

BLOOD, SWEAT, AND CANAPÉS
ASSESSING NEGOTIATORS AND THEIR TACTICS TO END
THE LIBERIAN AND SIERRA LEONEAN CIVIL WARS

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ABSTRACT

Current political research on peace negotiations is fundamentally incomplete because it lacks the capacity to explain individual intents, choices and actions. This dissertation asks what impact individual negotiators, their approaches and choices of tactics have on peace talks and their outcomes. Individual people—be they representatives of rebel groups, non-governmental organisations or states—negotiate peace agreements. Consequently, an examination of individual motivations and actions in negotiations yields important knowledge. A fuller understanding of political negotiations, negotiators, and their tactics in Sierra Leone and Liberia is facilitated through a multidisciplinary consideration of the psychology, law and management studies literatures that consider individual motivations, biases, and behaviours.

Based on extensive field research in Sierra Leone and Liberia, including numerous interviews with key players, I argue that individuals and their specific approaches and tactics influenced and altered the course of these peace negotiations, as well as their outcomes. Negotiators engaged in peace talks with underlying approaches (such as competitive, collaborative and cooperative styles) and then came to use various tactics (including shifting goalposts, hardball, silence, and bad faith), many of which were influenced by their innate biases and frames. Exploring these individuals' conduct gives us previously unexplored insight into peace processes.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AFL	Armed Forces of Liberia
AFRC	Armed Forces Revolutionary Council
APC	All People's Congress
BATNA	Best Alternative to a Negotiated Agreement
CDC	Civic Disarmament Campaign
CDF	Civil Defense Force
CN	Chief Negotiator
CPA	Comprehensive Peace Agreement
ECOMOG	Economic Community of West African States Monitoring Group
ECOWAS	Economic Community of West African States
EO	Executive Outcomes
INPFL	Independent National Patriotic Front of Liberia
IRCL	Inter-Religious Council of Liberia
LCC	Liberian Council of Churches
LDF	Lola Defense Force
LNTG	Liberian National Transitional Government
LPC	Liberia Peace Council
LURD	Liberians United for Reconciliation and Democracy
MODEL	Movement for Democracy in Liberia
NMCL	National Muslim Council of Liberia
NPFL	National Patriotic Front of Liberia
NPP	National Patriotic Party
NTAL	National Transitional Assembly of Liberia
OAU	Organisation of African Unity
PDP	People's Democratic Party
RSLAF	Republic of Sierra Leone Armed Forces
RUF	Revolutionary United Front
SCSL	Special Court for Sierra Leone
SLPP	Sierra Leone People's Party
ULIMO	United Liberation Movement
ULIMO-J	United Liberation Movement, Johnson Faction
ULIMO-K	United Liberation Movement, Kromah faction
UNAMSIL	United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone
UNMIL	United Nations Mission in Liberia
UNOMIL	United Nations Observer Mission to Liberia

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION: AGENTS AT STAKE

When individuals or groups of people are in conflict, and cannot achieve their goals without joint effort, they negotiate. Negotiating is a formal way of resolving conflict in which individual humans achieve their interests collaboratively. However, much of the political science literature pertaining to negotiations and peace agreements simply discounts human agency. From the dominant perspective, decisions appear to be made and actions carried out by states or amorphous rebel groups; the people behind the state apparatus are rarely seen, identified only through their citizenship or organisational affiliation. Unless a rebel faction is headed by a particularly colourful character, his human form is also concealed, usually shrouded by a shapeless cloak of seething disgruntlement, in which case, analyses usually focus on that individual, without giving additional context to the group that he leads.¹

All the same, a “basic fact about negotiation, which could well be easily forgotten, is that [one is] dealing not with abstract representatives of the “other side”, but with human beings” (Cheng 2009: n.p.). Peace negotiations are political events where individual people—be they representatives of rebel groups, non-governmental organisations or states—negotiate peace agreements. This is not to say that individual behaviour supersedes structural factors. However, political research overlooks the individuals that influence negotiations and their outcomes and thus lacks the capacity to explain individual intent, choices and actions. As a result, current negotiations research in Political Science is lacking.

This dissertation seeks to discover the key individuals who shape peace negotiations, to understand their personalities and biases, along with the tactics that they use, and to determine the impact they have on the peace process and its outcomes. A better understanding individuals and their role in peace negotiations will serve as a corrective lens to previous blind spots, yielding important knowledge for the discipline of political science as well as for practitioners. This first comparative study of the cumulative negotiations to end the long civil conflicts in Sierra Leone and Liberia—countries more recently overlooked by political researchers—reveals insight into individuals that was previously lacking through a multidisciplinary consideration of psychology, law and management studies literature. The result is a broader, more nuanced understanding of peace negotiations as political events beyond West Africa.

In the following pages, I first provide background and context to the thesis by introducing important facts about Sierra Leone and Liberia—the site of my field research—and fusing these with interdisciplinary approaches to negotiation studies. From there, I expound on the central problem my research addresses, then outline the aims of the thesis,

¹ In which case, domestic and international media sources focus on that individual, without giving additional context to the group that he leads. The gendered pronoun is deliberate; very few women have been identified as *leaders* of armed insurgencies.

and expand on the key research questions that guide the work. The second half of this chapter presents my research design, including a justification for fieldwork in Sierra Leone and Liberia. I also consider the availability, quality, and limitations of the data, both in terms of existing written documentation, as well as first person accounts. The final section maps out the structure and content of the dissertation.

BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

Sierra Leone and Liberia were the sites of lengthy civil wars that lasted most of the 1990s, collectively resulting in approximately 350,000 deaths and more than 2.5 million displaced persons.² Sierra Leone's war officially lasted 11 years, from 1991 to 2002. The two primary warring parties throughout included the Revolutionary United Front (RUF), which sought to overturn fighters loyal to the Sierra Leonean government. Prior to 1999, two different peace agreements were negotiated and endorsed, neither of which held. Liberia experienced two wars: The first lasted from 1989 to 1997, after which there was a brief interlude of relative peace; the second war erupted in 1999 and lasted until 2003. In the course of the first Liberian conflict, upwards of seven different warring factions vied for control of the government. Liberia's second war featured two main rebel groups, Liberians United for Reconciliation and Democracy (LURD), along with Movement for Democracy in Liberia (MODEL) fighting to overthrow Charles Taylor and his governments' forces. During Liberia's two wars, before 2003, 17 different peace negotiations generated an equal number of signed agreements, none of which resulted in lasting peace.

Since wars' end, Sierra Leone and Liberia have fallen off the world's radar—even then, they barely registered, and only as horrific images of child soldiers and forced amputations.³ In addition to being of limited strategic interest politically and economically, neither country offers easy answers to researchers. Reno states, “those familiar with writing on Sierra Leone's war know that this event can be an intellectual *Rashomon*, in which one sees what one wishes” (Reno 2008: 329). This holds for Liberia's war as well.

Much work to date on Sierra Leone and Liberia focuses on the possible sources of their conflicts. Some studies attribute these conflicts to youth rebellion and the grievances of individuals marginalised from power (Hoffman 2004, 2006; Richards 1996), while others highlight political corruption, collapsing state institutions and deplorable economic conditions that created a subculture of mass theft and extreme violence (Collier 2000; Gberie 2009; Reno 1997). There is no doubt that both countries' wars were compounded by the machinations taking place in the other. Throughout the 1990s, Liberia and neighbouring Sierra Leone were the regional nexus for drug running, arms trading, and diamond dealing. Supported in part by then Libyan dictator Muammar Gaddafi, who harboured designs of pan-African control, Liberia's wartime trading also helped launder money for al-Qaeda (Global Witness 2003; Simpson 2004). Rebels and government troops

² There is no consensus on the total numbers of casualties and displaced persons from the wars in Liberia and Sierra Leone. Record keeping during the war was virtually impossible, and various belligerents inflated or diminished numbers for political gain. The numbers I cite here are average approximations.

³ Sierra Leone and Liberia briefly emerged from post-conflict obscurity in 2013-15, but not as hopeful or uplifting examples of economic growth or political maturity. The two countries were the epicenter of an Ebola virus epidemic, which killed over 24,000 of their citizens in 21 months (WHO 2015).

in both nations also developed an effective military strategy of destabilization and terror (Ellis 2001), often using kidnapped children as soldiers and cutting off the limbs of their opponents. Warring parties in both countries stymied regional peacemaking attempts for more than a decade. Even as they claimed to broker peace, offering an “African solution to an African problem,” the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) was providing clandestine aid to warlords on all sides in both countries (Ellis 2001; 2005).

Between them, Sierra Leone and Liberia have nearly two dozen signed peace agreements, representing thousands of hours of negotiation and millions of dollars. For the cost and effort, little is known about these events, save the outcomes listed in the formal accords. The dearth of detail is because peace accords are but abridged study guides to negotiations; they provide a no-frills list tallying what was gained and lost over months of intense discussions. It is this list that much of the political science negotiations research addresses—what is apportioned that ends the war. Most often, the “what” is power and wealth. However, this prioritisation of outcomes alone ignores the process through which the tally comes about. An emphasis on outcomes also overlooks the individuals, whose motivations and aims drive the process and draft the agreements. In between the lines of each accord lies another list of paybacks, payoffs, and blowoffs. Seeking first to fulfil their personal interests in peace talks, individual negotiators will often “fail to see, seek, use, or share highly relevant, easily accessible, and readily perceivable information” and in so doing, they may lose their leverage and sacrifice the very outcomes they hoped to achieve (Chugh & Bazerman 2007: 3). Political researchers are much like negotiators in this respect. Their focus on outcomes at the expense of understanding individuals and context is an example of focalism, one of several kinds of bounded awareness that can trip up the most seasoned negotiator (Chugh & Bazerman 2005; 2007). Bounded awareness has long been observed and researched, but not by political scientists. For decades, social psychologists, legal specialists, and more recently, business management scholars have explored the role and impact of individual personality, cognitive structures, decision frames, and decision-making biases on negotiations (further developed in Chapter 2). Their findings are cited and applied in multiple conflict resolution settings, but remain virtually imperceptible in political analysis of peace negotiations.

Of the multiple peace negotiations that took place during the lengthy civil wars in Sierra Leone and Liberia, only two agreements ever held for longer than two years—the last ones. The cumulative peace negotiations to end the Sierra Leonean war took place in Lomé, Togo from May through July in 1999. Violence did not cease the day the Lomé agreement was signed; nonetheless, this event rang the death knell of the civil war. Sierra Leone has been at peace since 2002. The final peace process to end the Liberian civil war took place in Accra, Ghana from June through August 2003. Fighting ended as the ink dried on the signatures endorsing the Accra Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA). Not coincidentally, President Charles Taylor left the country at precisely the same time. Liberia has been at peace since. Considering these two events, I assert that multidisciplinary research from other social sciences stands to offer useful theoretical and practical insight to the study of peace processes as political events to bring about an end to war.

Fighters who are intent on killing one another do not suddenly leave the battlefield to partake in peace negotiations without some incentive. At times, non-combatants that

hold sway with parties to the conflict—these may be foreign leaders with vested interest, diplomats, or trustworthy members of domestic society—will encourage fighters to pursue a truce. Occasionally, warring parties will determine that violence alone is not achieving their aims and they gamble that their demands can be satisfied through discourse. Whatever the initial impulse, peace talks are a strategy to bring security to a country from outside (Mehler 2008). Negotiations are usually facilitated (and paid for) by third-party mediators and often require foreign peacekeeping forces to uphold an agreement's implementation.

Political research considers the importance of resource and power sharing as motivators to entice belligerents to negotiate, as well as the role and effectiveness (or lack thereof) of international peacekeeping missions. Most often, warring parties are motivated to participate in negotiations by the prospect of acquiring political power and material resources that they have not yet been able to seize on the front lines. Warring parties may be experiencing costly losses that they wish to mitigate, or the conflict may have reached a stalemate where no side stands to win a military victory. Once persuaded to attend negotiations, combatants will stay and participate in the process if their goals of influence and affluence appear within grasp. In cases of longstanding conflict, foreign intervention and financial assistance are often prescribed to enforce and maintain the peace, which creates a dilemma of ownership and control for a nascent democratic society. Each of these themes will be explored further in the next chapter. Less obvious, but equally important, is the role and influence of the individuals who claim a seat at the negotiations. However, political science reveals little in this regard. Lacking is a more comprehensive, comparative analysis of the principal drivers, or individual agents, behind the peace processes, seen within a broader context.

Metaphorically, peace negotiations are a kind of formal family dinner party—featuring the requisite theatre and discomfort that accompanies any gathering of relatives—that can last months. Questions of who is invited to the party, who dines at the negotiation table while others are relegated to the kitchen, what they discuss over soup, and what happens after the guests retire to the drawing room and the dishes are cleared, no doubt influence whether the host summons her lawyers to change her will. Similarly, who the negotiators are at peace talks, whether they are formal signatories or informal participants, what they want, why, as well as how they try to get it, would seem to greatly influence outcomes of the peace process.

Those planning and facilitating a peace process first consider the guest list—the negotiators—and the venue. The logical first choices as invitees to negotiate at a peace process are representatives from the warring factions. After all, it stands to reason that those who perpetuate war might also dictate its end. However, this is not necessarily the case at all negotiations. Nearing the end of the first war in Liberia, there were upwards of seven different warring parties seeking state control; not all of them were asked to join peace talks in 1995 and '96. Groups that were left out subsequently undermined the proceedings through violent action. Conversely, the incorporation of key belligerents was a primary consideration at the 2003 Accra peace talks. The RUF's lead negotiator at Lomé was warlord Foday Sankoh (see Chapter 5). President Ahmad Tejan Kabbah directed the Sierra Leone government's negotiating team (see Chapter 6). Representatives of Liberian

warring parties at Accra included, Thomas Nimely Yaya, chairman of MODEL, along with the unnamed chief negotiator for LURD (see Chapter 8), while President Taylor controlled the government's negotiators (see Chapter 9). That representatives from all three Liberian warring factions were at Accra, and both parties to the war in Sierra Leone were at the Lomé negotiations, was a necessary first step towards a successful peace agreement.

Because they are both willing and able to unleash violence during peace talks, combatants “call the show.” However, the power that belligerents—at least those not in government—wield (particularly at the outset of negotiations) is tempered by their lack of political sophistication, which can make them prone to buckle under the stress of the event, along with the pressure of other participants, and can see them making crucial mistakes during negotiations. In Liberia and Sierra Leone, many of the non-government forces sent to negotiate at Lomé and Accra were young, uneducated and politically inexperienced. Everything they had achieved or acquired up until the negotiations had been at the barrel of a gun, so the idea of diplomatic discourse and compromise was alien to them. Their lack of knowledge of the process led them respond to with renewed aggression and inflexibility. For instance, in Liberia LURD was poised for a both a military and negotiated victory, especially with the departure of Taylor at the outset of the Accra talks. However, a lack of organizational solidarity and miscommunication between the chief negotiator in Accra, the leadership issuing orders in far-away Guinea, and the military wing shelling the innocent residents of Monrovia, resulted in a missed opportunity for the ultimate prize of national control.

The Lomé and Accra negotiations were also attended by a lead mediator (and team) and an assortment of other “interested” parties. Adjunct participants at peace negotiations are often representatives from countries that are stakeholders of sorts in the sites of the conflict. These individuals may be official signatories to the peace agreements or non-official participants, but all exercise a relative amount of influence over the process. For example, at Accra, when the talks turned towards obtaining Security Council approval for a formal UN intervention, the Chinese representative (quietly, over coffee) leaned over to remind the LURD chief negotiator that his support was contingent on Liberia's vote for “one-China rule” in the UN Assembly—meaning that Liberia would have to promise to switch their recognition of Taiwan to the People's Republic of China.⁴ Certainly, state representatives, particularly those from the US and the UK, carried weight at the Accra and Lomé negotiations, as did organisational representatives from ECOWAS.⁵ However, non-official representatives wield significant influence at peace talks also. In Accra, Liberian religious leaders Sheikh Konneh and Benjamin Lartey were integral to maintaining communication during the talks (see Chapter 7), while American civil rights leader Jesse Jackson had disproportionate clout at Lomé (see Chapter 4).⁶

All the same, the guest list of Lomé and Accra participants demonstrate that it is a nation's elites (military or otherwise) and not society as a whole that are privy to peace

⁴ Interview with the chief negotiator (CN) for LURD in Monrovia, Liberia, 4 March 2010.

⁵ ECOWAS officially mediated both talks. Then Togolese President, Gnassingbé Eyadéma was lead mediator at Lomé, while former Nigerian Head of State, General Abdulsalami Abubakar was the chief mediator at Accra.

⁶ Exceptionally, the Accra talks featured numerous members of civil society. However, my focus in this research is limited to the Liberian religious leaders.

negotiations. Moreover, depending on how talks are being mediated and by whom, peace processes can make no claim to the full inclusion of all elites (Rothchild 2005). As noted, two dominant groups (government forces and the RUF) were at war in Sierra Leone and the Lomé agreement included both. However, in the first part of the Liberian war, groups excluded from negotiations retaliated by perpetuating conflict.

Once the guest list is settled, peace talk facilitators turn their attention to the venue. Successful event planners know that the choice of venue has a tremendous impact on the budget as well as the overall performance of an event. Securing a venue for the Lomé and Accra peace negotiations was sensitive on two counts. All the warring parties, save perhaps President Kabbah, were highly preoccupied with their own personal safety—death being a constant occupational hazard for warlords. Nearly all combatants had directly meddled in the sovereign affairs of neighbouring states; governments tend to withhold houseguest invitations from outside rebel forces that have militarily attacked them in the past. Due to international sanctions, several belligerents also had travel restrictions placed against them. Locating a nearby country willing to host peace talks, ensuring belligerents could have right of passage and sufficient personal security throughout was no small challenge. Add to this the living conditions of rebel groups actively fighting in the rainforests of West Africa, which were frightful at best and horrific at worst. Most belligerents, especially those doing well on the battlefield, are reluctant participants at negotiations. Those fighting in privation are less inclined to attend talks in a remote location with rustic accommodations. Upscale hotels with four-star amenities and access to extracurricular activities were a must for the belligerents at Lomé and Accra. Considering that negotiations can last weeks or months, the overall cost for those financing such events—usually moneyed members of the international community—can be exorbitant.

With the venue secured, facilitators at Lomé and Accra might be forgiven for seeking momentary recess, but the exigencies of the events were yet to manifest. From the outset, who takes part in the negotiation process, and whether those individuals are willing to work together can foretell whether a peace agreement has a chance to succeed. As yet, there is little available analysis of participants' agency and actions during peace negotiations. This work identifies the key participants in attendance at Lomé and Accra, their motivations, and their various tactics throughout the negotiations. The research reveals numerous indicators that should have warned negotiators at both events to proceed with caution. But participants at the Lomé and Accra peace talks were undiscerning of readily available information that might have steered them away rocky shoals.

Prior to Lomé, Sankoh and Kabbah had negotiated at preceding peace talks. Although Sankoh pledged to cease fighting and commit to peace, he never delivered on his promises, and the peace pacts he signed in 1996 and 1997 did not end the war. While the two rebel factions in Liberia were relatively new to the conflict, many of their members were combatants from other, defunct factions. With 17 failed peace pacts signed by his hand, Taylor was a peace process veteran. Some might argue that Liberia's many failed agreements meant that Taylor was an unsuccessful negotiator, but that would presume Taylor sought peace and floundered. In fact, Taylor was a winning negotiator; he simply did not aspire to peace. Those bearing witness to these events could have predicted that neither the Lomé nor the Accra peace negotiations had a high likelihood to triumph over war.

The date set, the venue chosen, the invited guests arrive to dinner. Some come wearing ties and jackets, others bring flowers. All dinner parties have behaviour protocols, and peace negotiations are no exception. From which fork to use, to how one should address the host's doddering great aunt, for all a family's differences, there are expectations that guests will arrive to dinner on their best behaviour. However, one of the belligerents arriving from Sierra Leone had just been released from prison, while others had been fighting in the bush for months. For the most part, they were uneducated, unsophisticated and ill-informed. Upon arrival, some were far more interested in languishing by the pool, drink in hand, attended to by sex workers, than in dressing for dinner and soberly discussing demobilisation with the same people they were trying to kill the day before. Of those who genuinely sought an end to war, heads of state and trained diplomats knew what to expect and what was expected from them at the negotiations, but the rebels had no inkling.

The night of the party, some guests arrive late, some are already fractious and spoiling for a fight, while the early-comers make pleasantries and nibble on canapés. At last, the guests are seated and the first course is served. Like most dinner party guests, participants at peace talks see themselves as reasonable and rational individuals capable of balanced decision-making. Political Science supports their self-perception: "It is physically possible for people to act as the social science explanation requires, and to hold or form the relevant beliefs and desires. There is no escape from the need to attribute some form of rationality to human agents" (Ferejohn & Satz 1995: 82). However laudable, ample evidence indicates this assessment is inaccurate (Kahneman & Tversky 1994; Tversky & Kahneman 1974). Indeed, outside of the annals of Political Science, extensive research documents "pervasive psychological biases" that factor into and limit the analysis and decision-making skills of a wide range of professionals, including negotiators. Rationality is often the cost of such biases. The most common of these biases include the desire to believe information that affirms existing beliefs and the habit of disregarding or devaluing information that discredits those beliefs (Birke & Fox 1999). In the course of peace negotiations, biases like these can impede the creation and maintenance of mutually beneficial, non-violent settlements.⁷

Over the course of our metaphoric evening, inhibitions are lost and guests reveal their true selves. Voices are raised, and some guests come to blows. Participants at peace negotiations fall into patterns that they have exhibited at previous engagements. Their personalities, the ways in which they perceive the process, how they frame the issues under consideration, their biases and bounded awareness all influence their motivations, tactics and decisions throughout. At peace talks, mediators and facilitators garner the same respect as a house steward, or perhaps an experienced butler; they are able to keep the talks on point, but possess insufficient clout to ensure agreements are maintained. All negotiators can make recommendations, some can even inspire, but ultimately, the fighting parties drive the peace process. As one of the Accra participants noted, "the rest of us were along

⁷ Birke and Fox (1999) note specifically that these biases can act as barriers in the practice of law. I expand their assertion to include the practice of negotiating peace settlements. According to the authors, lawyers encounter three separate obstacles as they negotiate conflict resolution: 1) strategic barriers; 2) institutional barriers; and 3) psychological barriers. Of these, Birke and Fox seek to highlight psychological barriers in conflict resolution. I share this quest, and highlight as much in this chapter.

for the ride.”⁸ This research project invites the reader to share a bumpy ride through the Lomé and Accra peace processes, along with a few key negotiators.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Confined by a structural approach and focus on outcomes that favour rationality, the political science literature is often unable to account for participants’ motivations and behaviour during negotiations because it presumes that people are reasonable actors. This is a faulty assumption. As a result, political science literature, particularly that of international relations, addressing peace negotiations is fundamentally incomplete and blinkered. It allows us to assess the sequence of events, including the critical junctures during the peace process, as well as the terms of the signed settlements, but it lacks the capacity to explain individual intents, choices and actions.

I claim that our understanding of the peace process in Sierra Leone and Liberia is limited because existing accounts do not acknowledge the role and impact of individuals. I argue that these events can be better understood by providing a broader narrative, supplemented by additional literature in psychology, law, and management studies. This dissertation, then, seeks to redress the limitations in the political science literature. My research, assessing the motivations, tactics and actions of key players at the Lomé and Accra peace processes yields insight for scholars of politics by making a case for the value of interdisciplinary research and data from other social sciences.

Despite so many previous failed attempts at establishing workable peace accords, belligerents, politicians and citizens from Liberia and Sierra Leone chose to again attend another dinner party, or peace process, in hopes of creating lasting workable peace agreements. Against the odds, the Lomé and Accra peace process resulted in signed peace agreements that held. Both countries have now been at peace for more than a decade.

To better understand why these negotiations were different, I consider the individuals that were essential to the process. In so doing, my research makes the case for extreme agency in political science. Willfully or inadvertently, one person’s individual motivations and actions can effect profound influence on political events—in this case negotiations—and even shape their outcomes. In the following, I note the lures that induced belligerents to participate in peace talks, how their aims and motivations shifted, the negotiating tactics used by key negotiators throughout and the turning points in the discussions during the course of the 1999 Lomé and 2003 Accra peace negotiations. I assess the relative influence and impact of the various players, the deals they made throughout, and how these were reflected in the actual outcome, the peace accords.

Accordingly, this work is a direct attempt to integrate aspects of psychology and management studies into political science. One of the significant features of this research is that it bridges two divides. The chasm between comparative politics and international relations is spanned by a consideration of international and local factors, as well as groups and individuals, and their interaction, while the void between psychology, management

⁸ Interview with Reverend Benjamin Lartey, Secretary General, Liberian Council of Churches (LCC) in Monrovia, Liberia, 19 & 21 March 2012.

studies and political science is navigated by focusing on the motivations of agents, the structures they are part of, and how these unite in a joint endeavour to negotiate lasting peace from ongoing bloodshed.

