wrongdoings and discussions of all the circumstances surrounding such acts can be critical to animating a spirit of forgivingness and developing a national psychology of renewal. Each country will have to devise its own path to a new beginning, *a process of reconciliation*. For Guinea, this may have to await the end of the era of President Conteh. Similarly for Liberia, a political environment controlled by Charles Taylor is inappropriate for such national soul searching. The major objective of TRCs is to expose the facts as seen by both the perpetrators and victims and to arrive at a basis for restoration. The pursuit of restorative justice as the central objective of TRCs is not incompatible with the punishment of war crimes as is the objective of an international criminal tribunal if both are pursued in proportions appropriate for the constitution of order through processes of constitutional choice. When an approach to reconstruction is dominated either by the pursuit of retributive justice as "victims" justice designed to attain revenge, or by reconciliation initiatives that are charades void of genuine expressions of remorse, its contribution can be seriously undermined.<sup>49</sup>

A truth and reconciliation commission can only kick-off a process of reconciliation. Reconciliation must be an objective underpinning all societal endeavors at all levels. Community-based organizations, inter-ethnic groups, and civil society organizations, religious bodies must spearhead such campaigns at local provincial, national and regional levels. The recently established council on mediation and reconciliation of the ECOWAS with its committee of elders should have a substantial role to play. However, the best approach to reconciliation is the establishment of systems of democratic governance through processes of constitutional choice.

## Establishing Foundations for Democratic Governance through Processes of Constitutional Choice

A crucial failing of standard approaches of establishing post-conflict governance arrangements is the over-emphasis on holding presidential and parliamentary elections as the first order of business. This preoccupation with elections is due to several reasons, the most important of which is the dominance of an orientation of top-down governance among those international actors who guide processes of creating order in post-conflict societies. Invariably, this orientation leads to the reconstitution of order in ways that strengthen the central state and create the potential for future governance failure. A second reason is that constitutional processes are seen to be the preserve of national elites who struggle among themselves for power. As long as elections can produce a national leadership, the making of a democratic order is perceived to be well underway. Mediator and donor fatigue is a third reason why elections are quickly held in such fragile situations and conflict declared resolved. African conflicts are typically protracted. Violence conflicts have persisted in the Mano basin area for a quarter of century. Post-Cold War conflagrations display shifting flashpoints. Once the flames are doused in one theatre, they flare up in another. Those who undertake mediation efforts and provide resources for peacekeeping and peacebuilding grow tired and are tempted to adopted quick-fixes and declare successes where a ray of hope may exist for a day. Understanding that a sustained international initiative is essential for conflict resolution and the establishment of appropriate institutions of governance in such a complex situation as the Mano basin area is of crucial importance.

The international community will have to take the responsibility for creating an the security environment within which the people of the Mano basin area can initiate processes through which they can arrive at theories of governance suitable to their own circumstances and establish appropriate governance institutions consistent with such theories.<sup>50</sup> The first step after the establishment of a secure environment is the establishment of appropriate interim governmental institutions whose major responsibility will be to launch constitutional processes that would involve all sectors of the population of each of the various countries. The challenge in this respect is to have open and informed discourse about the path to and pattern of democratic governance. Such discourse must include a diagnostic assessment that unravels governance dilemmas and point out institutional failings. Such assessment must put emphasis more on problem-solving than on finger-pointing and blame assignment.

Unfortunately in Sierra Leone, for example, post-conflict political discourse has not sufficiently attempted foster a deep understanding of institutional failures. Distressed by the murderous excesses of the RUF, Sierra Leoneans seemed to have considered the rent-seeking practices and the perversities of monocentric government of an order of importance unworthy of priority reform. Exceedingly gratified by the ending of the war—and rightly so—Sierra Leoneans have failed to reform governance institutions and have returned to business as usual. In Liberia, “post-conflict” political discourse remains superficial and focused largely on how national elections should be structured and what strategies should the opposition adopt to ensure electoral success. The fundamental

challenge of reconstituting order in ways that offer institutional reforms to address the dilemmas associated with repressive autocratic institutions has not been taken up. Thus, processes of constitutional choice cannot yield optimum success if they are not deepened sufficiently to identify and address fundamental problems. A major effort has to be made to overcome path dependent solutions.