This is a qualitative research project. In addition to a large-scale multidisciplinary literature analysis, I engaged in fieldwork in both countries, seeking out knowledge that has thus far remained undocumented. Process tracing and personal interviews are an essential component of this project, as individuals provide invaluable insight to processes and motivations, rather than simply denoting outcomes. The official Lomé and Accra peace accords merely outline the results of the many compromises resulting from long and tense negotiations, whereas interviews with participants reveal important knowledge regarding individual motivations and critical parts of the process that determined the outcome, as well as alternative amendments that were rejected. I have interviewed official and non-official delegates present at both negotiations—representatives of warring factions, foreign attendees, and members of the mediation teams—as well as officials of foreign governments (military and diplomatic) and aid agencies working in Sierra Leone and Liberia at the time, along with research institutes, human rights organizations and civil society groups.

Returning to the outcomes that political researchers favour, the Lomé and Accra negotiations and ensuing agreements were successful. The simple and somewhat obvious fact is that a successful agreement is one that holds, and however imperfect and unfair, these two agreements have held. Initially, the Lomé accord was deemed to have failed, because significant violence, including the abduction of several hundred UN troops, took place after it had been signed. However, Lomé marks the pivotal moment at which time the situation in Sierra Leone became no longer tenable and started to change. Albeit problematic, a unilateral British intervention in 2000 made way for a subsequently successful UN mission. The Sierra Leone Special Court has indicted 13 people, including Charles Taylor who was recently convicted and sentenced to 50 years in prison for aiding and abetting the war in Sierra Leone. In the decade since the Lomé accord was signed, there have been three elections, one in 2002, another in 2007, and a third in 2012. In the first election, the RUF was virtually eliminated from political power, having received less than 3% of the votes, and not winning a single senate seat. The subsequent election saw power change hands from the Sierra Leone All People's Party (APP) to the All People's Congress (APC). The country is considered both peaceful and politically stable.

Liberia's 2003 Accra agreement is widely perceived as successful. Certainly, if we consider that none of the 17 peace accords that preceded it prevented widespread violence, it is indeed a remarkable achievement. However, 12 years on, there are areas of concern that indicate that peace remains fragile. Unlike in Sierra Leone, warlords from all three warring factions were elected to senate in the 2005 and 2011 elections. Among others, Charles Taylor's ex-wife has a senate seat, as does Prince Johnson, the warlord who was filmed torturing and killing former President Samuel Doe, whom he overthrew in 1990. The 2009 recommendations of the much beleaguered Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) have been duly ignored, and few harbour much hope that the document will result in any change, let alone criminal prosecutions.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS AND ARGUMENTS

The central question this work addresses is: What impact do individual negotiators, their approaches and tactics have on peace talks and their outcomes? This compendious query encompasses several themes, which can be broken into three separate questions, the answers to which I briefly introduce below.

Based on the cases of Sierra Leone and Liberia, who are the individuals that influence and determine the course of peace negotiations? Following extensive research and fieldwork, I identified three primary actors at the Lomé peace negotiations and four key individuals at the Accra peace talks. These individuals influenced and determined the course of the Lomé and Accra peace negotiations. At Lomé, rebel leader Foday Sankoh and President Ahmed Tejan Kabbah unexpectedly shared centre stage with American civil right leader Jesse Jackson. Four years later, two religious leaders, Sheikh Konneh and Benjamin Lartey, helped unite President Charles Taylor with the chief negotiator for Liberians United for Reconciliation and Democracy (LURD) at Accra.

How do individual personalities, biases, and approaches towards negotiations impact the process? Each individual demonstrated biased judgments and distorted cognitive frames, which combined with their personalities, strongly impacted the process. To cite but a few examples, Jesse Jackson's bombastic personality, uncritical support of the RUF, and competitive approach, essentially steamrolled Sierra Leonean President Tejan Kabbah at Lomé (see chapter 4). Foday Sankoh's ruthlessness, deceit, and treachery served him well as warlord and negotiator (see chapter 5); like his Liberian neighbour Charles Taylor, he negotiated for peace in bad faith (see chapter 9). Neither Sankoh nor Taylor had any real commitment to peace. At Accra, LURD's chief negotiator believed the rebels stood every chance to secure a military victory and engaged in peace talks from a fiercely competitive approach (see chapter 8). At both Lomé and Accra, the belligerents' competitiveness stood in marked contrast to the concession-making behaviour that hallmarked Kabbah's cooperative approach to negotiations (see chapter 6).

What tactics do these individuals use in peace talks and to which ends? Each individual tried varying tactics during the peace talks to pressure other participants or the international community to yield to their demands. To get the belligerents to assemble in Accra, religious leaders Benjamin Lartey and Sheikh Kafumba Konneh repeatedly travelled throughout the region to meet with the warring parties and talk (see chapter 7). Their tactic of talk generated trust and honesty, which was soon undone by LURD's bloodthirsty stratagem of shelling innocent civilians in Monrovia (see chapter 8). The rebels' chief negotiator hoped violent tactics would gain him government concessions, and at first, this ploy appeared to work. However, in time, LURD's violence cost the rebels' credibility and leverage at the peace talks. At the outset of Lomé, Jackson's strategy of isolating Kabbah from his chief advisors, put the president in a position of weakness, from which he never recovered (see chapter 4).

These questions do not attempt to determine if agency trumps structure in peace negotiations, nor do they seek to answer whether agency surpasses alternate explanations of these events. Moreover, I did not set out to create a comprehensive list of every influential person and their deeds, but within the limitations of time and resources, I selected a representative number of significant participants at these negotiations.

Throughout the thesis, I demonstrate that the aforementioned individual negotiators' personalities, biases, and approaches to negotiations have a strong impact on the peace process. At Lomé, as a result of Jesse Jackson's support and advocacy of Foday Sankoh, Sierra Leone president Kabbah was forced to make numerous concessions that ultimately rewarded the warlord for waging war and destruction. If not for Jackson's advocacy, and Sakoh's duplicity, Kabbah would not have given up so much at Lomé. In Accra, despite of the tireless peacemaking efforts of Konneh and Lartey, LURD's chief negotiator still perpetuated violence as a bargaining tool, while president Charles Taylor negotiated in bad faith, using a competitive strategy of moving goalposts, which ensured his demands were never fulfilled, which meant he continued to cling to power. The religious leaders' legitimacy gave them the ability to bring the Liberian belligerents together at Accra, but they could not counter the LURD chief negotiator's competitive bravado, nor could they make Taylor commit to peace. Taylor continuously undermined the peace process at Accra, and peace only came to Liberia when he was forced out of office and into exile.

Through the tug of war in Sierra Leone and Liberia during the Lomé and Accra negotiations, in this thesis, I demonstrate how these seven individual negotiators influenced and altered the course of the peace process. Again, I do not claim that existing research data is faulty, but rather that it is incomplete. In seeking out research in other social sciences, I argue that our understanding of negotiations as political events is enhanced through the complementary study of disciplines that consider individual motivations, biases, and behaviours. A scholarly account of the motivations, tactics, and behaviour of individual agents yields nuanced insight into negotiations, which in turn allows researchers to better understand political events. Underscoring individual agency also provides valuable policy insight to participants and practitioners of peace negotiations, the most important of which is awareness of the negative outcomes of peace agreements negotiated by duplicitous participants.

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

There is little public record of the peace processes in Liberia and Sierra Leone. The official Lomé and Accra peace accords simply outline the results of the many compromises resulting from long and tense negotiations, whereas in-depth interviews with decision-makers reveal important knowledge regarding individual motivations and the critical issues that prolonged the fighting. Moreover, a decade later, many significant players are either deceased or rapidly aging.

The existing negotiations literature in Political Science is limited. There is no acknowledgement of, let alone assessment, of the role and influence of individual actors in negotiations. None of the Political Science literature suggests that individual players, including their motivations and actions, are relevant or important to negotiations, whereas innovative research in other social sciences does. The originality of this research is its acknowledgement of an evident gap in the literature of comparative politics, and its key contribution lies in its attempts to cross these breeches by including heretofore unexamined research in social psychology, law and management studies.

Another significant feature of this research project is that it serves as a historical and narrative platform for the voices of the remaining participants, observers, and decision-

makers. Much of my original data, and the basis of my analysis, was obtained through multiple, in-depth interviews with domestic and external actors and observers. Indeed, interviews provided all crucial data that were not part of the public record. The information acquired in this fashion is both exclusive and valuable; virtually none of these individuals' experiences or knowledge has been recorded, as I carried out my research I came to believe that capturing individual narratives was a matter of urgency. For the most part, my subjects spoke with great candour and eloquence. I have sought to honour their contribution by privileging a narrative recounting of events, using my subjects' own words as much as possible.

Finally, this is the first comparative study of the peace negotiations in Sierra Leone and Liberia. As such, it contributes to the scholarship of the region. However, its merits extend beyond West Africa. While these countries' experience with civil war was particular in many ways, a study of how key players influence the drafting of peace pacts and impact a country's likelihood to achieve lasting peace reveals general insights that benefit scholars and practitioners alike. The results of the study clearly establish that interdisciplinary research and data collection from other social sciences yields enhanced knowledge in political science.

RESEARCH DESIGN

The dissertation undertakes a comparative analysis of the role and importance of individual negotiators during the peace processes for two West African countries. This is a multidisciplinary, qualitative project and while this approach has numerous strengths it also has its limitations.

A strong feature of my work is the field research I undertook in Sierra Leone and Liberia. I sought first-person accounts by key witnesses to counter the paucity of historical accounts to date. Key individuals were difficult to locate – many are aging, or dead, and others did not want to relive these events with a foreign PhD researcher. I met with dozens of people in both countries, but I chose to quote those individuals who participated at or were witnesses to the Accra and Lomé negotiations.

An additional strength of my research is its multidisciplinary. There is a plentiful body of research on negotiations, just not in the domain of political science. As a result, I examine negotiations research in psychology, law, and management studies. My literature review is vast and adds new dimensions to pre-existing knowledge in political studies. Nonetheless, I acknowledge that there are other domains, such as anthropology, where scholars have carried out excellent work that I did not explore in this thesis.

As in negotiations, there are tradeoffs when using a multidisciplinary approach. I did not engage in depth with some common debates in political studies, namely International Relations theory, or identity politics. In my research, I found that these have been well addressed by others. My choice of methodology was shaped by what I could not initially find: political research that acknowledged the role and relative impact of individuals on peace negotiations.

The dissertation specifically examines the 1999 peace process in Lomé, Togo to end the war in Sierra Leone, as well as the 2003 negotiations in Accra, Ghana to achieve peace in Liberia. For six weeks, the Sierra Leonean government talked peace with the Revolutionary United Front (RUF) in 1999. In Accra, peace negotiations lasted 75 days. My research concentrates on individual actions taken during these intervals, however, these events require theoretical underpinnings that facilitate data analysis, as well as historical and political context.

Within the context of these goals, I undertake a thorough literature review, assessing the existing contributions with political science and identifying themes, research and data in other social sciences. The historical and political context of individuals comes to bear on their motivations and actions. Acknowledging that past behaviour is a predictor of future behaviour (Ouellette & Wood 1998), I also embarked on a historical and political overview of the wars in Sierra Leone and Liberia to better understand the key players at the peace processes in Accra and Lomé.

In addition to my consideration of a wide range of primary and secondary sources, including books, scholarly journals, official publications, and various media reports, I determined that personal interviews would form the bedrock of this project. Individuals provide insight to processes and motivations, rather than simply denoting outcomes. The official peace accords signed at Lomé and Accra merely outline the many compromises participants made during long and tense negotiations, whereas interviews with participants can reveal important knowledge regarding individual motivations, aims and miscalculations.

Consequently, I endeavoured to identify those individuals who cast an indelible mark on the Lomé and Accra peace talks. It was not my intention to create a comprehensive list of every influential person and their deeds, but to purposively select a representative population of such participants at these negotiations. I presumed that the Sierra Leone and Liberian presidents exerted some dominance over the process, as did the lead negotiators for each warring party at the peace talks. Consequently, I first sought to identify these individuals and learn more about the nature of their involvement in negotiations. I anticipated at least a few participants who were neither belligerents nor domestic government representatives would have left an impression on the proceedings. However, prior to undertaking fieldwork, I had not identified anyone in particular. Ultimately, I interviewed official delegates present at each of the two negotiations—representatives of warring factions, foreign attendees, and members of the mediation teams—as well as officials of foreign governments (military and diplomatic) and aid agencies working in Sierra Leone and Liberia at the time, along with research institutes, human rights organizations and civil society groups.

Location and justification of case studies

West Africa has been (and continues to be) the site of great conflict, while remaining widely neglected in terms of academic research. Numerous peace accords and ceasefire agreements have been drafted to end the region's conflicts, all with varying degrees of success and longevity. At the outset, I intended to pursue research in Sierra Leone, Liberia, and Côte d'Ivoire. However, renewed conflict in Côte d'Ivoire prevented

me carrying out fieldwork there. Consequently, this research project is an in-depth examination of two representative peace processes in the region: the 1999 Lomé peace talks that precipitated an end to the Sierra Leone civil war, and the 2003 Accra negotiations that marked the end of Liberia's war.

Figure 1. Map of Sierra Leone.



Claire de Rouet and Jonathan Raddatz
(Source: UN Map No. 3902 Rev. 5, Dept. of Peacekeeping Operation Cartographic Section, 2004)

A comparative study of these two countries is fitting. Sierra Leone and Liberia's colonial histories, demographics and natural resource wealth are similar in multiple ways. Conjointly, each country's war was intertwined with the politics, resource seeking, and

leadership in the other. For all the countries' likenesses, the Lomé and Accra peace processes were distinct. The Lomé peace accord did not immediately conclude the violence in Sierra Leone; conflict continued sporadically for more than one-and-a-half years under the auspices of a weak UN presence until a unilateral intervention by Great Britain. Conversely, all Liberian warring factions were included in a lengthy and contentious series of negotiations at Accra, where the war ended with the peace accord's endorsement—and Charles Taylor's departure into exile.

The Lomé and Accra peace processes differed significantly by virtue of the presence and influence of key individuals who propelled each event. Aside from identifying the fighting factions and individual heads of state, I began my field research without knowing who exactly acted in decision-making capacities during the peace negotiations. Initial field research involved speaking to as many people as I could find who participated in the negotiations, or who were close observers. Over many conversations, I began to develop insight into the various players and the ways in which they shaped events. From the outset, I determined that my research would focus on these specific individuals, and I sought to meet with as many of these people as time and resources permitted.

Most of my field research took place in Sierra Leone and Liberia, as this is where most peace process participants continue to reside. From the start, fieldwork was essential to the research, as crucial information is not available outside of the region. Due to a lack of historical documentation, detailed and current intelligence on local political conditions was only available by speaking with people one-on-one in their local environments. Additionally, certain interview subjects, particularly former belligerents, remain under international travel bans. Their knowledge and insight provides essential data for analysis, such as motivations and aims in peace negotiations. A large part of the research in these countries was undertaken in the capital cities of Freetown and Monrovia respectively, since most individuals I interviewed reside there. When necessary, I also travelled to rural areas. Additional research in the US and the UK was required, both to access archival documents, as well as to meet with certain government officials, as well as other prominent foreigners who were influential at the time.

Both countries have been at peace for over a decade. Although external assessments declare peacebuilding endeavours to be a success, local research reveals a much more precarious reality. Both countries remain among the 10 poorest in the world; socio-economic opportunities remain limited, the regions continue to lag far behind the capitals in affluence and political leverage, and with the unemployment rate ranging from 65-80%, countless young men are still susceptible to violence. Indeed, these unresolved issues were factors in inciting many to take up arms a generation ago.

Sierra Leone's first post-war elections in 2002 triggered several violent outbreaks, but the 2012 vote was peaceful and transparent (CBC 2012). There are no known former belligerents in government, and the RUF longer exists as a political party, having been absorbed by the All People's Congress (APC) in 2007. This is far from the case in Liberia, where I count at least seven significant figures from the previous wars in elected government positions. One former belligerent is a justice on the Supreme Court. To much of the world, Liberia appears to have experienced a laudable democratization process, with Ellen Johnson Sirleaf's ascent to presidency in 2005 as the first elected female head of state

in Africa. However well regarded internationally, Sirleaf does not enjoy unanimous support domestically, notwithstanding winning a second mandate in 2011. Sirleaf cannot run again and, despite having several children with political designs, she has no clear successor. This is an excellent time then to conduct *in situ* research to better assess the post-conflict political realities of both Sierra Leone and Liberia.

Figure 2. Map of Liberia



Claire de Rouet and Jonathan Raddatz
(Source: UN Map No. 3775 Rev. 7, Dept. of Peacekeeping Operation Cartographic Section, 2010)

Availability and quality of data

Written documentation

As noted, there is considerable political science literature that addresses resource and political power sharing, as well as international intervention. These are explored further in Chapter 2. Where political science literatures is lacking, I sought out extensive research on negotiation behaviour in other social sciences, namely psychology, law and management studies. This research forms the building blocks of my multidisciplinary analysis, and its major themes are also outlined in Chapter 2.

I searched local and foreign libraries, as well as various archives for facts on and interpretations of the Lomé and Accra peace processes. In the years since the wars, several

participants and knowledgeable observers at the 1999 Lomé and 2003 Accra peace talks have authored various books, reports, journal, and newspaper articles. These first-person accounts yield unique perspectives, which I source as needed. Institutional archives and research libraries at the UN, as well in the US and UK housed widely available and reliable data, which I also incorporate. Reports from non-governmental aid agencies provide supplemental information. Additionally, the Internet proved a valuable source and jumping-off point, particularly for locating key documents and contact information.

As both countries experienced a great deal of damage to their archives during the wars, I found little primary and secondary documentation inside Sierra Leone and Liberia, and the availability of official government documentation remains limited. Local media outlets and civil society groups had some archived materials, although media coverage is highly partisan. Despite limited written documentation, my fieldwork inside Sierra Leone and Liberia was very fruitful in terms of first-person accounts of the Lomé and Accra peace processes.

First-person accounts

Considering the scarcity of recorded historical material, my research was best served by seeking out predominantly qualitative original data. Interviews provided crucial data that are not part of the public record. Much of my information and analysis was attained through interviews with domestic and external actors and observers (former members of warring parties, political élites, outside government officials, academics, aid workers, along with human rights and democracy activists).

Prior to undertaking fieldwork, I identified several individuals who had political and personal knowledge of the peace talks and approached as many as I could locate from a distance to gather initial information. Based on these initial encounters, I travelled to Sierra Leone and Liberia four times. During my first trip, I met with several dozen individuals who gave me insight into identifying the key individuals who influenced the wars and various endeavours for peace. There are no telephone directories in Sierra Leone and Liberia, and many individuals do not necessarily wish to be found.

Accessing key individuals was challenging. Persuading certain individuals to partake in interviews depended on word-of-mouth, nurturing personal contacts, and persistence. In Sierra Leone, many players are at an advanced age. A number, including RUF leader Foday Sankoh, were deceased, while others were ill, as was the case with Solomon Berewa, the lead government negotiator at Lomé. In Liberia, many relevant individuals work with or within the current administration and are reluctant to speak openly. Several people from both countries had since moved overseas and limited resources prevented me from contacting them. At all times, I assured confidentiality and/or anonymity to assuage a reluctant subject's concerns about speaking publicly.

Many of my initial data-gathering interviews did not yield as much candour as I hoped for. Individuals weighed their words and tailored their answers according to their perceptions of me as a foreign (white), young woman with little awareness of the context or complexities of local politics. Using a technique I employed previously in documentary film-making, I hired a local research assistant and fixer. My assistants were men who were deeply knowledgeable of the political subtleties in both countries and were professionally known to my interview subjects. Both aided me immeasurably in locating and contacting

leading individuals. In Liberia, Aaron Weah is a long-time local and international civil society activist, with expertise in peacebuilding and post-conflict transitional justice. In Sierra Leone, Sorie Fofana is a career journalist who lived and worked in Freetown through the war.

I speculated that interview subjects might be more forthcoming if Weah or Fofana and I interviewed them simultaneously. After two experimental interviews, I realised that subjects responded differently depending on who posed the questions. Subjects tended to give my assistants practical information on strategy and would provide me with their impressions and emotional responses. Correspondingly, prior to each interview, my assistants and I planned out question sequencing. On site, if a subject proved reticent or recalcitrant, we would rephrase and repose questions, or my assistant would prod for an answer by using a personal anecdote to build trust based on shared experiences.⁹

Interviews were semi-structured. All subjects were asked the same pre-determined set of questions that were based on the primary research questions. Over the course of several visits, I interviewed some subjects more than once, during which time I encouraged subjects to reflect on issues, individuals and events that they might have recalled during our conversation.

ASSUMPTIONS, LIMITATIONS, AND SCOPE

Assumptions

This is a qualitative research work considering specific individual negotiators at the Lomé and Accra peace process. As such, the interview subjects from whom I collected much of my original data are assumed to be both sufficiently informed and qualified to discuss these events in depth. However much each of these individuals may have tried to answer my interview questions truthfully and accurately based on their personal experiences, I do not assume that my subjects are neutral and unbiased. Moreover, the events that my subjects were asked to recall occurred over a decade ago. I recognise that individual memories of past events—particularly deeply contested ones—are both selective and self-serving. It is an incontrovertible fact that peace negotiators are partisan and inherently biased because they are committed to particular outcomes.

Limitations

Civil wars and the negotiations undertaken to end them are contested events. I consider my sources to be partisan. A critical reader may dispute my respondents' recollection of the "truth" of the peace negotiations, and can certainly be justified in calling them biased. However, this does not negate my claim that personal agency mattered at the Lomé and Accra peace negotiations.

The memories of any individual are biased, and the people I sought out are members of political elites; as such, they have particular reason to be self-interested and

⁹ In the course of my fieldwork, I learned that the Liberian religious leaders used similar trust-building communication techniques to great effect.

one-sided. This is of particular concern in Sierra Leone, where the smaller pool of respondents were (and continue to be) highly politicised. Moreover, the interviews I undertook occurred more than a decade after principal events. Consequently, I anticipated some concerns over data quality. Based on methods used in sociology research, I foresaw three areas that could hinder attempts to gather complete and accurate data: *problems of memory*, where people might not be able to recall critical details about the peace negotiations; *problems of vested interest*, where people might seek to enhance or protect their (or someone else's) personal or professional reputation; and *problems of mistaken judgment*, where a person might be convinced that they know something, but are mistaken and reach false conclusions (Roth & Mehta 2002). There are no magical means to eradicate these problems. Heeding Roth and Mehta's cautionary advice, I pursued my research design, fieldwork and analysis with a perpetual awareness of these challenges as a means to minimize them.

Two complementary strategies also alleviated concerns over data quality: I sought to interview as many individuals as resources and time permitted and subsequently considered the information from these interviews within the context of the source's knowledge, social position, and personal and political agendas to triangulate facts and opinions, and reconcile inconsistent data. Using "interpretively informed triangulation" improved the quality of my data, facilitating its analysis, while yielding beneficial insight into the participants' worldviews and motivations (Roth & Mehta 2002).¹⁰

The assumptions that I have made about my subjects give rise to this work's limitations. The answers of the most well-intentioned of individuals are nonetheless shaped by his personality, approaches to the subjects being discussed, decision frames, bounded awareness and decision-making biases. Indeed, the aim of this research is to acknowledge that such concepts impact individual negotiators. Similarly, I must assume that my interview subjects are confined by these same notions. With this in mind, I have undertaken to cross-reference and triangulate contradicted facts.

Scope

This research work does not attempt a comprehensive study of every single individual that influenced the Lomé and Accra peace processes. I have only sought to ascertain that individual motivations, decisions and behaviours exert influence on peace processes. Consequently, I have only included a representational cross-section of various key negotiators at the Lomé and Accra peace talks. My time and resources also served to limit the project. The necessary exclusion of some individuals means that this research cannot provide a complete and fully detailed account of these negotiations—nor is this my aim. However, I do offer a much fuller and more nuanced record of these events than has previously been given.

¹⁰ Roth & Mehta believe that understanding subjects' worldviews provides researchers with invaluable information, since "a respondent's understanding of her world and culture is...[a] most illuminating form of bias that is not captured by our previous categories of memory, vested interests, or mistaken judgments (2002: 162)." The pursuit of worldviews to enhance knowledge of a narrative is intertwined with the process of "framing" information within structures and institutions. This connection is explored explicitly in chapter 2, and implicitly in the research findings of chapters four through nine.

My research data applies specifically to Liberia and Sierra Leone's experiences with peace negotiations. However, the techniques I have used to collect data, interpret the information, as well as the narrative recounting of events can also be applied to other contemporary peace processes, such as those between Russia and Ukraine, in Colombia, as well as the Balkans, to name but a few.

TERMINOLOGY

My research considers a few key individuals who negotiated the Lomé and Accra peace agreements. This work does not attempt to parse the differences between official negotiators, formal mediators, facilitators, and adjunct participants at peace talks. Every individual considered herein, regardless of his formal status at the Lomé and Accra negotiations, was interested in a particular outcome. When an individual seeks a specific result at peace talks—be it peace or ongoing conflict—his interactions, decisions and actions attempt to forward his aims. As a result, each of the individuals featured in this research is deemed a negotiator. Although Liberia's religious leaders claimed to be neutral participants, they unashamedly espoused a desire for peace and worked towards this end. Consequently, they too are deemed negotiators.¹¹

I claim the negotiators herein have extreme agency. By this I mean that the individuals I feature acted with intent; they sought to control, if not always themselves, then the direction and outcome of the peace processes they were part of. Extreme agency is manifest in the personalities, biases and motivations of the negotiators at Accra and Lomé. The negotiators in the following chapters acknowledged they knew what they were doing and demonstrated at least some understanding that their actions had consequences and implications. Whether their actions were "successful" in terms of achieving the outcomes they sought, these individuals believed that they were agents of change and acted to effect change; in so doing, these negotiators express extreme agency.

The terms peace talks, discussions, negotiations, and peace process are used interchangeably. Again, this research is not an attempt to distinguish between these expressions. This research explores the motivations tactics and decisions of negotiators at Lomé and Accra. These cities are sites where discussions, peace talks, and negotiations took place. The peace process is the entirety of all the discussions, talks and negotiations that took place at these sites, as well as in the countries at conflict (Sierra Leone and Liberia), and at times, the neighbouring region and the international community as well.

Peace negotiations are not usually held in the countries under consideration. Consequently, the peace process for Liberia and Sierra Leone did not take place in either of these countries. The Lomé peace process refers to the sum of the 1999 discussions to negotiate an end to the Sierra Leone civil war. Likewise, the Accra peace process was undertaken in 2003 to negotiate a resolution to Liberia's civil conflict.

¹¹ Although regional troops had actively fought in both conflicts, representatives from ECOWAS, the official mediator at both the Lomé and Accra peace talks, claimed to be neutral. Additionally, the mediators were intent to resolve the Sierra Leone and Liberian wars peaceably. As a result, the mediators at Lomé and Accra were also negotiators.

OUTLINE

Chapter 2 seeks insight into the negotiator mindset through an examination of political science, legal and psychology literatures. Much political science literature focuses on theories of power and rational choice, while political negotiation research highlights the distribution of power and wealth, as well as institutional reconstruction following conflict. These themes are all in evidence in political research relating to the sharing of administrative authority and material resource, as well as international or foreign intervention.

Acknowledging that people frequently demonstrate irrational and disjointed decision-making, Chapter 2 also considers legal and psychology research on negotiations that show how negotiator behaviour is influenced by cognitive structures, temperamental characteristics and personality traits. All negotiators are susceptible to various decision-making biases, which prevent them from making sound, reflective decisions. Perceptions of value are distinct among individuals, and negotiators often act to fulfil personal aspirations in peace processes over taking decisions that would benefit their country. Additionally, a person's decision frames and bounded awareness limits their perspective. Consequently, negotiators will overlook, not recognise or use information that is readily available to them, which can determine the success or failure of a peace agreement.

Chapter 3 provides a historical, social, and political overview of the wars in Sierra Leone and Liberia. Contextual insight into these complex wars is essential to understanding how the Lomé and Accra peace negotiations came about, as well as to assessing how and why the various players made the choices and pursued the actions that they did. Both countries share recent histories as colonies settled by freed slaves who perpetuated the inequalities they had endured themselves onto the aboriginal peoples who had resided therein for centuries. Many Sierra Leoneans and Liberians held legitimate grievances at the outset of the wars. However, the countries' natural resource wealth meant that conflict became highly profitable for the perpetrators. Whether the conflicts were grounded in greed or grievance, no rebel faction in either country had an intelligible political platform. Chief warmongers Charles Taylor and Foday Sankoh had previously attended a host of peace negotiations during the course of the wars, all of which came to naught. The choices and actions made by these two individuals over multiple events provided the negotiators at Lomé and Accra with ample insight into their opponents, but few chose to pay any heed.

Chapters 4 through 6 form a case study of the Lomé negotiations and three individuals who unquestionably influenced the process. In Chapter 4, American civil rights leader Jesse Jackson emerges as unexpectedly prominent advocate for rebel leader Sankoh. Although he was not appointed an official participant to the Lomé peace talks, Jackson's ambition and ego made him an intimidating, competitive, and highly successful negotiator. Subsequent to Jackson's intercession, Sankoh was released from prison, and flown to Togo to confer with his field commanders ahead of the Lomé peace process. Most notably, at the outset of the peace talks, Jackson deliberately isolated President Kabbah from his main advisors, forced him into discussions with Sankoh, and leaned on him to sign a pre-approved draft of a ceasefire. Jackson's impressive intervention skills were arguably the foundation of Sankoh's great gains—and Kabbah's significant losses—at Lomé.

Prior to the Lomé peace talks, RUF leader Sankoh was counting down his last days on death row. Chapter 5 tracks Sankoh's unexpected journey from obscurity to notorious warlord to imprisonment to chief prize winner at Lomé. Sankoh's initial aspirations from the peace process were modest; he wanted to be released from prison and savour life's luxuries at a beachside hotel at someone else's expense. But with Jackson's support, Sankoh reverted to the ambitious, impulsive, and deceitful warlord persona he had used to great effect during the war. Sankoh exploited President Kabbah's weaknesses during the negotiations using hardball tactics, and became increasingly avaricious with each concession. As in previous negotiations, Sankoh was not committed to peace at Lomé as much as he was to enriching himself and he never had any intent of being true to his promises.

Conversely, Sierra Leone's president Kabbah was wholly engaged to finding a peaceable end to the war. Chapter 6 reveals a man whose honourable aims were repeatedly sabotaged by his mendacious opponent. Kabbah was elected to power in the midst of war, and within a year, was forced into exile. With the assistance of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), Kabbah made his way back to the presidency, but remained beholden to the foreign troops who helped get him there, and he had little autonomy or control. Conciliatory, cooperative, and desperate for peace, Kabbah was so unlike Sankoh as to be blind to his duplicity. Believing himself more vulnerable than he was, Kabbah's quest for peace made him capitulate to Sankoh repeatedly at Lomé.

Liberia's case study is recounted through Chapters 7 through 9, in which I assess religious leaders Sheikh Kafumba Konneh and Benjamin Lartey, along with the unnamed lead rebel negotiator, and President Charles Taylor. Chapter 7 recounts how the religious leaders in Liberia collaborated to prevent the war from becoming sectarian, and their united efforts to develop trustworthy dialogue with the belligerents over many years. There are few ethical protagonists in wartime, but Lartey and Konneh distinguished themselves as tireless vocal advocates of peace and inter-faith cooperation. Lartey and Konneh's impartial insight into the warring factions gave them the legitimacy to bring them together for peace talks. However, their collaborative and integrative approaches could not ward off the belligerents' competitive approach and hardball tactics.

As illustrated through the travails of the unnamed chief negotiator (CN) for Liberians United for Reconciliation and Democracy (LURD), Chapter 8 shows that the rebels were neither committed to reconciliation or democracy, but they fought to the death to topple Taylor from power. At the outset of the Accra peace talks, the rebels believed that they had a military advantage over Taylor and CN pursued negotiations with one foot at the conference table and the other in the bloody battlefield outside Monrovia. Although CN never lost sight of LURD's primary goal, the group's aspirations expanded during negotiations to include a share of political power. Throughout the negotiations, LURD shelled the innocent civilians of Monrovia in a misguided attempt to intimidate its opponents. The rebels were so cocksure of their imminent victory that they did not envisage that their violent tactics would alienate public support and erase much of their leverage going into Accra.

Chapter 9 features the thesis' final profile, assessing Liberia's President Taylor. Ruthless, clever, amoral and manipulative, the traits that allowed Taylor to excel as a warlord, led him to ascend to the Liberian presidency. These same traits also served him well over the 17 negotiations that preceded Accra. Although his mellifluous words always

told of his commitment to peace, Taylor's actions at negotiations and thereafter suggested that peace was far less a priority than his personal gain. Come 2003, Taylor was fearful of being toppled like his two immediate predecessors, his troops were turning against him, and the international community had already deserted him. Nonetheless, Taylor dominated the Accra peace process, resorting to the tried-and-true hardball negotiating tactics that had worked for him so many times before. Were it not for his unexpected indictment for war crimes by the Special Court for Sierra Leone, Taylor would in all likelihood have won the lion's share of these negotiations as well.

The final chapter summarises my research findings and examines these in contrast with the existing political science literature. I establish the ways in which my research contributes to political science, while also signalling its policy applications for practitioners. I conclude by noting areas of inquiry that warrant additional research.

CHAPTER 2

NEGOTIATIONS AND NEGOTIATORS AT WAR'S END LITERATURE REVIEW

Political science overlooks the psychological hurdles that impede the resolution of civil wars such as those in Sierra Leone and Liberia. Outside this discipline, however, a large body of literature highlights numerous psychological principles that are directly relevant to negotiating conflict resolution. Thus far, these principles have been linked more specifically to the practice of civil law,¹² and less so to political negotiations; consequently my suggestion that they can be transplanted into the realm of civil conflict negotiation while theoretical, deserves due consideration.

This chapter explores political science, legal, and psychology literature seeking insight into the minds of the negotiators whose decisions and actions determine the negotiation process. There is no single encompassing theory of negotiation. Instead, there are five core approaches to negotiation (Zartman 1988; 1978). Political science emphasis on power and rational choice game theories, along with distributive and institutional outcomes, are manifest in an exploration of the literature surrounding power and resource sharing, as well as international intervention. These perspectives lend themselves well to structural and strategic approaches, which seek to explain negotiated outcomes in terms of the rational, self-interest of players. Recognising that these approaches can be impersonal and monolithic, the chapter makes way to explore non-rational, emotive approaches to negotiation, which account for the frequently irrational and disparate nature of human behaviour. Delving into legal research and psychology, we see how negotiator personality and temperamental characteristics reflect the behavioural approach, whereas market-style haggling and emphasis on distributive and procedural fairness denote the processual approach, while more recent emphasis on mutual gain and collective problem-solving point to the integrative approach, in which negotiators can achieve a greater outcome together than alone.

The psychology of negotiation explored in this chapter asserts that individual negotiators' decision-making and behaviours are influenced by their cognitive structures and personality traits. Moreover, whether a negotiation process is deemed cooperative, competitive, or collaborative, negotiators' decision frames and bounded awareness limits their outlooks and impacts their mood, which often means that they do not see or use readily available information, all of which can determine whether a negotiation ends in success or failure. Negotiators are also influenced by their perceptions of value, which sees them making decisions based on what they perceive as a means to achieve personal gain. Finally, just as negotiators' moods and decisions are shaped by their decision frames, negotiators are also susceptible to a host of decision-making biases. These biases result in "simplified information processing strategies" (Fink 2014: np), which frequently cause negotiators to make erroneous decisions or choices.

¹² In addition to Birke & Fox (1999), see also Rachlinski (1996), Korobkin & Guthrie (1994), Kelman et al. (1996) and Langevoort (1998).

POLITICAL SCIENCE: STRUCTURE, STRATEGY AND OUTCOMES

Many political studies of civil war concentrate on exploring the conditions that precipitated conflict rather than its resolution (see Blattman & Miguel 2009). Political science researchers generally concur that the conditions associated with civil war include states' economic limitations (poverty or dependence on natural resources), political stability (institutional strength and credibility), social demography and population density, and geographic characteristics (rough terrain) (see Collier & Hoeffler 2004; Collier et al. 2006; Fearon & Laitin 2003). Conversely, negotiations to end civil wars and the subsequent high rate of failure of peace settlements are less well understood by political scientists (Walter 2009).

Warring parties do not simultaneously choose to engage in arbitration without some form of prodding. A peace negotiation is a strategy to bring security to a country from outside (Mehler 2008) and typically includes third-party mediators and occasionally external peacekeeping forces to oversee an agreement's implementation. Usually, members of the international community that hold sway with parties to the conflict will push combatants to negotiate a truce, or the combatants themselves determine that their demands stand a better chance of being addressed in a non-conflict situation than through violent means.

Belligerents are often motivated to participate in peace talks by the possibility of acquiring political power and other resources that are otherwise not being achieved (at least not expediently) on the battlefield. Warring parties may have no immediate military victory in sight, or they are experiencing costly losses that they wish to mitigate. Once negotiations begin, combatants stay to participate in the process when their goals of influence and affluence appear within grasp. In cases of intractable conflict, foreign intervention and external financial aid are usually required to enforce and maintain the peace, which creates a dilemma of ownership and control for a nascent democratic society.

While there is a common sequence to most peace processes, there is no dominant, unifying theory of negotiation. Rather, there are five core approaches to negotiation (Zartman 1988; 1978). Structural analysis focuses on the distribution of power between negotiating parties, whereas strategic approaches assess negotiations through the matrices of game theory. In processual negotiations, the parties will resolve their differences through a series of concessions, much like marketplace haggling. Behavioural approaches consider how individual negotiators and their personalities impact outcomes, whereas integrative negotiations consider how parties can collectively create positions of mutual gain in which everyone can win. In practice, negotiators will combine any number of these approaches, and will embrace multiple perspectives. However, in theory, political science is partial to structural and strategic approaches, whereas other disciplines—namely, law and business management—often acknowledge the importance of the processual, behavioural, and integrative approaches. Ultimately, the “separate approaches are supported by a disciplinary bias [that] also keeps them locked in their internal analytical problems” (Zartman 1988: 32). The result is that bargaining and settlements are considered throughout the social sciences in disparate ways. And while negotiations research has flourished over the last two decades, disciplinary chasms have deepened. The gap is most acute between political science and other social sciences, particularly psychology, law and management.

Considering the stakes (political power and control of resources), it is not surprising that much political science literature favours the structural and strategic approaches to negotiations, which focus on the distributive and institutional outcomes of the peace process. In addition to the outcomes of the negotiating process, political science research also concentrates on the dilemmas emerging from simultaneous attempts to build peace while ushering in a democratic governance structure. Indeed, much negotiation literature stemming from political science is positioned in the realm of comparative research, particularly democracy and regime change research, as well as within peace studies, focusing on civil conflict resolution through mechanisms such as peacekeeping, peacebuilding and peacemaking (see, among others, Bertam 1995; Featherston 2000; Fisher 1993; Greig & Diehl 2005; Jarstad & Nilsson 2008;).

Of the social sciences, both economics and psychology accede to the strategic approach as a rightful point of departure in the assessment of negotiations. The structural approach to negotiations prioritises the outcomes of a bargaining process, and considers these to be functions of the structural features of a particular negotiation. In tandem with the realist school of thought, the structural approach to negotiation theory perceives negotiators as ever acting according to their self-interest and portrays power as the determining factor in negotiations.¹³ However, the resources at a party's disposal cannot necessarily be converted to compelling negotiating power (Fisher & Ury 1997). Thus, structuralists acknowledge that at times smaller states or groups with less obvious amounts of power do not necessarily capitulate to parties with more power, and can even come to prevail in negotiations. Consequently, power is not a fixed resource but rather a "relational and perceptual concept" (Cheng 2009: n.p.) that is manipulable.¹⁴

Participants pursuing a power-based structural approach to negotiations value "winning" above all, which often results in their use of competitive negotiating tactics, including coercion, intimidation, threats and other means of duress. Evidence suggests that these tactics do not always work well—they tend to work best against opponents that are poorly prepared—and that competitive negotiators are not the most effective (Saunders et al 2010). Initially, competitive ploys may yield short-term results, but over time, they can backfire as people on the receiving end of hardball tactics want to retaliate and seek revenge.

Whereas the structural approach emphasizes *means* (i.e., power) in negotiations, the strategic approach focuses on *ends* (i.e., goals) and in so doing uses models of rational choice. Not unlike the self-interest evidenced in the structural approach, according to rational choice theory, actors will choose between known alternatives the option that will earn them the greatest payoff. While both structural and strategic actors are self-interested,

¹³ There are three kinds of structural power in negotiations: Authority, which usually lies with people or groups in official positions (legitimate power) or with particular expertise (expert power); "Best alternative to a negotiated agreement" (BATNA), is a party's alternative to proceeding with negotiations; and, Threats, which are only effective when they target an opponents' interests and are seen as credible (Cheng 2009). Aspects of these forms of power are explored further in this chapter.

¹⁴ Relational power is generally understood as the ability to get someone to do something they otherwise would not do (Dahl, 1957). Perceptual power is one side's "perceived capacity" to affect another (Zartman & Rubin, 2000).

instead of relying on power as a means to maximise their claims, negotiators adopting a strategic approach are presumed to be rational decision makers as they pursue their self-interests. Correspondingly, the choices such actors make and their subsequent results can be known in advance.

Strategic approaches to negotiation can be described as normative because they adhere to a notion that there is a single optimal solution to every negotiating hurdle. Accordingly, negotiators seek to enact “what ultra smart, impeccably rational, super-people should do in competitive, interactive [i.e., bargaining] situations” (Raffia 1982). With such lofty criterion, it does not require much insight to see that Raffia’s model negotiator is as rare as a unicorn. Even so, the strategic approach to negotiations and rational choice theory remain widely embraced.

Game theory and critical risk theory are examples of the strategic approach. Game theory describes and predicts the choices and actions a person will take to augment their gains in situations where the consequences of their choices depend on the decisions of another (Alfredson & Cungu 2008).¹⁵ Rather than skill or chance, game theory hinges on strategy, where a person’s “best course of action” is determined by what she expects the other actor(s) to do (Schelling, 1960). Similar to game theory, critical risk theory explains decision-making through utility maximisation, with the added hypothesis that people make rational calculations before acting, first estimating the probability of the outcomes of their actions (Ellsberg 1959 in Alfredson & Cungur 2008). Negotiators develop probabilities by assessing personal critical risk, by appraising the resolve of their opponents to hold fast, or by evaluating how much risk of a complete negotiation breakdown is acceptable before they make concessions.

The best-known game that pertains to negotiations is the Prisoner’s Dilemma.¹⁶ In the classic scenario, two prisoners awaiting trial for a crime they perpetrated must choose whether to confess or not. If neither confesses—a joint choice made by cooperating—each must serve a two-year sentence. If both “defect”—making an individual choice to turn evidence against their fellow prisoner—both risk a four-year sentence. According to this plotline, the obvious choice would see prisoners collaborating to ensure a reduced sentence for both of them. However, the prisoners also learn that if one of them cooperates while the other defects, the prisoner who defects will serve no time at all, leaving the cooperator to be incarcerated for five years. Each prisoner wants to maximise her interests, but neither knows what the other will decide. Assessing that the risks of defection are less than the benefits of cooperation, the “rational” prisoner will choose to defect every time.

As in the Prisoner’s Dilemma, negotiators often do not know their opponents’ intentions. This suggests that negotiations should frequently see one party defecting to maximise their interests. However, because all sides are usually better off for having

¹⁵ Using mathematical models, games are often portrayed as matrixes, in which players choose between a finite number of “moves”, all of which have known outcomes.

¹⁶ The Prisoner’s Dilemma was first run as an experiment by mathematicians, Melvin Dresher and Merrill Flood in 1950. Subsequently, in 1957, decision theorist Howard Raiffa independently conducted experiments with the Prisoner’s Dilemma.

cooperated, defection is a less desirable outcome. During the Lomé and Accra peace processes, there were numerous threats of defection, but all sides frequently cooperated.

Proving the existence and value of cooperation, Axelrod (1984) repeatedly ran a Prisoner's Dilemma experiment that revealed that while pursuing their self-interest, people will choose to cooperate with someone when they anticipate meeting them again. Negotiating processes are often long, drawn-out events where participants are guaranteed to meet time and again; whether or not negotiators choose to cooperate or defect frequently depends on their personalities, biases and personal relationships. While few participants at Lomé or Accra would credit this as a key reason for their eventual cooperation, it is evident that repeated contact with their opponents over lengthy negotiations allowed individuals to develop at least some personal knowledge of their counterparts, from which genuine relationships evolved.

With their emphasis on power and rational choice, the structural and strategic approaches to negotiations found in Political Science leave us lacking an understanding of the role and impact of individual participants, their personalities, the limits of their awareness, the decision frames within which they operate, as well as their prejudicial heuristic biases. However, these approaches do teach us that negotiators do, in fact, make choices (albeit not necessarily rationally) in hopes that they will maximise their interests. And we also learn that although they may, at times, cooperate, negotiators remain suspicious of their opponents. For all their misgivings, we know that negotiating opponents will cooperate when they recognise that they share similar interests. In peace processes, negotiators' interests typically lie in accessing a share of political power and material resources. And whatever cooperative agreements negotiators reach, these usually require monitoring and implementation by outside forces. Considering how notions of power and rational choice colour structural and strategic approaches to negotiations, political science literature provides a useful account of negotiators' aspirations of power and resource sharing, as well as the international intervention that accompanies such arrangements. The following two sections review the political science literature that assesses power sharing and resource sharing, and notes that these comprise the lion's share of outcomes in peace negotiations.

POWER SHARING

Scholars of conflict management suggest power sharing is a means to achieve short-term peace, while scholars of democratic theory expect that power sharing will produce peace while making way for democracy. The negotiators who drafted the Lomé and Accra peace agreements appeared to endorse both these beliefs, while failing to acknowledge that there is potential for concurrent dilemmas in both democratization and peacebuilding in the aftermath of conflict.

During the course of war, various groups, warlords and politicians will gain positions of power while profiting from the conflict. These actors will only agree to peace and democratization as long as their benefits and status are not threatened. Non-state actors (rebels) and state actors (military) alike can threaten and use violence to disrupt budding peace attempts (Höglund & Zartman 2006). In many peace agreements, deliberate efforts

are made to deter spoilers by including “violence makers” in the peace process in exchange for their pledge to cease fighting.

During the course of Liberia’s three-month-long peace negotiation in Accra, LURD was repeatedly accused of trying to spoil the process. Whenever talks would grind to a standstill, or LURD felt that it was being asked to compromise too much, the negotiator would call the party Chairperson (then residing in Guinea) who in turn would order troops to increase the shelling of Monrovia. The increased misery of citizens would then be broadcast in the media, which would result in international outcry, particularly among the large Liberian diaspora residing in the US, which would prompt the mediators to accommodate LURD.¹⁷

LURD’s actions directly support the main argument *against* power sharing, which is that it remunerates and empowers the very parties that sought to seize state control with violence, while committing domestic and international crimes. Civil society actors and West African legislators have scorned the Lomé and Accra agreements for their power-sharing content.¹⁸ Sawyer (2004) argues that peace brokered in this fashion cannot endure. Indeed, while power sharing is undeniably a key component of contemporary peace agreements, whether such concessions result in a lasting end to conflict is greatly debated. Jarstad & Nilsson (2008) claim that different kinds of power sharing arrangements result in more or less durable peace. For example, the simple sharing of political institutions can help facilitate the implementation of an agreement, but it does not appear to ensure lasting peace, whereas pacts that stipulate power sharing of the military, resources and territory tend to make way for longer-term conflict cessation (see Hoddie & Hartzell 2005; Mukherjee 2006; Walter 2002).

Political science scholars have developed a range of power-sharing models and methods (Lijphart 1977; 1993; Horowitz 1985; Walter 1999; Hartzell & Hoddie 2004), but the overall aim is always to coax belligerents to stop fighting by providing them with political legitimacy and decision-making authority in the government (Levitt, 2006). Power sharing promotes “moderate and cooperative behaviour among contending groups by fostering a positive-sum perception of political interactions” (Hartzell & Hoddie 2004: 321). The foundation of power-sharing theory, Sisk (1996) notes, is grounded in the belief that political engineering can build a democratic political system that can withstand the forces that would otherwise destroy polarized societies.

In power-sharing arrangements, former combatants seek to achieve influence in the post-war government. Belligerents-cum-negotiators also want to ensure that their opponents will not win victories in a peace agreement that they could not achieve in battle (Hartzell & Hoddie 2003). As a result, power-sharing provisions seek to persuade combatants to lay down their arms by assuring warring groups they will be granted a portion of state government. Ideally, power sharing provides warring parties with the means to resolve the acrimony and partisanship between them, and create a more just and equitable society (O’Flynn & Russell 2005).

¹⁷ Field research in Monrovia, February-March 2010.

¹⁸ Field research in Liberia, March 2012 and Sierra Leone, October 2012.