Associated with the need for diagnostic assessments and for going beyond path dependent solutions, processes of constitutional choice in post-conflict situations must encourage the development and utilization of entrepreneurial skills. Innovations and good ideas do not drop from the sky and collective actions do not typically occur spontaneously. Entrepreneurship is usually required. Scholars, small holders, business people and others in society are frequently confronted with dilemmas that require problem-solving. Drawing from such experiences and from experiences of others elsewhere, new ideas and new institutional forms must be adapted where appropriate. Liberia's past experience in constitution making should prove instructive in this respect. In 1982, after conducting nation-wide discussions that identified institutional flaws and provided suggestions for addressing such dilemmas, both the constitution drafting commission as well as the constitutional advisory assembly lacked the entrepreneurial skills and will to craft appropriate governance institutions to address the concerns expressed by the Liberian people through town meetings and village assemblies. From around the country came recommendations for the establishment of county councils and the election of county superintendents. The commission could not reconcile these recommendations with the constitutional orthodoxy associated with a theory of unitary sovereignty. For its part, the constitutional assembly was so blinded by the ambition of its members that it ended up strengthened the authority of the president rather than creating other centers of authority as the people had recommended. While Liberians were encouraged to participate in constitutional discourse, their views were not significantly taken into account.<sup>51</sup> Thus, participatory processes of constitution making can be meaningless if the will and entrepreneurship to transform ideas into institutional forms are lacking.

### Crafting Appropriate Governance Institutions

Governance reforms that depart from autocracy and monocentric governance must be based on a theory of governance that vests limited authority in several centers rather than centralizing power in a single center. Thus, polycentric governance of local to regional scale is appropriate.<sup>52</sup> In constituting such order in the Mano river basin area, it is important that institutional reforms be made consistent with the nature of the governance challenges that confront the societies of the area. Certain reforms will have to be made on a regional scale and others at local, provincial or national scales. The nature of public goods and services to be delivered must determine the type and scale of institutional arrangements to be crafted. Institutional reform must provide both general purpose and task-specific governance institutions and such institutions must coexist, interact and overlap as necessary to ensure the efficient and equitable provision of such public goods and services (Frey and Eichenberger (1999)).<sup>53</sup>

Appropriate studies will have to be undertaken to address questions of equity and efficiency, especially as they relate to the establishment of appropriate jurisdictions for the provision of public good. An appropriate jurisdiction for the provision of a public service is typically designated on the basis of its capacity to internalize the externalities associated with the provision of the public service (McKinnon and Nechyba, 1999). For example, as discussed above, the provision of effective security services requires a strong regional institutional arrangement that should involve the countries of the Mano basin area as well as ECOWAS and international actors. For example, where ethnic communities straddling the borders of the three countries have had a history of conflict, special purpose governance arrangements that draw upon inter-ethnic conflict management mechanisms may need to be set up. In other cross-border areas of Guinea, Liberia, and Sierra Leone, where long-standing patterns of trade among ethnic groups have for centuries constituted the economic lifeblood of larger catchment areas, special institutional arrangements may be needed for addressing governance challenges in such areas. The location and nature of some deposits of natural resources also give reasons for organizing regional patterns of governance. The rich depositions of iron ore of the low mountain range of northern Liberia and southeastern Guinea and the hydroelectric potentials of the Cavalla river can only be efficiently exploited through patterns of cooperation between Liberia and Guinea on the one hand and Liberia and Cote d'Ivoire on the other.

Hence, the establishment of patterns of regional governance is critical to the provision of an array of public goods such as peace and security, justice and rule of law, and natural resource and physical infrastructure development. Processes and strategies of constitutional choice in Liberia, for example, must conceive of regional scale of governance right from the start rather than perceiving such scale as relating to externalities that can be addressed later. What this means is that the role of regional institutions such as the Mano River Union and the Economic Community of West African States must be seen as critical actors in processes of constitutional choice undertaken to establish self-governing orders in the West African sub-region.

ECOWAS has initiated a number of institutional responses to the widespread security crisis, the quest for justice and the economic challenges facing West African societies. The ECOWAS Monitoring Group (ECOMOG) has been made a permanent community peace-keeping force; it has established the West African Community Court of Justice and the West African Parliament. With the forming of the West African Monetary Institute, the Community has moved closer to the establishment of a central bank and the issuance of a single currency, the *Eco*.<sup>54</sup> The major problem with most of these initiatives is that they are proceeding largely if not solely as state undertakings with little or no inputs from the people of West African societies. Civil society's involvement in considerations of a West African security architecture is marginal if not only cosmetic. Demarcation of observation and data collection centers and the establishment of local early warning networks of communities and towns are all proceeding without discussions that involve representatives of local communities in any substantial way. A council of elders established to assist in sub-regional conflict mediation consists solely of individuals

directly appointed by governments. The Community Court accords standing to individuals but only through national governments. State actors and West African Community actors provide mutual reinforcements as the West African community becomes infected with the malaise of West African states without being infused with the energizing inputs of people-driven West African institutions. This is why the establishment of people-centered governance arrangements is critical at the West African regional scale as it is of profound importance at local and national levels.

## CONCLUSIONS

The Mano basin area is a site of a violent system of conflict that has produced profound human tragedies. While the conflict that rages there bears similarities to conflicts elsewhere in Africa, each conflict warrants careful studies that uncover its special features and reveal clues as to how its challenges can be addressed. Understanding the context, actors and incentives that drive each conflict is of critical importance in the search for solutions. A complex system of conflict such as that which has unfolded in the Mano basin cannot be addressed in whole through atomistic state-centered prescriptions. Neither can such conflict system be resolved through a quick-fix solution. As a regional conflict system with global aspects, much more than a local solution is needed. Conflict resolution and the establishment of order in the area require nothing short of the reconstitution of complex configurations of self-governing orders from the level of villages to regional levels. This is a momentous task that cannot be accomplished without a properly coordinated and sustained international effort.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> Adedeji (1999) has argued that a major cause of failure to properly address African conflicts stems from failure to “comprehend and master” them.

<sup>2</sup> For a discussion of predatory regimes, see Evans (1992)

<sup>3</sup> IDP figures usually reflect those persons who are being care for by humanitarian organizations and not those who take refugee deep within the forest and other ecological sanctuaries and have not been reached by such organizations. In Congo Brazzaville, for example, hundreds of the estimated 7,100 IDPs were yet to be found and returned to their villages in mid-2000, more than a year after the fighting had ended. (See ICRC News, 2000)

<sup>4</sup> See *State of the World's Children, 2001*. New York:: UNICEF, 2001.

<sup>5</sup> See *World Situation Reports*, Geneva: ICRC, 2000.

<sup>6</sup> Personal experience as evidenced in the case of Liberia where young children acting out governance roles in school more often demonstrate preference for military roles than for any other types of roles.

<sup>7</sup> After more than two decades of tumultuous relationships beginning in the mid 19<sup>th</sup> century, British colonial authorities and the Liberian government reached an agreement demarcating Liberian-Sierra Leonean boundary at the Mano river (Sawyer, 1992; Bah, 1987). In mid-1970s, an economic cooperation organization was formed between Liberia and Sierra Leone and named the Mano River Union. Thus, Mano river, which was a source of colonial dispute became a symbol of cooperation between the two countries. In the early 1980s, Guinea became the third member of the Mano River Union.

<sup>8</sup> For a history of the Upper Guinea Coast, see Rodney (1970). See Davidson (1998) and Fage (1995) for a history of the larger area including the Lower Guinea Coast.

<sup>9</sup> Mount Auriel in Freetown, and Cape Mount in Liberia are among the most scenic.

<sup>10</sup> Niane (1965) has provided a much celebrated account of Sundiata.

<sup>11</sup> By some accounts, the forest region became the home of some groups as early as “prehistoric times.” See H. Baumann and Diedrich Westermann as quoted in d’Azevedo 1962, p.512.).

<sup>12</sup> Suret-Canale (1964) tells us that in Guinea, in 1903, there were an estimated 100,000 djoula traders out of a population of 2 million.

<sup>13</sup> German trade was terminated with the First World War as trading houses from Bordeaux and Marseilles now dominated trade in the French West African colonies. (Suret-Canale, *ibid*)

<sup>14</sup> See for example, Bah (1987); *World Population Prospects 2000*. New York: UNPD, (2000.).

<sup>15</sup> Publications of his include an extensive treatise titled, *Revolution, Culture, and Panafrikanism*.

<sup>16</sup> See *Guinea: Enhanced Structural Adjustment Facility: Economic and Financial Policy Framework, 1998-2000* Washington, D.C.: International Monetary Fund, 1998; *Guinea Letter of Intent and Memorandum of Economic Policies*. March 20, 1998.

<sup>17</sup> Despite its enormous mineral resources, especially diamonds and alluvial golds and hydro-electric potentials, Sierra Leone was without electricity and pipe-borne water for years during the late 1980s and early 1990s.

<sup>18</sup> For some of the more widely known accounts of oligarchic rule in Liberia see, Liebenow (1967), Lowenkopf (1976)

<sup>19</sup> Rubber production and iron ore mining were the two dominant economic export activities and foreign exchange earners. Together they accounted for more than 40 per cent of the wage earning labor force. For about a decade as of the early 1960s, government’s resistance of workers’ initiative to constitute unions and collective bargaining associations was a constant source of tension. Sporadic strikes were perceived by the government to threaten the security of the state. (See Clower et al. (1964), Mayson and Sawyer (1979), van der Kraaij (1983)

<sup>20</sup> Ibrahim Abdullah (1998) has aptly used referred to hordes of unemployed, restless and ill-mannered youth of Freetown and other urban areas of Sierra Leone as *lumpen* youth.

<sup>21</sup> It is this behavior that led Arthur Abraham (2001) to refer to Sierra Leonean soldiers as “sobel”, that is, soldier turn rebel.