Political scientists routinely advocate power sharing as a means to democracy, claiming that it helps to socialize groups towards moderation and compromise (Papagianni 2007; Sisk 2003; Rothchild n.d.; Spears 2000). However, power sharing has also proven to be destabilizing as it can lead to ineffective governance as well as the resurgence of conflict (Rothchild 2005). The primary arguments for power sharing as a means to democracy claim that government by the many is both more legitimate than majority rule (Lijphart 1999), as well as being cooperative through a coalition promotes tolerance and trust, while developing democratic culture and peace (Lijphart 1994). However, Jarstad (2008) claims that this assessment does not consider how power sharing typically has been seen as a short-term tool to achieve peace, nor does it account for how the particular conditions of war-torn societies impact power sharing. That power sharing was pursued in the Liberian and Sierra Leonean negotiations as a means to persuade warring parties to see the value in peace does not conceal the fact that proffering state power to belligerents is, in essence, bribery. So too is resource sharing.

RESOURCE SHARING

In addition to power sharing, the lure of material gain can act as a powerful incentive to lure and keep belligerents at the negotiating table. Wealth sharing is much like power sharing (Jarstad 2008), with an economic emphasis; indeed, possession of resources and resource-related revenue *is* a form of power.

Resource sharing is often a compromise with “what is needed to end the war, and what is needed to build a stable post-conflict economy and in the long run a stable democracy” (Binningsbø & Rustad 2009: 6). Wealth sharing can include revenue distribution, direct access to resources, and government portfolio (Binningsbø & Rustad 2008). The redistribution of a nation’s wealth and its resource revenue can alleviate poverty and inequality, which addresses two rebel grievances – the diversion of revenues from state coffers directly to those in power, as well as the citizenry’s deprivation from existing resources that they cannot benefit from. The reallocation of some government portfolios to former rebels provides them with control over areas where they can exercise change, along with the secure income that comes from control, as well as financial and status initiatives (Rustad *et al* 2008). In Sierra Leone, the Lomé accord made RUF leader Sankoh Chairman of the Commission for Strategic Resources, which gave him control over the nation’s diamond resources. In addition to providing the rebels with immense wealth, the move served to validate the RUF’s discourse on the necessity of reducing corruption and addressing rural poverty by reforming the diamond industry. This example supports Le Billon & Nicholls’ (2007) suggestion that resource-sharing arrangements reduce combatants’ need to use violence in order to access resources.

While war can provide political and economic opportunities for combatants that cannot be achieved in peace (Addison *et al* 2003), wealth sharing may shorten conflicts by providing warring parties with economic opportunities that can only be achieved in peacetime (Ross 2006). The effects of wealth sharing would indicate that when the government in power decides to share the nation’s resources with the rebels it is fighting, belligerents no longer see as much benefit in ongoing combat. On the other hand, similar to power sharing, it can also be argued that buying peace via wealth sharing “could be

perceived as rewarding violence” (Le Billon & Nicholls 2007: 618). Depending on whether wealth-sharing arrangements satisfy all the parties in a negotiation, how they are implemented, the way that agreements are worded, as well as how such arrangements are perceived by civil society, wealth-sharing arrangements might not ease the peace process after a resource conflict (Binningsbø & Rustad 2009). Recognising that resource sharing is limited in its capacity to equally compensate all the signatories to a peace agreement, mediators and belligerents almost invariably look beyond the borders of a conflict to external actors that will help keep the peace.

INTERNATIONAL INTERVENTION

Third party involvement can facilitate peace negotiations and bring about an end to violent conflict; however, democratization and peacebuilding must be ultimately be propelled and sustained by local intent and actions (Jarstad 2008b). Often, international support for democracy aims to promote stability while establishing institutions that alleviate conflict. In the name of peacebuilding, external actors may take temporary control over political and social processes. These actors are not democratically elected, nor are they accountable to the nation’s citizens.

For the international community, democratization provides a means for belligerents to resolve their grievances without falling back on violence, all within the principles of international law (Franck 1992). Similarly, democratization is also linked to state building, since elections are seen to generate internal legitimacy for peace agreements. Elections are not just one of several means to achieve domestic stability, for many scholars, they are a reflexive mantra, “In any transition from conflict to peace, the creation or restoration of some form of legitimate authority is paramount...the support of the citizenry must be tested and obtained” (Reilly 2003: 174).

Indeed, the UN appears to possess a near-religious fervour in its support of peace and democracy. Noting that the control and use of power is central to civil conflict, former UN Secretary General Kofi Annan claims, “No conflict can be resolved without answering those questions, and nowadays the answers almost always have to be democratic ones, at least in form... At its best it [democracy] provides a method for managing and resolving disputes peacefully, in an atmosphere of mutual trust” (Annan 2001). Ushering in a war-to-democracy transition is clearly appealing for the international community, especially when compared with the alternatives of authoritarianism or partition. However, there are inherent tensions among international policymakers and their approaches to war termination: “Conflict managers tend to concentrate on short-term solutions that address the precipitous events that sparked the conflict; above all they swift and expedient end to the violence. “Democratizers” tend to concentrate on longer-term solutions that address the root causes of the conflict; they search for enduring democratic stability. The former see peace as a precondition for democracy, the latter see democracy as a precondition for peace” (Baker 2001: 760).

The actual tasks within a foreign intervention typically conform to a three-step sequence: Monitoring a ceasefire, then disarming and demobilizing the hostile groups, followed by organising or managing national elections. The ability of the international

community to build peace and establish democracy hinges on how it addresses the dilemmas of sovereignty, neutrality and democracy that emerge from the pursuit of these goals (Bertram 1995, Fortna 2008), as well as whether it considers various constraints on external intervention (Bertram 1995).

A *sovereignty dilemma* arises because states believe their sovereignty to be inviolable and resist any intrusion from other states (see Hellman & Ratner 1992; Fromuth 1993). However, analysts argue that when a state is considered as “failed” it no longer has the same rights of sovereignty and international intervention is warranted “to save them from self-destruction” (Helman & Ratner 1992: 12). In cases of intervention where a state is not labelled as failed, foreign actors claim that national sovereignty is preserved because the international community was either asked to intervene or secured the consent of the government in power to act (Bertram 1995). However, in the midst of civil conflict, with multiple parties contending for political power, who can be said to provide legitimate consent for intervention? In both Liberia and Sierra Leone, the government was one of the warring parties in the civil war, which means that the government’s claim to legitimate power was contested. As a result, third party actors are expected to simultaneously respect state sovereignty and challenge its lawfulness (Bertram 1995). Either way, when outsiders enter a country as peacebuilders, national sovereignty is undermined to some extent. In Liberia, Doe’s government was functioning in name only when he requested intervention from ECOWAS in 1990. Taylor, who was winning the war, was adamantly against any kind of intervention, because he believed that ECOWAS was partisan and overtly supporting Doe (Alao et al 1999). ECOWAS acquiesced to Does’ request, not necessarily because it wished Taylor ill, but because the regional body—led by Nigeria—valued West African stability. With Sierra Leone already at war, ECOWAS was concerned that conflict in Liberia would also ignite existing tensions in neighbouring countries like Cote d’Ivoire and Guinea.

Traditional peacebuilding missions, particularly those undertaken by the UN, are based on the principle of neutrality. However, Bertram states that such actions are “nothing less than the reallocation of political power” (Bertram 1995: 394). This results in a *neutrality dilemma*, whereby interventions are intended to be nonpartisan but often are anything but. Peacebuilding missions are charged with monitoring or implementing a peace agreement between hostile groups which have often been at war for years. In order to generate confidence from all parties, outsiders who come to a country to assist in power transitions need to demonstrate their neutrality. However, in volatile environments “even the most limited and seemingly neutral of non-military objectives, such as providing humanitarian relief, may be perceived as sharply biased by those vying for power on the ground” (Bertram 1995: 395). Considering the interventions in Liberia and Sierra Leone, Hoffman (2004) points out that neither the UN nor other intervening parties practiced the neutrality that was otherwise essential to their institutional character.

Undoubtedly, outside intervention can help to prevent a return to conflict following the signing of a peace agreement, but it can also hinder the development of local political institutions that are legitimate and accountable (Jarstad 2008). There are two areas where a *peacebuilding-democracy dilemma* is most apparent: human rights and elections (Bertram 1995). As they work to ensure the implementation of peace agreements, peacebuilders are

often required to consider how past human rights abusers might be held accountable for their actions. As noted earlier in this section, to ensure an expedient end to violent conflict, pact overseers will convince warring groups to lay down their weapons in exchange for political power and amnesty. In both Liberia and Sierra Leone, parties to negotiations were presented with power-sharing options, and in Sierra Leone the RUF was given amnesty from any war crimes it may have committed during the course of the conflict.

Liberia was the site of foreign intervention twice, both times by the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS). In 1991, despite fierce resistance by leading warlord Charles Taylor, ECOWAS established the Economic Community for West African States' Monitoring Group (ECOMOG) and embarked on a seven-year mission. Beleaguered by in-fighting and a perpetual lack of resources, the mission was justifiably accused of being another belligerent due to its support of various rebel factions, as well as the notorious corruption and theft by many of its troops. ECOMOG again intervened in Liberia in 2003, this time to counter violence by rebel forces during the course of peace negotiations. The United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL) succeeded this force shortly after the signing of the Accra peace accord and thousands of UN troops remain in Liberia to this day.

Sierra Leone experienced three different international interventions, one by ECOWAS, one more by the UN, and another still by Great Britain. In 1997, ECOWAS launched an unplanned military intervention that subsequently failed. Recalling its ill-fated sortie in Liberia, ECOWAS quickly recognized that it lacked the military capacity to resolve the country's conflict and instead began working for a diplomatic solution. Meanwhile, the UN had also been involved in Sierra Leone, working closely with ECOWAS and the Commonwealth. In October 1997, the UN Security Council voted to back ECOWAS' peace efforts, but until the Lomé agreement in July 1999, the organization did little more than impose travel bans on the RUF and the AFRC (Armed Forces Revolutionary Council), branding them war criminals (Francis 2000).

Within months of the Lomé accord's ratification, the deal was in danger of complete failure when the RUF attacked and kidnapped 500 UN troops. In an attempt to salvage the accord, establish democracy and bolster the UN's waning credibility, Great Britain launched Operation Palliser on 6 May 2000, designed to rescue the UN soldiers, and evacuate citizens still in Sierra Leone. Two weeks into the deployment, the United Kingdom expanded its mission to support the UN by providing security until other troops arrived and the immediate crisis was assuaged. The operation terminated on 15 June, but the UK continued to maintain a significant presence in the country (Zack-Williams 2001, Durch 2006) even as the UN established its largest peacekeeping mission to date in the country, remaining in Sierra Leone until 2005.

While third party intervention is usually defined by the physical presence of troops, foreign aid is in fact another, significant part of intervention. Indeed, the UK remains the largest donor of aid to Sierra Leone, averaging more than \$100 million per year in the last decade (DFID 2013). Although almost half of that amount is destined for governance projects, there are allegations that a significant amount of aid is being siphoned off by government officials (EURODAD 2008). Meanwhile, the US has provided over \$1 billion

in bilateral aid to Liberia since 2003 (U.S. Dept. of State 2015). This figure gains perspective when compared to the annual budget of Liberia, which was \$183 million in 2008 (Office of Public Affairs 2008). Throughout the country, it is quite evident that a huge part of Liberian reconstruction would not be underway without US financing.

The most difficult dilemma for international actors concerns the use of coercion. The use of force to support a peace agreement, particularly one that is contested, is risky and can backfire, which prompts Jarstad to ask, “Should the UN be in the business of ensuring democracy at the barrel of a gun?” (Jarstad 2008: 6). Additionally, the issue of authority is disputed in war-to-democracy transitions. In places where local authorities have failed to prevent human rights atrocities or mass violence, such as in Sierra Leone, or where the state itself has perpetrated atrocities, the international community has taken on widespread post-conflict authority. With international bodies assuming control over state functions, one dilemma is how to establish a capable functioning state, with an empowered civic-minded society that can assume credible leadership once the international community mission is deemed complete. While this problem is inherent to all transitional administrations, it is particularly problematic for the UN, which faces the task of establishing democracy in former conflict zones in ways that are fundamentally undemocratic while espousing commitment to democracy (Chesterman 2004).

NEGOTIATION FAILURE

A survey of the political science literature assessing negotiations from a structural and strategic perspective gives us insight into outcomes that negotiators most value—power and resources—and the means through which they hope to secure their interests. We also learn that power, resources and international intervention come with their own inherent dilemmas, particularly when negotiators seek to establish democratic governance while keeping and building peace. However challenging, these dilemmas do not explain why so many peace negotiations end before agreements are signed, and of the agreements that are ratified, why so many are violated.

Negotiations fail, we are told, because of bargaining problems that stem from the reasons why states go to war with their citizens. States wage civil war, claims Walter (2009), because they seek to ascertain information about the capacities and resolve of rebel factions (see Blainey 1973). Throughout negotiations, states continue to probe their opponents’ strength, while struggling to divide stakes that cannot be fairly shared. This both hinders negotiations and prevents parties from adhering to the terms of settlements. States lack the inclination to settle with all groups that threaten conflict because they are unsure of the opposing organisations’ strength. Instead of granting allowances to every group that makes a demand, governments would rather limit their negotiations to groups that have the financial means and accompanying stimulus to maintain war over long periods of time and that can inflict substantive damage on the state if they are not given sufficient concessions (Walter 2009).¹⁹ While it is true that fiscally flush organisations

¹⁹ In a study of all civil wars from 1946 to 1996 carried out by Walter (2002), state governments were more inclined to grant concessions to rebel factions that demonstrated the ability to continue a war for at least 72 months. Walter suggests that governments appear to need six years to determine the strength and purpose of an opposing force – if true, governments learn at a geological pace, and at the great expense of their citizens.

have the necessary means to exact a painful toll on a state, Walter ignores that small, less lucrative groups can also wreak havoc. Where the state is weak, rebel forces (regardless of their financial means) are not only cutthroat, they may also garner legitimacy with the population, further undermining the state's authority.

Even so, Walter's argument is delivered from the standpoint of a state government that has an edge, or at least possesses a certain degree of leverage over deliberations. Her choice of words, "governments... go to war" is indicative of this vantage (Walter 2009: 250). This is a limited lens through which to examine conflict and negotiations for its resolution. In fact, more often than not, the government has not taken the first step to go to war, it has been forced to administer violent retribution to those who seek to subvert its power. Moreover, in many civil conflicts, such as those in Sierra Leone and Liberia, the state is so weak as to be crippled or even failed, and thus has less bargaining power than do the rebel forces opposing it.

Overall, wars that end with a decisive military victory are less likely to slide back into renewed conflict (Collier & Sambanis 2002; Walter 2002, 2004). However, fully half of all negotiated settlements relapse into war (Licklider 1995).²⁰ Whether wars that concluded via settlement will recommence depends on the information combatants gleaned about each other previously (Doyle & Sambanis 2002; Dubey 2004; Fortna 2004; Hartzell *et al* 2001; and Walter 2004, 2009). In long-lasting wars, parties are able to collect more information about each other, which makes them more capable of resolving their disputes (Walter 2009). While protracted conflict can yield more information about combatants' military strength and commitment, this claim implies that adversaries cannot learn from and about each other outside of active combat. This is another flawed assumption on the part of many political researchers.

The fact is that combatants can (and do) learn about each other beyond the blood-soaked battlefield. They particularly can come to know each other through the negotiation process. Over repeat encounters, lasting weeks and months, negotiators come to know about the personalities, motivations, intents, decision frames and biases of their opponents. All the same, even when negotiators possess full knowledge and shared information, they are still liable to assess the strength of their claims in self-interested ways. People not only tend to be biased in their own favour, they also think that otherwise neutral, third parties will be partial to them (Birke & Fox 1999). And yet, political science literature tells us nothing of these.

Instead of providing us with deeper, more relevant knowledge of players' intents and motives, political science research can only provide us with parting snapshots rather than three-dimensional moving images. We learn that a concluded settlement is indicative of the "government's willingness to compromise with rebel groups, signaling to potential challengers that rebellion is likely to be rewarded with a deal" (Walter 2009: 257). We did not learn what offers motivated the various players to finally lay down their arms and commit to peace. We also learn that the terms of peace agreements reflect the balance of power at the time they were signed (Werner 1999). We did not discover the psychological influences

²⁰ Conversely, Licklider's findings show that only 15% of decisive military victories experience renewed conflict.

imposed by certain participants on war-weary and vulnerable combatants. It is not that the information we have from the existing literature is false or its accompanying data faulty; it is simply incomplete. Because we only have glimpses of static moments in time, we never come to know the fullness and nuance of the fraught peace negotiation process.

If we—scholars and practitioners alike—develop an awareness and understanding of the psychological attributes of the parties to a conflict, and how these create barriers to resolution, we can discern what makes for a desirable settlement. Both management and legal scholars have already determined the value of these phenomena: “What has been learned about human behaviour and choice should be linked at the theoretical and empirical levels,” claims Cass Sunstein (1997: 1176). Similarly, political science can also greatly benefit from psychological research in refining its theories on conflict resolution.

OTHER SOCIAL SCIENCES: BEHAVIOUR, INTEGRATION, AND PROCESS

Political action does not occur in a vacuum. All decisions about political conduct are made, if not by a single individual, then by groups of individuals—each possessing distinct personalities, motives, and biases. It is essential that we understand non-rational components of the negotiation process. These include the concepts of negotiator personality, decision frame, bounded awareness, decision-making biases, motivation, and psychological influence (including defenses against such influence).

In addition to the structural and strategic approaches favoured by political scientists, scholars in other social sciences have gleaned a wealth of research by examining negotiations by exploring a behavioural approach, a concessions exchange (or processual) approach, as well as an integrative approach. The behavioural approach highlights how negotiator and participant personalities and character traits can determine the course and outcome of the bargaining process. Personality and character traits determine negotiators’ relative interest in interpersonal relations or outcomes, which in turn reveals their motives as being more or less self-centred, altruistic, cooperative, or competitive (Deutsch 1958; Messick & McClintock 1968). The processual approach to negotiations is similar to both the structural and strategic approaches in that all three chronicle mechanisms that emphasize learning; negotiators learn from and react to each other’s concession behaviour (Zartman 1978; Alfredson & Cungu 2008). This approach sees participants start from a place of contention, then engage in a series of concessions, until their interests and desires converge. According to Zartman (1988), seesawing power struggles between negotiators show that process theories are actually a form of structuralism, whereby the weaker party will capitulate until “the tables are turned”, then the other party will yield in turn, until both sides come to an agreement. At the opposite end of the spectrum, the integrative approach seeks to accommodate the interests and goals of all participants, by emphasising group problem-solving, common interests and information exchange, in the interest of mutual gain (Lewicki *et al* 2003). Instead of seeing negotiations as a competition where one side claims a fixed prize, the integrative approach divides negotiations into stages wherein the formerly fixed prize is reframed in such a way as to expand and gain value, so there will be more than enough reward to share among all parties.

The integrative and behavioural approaches are the exceptions to our overall understanding of the negotiation process, Zartman claims. Behavioural analysis is most obviously different because it uses “the negotiators themselves as the focus of analysis” (Jönsson 1978 in Zartman 1988: 36). Moreover, the personalities and character traits of the negotiators are the “terms of analysis” (Jönsson in Zartman 1988). And while integrative analysis views negotiations as a process, this process is broken down into stages, where outcomes are explained by the behaviours negotiators appropriately enact during each consecutive stage (Jönsson in Zartman 1988: 37).

Process analysis shares certain features with structural and strategic approaches, but unlike integrative and behavioural analysis, Zartman does not perceive this method as exceptional.²¹ Accordingly, Zartman limits both the negotiation process, writ large, as well as the processual approach, more particularly. Regardless of the approach one uses, throughout negotiations participants are engaged in a process and exchange concessions with a mind to the outcomes. This holds all the more true when negotiations are examined through the processual approach. Thus far, in this review, the outcomes that concern researchers (and negotiators) are palpable, such as power and resources. However, in the aftermath of the process, another outcome preoccupies negotiators nearly as much as the division of tangibles: fairness.

While most negotiators’ ultimate goal is to win, at worst they hope to achieve outcomes that they consider fair (Welsh 2004). Throughout and after the process, negotiators ponder at length over whether the outcomes were fair (Deutsch 2006). “Negotiators rely upon their perceptions of distributive and procedural fairness in making offers and demands, reacting to the offers and demands of others, and deciding whether to reach an agreement or end negotiations” (Welsh 2004: 753). The notion of *distributive fairness* is that which makes participants feel as though they have received their “fair share” of the rewards that were available in the negotiating process; *procedural fairness* refers to how negotiators felt they were treated during the bargaining process (Welsh 2004). Numerous studies indicate “most people are more sensitive to how fairly they have been treated than to how they have fared in objective terms” (Birke & Fox 1999: 38).²² In fact, fairness is so important that negotiators are often willing to sabotage their own gains to penalise parties that they think are behaving unfairly. Consequently, fairness must be consciously studied and addressed in negotiations, if only to avoid the impression that one side is acting unfairly.

As noted, much political science literature examines negotiations through power relations, which encourage a “winner takes all” mentality, or game theory, which assumes that negotiators are fully rational at all times. Conversely, Raiffa (1982) acknowledges that negotiators do not follow fully rational strategies (Bazerman & Chugh 2005). Recognising the limits of full rationality, negotiators are better served by grounding their thoughts and actions in multidisciplinary analysis. In reviewing negotiation literature outside the usually

²¹ Zartman acknowledges that process theory is limited to the extent that it only works in tidy, theoretical situations. Instead of conceding in turn, negotiators tend to “teach and learn, respond and elicit responses all at the same time” (Zartman 1988: 36).

²² See also Kahneman *et al* 1986, Loewenstein *et al* 1993, Thompson & Loewenstein 1992, and others in Birke & Fox 1999.

defined boundaries of political science, I identify and assess the psychological patterns that inform us about negotiator decision-making and behaviour. Psychologists call this focus on how negotiators make decisions and the ways in which people stray from rationality “decision perspective” (Bazerman 2005; Neale & Bazerman 1991). Similarly, I also assume that negotiators aspire to rational thought and action—rational being understood here as careful, reasoned, and intelligent—but like all humans, their rationality is “bounded” (Simon 1957 in Bazerman & Chough 2005).

The information negotiators possess, their minds’ cognitive abilities, and the time they have in which to make choices, all act as limits to their capacity for rationality. Instead, negotiators make decisions that “are inconsistent, inefficient, and based on normatively irrelevant information” (Bazerman & Chugh 2005: 8). Combined with individual personality traits and the frames in which decisions are made, such simplifying strategies or cognitive heuristics can provide negotiators with helpful bypasses, but can just as easily induce them to make predictable mistakes. It is only when we acknowledge such biases that we can gain a modicum of control over them.

NEGOTIATOR PERSONALITY

Throughout the 1960s and ’70s, social psychologists carried out hundreds of studies on negotiation, focusing predominantly on individual differences of negotiators and situational characteristics (Rubin & Brown 1975). Researchers believed that because negotiating was an interpersonal undertaking, the individual personalities of negotiators influenced the process and alter outcomes. Despite a wealth of empirical work documenting individual differences in negotiation, by the 1990s many researchers concluded that individual differences could not alter the course of negotiations, and were limited in their capacity to predict outcomes (De Dreu *et al* 1999; Lewicki *et al* 1993; Pruitt & Carnevale 1993). Some went so far as to claim that personality “played a minimal role” in bargaining outcomes (Thompson 1990: 15).

However, there is evidence that the importance of personality in negotiations has been too easily dismissed. For instance, researchers now highlight the importance of individual difference variables, such as social value orientation, whereby people choose how to allocate resources to themselves and others (Olekalns & Smith 1999) and cognitive closure, which suggests that some dilemmas cannot be resolved by the human mind (de Dreu, Koole & Oldersma 1999). Some scholarship also acknowledges that how negotiators define the bargaining process is as important—if not more so—as the tactics they use in negotiations (Brandenburder & Nalebuff 1996). Others note how individual personality traits (cognitive motivation) and state (positive affect) impact on negotiations (Schei *et al* 2002). Certain researchers now claim that negotiators’ personalities affect how they define negotiations and are relevant to how they come to understand events (Morris & Fu 2001). As a result, instead of concentrating on how the features of negotiations predict negotiators’ behaviour, researchers now cite the way that negotiators define and create the bargaining process as evidence that their personalities directly impact the “game”.

Based on their past experience and present concerns, negotiations elicit a “well-defined cognitive structure” on the participants (Pinkley 1990). The way that negotiations

are interpreted and defined “invokes norms and prioritizes the available facts, which provides a cognitive picture of associated events and actions” (Ma 2008: 776). Negotiators’ cognitive understanding of the bargaining process shapes their conduct, choice of tactics, outcome preferences, as well as their interaction with other participants. Coupled with high cognitive motivation, which allows a person to “actively seek out and use new information” (Shei *et al* 2002), negotiators can become more effective decision-makers.