<sup>22</sup> In previous writings, I, too, have referred to Charles Taylor and other leaders of armed bands in the Liberian conflict as warlords. See, for example Sawyer, 1996

<sup>23</sup> Warlordism is a concept used to described patterns of government in Imperial China in which individuals, typically of Mandarin background, organized armies that provided defense for magistrates who

were supposed to be in control of administrative jurisdictions. Many of these protectors usurped authority and became grossly exploitative (Yang, 1987). As Imperial China declined, warlordism flourished; many seized control of vast jurisdictions, raised large armies and engaged in aggressive extraction. In their effort to develop a warlord model applicable to Africa, Charlton and May (1989:20) refer to Chiang Kai-shek's—one of the last Chinese warlords—characterization of warlord behavior: “lack of a political principle, occupation of an area, an insatiable need for money and property, love of his own skin, and dependence on imperialist support.” As unflattering as these qualities are, yet, warlords did establish administrations, govern people, relate to the gentry, support education, organize standing armies and employ the methods and tactics of conventional warfare (Pye, 1971; Ch'i, 1976). Some even struggled to reduce corruption (Sheridan, 1966).

<sup>24</sup> Between 1991 and 1996, at least five armed bands were involved as warring parties in the conflict.

<sup>25</sup> See Simons (1993); Mattes (1995).

<sup>26</sup> Admittedly, Taylor's public relations postures designed to impress special audiences were totally different. As will be discussed below deceit, deception and duplicity were at the core of his demeanor.

<sup>27</sup> Early in the conflict, Taylor had promised to fight Doe in what he called “a 12-round heavy weight bout.” He anticipated a long grueling struggle against Doe but not against multiple factions, beginning with a splinter group and later several others, and frequently against ECOMOG, the West African peacekeeping groups. He sought to take the country inch by inch, establishing his control and appropriating resources every step of the way.

<sup>28</sup> Papay is a Liberian expression used with reference to a father figure or with reverence to any male.

Children were the most loyal among those recruited, always ready to do the bidding of their superiors and consequently always called upon to become “cannon fodder” and to commit the most vicious crimes.

<sup>29</sup> At the peak of war in 1990-1992, when the NPFL claimed to have controlled 70 per cent of the land, about 40 percent of the population had sought security in Monrovia, 30 percent in refugee camps in neighboring countries (mainly Cote d'Ivoire, Guinea and Sierra Leone) and only about 30 percent scattered in towns and villages including hamlets deep within the rainforest. (See United Nations High Commission on Refugees (UNHCR) reports on Liberia, 1990-1996.) Taylor's boast of being in control of more than 70 percent of Liberian territory, rang hallow to Liberians, even if perceived by his international supporters as reasonable claims of “effective occupation.”

<sup>30</sup> This fact has only become obvious over time to many who supported Taylor from the start of his campaign.

<sup>31</sup> These are the ones who would ensure mysterious disappearances or torturous murder of Taylor's targets. They consist largely of illiterate or semi-literate youngsters who enjoy special privilege from Taylor: they are showered with money, cars and other perquisites. One such youngster was made a three-star general in the security service after Taylor's election in 1997 and is reported to have remarked during his wedding party: “I give thanks to President Taylor first and God second.”

<sup>32</sup> According to those who observed him operate, it was not unusual for Taylor to instruct a fighter or group of fighters to eliminate a target and then, instruct still others to eliminate the eliminators. It was also not unusual for him to organize theatrics such as bringing together a group of elders and later informing his victims that he had been bestowed with *Poro* authority, and then act in the name of such authority to execute those he wished. Similarly, while a rebel leader, he would organize investiture ceremonies and bestow bogus Liberian government decorations on rural elders whose compliance he needed and then turn mobs of young fighters on those elders who refused to comply with his demands.

<sup>33</sup> Such was the case with Taylor and Burkinabe President Campaore. A similar situation seems to have developed in the DR Congo.

<sup>34</sup> For example, President Felix Houphuet Boigny's strong dislike of Samuel Doe was well known; his privately expressed wish to see the sub-region free of Doe remained an idle wish as long as Doe enjoyed American support. Once Doe lost American support, Houphuet Boigny wasted no time in supporting Doe's overthrow. Suspicious of Houphuet Boigny's intention, Guinea's Conteh was prepared to intervene unilaterally if needs be.

<sup>35</sup> Like Jerry Rawlings, many senior officers of the Ghanaian military privately admired what they saw as Taylor's courage; Ivorian military leaders, especially General Guei, Houphuet-Boigny's chief of staff became a close friend of Taylor's; so also did Togolese chief of staff (later minister of defense) General Tijani. As a rebel leader, Taylor's links with the military brass of West Africa were deeper than could have

been detected at a superficial glance. His personal friendship and business connections with Compaore were well known. In 1993 a senior military officer of the army of a West African country, distressed about these relationships expressed to me in confidence his fears that with as little as a few thousand US dollars, the security files of many West African governments could be accessed due to seething corruption in the ranks of the military and bureaucracies of many West African countries.