According to the literature, there are three cognitive structures that impact the negotiation process and its outcome: win-lose orientation, face-saving and trust (Boven & Thompson 2003; Goffman 1967; Larrick & Blount 1997; Lituchy 1997). Unlike a win-win orientation (where all parties emerge victorious), the *win-lose orientation* is a bias that evolves from a mind-set that sees conflict negotiation as a process that fulfills one side’s interests at the expense of another.²³ According to Pinkley (1990), the win-lose orientation is a key construct used by individuals to define and decipher conflict. Numerous studies indicate that a win-lose approach to negotiations results in parties achieving less than optimal outcomes (Larrick & Blount 1997; Ross & Ward 1995).

The concept of face is defined as the importance that individuals place on their “situated identities” (Goffman 1967). Negotiators are concerned with *face-saving* when a situation or their behaviour undermines their identity in the eyes of the other side or their fellow parties. Face-saving is particularly important in certain cultural contexts, and while it may or may not be of significant value to a particular individual, unjustified insults, derision in the face of a negotiator’s outcomes and other actions that are perceived as an assault to “face” will usually result in retaliation and mutual loss in the bargaining process (Brown 1968).²⁴

Finally, *trust* is belief in another’s honesty and dependability. It makes individuals presume benevolent intent on the part of the other participants and engenders the sense that the other side is willing to cooperate (Ma 2008). In negotiations, an actor will be inclined to trust the opposing party if s/he appears to be cooperative and unselfish (Pruitt 1981). In turn, because a sense of trust facilitates communication and the sharing of information, this makes way for actors to collaborate and work towards integrative outcomes (Ma 2008).

Constructs that support a range of personality traits further demonstrate links between personality and negotiations. One such construct is known as the Big Five,²⁵ which is comprised of the following traits: Neuroticism, extraversion, openness to experience, agreeableness, and conscientiousness (Barrick & Mount 1991).²⁶ There is

²³ Also explored in negotiation literature as win-lose assumption or fixed-sum assumption.

²⁴ Face-saving has been most researched in countries of South-East Asia, although the phenomenon has been observed elsewhere as well.

²⁵ Both Barry & Friedman (1998) and Ma (2008) note that the Big Five are not exactly personality traits but “dispositional categories” within which various traits can be subsumed.

²⁶ See Barrick & Mount 1991 and Ma 2008: *Neuroticism* is associated with being anxious, depressed, worried, and indicates a state of emotional instability. *Extraversion* is linked with talkativeness, assertiveness and sociability, and predicts a personal need to impact group interaction as well as to preserve reputation. *Openness to experience* describes the extent to which a person is receptive to new ideas, adventurous, and imaginative; such individuals are willing to adjust their ideas and actions according to new concepts and situations. *Agreeableness* is a tendency to be courteous, cooperative and compassionate, which can make a

widespread evidence of the Big Five's scholastic resilience across research design, culture, sources, and samples (Conley 1985; Costa & McCrae 1988; Noller *et al* 1987; Watson 1989 to cite but a few). Indeed, Hofstede & McCrae (2004) believe that the personality traits enumerated in the Big Five transcend culture and are biologically based dispositions characteristic of humans. Even so, political research does not consider either cognitions of interest or personality.

Individuals manifesting personality traits of the Big Five can expect to see their behaviours influence the course of negotiations. For instance, neuroticism is linked with anxiety over how one appears to others. Negotiators with high degrees of neuroticism are therefore likely to pay heed to face-saving in negotiations. Similarly, extraverted individuals value their image as a means to enhance their relations with others, which sees them wanting to protect "face" in negotiations. A person's openness reveals how likely they are to accommodate new ideas and consider the interests of others (Costa & McCrae 1988). As a result, such negotiators are less prone to see bargaining from a win-lose orientation. Individuals who demonstrate agreeableness are inclined to trust and act cooperatively in negotiations. However, negotiators who are agreeable also make fewer demands and are more yielding in negotiations (Barry & Friedman 1998), which suggests they interpret negotiations from a win-lose orientation (Ma 2008). Lastly, although conscientiousness points to qualities such as responsibility and self-discipline, this trait is not linked to negotiation outcomes (Barry & Friedman 1998) and so does not necessarily factor into face-saving, trust or win-lose orientation.

In addition to the personality traits participants possess, depending on whether a negotiation process is deemed cooperative, competitive or collaborative, players will behave differently to the extent that they are preoccupied with their own interests or those of others (Thomas & Kilmann 1974). In *cooperative* negotiations, actors may use "yielding behaviour", concentrating on fulfilling the needs of others, even if that means overlooking their own desires (Ma 2008). *Competitive* negotiations will see actors using fixed sum or distributive tactics.²⁷ In *collaborative* (or integrative) negotiations, actors combine aspects of competitive and cooperative behaviours, and collectively seek solutions that meet the interests of all parties (Thomas & Kilmann 1974). By engaging in an ongoing, honest exchange of information, at times mutually conceding their entrenched positions, and respecting all parties' objectives (Campbell *et al* 1988; Lituchy 1997), collaborative negotiators may shift their positions (a yielding tactic) and actively search for integrative solutions where everyone "wins" (a more competitive rather than yielding strategy). In collaborative and cooperative negotiations, trust can yield beneficial outcomes to both sides (Lituchy 1997) because negotiators are more likely to employ yielding behaviour when they trust the individuals they need to reciprocate with (Kramer & Carnevale 2001).

person less demanding and more inclined to concede in conflict. *Conscientiousness* is associated with being responsible, disciplined and dutiful; planning and preparedness are also indications of conscientiousness.

²⁷ Fixed sum is also referred to as "zero-sum" in game theory and refers to how the amount lost in a game or negotiated settlement is always equal to the amount gained. Distributive tactics are sometimes called hard-bargaining; users of this tactic believe that there is a finite amount of that which is to be distributed or divided, but the number of recipients may vary, in which case one person's gain involves another's loss.

Just as negotiators' behaviour differs depending on how much they value their own and others' interests in competitive, cooperative and collaborative situations, different negotiators' behaviours will result in different outcomes. Throughout the literature, there are two primary negotiation outcomes: economic outcome, which is each negotiator's net profits, and affective outcome, meaning the negotiators' sense of satisfaction. According to Ma (2008), economic outcome measures whether and how negotiators effectively used their time and resources to reach an agreement that increased their profits (with profits being understood as the resources available within the confines of the negotiation process). Conversely, affective outcome assesses whether negotiators came away from a negotiating process with a sense of satisfaction, as a result of engaging in (and maintaining) lasting relationships and possibly achieving double wins (where both sides gain). Affective outcome is intertwined with notions of fairness. Affective outcome or satisfaction is particularly important in collaborative negotiations, where integrative solutions are necessary and lasting relationships are valued (Ma 2008).

Competitive negotiations prioritise high aspirations for economic outcomes; the approach is "us against them". Competitors enjoy conflict and often have sizable egos, which can make them inept listeners (Latz 2002). Competitive negotiators are virtually exclusively self-interested, and do not consider others' preferences. Consequently, competitive negotiators will frequently use inflexible tactics to force their opponents to make allowances. The goal is to achieve an agreement that will yield the most profit for "their side", which also leads to their increased sense of satisfaction from the outcome.

Cooperative negotiations value good relationships over personal enrichment. Cooperative negotiators dislike open conflict, which can make them concede unnecessarily when they feel threatened (Latz 2002). In addition to being good listeners, they seek to achieve a positive outcome by engaging in "yielding behaviour", making compromises to accommodate others' interests. These kinds of tactics will typically yield low economic outcomes. According to Ma (2008), it is difficult to ascertain whether cooperative tactics yield a positive affective outcome; one can only suppose that self-sacrifice makes cooperative negotiators feel positive about whatever economic outcome results from an agreement.

Collaborative negotiations emphasize finding solutions that satisfy the preferences of all actors. Collaborative negotiators respect each other, which elevates the trust they have in one another and the process; this allows them to exchange truthful information as well as make collective compromises. Collaborative tactics will often result in increased economic outcomes for both sides, because negotiators endeavour to augment the total available resources. Collaborative negotiations are also likely to end with high levels of satisfaction for all involved.

While some researchers have been willing to once again consider the individual influence of negotiators in terms of their personality traits, other researchers have explored structural variables that were thought to determine the context of negotiations. Among these, scholars explored the inclusion of constituencies (Druckman 1967), power (Marwell *et al* 1969), deadlines (Pruitt & Drews 1969), the number of people of each side (Marwell & Schmitt 1972), and the presence of third parties (Pruitt & Johnson 1972). Many of the

same structural variables identified by social psychologists were adopted by political scientists examining armed conflict resolution in the 1980s and 90s. Consequently, we see similar key variables appearing in political science research, including constituencies (Schumann 2014; Wood 2003), power (Downes 2004; Hultquist 2013), deadlines (Pinfari 2011; Ross *et al* 1990; Rothstein 2007), third parties (Doyle & Sambanis 2002, 2006; Fortna 2004; Hartzell & Hoddie 2003; Walter 1997, 2002;). However, in time, structural variables in a negotiation have been found to extend beyond the individual control of negotiators. However, even as this area of research waned in psychology, it remains widely referred to and continues to be explored by political scientists.

I contend that while negotiator personality does not predetermine a negotiating process or outcome, it is a necessary consideration. According to a significant study on lawyers' negotiating styles, the most effective negotiators are "both assertive (experienced, realistic, fair, astute, careful, wise) and empathetic (perceptive, communicative, accommodating, agreeable, adaptable)" (Schneider 2002: 147). Although it is unfair to expect all participants in peace negotiations to share similar personality traits and structural cognitions (not to mention this being entirely unlikely), it would seem that of the Big Five, an openness to experience best lends itself to positive negotiation outcomes. Likewise, collaborative negotiations are more likely to yield win-win results, both in terms of economic as well as affective outcomes.

Few people's personalities reflect only one key trait. In fact, nearly everyone possesses at least some parts of all traits. While most negotiators revert to the one or two key traits that are most comfortable for them, and engage in competitive, cooperative or collaborative bargaining tactics by default, the most effective negotiators learn how to employ certain personality traits and tactics when they stand to be most effective. I will return to the impact of personality while assessing the performance of the various players in the Sierra Leonean and Liberian peace processes commencing in Chapter 4.

DECISION FRAMES

Inasmuch as research enhances our understanding of the impact of individual negotiator behaviour, there is growing evidence underscoring the importance of negotiator cognitions of the bargaining process. In their fulsome review, Bazerman *et al* (2001) claim that negotiations can only be thoroughly considered by factoring in each negotiator's cognitive representation of the process. In negotiation, framing effects can influence whether conflicts are resolved or perpetuated (Lewicki *et al* 2004; McCusker & Carnevale 1995), as well as how conflicts are settled and the quality of the final agreement (Putnam & Wilson 1989).

Negotiations are places of social decision-making, where negotiators' individual assessments of the conflict and the "issues at stake" impact the process (Bazerman 1983). Negotiators' perceptions and actions throughout depend on their *frame*, which refers to an individual's "conception of the acts, outcomes, and contingencies associated with a particular choice" (Tversky & Kahneman 1981: 453). People will take on one frame or another, and act accordingly, based on their personalities and habits, as well as on how a problem is presented (Tversky & Kahneman 1981). Framing effects are an example of

cognitive bias; a person will choose a particular course of action if she perceives an outcome as positive (gain) or negative (loss). Carnevale (2007) states that framing effects can be viewed as a “risk about agreement”: when working within a negative frame, negotiators accept the risk of a non-agreement, which makes them less inclined to make concessions; conversely, negotiators acting within a positive frame do not want to risk having the process fail, and will consequently be more accommodating to ensure an agreement.

Even when objective structures of negotiations are identical, negotiators change the way they act when interactions between participants are framed differently (Larrick & Blount 1997). Consider the following two frames as example. According to Larrick and Blount’s *accept/reject* frame, Side 1 engages first and suggests dividing the (fixed) resources between the two sides.²⁸ Side 2 can either accept or reject Side 1’s proposal. If Side 2 accepts the offer, then the resources are shared according to Side 1’s suggestion. However, if Side 2 rejects the offer, both sides get nothing. In the authors’ *claim* frame, Side 1 again engages first, and informs Side 2 which portion of the resources it will claim for itself. Side 2 then stakes its own claim, knowing what Side 1 has taken. If the total of Side 1 and Side 2’s claims are equal to or less than the total resources, each side can collect what it claimed. However, if the total claims surpass the resources, both sides get nothing.

Although these frames are structured identically, Larrick and Blount demonstrate that both sides act more generously in the claim frame. The difference rests on Side 2’s response; when Side 2 frames its reply as a claim instead of an accept/reject choice, Side 1 will be more giving because it (inaccurately) anticipates that Side 2 will be more demanding. Larrick and Blount say this outcome results from “incorrect naive theories about power and control in bargaining” (1997: 47). In the accept/reject frame, Side 2 had a single choice, which made Side 1 perceive it as “more dependent and predictable,” whereas in the claim frame, Side 1 assumed that the unrestricted option allotted to Side 2 gave it too much autonomy, which made it unpredictable. Larrick and Blount’s frames indicate that negotiator bias can impact bargaining behaviour in two ways: negotiators can make varying offers depending on their frame; and given the choice between two frames, negotiators might opt for a choice that decreases their chances of achieving the outcome they desire most, simply because they mistakenly believe that one frame is more likely to be successful than another (Blount & Larrick 2000). Here, we also see how Blount and Larrick’s research on framing overlaps with notions of fairness and affective outcome (explored above), where a negotiator may act against her self-interest if she feels an opponent is acting unfairly.

Other experiments reveal that many (if not most) negotiators enter into the bargaining process assuming that their interests are in direct conflict with the interests of other participants. These perceptions are sustained even in fictitious situations where all sides have the same interests (Thompson & Hastie 1990). Such beliefs tend to endure throughout the process. On occasions when negotiators change their mindset, they tend to do so at the very beginning of negotiations (Thompson & Hrebec 1996); if they do not

²⁸ The “accept/reject” frame described by Larrick and Blount (1997) is not dissimilar to the distributive tactics used in a fixed or zero sum game, outlined earlier.

modify their stance at the outset, they are unlikely to do so later on. When a negotiator operates with an inflexible mindset, negotiation outcomes are often predictable (Ma 2008).

According to Dewulf *et al* (2009), there are cognitive and interactional frames and these differ. *Cognitive* frames refer to individual representations of knowledge structures. These are ontologically distinct from *interactional* frames that make way for individuals and groups to develop co-constructions of issues. Both cognitive and interactional frames are relevant to how negotiators assess, construe, and come to resolve conflict.

A cognitive frame is a memory device that helps people to sort and interpret new information by conforming it to their pre-existing notions of reality (Minsky 1975). Frames are representations of knowledge that are stored in human memory, which can be retrieved and applied to new situations (Dewulf *et al* 2009; Minsky 1975). In psychology, cognitive frames pertain to the ways that “people experience, interpret, process of represent issues, relationships and interactions in conflict settings” (Minsky 1975: 211). The influence of cognitive frames is particularly relevant to negotiations because of the ways that knowledge becomes distorted and biased in times of conflict and decision-making.

Interactional frames are communication devices that people use to chart the ways that they engage with one another (Dewulf *et al* 2009). Unlike cognitive frames, which are understood as static, interactional frames are dynamic; they shift and grow with ongoing interaction (Gonos 1977). Interactional frames can help us assess how, together, the various participants in negotiations create (or co-construct) meanings to issues and situations as they interact.

However influential, cognitive frames are biased. They are perceived as accurate reflections of the “real world”, whereas in fact, they are not unlike black-and-white photographs that reproduce a non-nuanced, partial reality. Imperfect insight that serves to bolster pre-existing knowledge makes for a narrow, myopic view of the world, which can lead individuals to develop false assumptions or make decisions based on incomplete information. Alternatively, people seeking to make sense of their world(s) create interactional frames together and simultaneously. As such, interactional frames help people create meaning for the events and situations they partake in (Edwards 1997), instead of relying entirely on imprecise cognitive frames.

A negotiator’s affect or mood can influence his or her cognitive or interactive frames. Depending on a negotiators’ goal, mood can increase or decrease chances of cooperation (Carnevale 2007). For instance, feelings of happiness or well-being can cultivate cooperation, which can lead to compromise and compliance (Baron 1990; Kopelman *et al* 2006), as well as problem solving and collaborative agreements (Carnevale & Isen 1986; Forgas 1998). When negotiators feel good, they are more likely to have a good impression about the process, which makes them more cooperative; this, in turn, can produce successful outcomes (Schei *et al* 2000). Researchers have not yet determined how negative emotions, such as anger, can influence decision frames (Carnevale 2007). Anger can impair a person’s judgment (Allred *et al* 1997), making him more self-absorbed, and is known to cause a person to reject offers out of hand or make unreasonable ultimatums (Pillutla & Murnighan 1996). This might seem to indicate that negotiations undertaken in

anger would tend to fail, but Carnevale (2007) also notes that anger can foster cooperation. In the face of an utterly intransigent opponent, some negotiators will make significant compromises to come to an agreement, but they feel highly angry about having done so (Hilty & Carnevale 1993).

Both cognitive and interactive frames are at play during the negotiating process, as are the moods of the various participants. Individual, feeling negotiators bring the cognitive frames through which they perceive the world to an interactive negotiation process. Throughout their interactions, negotiators collectively co-construct an avenue of interaction; individuals may shift from autonomous frames to common frames that they have built and share with others (Dewulf *et al* 2009). However, at the cognitive level, a person's cognitive frames may or may not change.²⁹

Interestingly, the effects of framing are more significant on older adults than on children and adolescents (Peters *et al* 2000). As people's cognitive capacities slow with age, they also lose the ability to be as flexible in their decisions, and their frames can be more impacted by their emotions (Wantanabe & Shibutani 2010). As few peace negotiators are young, these findings are relevant in political negotiations. Notwithstanding, there are benefits to more mature negotiators: older adults can be persuaded to reassess their choices, and when they do so, their amended decisions are less biased than at the outset (Thomas & Millar 2012).

Negotiators can correct their faulty assumptions about power and control while checking their inherent biases in bargaining by learning to read others' signals and adjusting accordingly. As negotiations proceed and parties interact repeatedly, negotiators can try shifting their frames throughout and paying heed to whether alternate behaviours succeed or fail. Larrick & Blount aptly use the example of parents, spouses, bosses and children who, in time, learn to frame their requests differently to "maximize desired results" (1997: 66). Frame choices need not be static or reactive. Negotiators can adjust their perceptions depending on context and experience. All the same, however attuned individual negotiators can become to their biases and decision making frames, they can still be tripped up by how they perceive and respond to notions of risk and value.

PSYCHOLOGY OF VALUE

As noted earlier in this chapter, much political science literature interprets action through the lens of economic rational choice, whereby people, parties, and states evaluate their options and make choices with a mind to maximise their self-interest. However, behaviour decision theorists have noted "systematic violations" of the typical rational choice model (Kahneman & Tversky 1984). In fact, breaches of rational choice are common enough to warrant their own theory.

Prospect theory (also known as "loss-aversion theory") suggests that individuals appraise gains and losses differently, and will make choices according to whether they perceive an option as a personal gain, over the option they perceive as a loss (Kahneman &

²⁹ In fact, according to Aarts & van Woerkum (2002), when individuals feel under threat, they rigidly maintain their pre-existing frames, and even reinforce them, which can result in "frozen frames."

Tversky 1979; 1992). In a bargaining situation, this means that if a person is given a single choice between two options of equal value—one conveyed in terms of potential gains and the other in potential loss—he will always choose the potential gains option. Prospect theory supports the notion that humans cannot be relied upon to always cater to their self-interest by demonstrating that people “have an irrational tendency to be less willing to gamble with profits than with losses” (Tvede 1999: 94). The idea of loss aversion relates directly to the discussion above on decision frames because what one determines to be a gain or loss depends on how the option is “pitched” or expressed.

While people make choices according to what they perceive they might gain or lose, they also become inured to increased gains or losses. In negotiations, a person receiving an increase of \$0 to \$1,000 will be happier with her outcome than if her share was increased from \$1,000 to \$2,000 (Birke & Fox 1999). Similarly, having to pay one’s opponent an increasing amount from \$0 to \$1,000 is more unpleasant than augmenting her payout from \$1,000 to \$2,000 (Birke & Fox 1999). According to Birke & Fox, this predictable reaction indicates that people will accept different risks depending on whether or not they foresee an offer to be a potential gain or loss:

Because \$1000 is more than half as attractive as \$2000, people typically prefer to receive \$1000 for sure than face a fifty-fifty chance of receiving \$2000 or nothing (i.e. they are “risk adverse” for medium probability gains). In contrast, because losing \$1000 is more than half as painful as losing \$2000, people typically prefer to risk a 50-50 chance of losing \$2000 or losing nothing to losing \$1000 for sure (i.e. they are “risk seeking” for medium probability losses) (Birke & Fox 1999: 44).

Essentially, people are more likely to be risk adverse if they value certain payment over an unsure outcome of a greater amount. Conversely, a person will be more accepting of risk if they are looking for a lucrative, albeit uncertain, outcome over a guaranteed payment that is just as high as the value of the uncertain amount. However, Birke & Fox’s observation only holds true for “moderate to large probability” gains and losses. According to Tversky & Kahneman (1992), in circumstances of low probability gains and losses, the opposite applies.

When we tally up these findings, it is clear that the way in which an outcome is framed can significantly influence the value participants place on bargaining outcomes, which also determines negotiators’ choices and actions. A person’s aversion to loss makes them biased towards the status quo because they focus more on the comparative drawbacks of the potential outcome. Loss aversion and status quo bias make negotiators disinclined to make tradeoffs or grant allowances to reach shared gains (Samuelson & Zeckhauser 1988). Additionally, loss aversion coupled with a tendency to accept elevated risk for losses can make negotiators more hostile and inclined to use hardball tactics when they perceive their goal as “minimizing losses rather than maximizing gains” (Birke & Fox 1999). Finally, the way that gains and losses are “packaged and described” can determine whether a negotiator will assess a prospective settlement to be appealing (Taler 1985 in Birke & Fox 1999). Certainly, some understanding of the psychology of value can provide guidance to negotiators as they seek to make propositions enticing to their opponents.

BOUNDED AWARENESS

Being influenced by decision frames as well as their perception of value, negotiators often do not discern or acknowledge information that should otherwise be apparent to them. Negotiators will typically consider the most obvious issues at hand, while overlooking other pertinent data. This results in a constricted or bounded mindset that can inhibit the scope of discussions and the kinds of deals that can otherwise be made during negotiations.

Awareness is bounded, say Chugh and Bazerman (2007: 3), when people “fail to see, seek, use, or share highly relevant, easily accessible, and readily perceivable information during the negotiation process.” At the outset of negotiations, participants may not know important information or what to look for. Further into the process, negotiators may not use information they have at their disposal because they cannot conceive how it might be relevant. Later still, participants may possess information but fail to share it with others, either because they assume the facts are already well known, or because they are not aware that others don’t have (and could use) their knowledge (Chugh & Bazerman 2007).

Humans overestimate their capacity to multitask; instead of seamlessly moving in and out of different tasks, people actually tend to narrow their focus while occupied. Narrowed focus constrains a person’s attention, which can cause her to miss important information. When a negotiator’s limited awareness fails to overlap with the knowledge required to make a wise decision, the negotiator experiences a “focusing failure” (Chugh & Bazerman 2005; 2007). Four conditions lead to focusing failures: a) a second task that rivals for attention; b) a closely defined event with narrow parameters; c) information that impacts mood (affect); and d) information that relates to the self (Chugh & Bazerman 2005). Whatever the condition, decisions and actions taken in times of focusing failures result in costly mistakes.

Another task rivals for attention: People tend to not be able to see something they are looking at directly when their attention is simultaneously focused elsewhere—this is known as “inattentional blindness” (Mack & Rock 1998, in Bazerman & Chugh 2005). An example of inattentional blindness is the driver who plows into the back of a car while texting. That the car in front is slowing is visually in evidence, but the attention the driver is giving to texting prevents her from “seeing” the other car’s brake lights and slowing accordingly.

A closely defined, narrow event: People tend to focus their attention on one thing (the “focal event”) at the expense of other simultaneous events—this is referred to as “focalism” (Wilson *et al* 2000, in Bazerman & Chugh 2005). While being able to narrow in on a task can be useful, it can restrict a person’s perception. Individuals lose perspective and come to overemphasize the importance of a focal event and overrate its impact on their emotional state. People disproportionately emphasize the significance a good or bad event has on their happiness. For instance, a person may expect more gratification when a favourite team or politician wins than what they actually receive (Wilson *et al* 2000, in Bazerman & Chugh 2005).