<sup>36</sup> For example, Houphuet Boigny and Rawlings had long been at odds; so also had Rawlings and Compaore. Houphuet Boigny was no close friend of Gaddafi; moreover, his close association with the French government with which Gaddafi was at odds made such collaboration with Gaddafi unusual.

<sup>37</sup> Cheru (1996) and Mkandawire (1999) are among those who have argued that globalization is likely to seal Africa's economic marginalization, wreak further hardships on the poor—especially peasants, and consolidate an emergent sovereignty of the Bretton Woods institutions over African economies. While mindful of such pitfalls, there are others, notably the Bretton Woods institutions themselves and the OECD that are more optimistic, believing that with democratization, macroeconomic reforms, trade liberalization and other relevant changes, foreign private capital can be attracted and economic growth and development spawned.

<sup>38</sup> There is a growing body of scholarly work focusing on the economic motives, activities and outcomes associated with internal wars and violent conflicts. See, for example, Berdal and Malone (2000); Cilliers and Mason (1999); Reno (1998). Rufin and Jean (1996).

<sup>39</sup> Mitterand has since been indicted by a French court for illicit business dealing elsewhere in Africa while serving as African policy advisor in the president's office. See Suzanne Daley's, "Mitterand's Son Free on Bail after 21 Days," *New York Times*, vol. 150. no. 51631, p.A11, January 12, 2001; Paul Michaud's "Dodgy Arms Sales to Angola," *New African*. No. 395 p.16. April, 2001. French businessman Robert Sanpei, a close friend of Dupuch was involved in a timber venture with Taylor. Dupuch and Sanpei together paid numerous visits to Taylor in his rural stronghold. Based in Abidjan, Sanpei is said to have paid out thousands of dollars to Taylor operatives.

<sup>40</sup> The son of Guy Nairay, a close associate and friend of long standing of President Felix Houphuet Boigny, was deeply involved in logging in Liberia under Taylor.

<sup>41</sup> See Washington Post, Sunday December 29, 2002; "Pat Robertson's Letter to the Editor of the Washington Post at [www.patrobertson.com](http://www.patrobertson.com), the New Republic, (November 19, 2001).

<sup>42</sup> For more on Oriental Timber Company, see Global Witness, "Logging Off: How the Liberian Timber Industry Fuels Liberia's Humanitarian Disaster and Threatens Sierra Leone" (September 2002); Global Witness, "The Logs of War: The Timber Trade and Armed Conflict." Fafo, Institute for Applied Social Science, Norway. (March 2002), [www.globalwitness.org](http://www.globalwitness.org).

<sup>43</sup> See *Controlling Small Arms Proliferation and Reversing Cultures of Violence in Africa and the Indian Ocean*, Monograph No. 30, Septem 1998. Institute of Security Studies, South Africa..

<sup>44</sup> See *Abuja Peace Agreement*, Abuja, Nigeria: Economic Community of West African States, 1996.

<sup>45</sup> See *Lome Peace Agreement*, Abuja, Nigeria: Economic Community of West African States, 1998.

<sup>46</sup> For an enlightening discussion of early warning systems, see Klaas van Walraven ed. (1998).

<sup>47</sup> Poro leaders and Mandingo Imans have been able to restore trust among Mandingo and Lorma people who live together in many multiethnic communities in northwestern Liberia. Such indigenous peacemaking mechanisms are hardly ever acknowledged for their contribution to peacemaking and incorporated in multileveled peacebuilding strategies.

<sup>48</sup> A Special Court for Sierra Leone has been established and has gotten off to a slow start. No much has been said about the scope of operation of the court.

<sup>49</sup> Rwanda's dilemma with the trials of genocidaires and South Africa's experience with the TRC are examples of a quest for "victim's justice" on the one hand and a balanced approach to reconciliation on the other. See, Mamdani (2001) Tutu (1999).

<sup>50</sup> This is the essence of a process of constitutional choice. See Vincent Ostrom [1971] 1987, 1990, 1997. For an understanding of institutions and governance in a variety of circumstances, see E. Ostrom, 1986, 1990, 1992, McGinnis (1999, 1999a).

<sup>51</sup> See Sawyer, (1987).

<sup>52</sup> See V. Ostrom, [1971] 1987; McGinnis, *ibid*

<sup>53</sup> Hooghe and Marks (2001) have analyzed both types and shown how they complement each other.

<sup>54</sup> See ECOWAS website at [www.cedeao.org](http://www.cedeao.org)

---

 REFERENCES

Adedeji, Adebayo (ed.) 1999. *Mastering and Comprehending African Conflicts*. London: Zed Press.