Information that affects mood: People will often act without thinking according to information that prompts an emotional response (Lowenstein 1996; Slovic *et al* 2007, in

Bazerman & Chugh 2005). These automatic feelings are called “affect heuristic” (Slovic et al 2007 in Bazerman & Chugh 2005). Consider the parent who hangs up on a phone call after hearing the caller’s first sentence, in which she claims that there has been an accident at school. The parent proceeds at panicked speed to rage at the caregivers at the nearest hospital, causing mayhem, only to learn that the accident in chemistry class merely resulted in the bleaching of his child’s hair. This example of affect heuristic shows how some emotional responses are so intense, they cause people to fail to reflect before acting.

Information that relates the self: Performing a sleight of hand, a magician asks audience members why they selected a specific card. At the moment the audience is observing the “trick” as it occurs, they are also required to focus on themselves, and in so doing they fail to discern the actions that make up the illusion—here the magician is using “misdirection” to shift spectators’ focus (Schneider 2011 in Bazerman & Chugh 2005). Similarly, in negotiations, Bazerman and Chugh (2005) note that self-serving options and interpretations “come into focus more naturally”, which often means that non-partisan and dispassionate assessments remain out of focus.

Having established several conditions that lead to bounded awareness, the results remain the same: People fail to “seek, use, or share important information that is easily seen, sought, used or shared” (Chugh & Bazerman 2007: 4). That said, bounded awareness is not the same as information overload or needing to make complex choices quickly. Bazerman and Chugh note that even when they have enough time and a choice is relatively simple, people still neglect to consider the “right information... at the right time” (2006: 90). There are two key examples of bounded awareness: *inattentional blindness* and *change blindness*. In a notable experiment, a person wearing a gorilla suit walks through a basketball game thumping his chest for five full seconds, but only 21% of game viewers report seeing the gorilla (Neisser 1979; Simons & Chabris 1999 in Chugh & Bazerman 2007). Viewers’ inattentional blindness to a person in a gorilla suit sauntering through a basketball game may seem amusing, but the consequences of inattentional blindness can be severe. In the aforementioned example of the driver who has an accident while texting, the driver is attempting to juggle two tasks that are rivaling for her attention, and the result is that she is inattentionally blind to the car slowing in front of her. Inattentional blindness causes the driver to plunge into the car in front, which in turn causes a multiple car pile-up with numerous casualties, as the cars behind the texting driver have no time to avoid a crash.

Change blindness occurs when people fail to notice changes in events or circumstances that occur in plain sight. Consider the experiment undertaken by Simons and Levin (1998), where a researcher stops a person on the street to ask for directions: as the person is speaking, construction workers carrying a door walk in between the researcher and the interviewee, and another individual takes the place of the researcher. Following the interruption, most respondents continue giving directions, and nearly half do not notice that the researcher who initially hailed them has changed. Similar to the magician who asks the audience about the card they chose at the moment he performs a sleight of hand, the person giving directions is blind to change because she is otherwise focused on providing accurate instructions. Interestingly, people are often blind to their change blindness; they confidently claim their prowess at noticing change, but typically perform poorly when tested (Levin et al 2000).

The more slowly change occurs, the less likely people perceive it. This kind of change blindness is illustrated by the “slippery slope” theory of unethical behaviour that shows that people will engage in and not notice unethical activities when eased into them incrementally, over time (Gino *et al* 2009; Cain *et al* 2005). Individuals caught up in the multiple banking scandals of 2008 and the fall of corporate giant Enron in 2001 testify to the “boiling frog syndrome”, where people were lulled by their familiar work environments and the seemingly insignificant ethical lapses they regularly overlooked, failing to take note of larger illegal activities and the threat of imminent disaster until “the frog [died] due to his inability to sense the gradual increase in water temperature” (Chugh & Bazerman 2007: 6). Negotiators can be caught in similar situations. In Liberia, for example, international participants were lulled by promises of peace at numerous official talks, only realising afterwards that other participants had no intention of keeping to the terms of any agreements. Such negotiator complacency ensured that 17 Liberian peace agreements were doomed from the outset.

In negotiations, the conditions of competing tasks, narrow events, knowledge that impacts mood, as well as self-relevant information that lead to change blindness and inattentional blindness should be anticipated. Similarly, knowledge of the rules and the decisions of others should also be reckoned. Too often, these remain outside the bounds of negotiators’ awareness. Repeatedly, negotiators prioritise ‘end-states or outcomes’ instead of thinking through the process and using broader insight that would help them focus their attention on important effects and consequences of their actions (Bazerman *et al* 2001).

Bounded awareness has other significant ramifications for negotiators, particularly in their knowledge of the decisions of others and the rules of the game (Chugh & Bazerman 2007). Negotiators frequently fail to focus on the decisions of their opponents or the rules of the process, when both yield information that is essential to their role. Consider bounded awareness in the context of negotiation deadlines. In a two-party negotiation where both sides lose everything if they do not come to an agreement, one side is issued a publicly known deadline (Moore 2000 in Chugh & Bazerman 2007). Both parties should be able to see that if one side has a deadline, they both do, but most negotiators cling to the idea that the deadline puts one side at a disadvantage (Moore 2000 in Chugh & Bazerman 2007). Participants zero in on their own ideas and behaviours instead of making an effort to understand how the rules of the game affect both parties; in so doing they diminish their outcomes.

Negotiators that do not seek to understand their opponents are often partial to one specific outcome, and this prevents them from seeking out information beyond that which caters to their own interests. Searching out “contradictory, rather than confirming, evidence” is counterintuitive (Bazerman & Chugh 2006: 94), which explains why so few decision-makers use this problem-solving technique. One of the most egregious examples of a failure to find more, and contradictory, data was the US administration’s decision to invade Iraq in 2001. Key government officials were so intent on targeting a culprit for the terrorist acts of September 11 that they assumed Iraq was surely at fault and did not seek information that might have supported the case for not undertaking an attack. With this example in mind, Bazerman & Chugh (2006) underscore the value of contradictory evidence to decision-makers, stating that its absence is a sure indicator of bounded awareness.

DECISION-MAKING BIASES

As explored in the above section on decision frames, social cognition theory shows that a person's beliefs, attitudes, and perceptions shape their interpretations of reality. Negotiators are no different from anyone else in that they interpret the world in ways that reflect their established beliefs and perceptions. Even when they are confronted with irrefutable evidence that discredits their prior opinions, people will still develop causal explanations to maintain their preconceived notions.

During the 1980s and '90s, a growing emphasis on cognitive psychology influenced research in negotiations, which shifted towards behavioural decision research (BDR) and its quest to generate theories explaining how negotiators come to make decisions. Behavioural decision making theory came to dominate psychology research through much of this time, and it revolutionized views on negotiations by demonstrating how actual decisions and outcomes were different from what earlier models predicted (Bazerman *et al* 2000). At its heart, BDR argues that people rely on simplifying strategies, or *cognitive heuristics* to make decisions (Bazerman 1998). In retrospect, this theory may seem self-evident, but at the time it was revolutionary.

Through the 1990s, psychology research also focused on variables that could complement BDR, including social relationships, egocentrism, motivated illusions, as well as emotion (Bazerman *et al* 2000). Examining social relationships, researchers showed how the judgment of negotiators was influenced by their social context (Clark & Chrisman 1994), and that instead of seeking to develop new partnerships, people tend to prefer to work through issues with individuals they already know (Tenbrunsel *et al* 1996).

In bargaining processes, negotiators' cognitions and the ways that they frame their circumstances influence their negotiating behaviours. Negotiator decision frames can be simplifying strategies, or cognitive heuristics. While such cognitive heuristics can be useful, timesaving shortcuts in everyday life, they actually reveal a person's biases, and in negotiations they lead to predictable mistakes (Tversky & Kahneman 1974). The decision-making biases of negotiators are amply in evidence during the course of negotiations. Indeed, an abundance of scholarship suggests that in two-party negotiations, negotiators tend to:³⁰

- Be more inclined to offer concessions to a positively framed request rather than a negative one (Bazerman *et al* 1985; Lim & Carnevale 1995; Olekalns 1997)
- Be unduly influenced by initial information or anchors (Kahneman 1992; Ritov 1996; Whiyte & Sebenius 1997)
- Be disproportionately impacted by readily available information (Neale 1984; Pinkley *et al* 1995)
- Be presumptuous and unrealistic in the belief that they will achieve outcomes advantageous to themselves (Bazerman *et al* 1999; Lim 1997)

³⁰ Most negotiation research focuses on the bargaining that occurs between two parties. However, many peace processes, including the Liberian talks that took place in Accra in 2003, feature more than two negotiating parties.

- Wrongly assume that the ‘negotiation pie’ is fixed and thereby miss the chance to see and explore mutually profitable trade-offs (Fukino & Ohbuchi 1997; Thompson & DeHarpport 1994)
- Wrongly assume that their aims are at odds with those of the other participants (Thompson & Hrebec 1996)
- Pursue conflict escalation when further analysis would indicate the benefits of changing tactics (Bazerman & Neale 1983; Diekmann *et al* 1990)
- Discount the input of other participants (Bazerman & Carroll 1987; Valley *et al* 1998)
- Discount compromises made by other participants (Curhan *et al* 2008; Ross & Sillinger 1991)

Negotiators make mistakes because they are often unable to adequately separate their sense of self from their role as negotiators and achieve an objective—some might say “rational”—view of the process they are engaged in. There are numerous ways that people show a lack of objectivity and bias in negotiations; chief among these is an individual’s inflated self-regard, which results in *egocentric bias*. All parties to negotiations are somewhat egocentric, but the more a negotiator is self-seeking, the less likely he will come to an agreement with his counterpart (Thompson & Lowenstein 1992). *Motivational bias* occurs when a person prioritises views that favour herself (Babcock & Lowenstein 1997). Similarly, people tend to better remember facts that show them in a better light; this is termed *self-serving recall*. People also define the fairness of a situation in accordance to how well it favours them (Camerer & Lowenstein 1993; Diekmann *et al* 1997). Not surprisingly, egocentric bias is reduced when people communicate, since in communicating they can develop a common or shared understanding of a situation (Thompson & Lowenstein 1992).

Similar to some egocentric biases are people’s *motivated illusions*, where individuals see themselves and the world in an overly optimistic way (Taylor 1989). Frequently, people have an aggrandized perception of themselves (Gabriel *et al* 1994; Messick *et al* 1985) and evaluate themselves in overly inflated ways (Brown 1986).³¹ People also overestimate their capacity to control events (Kramer 1994). However, when unsuccessful in negotiations, the “loser” will often reject and denigrate the opposition by suggesting that their tactics were unfair, inflexible and unethical (Kramer 1994). All the same, time and again, people are prone to make overly auspicious predictions as to their future outcomes (Kahneman & Lovallo 1993).

The aforementioned egocentric biases are further reinforced by *positive illusions*, which include “unrealistic optimism, exaggerated perceptions of personal control, and inflated positive views of the self” (Birke & Fox 1999: 15; see also Taylor & Brown 1988 in Kahneman & Lovallo 1993). When negotiators are overconfident about their ability to secure particular outcomes, they may become intransigent and set extreme reservation points. Negotiator overconfidence is sourced in biases from seeking out and assessing evidence. A person is more likely to look for information or statistical evidence that

³¹ In a negotiation class for MBA candidates, 68% of the students believed their bargaining outcomes would rank in the top 25% of the class (Kramer *et al* 1993).

affirms her preconceived notions rather than rethink her point of view according to information that discredits her assumptions (see Wason 1977 in Birke & Fox 1999). Likewise, people will make new information conform to their existing views (see Lord *et al* 1979 in Birke & Fox 1999). Another positive illusion is the human inclination to exaggerate one's capacity to influence outcomes that are determined by circumstances beyond one's control (see Langer 1975 in Birke & Fox 1999). In the same way, people overvalue their personal attributes and motives, typically considering themselves to be more intelligent and equitable, as well as more flexible, competent, honest and cooperative than the average (Kramer *et al* 1993).³²

Basing their opinion on nothing more than personal experience and intuition, many people automatically assume that if they can easily recall an event or a fact, then that event or fact is likely to be true. For instance, most people assume that the overwhelming number of sexual assaults that occur in the military involve female victims. This is not actually accurate, but because it is easier to think of examples of female sexual assault victims (perhaps helped along by lurid media coverage of extreme events), people believe it to be true.³³ This bias is reinforced by human tendency to become attached to a particular outcome (particularly monetary) in negotiations, which prevents participants from adjusting their expectations to the specific details of the case they are involved in (Birke & Fox 1999).³⁴ These two examples are evidence of an *anchoring bias*. People are more susceptible to this bias when they are unsure about something or have little prior knowledge of an event (see Northcraft & Neale 1987 in Birke & Fox 1999).

Researchers also find that emotion impacts negotiations. Somewhat self-evidently, when participants are in a positive frame of mind, they are more inclined to see areas of mutual benefit (Carnevale & Isen 1986) and be obliging (Forgas 1998). When angry, people are less able to assess factually the concerns of others (Allred *et al* 1997), are more self-serving in their choices (Lowenstein *et al* 1989), which makes them more likely to turn down lucrative offers and engage in ultimatums (Pillutla & Murnighan 1996). Finally, when people's emotions are "hot", they are often conflicted between what they believe they should do and what they want to do (Bazerman *et al* 1998); in negotiations, "hot" emotions can lead to self-sabotage.

While acknowledging that negotiators are swayed by their emotions and hamstrung by their cognitive heuristics, decision-makers can overcome these limitations. According to Cacioppo *et al* (1984), cognitive motivation—whereby a person's choices and actions

³² Humourously, Birke & Fox (1999) cite the claim made by 94% of university professors that they are better at their job than their colleagues (Liebrand *et al* 1986).

³³ According to *Harper's Index*, 53% of victims of US military sexual assaults are male. See, *Harper's Magazine* (2013) Vol. 327, No. 1960 (September 2013): 17.

³⁴ Birke & Fox (1999) note that even when figures are not relevant to the outcome of negotiations, a "focal number" can cause bias when people are uncertain about something. They cite, for example, a study where participants were asked to estimate the number of African countries that were members of the United Nations. Prior to answering, the questioner spun a wheel, which yielded a threshold percentage of either 10% or 65%. Although the focal number given by the wheel was utterly unrelated to the answer, it nevertheless exerted tremendous weight on the respondents' answers. When the wheel noted 10%, the median number of African countries people believed to be in the UN was 25%, but when the wheel cited 65%, the median estimate was 45%.

result from actively engaging with and assessing the information at her disposal— influences a person’s problem-solving capacities. High levels of cognitive motivation prompt negotiators to look for and use new information (Schei *et al* 2002), which can make them more effective at finding solutions. Conversely, people with low levels of cognitive motivation rely on simple information cues, use cognitive heuristics (Cacioppo *et al* 1984), and are frequently prone to decision-making biases (Chatterjee *et al* 2000; Smith & Levin 1996). Decision-making biases not only influence negotiators (Thompson 2005); unsurprisingly, their use of cognitive heuristics sees them make avoidable blunders as well (Bazerman *et al* 2000). While researchers do not yet know how to “trigger” cognitive motivation among decision-makers, there is speculation that “personal relevance” may be a factor that increases cognitive effort (Cacioppo *et al* 1996). Even so, choosing negotiators that are practiced at active problem-solving may be as beneficial to the bargaining process as training decision-makers to prevail over their cognitive bias (Schei *et al* 2002).

The relevance of decision-making biases in peace negotiations is not well explored in political science, but it is considered in legal research.³⁵ Although these principles are “difficult to subvert”, Birke and Fox (1999) claim that “increased awareness” of decision-making biases ensure that lawyers are better negotiators. Likewise, I suggest an appreciation and acknowledgement of the insight garnered by scholars of psychology can be used to enhance our understanding of political negotiations. In subsequent chapters, I will apply the insights gained in this review to the peace negotiation processes—namely, the key players and their tactics—that ended the civil wars in Sierra Leone and Liberia. Consciously and reflexively, negotiators’ decisions and actions were influenced by their personalities, the ways in which they framed situations, as well as their decision-making biases. Consequently, the Accra and Lomé processes played out in unanticipated ways, with unforeseen results.

This chapter has examined the political science, legal, and psychology literature, probing the mindset of those who determine the negotiation process. There is no dominant, overarching theory of negotiation. Instead, there are five core approaches to negotiation (Zartman 1988; 1978). Political science most often emphasises power and rational choice game theories, along with distributive and institutional outcomes, all of which are in evidence in the literature addressing power and resource sharing as well as international intervention. These perspectives lend themselves well to Zartman’s structural and strategic approaches, which seek to explain negotiated outcomes in terms of the rational, self-interest of players. I subsequently considered approaches to negotiation that account for people’s often irrational and dissimilar behaviour. Legal research and numerous psychological research endeavours illustrate negotiator personality and temperamental characteristics, which are reflected in the behavioural approach, whereas haggling and a preoccupation with distributive and procedural fairness mark the processual approach, while prioritising mutual gain and joint problem-solving indicate an integrative approach. Most often, negotiators will combine any number of these approaches in the course of a negotiation process.

³⁵ See Edwards & von Winterfeldt (1985), Sunstein (1997), Jolls *et al* (1998), Ulen (1944), as well as Birke & Fox (1999).

The psychology of negotiation explored in this chapter demonstrates that individual negotiators' decision-making and behaviours are influenced by their cognitive structures and personality traits. Moreover, whether a negotiation process is seemed cooperative, competitive, or collaborative, negotiators' decision frames and bounded awareness limits their viewpoints and impacts their emotions. As a result, negotiators often will not see or use readily available information, all of which can determine whether a negotiation ends in success or failure. Because negotiators are also influenced by their perceptions of value, they frequently make decisions based on what they perceive as a means to achieve personal gain. Finally, negotiators are also susceptible to a host of decision-making biases, or frequently illogical and prejudiced "rules of thumb", which can inhibit them from making wise, reflective decisions and decisions that benefit their countries and not simply themselves.

My aim is to develop an awareness and understanding of the psychological attributes of individual negotiators, acknowledging that these can strongly impact the likelihood of success or failure of the peace process. Other disciplines, including management and legal studies, have recognised the importance of integrating human agency and choice in their research studies and theories. Similarly, I contend that political science can also greatly benefit from the inclusion of the individual in refining its research and theories on conflict resolution.

CHRONOLOGY OF KEY EVENTS TO WARS' END

SIERRA LEONE	LIBERIA
1792: Sierra Leone founded as a colony for freed slaves who fought for the British in the American Revolution. Early 1930s: Significant alluvial diamond deposits found in Sierra Leone. 23 March 1991: Civil war begins when 100 Revolutionary United Front (RUF) troops, led by Foday Sankoh, cross the Liberian border into Sierra Leone. 29 April 1992: Junior-ranking soldiers overthrow President Momoh and the All People's Congress (APC) government after 24 years in power. Capt. Valentine Strasser assumes the Presidency within the National Provisional Ruling Council (NPRC). December 1993: NPRC declares unilateral ceasefire. RUF is nearly eliminated from most war-affected areas, retreats to the bush to rearm and recruit. 1994: Charles Taylor thwarts the NPRC's attempts at making peace with the RUF. NPRC government engages rebels throughout the country, but neither side makes any significant military inroads.	1820: Freed slaves begin to colonise Liberia 1926: Firestone Tyre and Rubber Company opens a rubber plantation near Monrovia. Rubber becomes a national economic mainstay. 24 December 1989: Led by Charles Taylor, the National Patriotic Front of Liberia (NPFL) invades Nimba County from Cote d'Ivoire. 1990: As the NPFL marches on Monrovia, ECOWAS forms and deploys ECOMOG to the city. Prince Johnson, heading a splinter group of the NPFL (ULIMO), executes President Doe. Over 12 months, three peace agreements are signed; all fail. Feb 1991: ECOWAS and NPFL agree to disarm under the <i>Lomé Agreement</i>. ECOWAS sponsors and establishes an interim government. Taylor refuses to acknowledge the government and establishes his own, rival administration. Oct 1991: Belligerents sign the <i>Yamoussoukro IV Peace Agreement</i>. Oct 1992: NPFL commences Operation Octopus, attacking ECOMOG peacekeepers in Monrovia. ECOMOG abandons its peacekeeping mandate in favour of a combatant role and bombs NPFL locations. Jan-Mar 1993: Despite a UN embargo, arms continue to flow into Liberia. A strong ECOMOG offensive weakens NPFL military and commercial interests. First reports of ECOMOG corruption and dubious commercial undertakings. April-May 1993: ECOMOG imposes sanctions on NPFL strongholds. 25 July 1993: Under the <i>Cotonou Peace Agreement</i>, the warring factions agree to a ceasefire, which neither side keeps. May 1994: ULIMO splits along Mandingo and Krahn ethnic lines, and is rechristened ULIMO-J and ULIMO-K after respective leaders, Alhaji Kromah and Roosevelt Johnson.

May 1995: Strasser hires mercenary outfit Executive Outcomes (EO), which repels RUF advance on Freetown. January 1996: Brigadier Maada Bio topples his former commander, Strasser. Bio agrees to mount elections, supported by the international community. 15 March 1996: “Free and fair” elections are won by former United Nations bureaucrat, Ahmed Tejan Kabbah. 30 November 1996: Kabbah & Sankoh sign the <i>Abidjan Peace Accord</i>. January 1997: According to the terms of the Abidjan Accord, Executive Outcomes leaves Sierra Leone. March 1997: Foday Sankoh is arrested and incarcerated in Nigeria, purportedly for transporting arms. 25 May 1997: In a coup orchestrated by Major Johnny Paul Koroma of the Armed Forces Revolutionary Council (AFRC), Kabbah is sent into exile in Guinea. Koroma creates an alliance with the RUF. Sankoh is made deputy President. Summer 1997: ECOWAS ministers endorse a plan to overturn the AFRC coup and vote to extend the ECOMOG mission into Sierra Leone. October 1997: ECOWAS mediates the <i>Conakry Peace Plan</i> on behalf of Kabbah’s exiled government and the AFRC-RUF. AFRC-RUF renege on their commitment to peace; war resumes. February-March 1998: ECOMOG engages in a six-day battle with AFRC-RUF in Freetown. Rebels retreat in loss to the bush. Kabbah returns to Freetown and is restored to power. Kabbah announces reformed military and consolidates kamajors into a single civil defense force (CDF). Sept-Nov 1998: Government forces control 80 percent of the country’s territory. Kabbah declares that the war will be over before the year’s end.	December 1994: According to the <i>Akosombo Peace Agreement</i>, warring factions agree to a schedule for disarmament and establishing a joint Council of State Jan-July 1995: Denouncing corruption and widespread looting, US State Department and UN cut funding to ECOMOG. 19 Aug 1995: The temporary Liberian government, rebel groups and civil society sign the <i>Abudja Peace Agreement</i>. Oct 1995: After multiple ceasefire violations, full-scale war recommences. Aug 1996: Nigerian President Abacha takes over ECOWAS chairmanship and pursues rapprochement with Taylor. A supplement to the Abudja Accord is signed. Elections are scheduled. May-July 1997: Taylor wins the presidential election, with 75% of the vote. International observers declare the elections free and fair. Taylor acts quickly to suppress political opposition and consolidate a single-party government. Monrovia experiences a lull in fighting, while rural skirmishes continue.
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December 1998: RUF emerges from the bush, and engages government forces. The army fires on fellow ECOMOG forces in battle. ECOMOG troops are withdrawn to their bases outside of Freetown.

January 1999: Rebels invade Freetown, killing 6,000 civilians in less than a week and burning most of the East part of the city. Government forces lose their foothold in the Northern territories, as well as the valuable Kenema mining district. Kabbah announces a two-pronged government initiative of diplomatic dialogue and increased military offensive with AFRC-RUF.

April 1999: Sankoh is freed from custody to counsel his field commanders on negotiations.

07 July 1999: Government of Sierra Leone signs the *Lomé Peace Accord* with the RUF.

April 2000: ECOMOG forces drawdown and are replaced by the United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone (UNAMSIL).

May 2000: RUF takes more than 500 UN peacekeepers hostage. RUF advances on Freetown, but is repelled by UK paratroopers, during Operation Palliser.

January 1999: Ghana and Nigeria accuse Liberia of supporting the Revolutionary United Front (RUF) in Sierra Leone. The UK, the US and the UN apply limited sanctions to Liberia.

April 1999: Crossing the border from Guinea, Liberians United for Reconciliation and Democracy (LURD) attacks the town of Voinjama in Loma County.

Sept 2000: Government troops undertake a major operation to end LURD's presence in the north.

May 2001 - UN Security Council imposes arms embargo on Liberia for trading weapons for diamonds from rebels in Sierra Leone.

Jan-Feb 2002: Rebels make numerous military gains and arrive at Kay Junction, 44 km from Monrovia. More than 50,000 refugees flee fighting. Taylor declares a state of emergency.