Abraham, Arthur. 1978. *Mende Government and Politics Under colonial Rule: A Historical Study of Political Change in Sierra Leone 1890-1937*. Freetown: Sierra Leone University Press.

Abdullah, Ibrahim. 1998. "Bush Path to Destruction: The Origin and Character of the Revolutionary United Front/Sierra Leone." *Journal of Modern African Studies*. Vol. 36 No. 2. pp.203-236.

Abuja Peace Accord on Liberia. 1996. Abuja: Economic Community of West African States.

Ake, Claude 1996. *Democracy and Development in Africa*. Washington, D.C.: The Brookings Institution.

Ayittey, George, B.N. 1992. *Africa Betrayed*. New York: St Martin's Press

Azarya, Victor. 1978. *Aristocrats Facing Change: The Fulbe in Guinea, Nigeria and Cameroon*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

\_\_\_\_\_. 1987. "The Nineteenth-Century Partition of Kissiland and the Contemporary Possibilities for Reunification." *Liberian Studies Journal*. Vol. 12 No. 1. pp.38-55.

Bah, M. Alpha. 1998. *Fulbe Presence in Sierra Leone: A Case History of Twentieth-Century Migration and Settlement among the Kissi of Koindau*. New York: Peter Lang.

Boyden, Jo. 1994. "Children's Experience of Conflict Related Emergencies: Some Implications for Relief Policy and Practice." *Disasters*. Vol. 18. No. 3. pp254-267.

Bracken, Patrick J. 1998. "Hidden Agendas: Deconstructing Post Trumatic Stress Disorder." *Rethinking the Trauma of War*. Peter Bracken and Celia Petty eds. London: Free Association Books.

Berdal, Mats and David M. Malone. Eds. 2000. *Greed and Grievance: Economic Agendas in Civil Wars*. Boulder: Lynne Rienner Publishers.

Berkeley, Bill. 2001. *The Graves Are Not Yet Full: Race, Tribe and Power in the Heart of Africa*. New York: Basic Books.

---

*Canadian Security Intelligence Service 2000 Public Report. CSIS Website*

Charlton, Roger and Roy May. 1989. "Warlords and Militarism in Chad." Review of African Political Economy.

Chi, His-sheng. 1976. *Warlord Politics in China 1916-1928*. Palo Alto: Stanford University Press.

Clapham, Christopher. 1998. "Introduction: Analysing African Insurgencies." In his (ed.) *African Guerrillas*. Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press.

Collier, Paul. 2000. "Doing Well out of War: An Economic Perspective." In Berdal, Mats and David M. Malone, eds. *Greed and Grievances: Economic Agendas in Civil Wars*.

Conteh-Morgan, Earl and Mac Dixon-Fyle. 1999. *Sierra Leone and the End of the Twentieth Century: History, Politics and Society*. New York: Peter Lang

Copeland, Miles. 1969. *The Games of Nations: The Amoralty of Power Politics*. New York: Simon and Schuster.

Davidson, Basil. 1998. *West Africa Before Colonial Era: A History to 1850*. London, New York: Longan.

D'Azevedo, Warren L. 1969-1971. "A Tribal Reaction to Nationalism." Parts 1-4. *Liberian Studies Journal*. 1 (spring 1969):1-21; 2 (1969): 43-63; 2 (1970):99-115; 3 (1970-1971):1-19.

Delafosse, Maurice. 1900. "Un etat negre: La republique de Liberia." *Bulletin du Comite de l'Afrique Francais: Renseignements Coloniaux*. No.9

Derman, William. 1973. *Serfs, Peasants, and Socialists: Former Serf Village in Republic of Guinea*. Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press.

Diallo, Djibril. 1985. "Definition of Fulbe Culture." In *Distinctive Characteristics and Common Features of African Cultural Areas South of the Sahara*. Paris: UNESCO

Duffield, Mark. 2000. "Globalization, Transborder Trade, and War Economies." In Berdal, Mats and David M. Malone, *Greed and Grievances: Economic Agendas in Civil Wars*.

Dunn, D. Elwood, and S. Byron Tarr. 1988. *Liberia: A National Polity in Transition*. Metuchen, N.J.: Scarecrow Press.

Dupire, Marguerite. 1962. *Peuls Nomades: Etude Descriptive de Wodaabe du Sahel Nigerien*. Paris: Institut d'ethnologie.

- 
- Ekeh, Peter, 1975. "Colonialism and the Two Publics in Africa: A Theoretical Statement." *Comparative Studies in Society and History*. Vol. 17, no. 1. pp 91-112.
- Ellis, Stephen. 1996. *The Mask of Anarchy: The Roots of Liberia's War*. New York: New York University Press.
- Evans, Peter, Dietrich Rueschemeyer, Theda Skocpol eds. (1985) *Bringing the State Back In*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Fage, J.D. 1995. *A History of Africa*. London, New York: Routledge.
- Frey, Bruno and Reiner Eichenberger. 1999. *The New Democratic Federalism for Europe: Functional, Overlapping, and Competing Jurisdictions*. Cheltenham: Edward Elgar.
- Fyle, C. Magbaily. 1981. *The History of Sierra Leone: A Concise Introduction*. London: Evans Brothers Limited.
- Gable, Eric. 2000. "The Culture Development Club: Youth, Neo-Tradition, and the Construction of society in Guinea-Bissau." *Anthropological Quarterly*. Vol 73. No. 4. pp195-210.
- Garbarino, James, Kathleen Kostelny and Nancy Dubrow. 1991. *No Place to be a Child: Growing Up in a War Zone*. San Francisco: Bossey-Bass.
- Global IDP, 2000*. Norwegian Refugee Council, Oslo.
- Global Witness, 2002. *The Logs of War: The Timber Industry and Armed Conflict*. Oslo: Fafo, Institute for Applied Social Science.
- \_\_\_\_\_. 2002. "Logging Off: How Liberian Timber Industry Fuels Liberia's Humanitarian Disaster and Threatens Sierra Leone." (March) [www.globalwitness.org](http://www.globalwitness.org).
- Gordon, David F. and Howard Wolpe 1998. "The Other Africa." *World Policy Journal*. Vol. 15. No. 1 pp.49-62.
- Greenberg, Joseph H. 1963. *The Languages of Africa*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.
- Groelsema, Robert J. 1998. "The Dialectics of Citizenship and Ethnicity in Guinea." *Africa Today*. Vol. 45 No. 3-4 pp.411-423.
- Guinea: Enhanced Structural Adjustment Facility, Economic and Financial Policy Paper, 1998-2000*. IMF Website

---

*Guinea: Letter of Intent and Memorandum of Economic Policies.* 1998. IMF Website.

Gurr, Ted. Ed. 2000. *Peoples Versus States: Minorities At Risk in the New Century.* Washington, D.C.: United States Institute of Peace Press.

Gwynne-Jones, D.R.G; P.K. Mitchell, M.E. Harvey; K. Swindell. 1978. *A New Geography of Sierra Leone.* London: Longman.

Hamilton, Alexander, John Jay and James Madison. [1788] n.d. *The Federalist.* Ed. Edward M. Earle. New York. Modern Library.

Holsoe, Svend. 1971. "A Study of Relations between Settlers and Indigenous Peoples in Western Liberia, 1821-1847." *African Historical Studies* 2:331-62.

Hooghe, Liesbet and Gary Marks. 2001. *Multi-Level Governance and European Integration.* Boulder, Colorado: Rowman & Littlefield.

Hyden, Goran. 1996. "African Studies in the Mid-1990s: Between Afro-Pessimism and Amero-Skepticism." *African Studies Review.* Vol. 39. No. 2. pp 1-17.

*ICRC News*, April-June 2000, ICRC Website

Kamarah, Umar I. 2001. *Sustainable Rural Development: Semantics or Substance: The Study of Rural Projects in North Western Sierra Leone (1985-1995)* Lanham: University Press of America.

Kovsted, Janes and Finn Tarp. 1999. "Guinea Bissau: War, Reconstruction and Reform." Working Paper No. 168. United Nations University and World Institute for Development Economics Research, Helsinki. (November)

Kpundeh, Sahr John. 1994. *Politics and Corruption in Africa: A Case Study of Sierra Leone.* Lanham, Md.: University Press of America.

Lake, David and Donald Rothchild. Eds. 1998. *The International Spread of Ethnic Conflict: Fear, Diffusion, and Escalation.* Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Liebenow, J. Gus. 1987. *Liberia: the Quest for Democracy.* Bloomington: Indiana University Press.

Little, Kenneth. 1967. *The Mende of Sierra Leone: A West African Pople in Transition.* London: Routledge and Kegan.

Lome Peace Agreement on Sierra Leone. 1997. Abuja: Economic Community of West African States.