Jan-Mar 2003: Backed by the Ivorian government, a new rebel group, Movement for Democracy in Liberia (MODEL), emerges in the South. Taylors' troops lose significant territory and soon control less than a third of the country. LURD advances to within 10 km of the capital.

June 2003: International and regional pressure lead to a new round of peace negotiations in Ghana. Talks are jeopardised when Taylor is indicted for war crimes in Sierra Leone.

July 2003 – Despite ongoing peace talks, fighting intensifies as LURD battles government troops for

	control of Monrovia. Aug 2003: Taylor resigns; leaves Liberia for exile in Nigeria, opening the way for a peace agreement between the rebels and the government. Interim government and rebels sign the <i>Accra Comprehensive Peace Accord</i>. Sept-Oct 2003: US and Nigerian troops withdraw, and are replaced with the UN Mission in Liberia (UNMIL). Nov 2005: Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf becomes Africa's first female democratically elected head of state. April 2006: Charles Taylor is arrested in Nigeria and sent to appear before a UN-backed court in Sierra Leone on charges of crimes against humanity. In June, the International Criminal Court agrees to host his trial in The Hague. April-May 2012: In a unanimous decision, the Special Court for Sierra Leone finds Charles Taylor guilty of 11 charges of war crimes and crimes against humanity. He is serving his 50-year sentence in a UK prison.
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CHAPTER 3

A FRONT TO PEACE

A GUIDE TO THE WARS IN SIERRA LEONE AND LIBERIA

A comparative political study of the Sierra Leonean and Liberian civil conflicts and their resolution reveals interesting similarities and disparities. Both “horribly obscure”³⁶ and incoherent wars began nearly simultaneously (Liberia in 1989, Sierra Leone in 1991), but their tinder had already been laid and was smoking for decades. At times, the wars appeared to be embodiments of timeworn grievances between young and old, between urban power and rural deprivation. However, such interpretations are far too simple—and nothing of these conflicts is straightforward. These were not conventional battles between political parties or ethnic communities, nor were they unambiguous disputes between the state and a rebel faction—combatants’ allegiances being vague and opportunistic at best. Ultimately, the Liberian and Sierra Leonean wars were venal contests of appropriation, subjugation and greed, commanded by charismatic (if not always clever) strongmen, perpetuated by hordes of (disposable) children, waged against millions of impoverished, innocent civilians. The result was the wholesale collapse of political and moral order.

If past behaviour is a predictor of future behaviour (Ouellette & Wood 1998), then an overview of the wars in Sierra Leone and Liberia is essential to understanding the key players at the peace processes in Accra and Lomé. For the considerable volume of documentation on each of the wars, no one has synthesised and presented a complete overview of these events, noting the various players, their initial motivations, and their wartime strategies. Grasping the key elements of these lengthy and complex wars is essential to understanding how the Lomé and Accra peace negotiations came about, as well as to discerning how and why the various players made the choices and pursued the actions that they did.

In the following chapter, I set the scene in which the Lomé and Accra negotiations took place. Considering first Liberia, then Sierra Leone, I provide readers with a brief history of each country as colonies settled by freed slaves. I highlight Liberia and Sierra Leone’s respective ethnic communities and how divisions between colonial settlers and ethnic cleavages manipulated and exacerbated the political instability that preceded the wars. I note how both countries were also sites of economic growth but great inequality, fuelled by the wealth of natural resources (namely iron, rubber, timber and diamonds). The combination of corrupt political systems that crippled already dysfunctional states, the curse (and promise) of boundless natural wealth, grievances generated by profound socio-economic disparity, all created an environment ripe for conflict.

Within the context of regional politics, namely the emergence of Nigeria as a regional hegemon and the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), I explain the rise of the National Patriotic Front of Liberia (NPFL) led by Charles Taylor, as well as the evolution of Revolutionary United Front (RUF) in neighbouring Sierra Leone,

³⁶ *The Economist* (7 Jan. 1999) applies this term to the Sierra Leonean war, but it is equally relevant to the Liberian conflict.

and its leader Foday Sankoh. Because history provides an accurate template for the future, I provide a timeline of both countries' wars, including how Liberian and Sierra Leonean warlords signed numerous peace agreements, not because the rebel leaders saw the benefits of peace, but as a means to create a respite in which they could rest their troops, while recruiting new ones. A historical and political backdrop is the structure in which individual agents operate, and as such, provides a necessary context to the personalities and tactics of the players who emerge as key to Sierra Leonean and Liberian peace negotiations.

LIBERIA, 1989-1997; 1999-2003

SETTING THE SCENE, LIBERIA

When Liberia's warring factions assembled in Accra to negotiate in June 2003, it was the eighteenth time belligerents had come together to discuss peace. Few individuals, including many participants themselves, held a genuine expectation that this round of peace talks would truly end the war. Over 13 years, between 1989 and 1996, and again, from 1999 to 2003, Liberia's war claimed the lives of over 250,000 civilians (Ormhaug *et al* 2009; *BBC News* 2014), or 10 per cent of the population.³⁷ Amidst complete state failure, up to seven rebel factions simultaneously engaged in a campaign of mass plunder and destruction. At the height of the fighting, fully half of Liberian citizens were displaced (Global Security 2005). For the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), more than a decade of involvement in Liberia had proved an embarrassment, seeming to demonstrate to the rest of the world that Africans could not adequately deal with their own problems.

HISTORY AND DEMOGRAPHICS

Liberia—a Latin derivative of liberty—was conceived by the (white) members of the American Colonization Society (ACS) in 1821. Like the founders of Sierra Leone whose history is retold later in this chapter, the Society's motives were at once philanthropic and racist; fearful of the foreseen end of slavery and a large black population demanding jobs, rights and resources, they hoped that (soon to be) former slaves would seek to establish themselves on their continent of origin. Planning accordingly, an ACS agent bought, leased or annexed land (by force, when necessary) along the West African coast and rivers inland (Hutton 1983).³⁸ Initially, the ACS encouraged slave-owners to provide emancipation on the condition that slaves accept a Society-subsidised relocation to

³⁷ Compared to refugee numbers, which were usually documented and verified by outside agencies, the death toll of Liberia's civil war is very difficult to ascertain with precision; generally, sources agree that 150,000 to 200,000 people died between 1989 and 1996, but there is virtually no information on the number of casualties between 1999 and 2003 (there were few journalists, researchers, and humanitarian workers in the country at the time). The general, albeit vague, consensus is that about 250,000 people perished in the Liberian war.

³⁸ In a tale that reads remarkably like the British conquest of the First Nations peoples of North America, the first deed to Liberian land was secured "at gunpoint, in return for three hundred dollars' worth of muskets, beads, tobacco, gunpowder, clothing, mirrors, food and rum from a chief named 'King Peter', who reportedly came only later to understand the full implications of the term sale'" (Berkeley 2008: 29).

Liberia (Ricks 2003).³⁹ The Society's first settlers arrived in 1822 and, over time, other ex-slaves, mostly from the United States, but also from the West Indies and Congo, continued to emigrate to Liberia in the early 19th century.

The emancipated slave settlers, called Americo-Liberians, saw themselves as distinct from the indigenous peoples whose land they appropriated, and developed a cultural tradition that reflected theories of racial dominance and political republicanism common in the US at the time (Wegmann 2010). Colonial houses built in the style of the antebellum South still stand—in various states of rot, disrepair, or wartime damage—throughout the country. Save for its single star, the flag is a near-copy of the Stars and Stripes. Drafted by a Harvard professor, in parts, the Liberian constitution reads as an unconcealed paraphrase of that of the U.S. Americo-Liberian descendants still retain English surnames such as Jones, Cooper, Johnson, and Sawyer. Even the inflection of Liberian Creole spoken by most people has traces of America's South.

Aside from the Americo-Liberians, Liberia is home to 16 major indigenous groups, each with its own customs, traditions and laws.⁴⁰ The Gio, Mano, Krahn and Mandingo communities are the most numerous (see Figure 3), and most relevant to the Liberian conflict (Ellis 1999). Grand Gedeh County in the southeastern part of the country, borders on Côte d'Ivoire, and is regional home to most Krahn (Ellis 1999). The Mandingo are predominantly Muslim and hail from Lofa County in the North as well as Nimba County in the Northeast. In the course of the war, Mandingos were commonly allied with the Krahn. Lofa County is also home to the Gio and Mano, who were also typically united in the war, and formed Taylor's primary support base (Ellis 1999).

By 1861, at the time of the American Civil War, when colonisation stopped, about 12,000 settlers were living in communities scattered along the coast. Their motto, 'The love of liberty brought us here', survives to this day. When the colonists united and declared themselves a republic in 1847, they established a constitution whereby all men were deemed free and independent with certain unalienable rights. However, "all men" meant repatriates; the "native tribes" were not eligible for election or voting (Bøås 2001). Like the system of slavery from which they had come, the intent behind this discrimination was founded on economic greed. Through access to the country's abundance of natural resources, the repatriates became an economic elite who wished to perpetuate their ongoing dominance. Throughout the 19th century, fully half of the country's wealth was owned by less than five per cent of its population (Berkeley 2008).

³⁹ While an unspecified number of slave-owners availed themselves of the ACS's charity, there was considerable abolitionist resistance to colonisation (Ricks 2003).

⁴⁰ Disproportionate Americo-Liberian influence led to the popular belief that Liberia is a predominantly Christian state. In fact, only 15 percent of the population belongs to Christian churches (Taryor 1989). Another 12 percent of Liberians are Muslim (US Dept. of State 2010). Fully three-quarters of the population self-define as adherents of traditional religions (Taryor 2010). Not unlike Sierra Leone, many (if not most) Liberians incorporate traditional religious beliefs and practices with Christianity and Islam.

Figure 3. Main ethnic communities of Liberia.



Claire de Rouet and Jonathan Raddatz
(Source: PeacebuildingData.org, 2011; UN Map No. 3775 Rev. 7, Dept. of Peacekeeping Operation Cartographic Section, 2010)

Politically, despite its constitutional claim to freedom, Liberia did not start out as a representative democracy. The freed slaves that first settled Liberia had little formal education and no experience in government, so their societal model of choice was the one with which they were most familiar—the plantation (Bøås 2001).⁴¹ The Americo-Liberians founded the True Whig Party (TWP) in 1869, which became the voting option by default for the next century.⁴² Controlled by the repatriates, who represented between three and five per cent of the population, the TWP dominated all aspects of political and economic life. Needless to say, few Liberians apart from the settlers, benefitted from this structure.

Joseph Jenkins Roberts, a freeborn American who emigrated to Liberia as a young man, was elected Liberia's first President in 1847. Roberts served for nine years and was

⁴¹ Bøås (2001) notes that government forced labour and child pawning was so widespread in Liberia that the League of Nations sent a commission to investigate slave trading in 1929; its scathing report (dated 1931) prescribed revoking the country's independence and placing it under League decree.

⁴² A second political party, the Liberian Party (later the Republican Party), was backed by a small group of poor, mixed race voters. Although other parties were never banned, for all intents and purposes, Liberia was a one-party state, dominated by the True Whig Party from 1878 until 1980.

re-elected for another term in 1872. Helmed by a small elite with little inclination for a population that would exercise real choice, Liberian political leadership was stable and its transitions smooth. Although the indigenous peoples had no economic or political clout, they were not entirely passive or mute. Liberia was the site of numerous rebellions, particularly in the mid-19th century and the 1920s. In the 1940s, thousands of indigenous rural Liberians migrated to Monrovia and other urban centres in search of economic opportunity; witnessing first-hand the yearning gulf between most citizens and the tiny Americo-Liberian elite only entrenched existing resentments.

Near the mid-20th century, however, it seemed as though indigenous peoples would finally gain political recognition. Officially, William Tubman, who came to power in 1944, advocated a “policy of unification” which he claimed would help bring people of the distant rural regions into the political system (Bøås 2001). The policy was rhetorical façade rather than real progress, and Liberia remained as inequitable as ever. Tubman was far more preoccupied with building a patrimonial shadow state, in which he reigned supreme, than he was with accommodating restive rural natives. Like Stevens in Sierra Leone, Tubman’s power was built around exchanging favours with a small group of fellow Liberian “big men” and cementing “clientelistic relations with non-equals, [and] pre-emptive strikes against real and perceived enemies were an integrated part of his survival technique” (Bøås 2001: 704). Tubman had abolished the death sentence, nonetheless, he evidently perceived himself as above his own laws, and oversaw the incarceration and demise of numerous legitimate and alleged opponents. After 27 years in power, on 23 July 1971, Tubman died in office. Vice-President William Tolbert took up presidential reins.

Like Tubman before him, Tolbert attempted some governmental improvements, namely introducing an anti-corruption commission. Liberians paid little heed; the Tolbert family was known to be among the key perpetrators of state corruption, and they realised that the commission was but a front. In fact, over the next decade, Tolbert’s regime only served to preserve and propagate patrimonial policies that were already deeply rooted. Tolbert’s reign was not a complete debacle; early into the Cold War, he made the country a dependable ally of the US, which assured an ongoing source of financial and military sustenance. All African intelligence was transferred through the US Embassy in Monrovia, and American military planes were allowed to land and refuel with ease at Roberts Field, a US-built airport from World War II (Berkeley 2008).

However, Tolbert not only lacked the charisma of Tubman, he was less inclined to use the same degree of coercion and patronage as his predecessor, and in time his leadership became vulnerable. Despite regular sustenance in the form of American foreign aid, Liberia’s economy maintained a downward trend through the 1970s, and most Liberians were destitute. Not surprisingly, on 14 April 1979, when Tolbert announced an increase in the price of rice—a national staple—poverty-stricken slum dwellers in Monrovia mutinied in numerous street demonstrations (Berkeley 2008).⁴³ In an attempt to reassert his waning control, Tolbert lashed out with force, ordering the police to open fire on the unarmed protesters and arresting those political adversaries that had surfaced under his rule.

⁴³ As Liberia’s main rice producer, citizens saw this decree would most benefit the Tolbert family while further impoverishing them (Gifford 1993).

Tolbert never recovered from the antipathy his actions engendered. Indeed, Tolbert's efforts to suppress his foes only served to inflame them, and on 12 April 1980, two days before the mass trial of the opponents he had incarcerated, a small group of 17 soldiers from the Armed Forces of Liberia (AFL), led by 28 year-old Samuel Doe, disembowelled a pyjama-clad Tolbert at home in the presidential mansion.⁴⁴ Capitalizing on the state's fragility, this group of ragtag fighters—none of which had more than a primary school education—staged a coup, after which Doe became the first indigenous Liberian to lead the country.

Doe's coup was widely supported by indigenous Liberians. For the first time, one of their own held the seat of power, and Doe's promises to quash the fraudulent and tyrannical Americo-Liberian elite and establish civilian rule within five years were met with enthusiasm. However, Doe soon showed himself to be an even more corrupt and oppressive dictator than his predecessors. In less than a week, Doe's zealously named People's Redemption Council (PRC) had suspended the constitution and declared martial law. According to one-time student activist Commany Wessah, "Doe was the embodiment of everything that had happened before. The difference with Doe was a difference in scale, not quality. If Tolbert did it twice, Doe did it a thousand times" (Wessah in Berkeley 2008: 32).⁴⁵ In his first five years of rule, Doe executed dozens of (real and imagined) rivals and systematically undertook numerous ethnically motivated attacks on other communities (Genocide Watch 2012).

Although Liberia was home to 16 different ethnic groups, prior to Doe, there was limited ethnic division. Any hostility among the indigenous peoples was aimed directly at the Americo-Liberian elite. However, soon after the coup, Doe began to elevate disproportionately his fellow Krahn—a group that only comprises four per cent of the population—to senior government positions. Within five years, Krahn administered four of 16 government ministries, Krahn officers controlled military intelligence and all infantry battalions, and the AFL chief of staff was a Krahn (French 1990). Unsurprisingly, the ascent of the Krahn coincided with increasing accusations of persecution by other ethnic groups, particularly the Gio and Mano.

Doe banned political parties until 1984, when he gave into to increasing international pressure and amended the constitution to once again allow political opposition. Soon after, Doe proffered his presidential candidacy under the aegis of the National Democratic Party of Liberia. On 15 October 1985, in an election most analysts characterised for its widespread fraud and tampering, Doe won the presidency (van Walraven 1999). For several years, Doe's regime continued to be defined by worsening political violence, widespread corruption, and major economic decline.

⁴⁴ None of the 17 collaborators (including Doe himself) were fully literate, and all were under the age of 30; the youngest among them was 16 years old. Doe and his supporters were clearly suspicious of formal education and the country's intelligentsia; consistently and constantly, they intimidated and arrested student leaders and other intellectuals. In 1982, the government formally banned all academic activities that "directly or indirectly impinge, interfere with or cast aspersion on the activities, programs or policies of the People's Redemption Council" (Meredith 2011: 549).

⁴⁵ Commany Wessah is presently Minister of State without Portfolio in Ellen Johnson Sirleaf's Unity Party government.

ECONOMICS

Despite the inherent socio-economic inequities on which it was founded, at the middle of the 20th century, Liberia boasted the second highest rate of economic growth in the world (Moran & Pitcher 2004). This auspicious and desirable achievement was due entirely to the export of rubber and iron ore.⁴⁶ Even so, Liberia remained a profoundly poor country. Infrastructure and modernisation were scarce to non-existent; under Doe, fewer than 25 per cent of city dwellers had access to safe running water, in rural areas, less than six per cent of citizens could say the same.

Liberia's natural resources were siphoned through a system of concessions, benefiting a few foreign investors and the insular Americo-Liberian elite (Moran & Pitcher 2004; see also Leibenow 1987; Sawyer 1992). Unfortunately, as with all commodity economies, the good times slowed and then halted when market prices declined. Market stagnation combined with a growing public demand for an accountable democratic government made way for increasing economic and political chaos through the 1970s.

As Liberia's first indigenous leader, Doe's presidency was exceptional, but the man himself did nothing to ameliorate his country's waning economic circumstances. Doe had inherited an economy in tatters, a situation that was only exacerbated by a global recession (from 1980-82) that ravaged Liberia's three primary industries, iron ore, shipping and rubber. Agricultural production decreased, and rice imports alone tripled from 1974 to 1983. Every year following Doe's coup, Liberia's gross domestic product dwindled further. By 1986, government workers were only being paid occasionally, while external debt had surpassed \$1.5 billion (Adebajo 2002).

Doe and his cronies were every bit as avaricious as any of the Americo-Liberians that preceded them; they illegally seized land and wealth with abandon. Profits from logging concessions and fuel surcharges were skimmed directly into Doe's personal coffers, while much American foreign aid was channelled into other officials' personal accounts (Adebajo 2002). Like Siaka Stevens, the neighbouring despot of Sierra Leone, Doe tapped the state apparatus for political patronage (see Reno 1999), evidenced by the skyrocketing number of civil servants, from 18,000 in 1979 to 56,000 in 1983 (Adebajo 2002).

Under Doe, Liberia effectively stopped functioning—no provision of public services, widespread corruption within the government, virtually no lawful economy, no government control over the legitimate use of force, and a large displaced population (Chomsky 2006). By 1990, "Liberia's only significant export to its neighbours [was] chaos" (Steyn 2003: n.p.).

If not the initiator, certainly Charles Taylor was long the main perpetrator of Liberia's chaos. Born in 1948, the third of 15 children, Taylor's mother was Gola and his father was an Americo-Liberian (Anderson 1998). Like many children of the elite, Taylor studied in the US, where he was an economics major and a vocal activist against Tolbert. Upon graduation from Bentley College, Taylor returned to Liberia soon after Doe's coup in

⁴⁶ By 1950, one company alone—Firestone Rubber—generated 25 percent of Liberia's tax revenue (Berkeley 2008).

1980 and rapidly landed a plum government job directing the General Services Agency, a position that gave him access and control over a sizable portion of the country's budget (Doyle 2009).

In little more than two years, Taylor had fallen out of favour with the president and fled back to the US, where Doe sought his extradition for having embezzled nearly \$1 million. Although he denied the charges, Taylor was nonetheless detained and held in a maximum security prison in Massachusetts. While awaiting extradition, miraculously, Taylor escaped from jail, left the US covertly and virtually disappeared for the next five years, during which he quietly established the National Patriotic Front of Liberia (NPFL).⁴⁷ According to Liberian and American authorities, Taylor spent a significant part of this time in Libya, as the guest of Col. Muammar Qaddafi (Noble 1992). Taylor's relationship with Qaddafi and Libya was to prove both lucrative and lasting.

CAUSES OF THE WAR

The genesis of Doe's demise—and the Liberian civil war—arguably dates to 1985, when Commander Thomas Quiwonkpa, from the Gio community, and a handful of other soldiers took over the AFL Monrovia barracks and two radio stations and claimed Liberia's leadership for themselves. That Doe's troops effectively suppressed the attempted coup within hours did not abate the ethnic and class tensions that had been seething since he took power. In fact, the ethnic alignments evident in the failed coup were met with fierce reprisals against soldiers and citizens alike. Quiwonkpa was captured, castrated and dismembered by state troops who went on to massacre between 400 and 2,000 people, mostly of Mano and Gio origin (French 1990).

Although Taylor was half Americo-Liberian, most of his adherents were from the Gio and Mano communities, and some initial NPFL troops participated in the 1985 coup attempt. The ethnic animosity manifest in Quiwonkpa's quashed coup and its aftermath erupted anew when Taylor's NPFL forces invaded a series of small Liberian communities in Nimba County, over the Côte d'Ivoire border.

Taylor's troops used inflammatory rhetoric and effectively elevated ethnic divisions in their military tactics, but their aim was not a simple matter of ridding the country of Doe and his ethnic Krahn. The rebels also targeted Liberians "of means", identified by their fine clothing, large homes, and automobiles. Fighters assumed that those who were wealthy had become so by virtue of their collaboration with Doe (Berkeley 2008). Consequently, because they were members of Doe's ruling class and because some of their leaders perpetuated Liberia's inequitable and oppressive system, particular suffering was meted out on the Krahn community at the outset of the war. In fact, however much they

⁴⁷ Accounts of Taylor's escape from prison are numerous and legendary. Some reports claim he sawed through the bars of his prison window, others say Americans sympathetic to his desire to overthrow Doe colluded to secure his freedom. According to Taylor, his prison escape was facilitated by the CIA, with whom he had ongoing relations: On the night of his "escape", a "guard" showed him to a window where sheets were tied into a ladder; on the ground, a "government car" drove him to New York, from where he travelled to Mexico on his own passport (Allen 2012). Upon receiving a response to a Freedom of Information request, the *Boston Globe* confirmed the CIA worked with Taylor (Allen 2012).

benefited under Doe, the Krahn had not created the country's unbalanced system of wealth; the freed Americo-Liberian slaves had imported it from the US. All the same, the Krahn—traditionally one of the country's most destitute communities—“took the fall for 133 years of simmering hatred born of envy. It is a sinister irony that Charles Taylor and many who bankrolled his war... [were] themselves Americo-Liberian” (Berkeley 2008: 28).

Neither greed nor grievance alone can fully account for the Liberian war. It is, nonetheless, evident that the conflict was heavily fuelled by economics and relative depravation. Indeed, both Liberia and Sierra Leone's wars shared proximate causes including economic collapse and pervasive, entrenched poverty, acute rates of youth unemployment, state dysfunction as demonstrated by breakdown of the rule of law and the cessation of public spending, as well as rural isolation and regional marginalisation.

Liberian and Sierra Leonean rebels may have been stirred by real and imagined grievances, but as Collier (2000a) argues, the financial viability of insurgence determines the risk of conflict. Moreover, insurrections founded entirely on grievance tend not to ignite because of the collective action problem (Collier 2000b), whereby even those individuals who have genuine objections to the government may prefer that others take up arms while they free-ride off the advantages achieved in the uprising. However, in both countries, war was made financially viable by diamond mining and its revenues. According to Davies (2000), Libyan financing and training of rebels—prior to and during the wars—also eased the collective action problem. Taylor had a longstanding relationship with Libya, and Qaddafi was only too willing to proffer a golden handshake of support to his comrade's rebellion.

Meanwhile, the international community that had been sustaining Liberia swerved, and with it so did Liberia's fortunes. Objecting to the multiple executions conducted after Doe's coup, the US reduced its foreign aid to Liberia, while the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and World Bank began to impose more stringent borrowing conditions. Conversely, Libya, Cuba, the Soviet Union and other Eastern Bloc countries responded warmly to Doe (Adebajo 2002). In the next two years, fearing that Liberia would increase its alliance with the Soviets, the US renewed its economic and military aid. In return, Doe closed both the Libyan embassy and the Soviet embassy in Monrovia, and became an ardent supporter of the US at the UN and in other international fora (Adebajo 2002). By 1983, Doe's redemption was complete when US president Reagan described the dictator as “a dependable ally—a friend in need” (Adebajo 2002: 35) and increased aid to Liberia further, ignoring the nation's growing tally of human rights abuses.⁴⁸ However, as the decade passed and the Cold War thawed, Liberia's strategic location became less important to the US and American aid to sub-Saharan Africa was slashed (Gifford 1993: 234). With the collapse of Berlin Wall, Liberia had outlived its strategic value to the US and Doe became a Cold War era fossil.