- 
- Maine, Henry S. 1960 [1917] *Ancient Law* London: J. M. Dent & Sons Ltd.
- Mamdani, Mahmood. 1996. *Citizen and Subject: Contemporary Africa and the Legacy of Late Colonialism*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Mattes, Hanspeter. 1995. "The Rise and Fall of the Revolutionary Committees." in Dirk Vandewalle (ed.) *Qadhafi's Libya, 1969-1994*. New York: St. Martin's Press.
- Mayson, Dew Tuan-Wleh and Amos Sawyer. 1979. "Labor in Liberia." *Review of African Political Economy*. No. 14.
- Morgenthau, Ruth Schachter. 1964. *Political Parties in French-Speaking West Africa*. London: Oxford University Press.
- Niane, Djibril T. 1965. *Sundiata: An Epic of Old Mali*. Essex: Longman.
- Nwokedi, Emika. 1998. "Causes of Conflict in the Third World Project." The Hague: The Netherlands Institute of International Relations, "Clingendael."
- Ostrom, Vincent. 1993 [1988]. "Cryptoimperialism, Predatory State, and Self-Governance." In Vincent Ostrom, David Feeny and Hartmut Picht. (eds.) *Rethinking Institutional Analysis and Development: Issues, Alternatives, and Choices*. San Francisco: Institute for Contemporary Studies Press. Pp.43-68.
- \_\_\_\_\_. 1997. *The Meaning of Democracy and the Vulnerability of Democracies: A Response to Tocqueville's Challenge*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.
- Porter, Arthur T. 1966. *Creolehood: A Study of the Development of Freetown Society*. 1<sup>st</sup> ed. Reprinted with corr. London: Oxford University Press.
- Posen, Barry R. 1993. "The Security Dilemma and Ethnic Conflict." In Michael E. Brown., ed. *Ethnic Conflict and International Security*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Pye, Lician. 1971. *Warlord Politics: Conflict and Coalition in the Modernization of Republican China*. New York: Praeger.
- Reno, William. 1995. *Corruption and State Politics in Sierra Leone*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- \_\_\_\_\_. 2000. "Shadow States and the Political Economy of Civil Wars." In Berdal, Mats and David M. Malone. *Greed and Grievance*.
- Rieff, David. 1998/99. *World Policy Journal*. Vol. 15. No. 4. pp10-27.

---

Richards, Paul. 1985. *Indigenous Agricultural Revolution: Ecology and Food Production in West Africa*. Boulder: Westview Press.

Rodney, Walter. 1970. *A History of the Upper Guinea Coast, 1545-1800*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.

Sawyer, Amos. 1987. *Effective Immediately—Dictatorship in Liberia, 1980-1986: A Personal Perspective*. Bremen, Germany: Liberia Working Group.

\_\_\_\_\_. 1992. *The Emergence of Autocracy in Liberia: Tragedy and Challenge*. San Francisco: ICS Press.

Schulze, Willi. 1973. *A New Geography of Liberia*. London: Longman.

Schwab, Peter. 2001. *Africa: A Continent Self-Destructs*. New York: St. Martin's Press.

Sen, Amartya. 1989. *Hunger and Public Action*. Reprinted in *The Amartya Sen & Jean Dreze Omnibus*. Oxford University Press. 1999.

Ssheridan, James. 1966. *Chinese Warlord: The Career of Feng Yu-hsiang*. Palo Alto: Stanford University Press.

Simons, Geoff. 1993. *Libya: The Struggle for Survival*. New York: St. Martin's Press.

Suret-Canale, Jean. 1964. *French Colonialism in Tropical Africa, 1900-1945*. London: C. Hurst & Company.

Szeftel, Morris. 2000. "Between Governance and Underdevelopment: Accumulation and Africa's "Catastrophic Corruption." *Review of African Political Economy*. Vol. 27. No. 84. pp287-307

Tocqueville, Alexis de. [1835] 1969. *Democracy in America*. Ed. J.P. Mayer; trans. George Lawrence. Garden City, New York: Doubleday. First published in 1835.

Toure, Ahmed Sekou. (n.d.) *Revolution, Culture and Panafricanism*. African Democratic Revolution. No. 88 (English First Edition.)

\_\_\_\_\_. 1982. *De la Resistance Africaine a l'intrusion coloniale*. Conakry

Tutu, Desmond. 1999. *No Future Without Forgiveness*. New York: Doubleday.

UNICEF, *State of the World' Children, 2001*. New York: unicef.

---

United Nations Population Division. 2000. *World Population Prospects 2000*. New York: UNPD, 2000.

West, Harry G. 2000. "Girls With Guns: Narrating the Experience of War of FRELIMO'S "Female Detachment." *Anthropological Quarterly*. Vol. 73. No.4. pp180-204.

*World Situation Report*. 2000. Geneva: International Committee of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies.

Wylie, Kenneth C. 1977. *The Political Kingdoms of the Temne: Temne Government in Sierra Leone 1825-1910*. New York: Africana Publishing Company

Yansane, Aguibou. 1984. *Decolonization in West African State With French Colonial Legacy: Comparison and Contrast: Development in Guinea, the Ivory Coast and Senegal* Cambridge, Mass.: Schenkman Publishing Company.

Zezeza, Paul T. 1997. "The Perpetual Solitudes and Crises of African Studies in the United States." *Africa Today*. Vol. 44. No. 2. pp193-212.