⁴⁸ Liberia was the recipient of more than \$500 million in US aid in the 1980s (Adebajo & Rashid 2004). This represents nearly 20 percent of Liberia's GNI in that decade (Index Mundi 2011). In 1986 alone, more than a third of Liberia's total revenue came from Washington (Adebajo 2002).

THE WAR

Charles Taylor had never served in the military, and he had fewer than 100 armed adherents when he decided to strike for the first time. Nonetheless, bankrolled by Libya (supplying money and weapons) and endorsed by Côte d'Ivoire and Burkina Faso (providing more funding and political leverage), the NPFL crossed into Liberia from Côte d'Ivoire in December 1989. With stealth, capital, and ambush, a decade of destruction and domination began.

Armed with a century's worth of inequality and grievance, initially, many Liberians met Taylor's rebel movement with enthusiasm and the number of his recruits increased rapidly.⁴⁹ By June 1990, Taylor commanded more than 5,000 NPFL troops; this number doubled by September (Bøås 2001). Meanwhile, Doe fought back with the fear and rage of a man with everything to lose. Knowing that Taylor's rebel fighters were predominantly Mano and Gio, Doe pressed his troops to raid these communities' villages.⁵⁰ In retaliation, Taylor incited his men to attack Krahn and Mandingos, who were Doe's main supporters. As the civilian casualties mounted, so too did Taylor's conquests, and by August 1990, the NPFL controlled Monrovia's airport and the Firestone Rubber plantation and factory. Taylor seemed poised for a military victory in the midst of an increasingly ethnic-flavoured war.

In August 1990, NPFL troops moved into the coastal fishing village of Marshall, rounding up all Ghanaian immigrants and Liberian sympathisers, and in the ensuing massacre shot approximately 1,000 people to death.⁵¹ Amidst the countless horrors that followed, the Marshall Massacre is scarcely remembered; even so, the event marks one of the first mass killings in the Liberian wars. Although Taylor's soldiers carried out the Marshall killings, they were hardly the only perpetrators of wartime horrors. One night in late July 1990, AFL soldiers loyal to Doe broke into St. Peter's Lutheran Church in Monrovia, where nearly 2,000 refugees were seeking shelter, and massacred more than 600 men, women and children with knives, cutlasses and guns. Their "crime" was to have been born Gio or Mano (French 1998). Charles Taylor's father was said to have been among the dead.

Only a few months into the rebellion, Taylor's troops numbered over 15,000 and were poised to overthrow Doe, who was hunkered down at his seaside mansion outside Monrovia. In the last two years of his tenure, Doe had nearly disappeared from view. His few public sightings told of an unpolished, inarticulate man who remained mired in the intrigue of barracks politics instead of demonstrating knowledge or capacity to govern on a national scale (Berkeley 2008). Indeed, Taylor's rebellion gained rapid traction at least partly due to Doe's profound incompetence. With the NPFL's military victories and its advance on the capital, over the summer of 1990, many members of Doe's ethnic group, the

⁴⁹ Many Liberians (particularly those outside the Krahn community) felt increasingly marginalized and unsafe under Doe and, at first, saw Taylor's NPFL as a liberation movement (Vogt 1996).

⁵⁰ As a member of the Americo-Liberian elite, Taylor had few links to the indigenously populated hinterland, but his rebellion was certainly abetted by Doe's ethnic fixation on the Gio and Mano communities (Harris 1999).

⁵¹ Fishermen of Ghanaian descent have lived and worked along Liberia's ocean and river coasts since the 1920s. Prior to the war, they netted 90 percent of the country's artisanal fish catch (Fishery Committee for the West Central Gulf of Guinea, 2010). NPFL rebels targeted Ghanaian residents in retaliation for Ghana's decision to deploy troops as part of the ECOMOG force, which was then fighting Taylor's troops from taking over Monrovia.

Krahn, fled Monrovia in droves, seeking escape from the rebels' retribution. Proclaiming himself the new head of government and promising elections within six months, Taylor urged Monrovia residents to leave the city for rebel-held areas (*NYT* 1990).

Meanwhile, just prior to the Marshall Massacre, the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) met to deliberate over the growing conflict in Liberia. Both the UN and the US had made it clear that they would not intervene in what they deemed a domestic matter. Claiming the conflict would lead to regional instability, the regional hegemon, Nigeria, assumed command and advocated deploying a peacekeeping force to Liberia. Nigeria's motives for pursuing intervention were not exactly altruistic; President Babangida was concerned that Taylor's "civilian" rebellion against a military government might stimulate his own political adversaries closer to home. Nor was the undertaking supported unanimously; the creation of a regional multilateral armed force, the Economic Community of West African States Monitoring Group (ECOMOG), served to deepen existing rifts between anglophone and francophone member states.⁵² A number of francophone states objected to the intervention, particularly Burkina Faso and Côte d'Ivoire—both nations that supported Taylor's insurgency. The initial peacekeeping force was almost entirely made up of ECOWAS' anglophone states, namely Gambia, Ghana, Nigeria and Sierra Leone. The sole francophone member state to support ECOMOG was Guinea, which had received a huge influx of Liberian refugees since the start of the war.

Dissenting members notwithstanding, ECOMOG's intervention went ahead.⁵³ With the aspirational rhetoric of the morally certain, ECOWAS anointed its force with the authority to "separate the warring factions and stop [sic] the bloodshed" (Bøås 2001: 710).⁵⁴ Taylor vehemently opposed ECOWAS' armed intrusion from the outset, and his resentment towards the peacekeeping force only grew in time. All the same, 3,000 ECOMOG troops (most of whom were Nigerian) arrived in Monrovia on 25 August 1990 (Ero 1995).

Into a sticky vortex of mass carnage and selfish ambition, ECOMOG disembarked with the lofty aim of establishing a ceasefire, overseeing the implementation of an interim government, and convening elections, all within a year's time. Taylor was not alone in resenting ECOMOG's regional meddling. In fact, at the start, neither Doe nor Taylor deigned to meet with ECOMOG representatives. Fighting continued, and with no peace to keep, ECOMOG was tugged inexorably into the war. Just as Doe seemed sure to lose the war and his hold on power, he discovered a newfound enthusiasm for negotiation, and set

⁵² In the first years of his uprising, Taylor had built powerful alliances with two key francophone ECOWAS members, including Felix Houphouët-Boigny, former ruler of Côte d'Ivoire and Blaise Compaoré, sitting President of Burkina Faso. These relationships go a long way to explain the linguistic divide in ECOWAS.

⁵³ Upon the announcement of ECOMOG, the *Washington Post* rightfully observed that the participating members shared a common political and value system, "All are ruled with a strong arm by military or civilian dictators and have little experience with democracy" (Henry 1990).

⁵⁴ Bøås (2001) notes that ECOWAS' deliberations on Liberia took place covertly, and that Nigerian President Ibrahim Babangida ultimately secured the support of the Standing Mediation Committee (SMS) to deploy ECOMOG, but that the SMS did not have the political authority to undertake this decision. SMS had been formed only three months previously and was mandated to address inter-state conflicts of members, not civil conflicts (see Mortimer 1996).

off for initial talks with ECOMOG on 9 September 1990. This date proved to be most inauspicious for Liberia's besieged president.

For all of the NPFL's battlefield success at the time, Taylor's position—among the rebels, let alone as self-declared head of government—was not entirely secure. In mid-1990, a NPFL commander, Prince Johnson, who had led the rebel offensive into Monrovia, broke away to form the not especially imaginatively named Independent National Patriotic Front of Liberia (INPFL). Johnson claimed to command 7,000 armed fighters and that Taylor was not fit to lead Liberia, labelling him “a criminal and a rogue” who should be tried for embezzlement (*Times Wire Services* 1990).⁵⁵ For a time, it was not Doe but Prince Johnson who was Taylor's primary foe, not least because of his relative influence and predilection for extreme cruelty. On 9 September, Prince Johnson took world stage when he captured President Doe from the Monrovia ECOMOG headquarters, brought him back to base, where he was tortured, mutilated, then killed, his men consuming part of the body (Steyn 2003).⁵⁶

Upon Doe's death, Johnson asserted himself as Liberia's new president. Loudly, and with some credibility, Taylor insisted that he was Liberia's president. After all, Taylor claimed control over fully 95 per cent of the country's territory. Conversely, Johnson's only stronghold was Monrovia. War continued between NPFL and INPFL for the next several months, with ECOMOG striving to repel both parties from Monrovia. As ECOMOG began to outrival both adversaries, Johnson and Taylor agreed to peace talks, and signed a ceasefire agreement in November 1990.

In the quiet lull of the ceasefire, Johnson and Taylor set aside their differences (and egos) and agreed to join forces against ECOMOG. Soon after, Taylor (this time with Johnson's support) declared himself President of Greater Liberia—a state of a strictly imaginary construct—whose territory extended into Eastern Sierra Leone (conveniently the site of many diamond mines), and a capital in Gbarnga (a sheltered distance of 200 km from ECOMOG soldiers in Monrovia). On their home territory, NPFL troops were somewhat better disciplined than other belligerents and, under Taylor's aegis, much of NPFL-controlled areas remained unaffected by the war between 1990 and 1994 (Harris 1999).

⁵⁵ Johnson's assessment is thought to be highly exaggerated; the real number of his troops has been estimated to be as low as 500 (Johnny 2012).

⁵⁶ Captured on videotape and broadcast internationally, Johnson first ordered Doe's ears to be cut off, and forced him to eat them. Johnson's soldiers, however, kept parts for themselves, then removed Doe's genitals and fought over who could eat these (Steyn 2003). This is but one example of cannibalism, which became common during the Liberian (and Sierra Leonean) wars. Belligerents believed that the life, power, and “manhood” of the person they ate were transferred to the eater. These beliefs were integral to certain Liberian (and Sierra Leonean) secret societies and predated the wars (see Ellis 1999). However, during the conflict, cannibalism was also appropriated as a political tool to incite fear. At Taylor's trial, a former commander testified that militias were ordered to eat the flesh of their enemies, including ECOMOG and UN troops. According to the witness, “[Taylor] said we should eat them. Even the UN white people...” (*BBC News* 2008). The order was to “set an example for the people to be afraid” (*BBC News* 2008). The commander noted that many victims of cannibalism were members of the Krahn ethnicity, but other groups, including African peacekeepers, were targeted as well (*BBC News* 2008).

To the rest of the world, Taylor was an ambitious rebel with despotic intent and did not grant him any legitimacy. ECOWAS saw Taylor's cross-border aspirations as violating state sovereignty and staunchly refused to accept his self-declared presidency. Instead, ECOWAS charged its peacekeeping force to establish a Monrovia-based interim government, led by academic Amos Sawyer, until elections could be administered.⁵⁷ The fact that Taylor's empire was not diplomatically recognised by the international community did not stop him from issuing various edicts and establishing "an efficient administration" of sorts—all paid for by the timber, iron ore, rubber, and diamond concessions he sold, taken from the territory he controlled (Bøås 2001). By allocating diamond and gold mining concessions to French and German corporations, Taylor cleverly siphoned state profits that would have otherwise gone to the "official" government in Monrovia (Noble 1992).

Taylor's grandiose posturing inflamed Liberians from other ethnic communities, and new factions emerged to fracture further the already mutilated country. In mid-1991, supporters of late-President Doe, led by former journalist Alhaji Kromah, created the United Liberation Movement of Liberia for Democracy (ULIMO). In a move that threatened NPFL's revenue and claims to sovereignty, ULIMO attacked the diamond-trading region of Lofa County, which the NPFL had controlled since 1990 (Reno 1998).

However disquieted he was by the appearance of new belligerents, Taylor was particularly enraged by ECOMOG's outside incursion and refused to recognise the body as a peace force. He decried the arrival of foreign troops on Liberian soil as a "flagrant act of aggression" (Taylor in Ero 1995: np). ECOWAS ought to have foreseen that Taylor would not be amenable to its solution. Instead, its forces were caught off-guard by the NPFL's "Operation Octopus", launched in October 1992, during which Taylor's troops assailed ECOMOG and AFL positions around the capital for more than a month.⁵⁸ Ultimately, ECOMOG troops successfully rebutted Taylor's offense, but not without first accepting the military assistance of ULIMO and the remnants of AFL, thereby sacrificing its veneer of neutrality.⁵⁹ Despite this victory, ECOMOG troops found themselves in a "no-win" position; they were potent enough to win isolated military battles, but lacked the might to vanquish any of Liberia's multiple warring factions, most notably the NPFL, and, crucially, they had undermined their legitimacy as a neutral participant in any future peace negotiations.

In a repeated exercise of extreme futility, Liberian belligerent forces signed 11 peace agreements in two years.⁶⁰ Scholars trace the failed agreements and ongoing conflict

⁵⁷ The following year, in November 1992, ECOWAS imposed sanctions on the NPFL. Soon after, the UN Security Council also levied a full military embargo on the country.

⁵⁸ Both Taylor and Johnson refused to acknowledge the legitimacy of Sawyer's interim government, and were particularly aggrieved by the new currency he introduced (Liberty Notes)—Johnson, in particular, was thought to have been stockpiling large amounts of Doe-era currency (Johnny 2012).

⁵⁹ According to Bøås (2001: 711), ECOMOG's decision to work with other belligerents was a tactical one, with two primary aims: ECOMOG believed that the factions could be tamed to act as "an effective proxy force" against Taylor, and also wanted to access the economic benefits of the lucrative black market wartime economy through their "partner" rebel groups.

⁶⁰ Accords signed between mid-1990 and mid-1992 included: two Banjul Agreements (August 1990), a third Banjul Agreement (October 1990), the Bamako Agreement (November 1990), a fourth Banjul Agreement

to the rise of ULIMO as a military threat to the NPFL and Taylor's disdain for ECOMOG as "weak and biased" (Doe 2003; Dunn 1998; Gershoni 1997). By 1992, ULIMO was not only working with ECOMOG, its forces were further supported by three ECOMOG members (Sierra Leone, Guinea and Nigeria) as well as maintaining close ties with Doe's former forces (Ellis 1999). ULIMO's rise also saw Taylor lose some of the territory he had previously gained (Aboagye 1999; Olonisakin 2000). According to Alao (1998), Taylor determined that Operation Octopus stood a good chance of achieving a military victory for NPFL because ECOMOG was inept. However, other researchers contend that Taylor had ample time to build his forces in the two years prior to the assault because ECOMOG favoured political negotiations over military force (Aboagye 1999; Olonisakin 2000). This assessment has particular credence considering that Taylor was receiving weapons from Libya and had been training troops in nearby Burkina Faso during this time (Huband 1998). Either way, the tactics that Taylor used to revitalise his forces and consolidate his power in these first years of the war would become his *modus operandi* in the decade ahead—Taylor would capitalise on the battle respite that peace negotiations made possible, during which time he would simultaneously appear to back peace talks, as his troops withdrew to the rainforest to rest and draft new recruits.⁶¹

Many of Taylor's recruits were children and adolescents. Like the Revolutionary United Front (RUF) in Sierra Leone, numerous child soldiers were forcibly recruited, then desensitised to battle through the frequent use of drugs. In a perversion of traditional Poro and Sande rituals and beliefs, they would don wigs and dress up in women's clothing or novelty-store costumes and masks, and collect fetishes, which they believed would make them bulletproof.⁶² During the war, children were often initiated into various rebel groups and asked to perform rites of passage, including atrocities, while under the influence of drugs (Vogel 2012). Through these rituals, children and adolescents became erratic, sadistic killers with names like General Fuck Me Quick, Baby Killer, Butt Naked and Dead Body Bones, who were known to decorate roadside checkpoints with the heads and entrails of their victims (Anderson 1998). Despite their obedience and loyalty, few of these soldiers received wages, and necessarily turned to looting, which they intensified through terror.

Rebel troops were not the only parties to the war who engaged in looting. By this time, it was clear that ECOMOG's profiteering and questionable neutrality were significant drawbacks in what was an increasingly convoluted conflict. From a straightforward NPFL attempt on the sitting government, a host of new warring factions materialised throughout the country. In 1993, the ironically named Liberian Peace Council surfaced to challenge

(December 1990), the Lomé Agreement (February 1991), four Yamoussoukro Agreements (June-October 1991), and (in a complete change of venue) the Geneva Agreement (April 1992) (Doe 2003: 264).

⁶¹ The RUF's Foday Sankoh used the same tactics in Sierra Leone, but only had three real peace negotiations in which to do so. Taylor refined this strategy over the course of more than a dozen formal negotiations.

⁶² The spirit or supernatural world is inherent to most (some would say all) West African communities. The Poro and Sande are two (of many) secret societies that are prevalent through much of coastal West Africa, and are particularly powerful in Liberia. The Poro admit only males, while the Sande initiates girls to womanhood. Because both societies operate under oaths of secrecy, details on their practices are scarce. Both have particular languages, symbols and rituals that take place deep in the bush. Generally, societies include secret initiation ceremonies, guide sexual mores and gender roles, teach cultural history and customs, and comprise religious and civil obligations. Many society rituals involve a masked and costumed "bush devil" that requires "feeding" (see Ellis 1995, Holloway 2005: 162-63, Little 1949).

Taylor. In the northernmost part of the country, the Lofa Defence Force (LDF) emerged to oppose ULIMO. Vestiges of the AFL that had not joined other groups did not vie for control over any particular territory, but were still armed and deployed around Monrovia (Bøås 2001). By 1994, ULIMO had also split. Supported by Krahns, ULIMO-J was led by Roosevelt Johnson (no relation to Prince Johnson), while Alhaji Kromah led the Mandingo backed ULIMO-K. That same year, the NPFL also split when Tom Woewiyu and Sam Dokie created the NPFL-Central Revolutionary Council (NPFL-CRC), citing Taylor's atrocities and declaring "Taylor should be killed like a snake" (Foreign Broadcast Information Service in Bekoe 2003: 271). None of the warring parties appeared to possess any political ideology, let alone an interest in lasting peace. On the other hand, the parties appeared to share a common greed, recognising the monetary prospects of conflict, as well as the likelihood of achieving official recognition at peace talks (Harris 1999).

Amidst assurances that it was reassuming a peacekeeping role, ECOMOG nearly doubled its forces to a total of 14,000 (Olonisakin 2000). With the signing of the Cotonou Accord in 1993, even the erstwhile invisible UN became more engaged, appointing a special representative of the Secretary General and forming the United Nations Observer Mission to Liberia (UNOMIL), in a public show of its support of ECOWAS. Early the following year, UNOMIL deployed nearly 400 military observers and support personnel to monitor the terms of the Cotonou Agreement in preparation for elections that were planned for February or March 1994. Projected dates came and went, and by May, elections were a distant dream; fighting resumed and intensified in the following months and in September the NPFL took 43 unarmed UNOMIL military observers hostage in plain view of ECOMOG troops (Bekoe 2008; Ellis 1999). The captives were released within a fortnight, but all UNOMIL personnel were evacuated from Liberia shortly thereafter.

As the number of parties to the conflict multiplied, so too did the peace agreements.⁶³ Some even seemed promising. Endorsed in August 1995, the Abuja Accord featured the signatures of all key faction leaders, who reaped the benefit of interim government membership. The usual sundries—a disarmament timeline and a commitment to elections—were stamped out. Then, just prior to disarming, Johnson declared he had incontrovertible evidence that (predominantly Nigerian) ECOMOG troops were arms trading with ULIMO-K.⁶⁴ Consequently, Johnson refused to disarm to ECOMOG, whose "peacekeepers" then became embroiled in battle with ULIMO-J. At first, Taylor (who was still Liberia's dominant warlord) offered to assist ECOMOG, but his bid was declined. Spurned, Taylor threatened to interfere with the deployment of peacekeeping soldiers in the regions he controlled. Meanwhile, Johnson of ULIMO-J lost credibility for being unable to

⁶³ In late September 1994, after the UNOMIL hostage-taking debacle, factional leaders met to sign the Akosombo Accord, but the security situation throughout the country remained tense. The warring parties met again in December 1994, this time in Ghana, to sign the Accra Agreement, which was a supplement to early September's Akosombo Accord, but within a month peace talks were suspended, and by April 1995 hostilities had resumed.

⁶⁴ Johnson's accusation was possibly a red herring; according to the terms of the Abuja Accord, ULIMO-J lost its seat on the governing Council of State. While Johnson was offered several ministerial posts, he was essentially eliminated from the decision-making process, and would come out of this series of peace talks with less power and influence than other faction leaders (Bekoe 2003)—a fact that did little to mollify his belligerence. Following Abuja, Johnson had difficulty retaining the loyalty of his troops and 24 ULIMO-J commanders supplanted him in March 1995 (Bekoe 2003).

rein back his troops from attacking ECOMOG and he was summarily dismissed. Johnson's expulsion enflamed his core Krahn supporters, who attacked NPFL troops in Kakata (Liberia's key rubber-producing area). The promise of Abuja withered to dust.

For all their animosity, the parties shared a remarkably likeminded bloodthirsty avarice. All factions fought ruthlessly to control regions of the country abundant in natural resources. All used forced labour to extract these resources, including rubber, hardwood, palm oil, gold, diamonds, even marijuana, and of course, all manner of looted goods. Liberia's bounty (as well as international sanctions) gave rise to another group, the warrior-merchants, who would purchase various raw minerals or resources as well as looted goods from warlords in exchange for weapons and ammunition. In this fashion, as ECOMOG forces began to win their own territories, including control of the ports, warrior-merchants found they could only operate by bribing ECOMOG officers, many of whom profited handsomely from "racketeering and the warlord economy in general" (Bøås 2001: 711; see also Ellis 1998). In effect, ECOMOG became another covetous faction in the war, so much so that Liberians wryly rewrote the acronym as Every Car Or Movable Object Gone.

Facing a multi-headed, hissing hydra of an opponent, ECOWAS became determined to resolve the Liberia conflict—despite, or perhaps because of its own inadequacies. However, the region's two leading members suggested decidedly different motives and means for doing so. When Ghana's President Rawlings took over the ECOWAS chairmanship in 1994, he advocated a strictly neutral role for ECOMOG. Rawlings claimed the only way the Liberian conflict could be resolved was if Nigeria no longer dictated the process and the warring parties committed to peace (Hutchful 1999); the militias could be persuaded to disarm if they were compensated by the promise of political power. In September, Rawlings invited key warring factions to Akosombo (Ghana), where he touted an enhanced role for a transitional government, in which Liberian warring factions would partake.⁶⁵ On 12 September, the warlords agreed to a new ceasefire whose implementation would be shared by ECOMOG, UNOMIL, as well as the new Liberian National Transitional Government (LNTG) and signed the Akosombo Accord.

Not all ECOWAS members were equally enamoured by the agreement that Rawlings brokered. Nigeria believed that the agreement was unduly partial to the NPFL, and particularly begrudged the provision that placed Taylor in charge of security and foreign affairs, claiming the post would give him the authority to determine the status of ECOMOG troops in Liberia (Riley & Sesay 1996). In an attempt to undermine the accord, Nigeria sought to influence the factions with which it was allied. Not surprisingly, despite another series of talks in Accra (December 1994) to bolster Akosombo, ECOMOG showed itself to be completely incapable of stopping Liberia's ongoing hostilities, let alone keeping peace. President Rawlings relinquished leadership in the peace process and the war continued.

⁶⁵ Not all warring factions were signatories to the agreement, a fact those excluded sorely resented. The NPFL, ULIMO and AFL endorsed Akosombo. In turn, the non-signatories (Lofa Defence Force, Liberia Peace Council, NPFL-Central Revolutionary Council, and Liberia National Conference) became increasingly uncooperative and actively sought to sabotage the process.

Once again, Nigeria stepped into the void, but its motives were hardly philanthropic. Already tainted by a poor human rights record, Nigeria's despotic president Sani Abacha ordered the execution of activist Ken Saro Wiwa in November 1995, resulting in the country's suspension from the Commonwealth. Keen to restore his reputation, Abacha devoted himself to becoming the region's powerbroker and peacemaker *par excellence*.

Abacha recognised that Taylor's collaboration was essential to end Nigeria's costly intervention in Liberia (Witte 2008), and if he could simultaneously ensure his eminence as an advocate of peace and democracy, then so much the better. The dictator set about wooing Taylor by first inviting him to Nigeria, where he ensured Taylor received a presidential welcome. Soon after, both made public apologies for past misunderstandings and committed to reconcile their formerly fractious relationship. Feeling optimistic, Abacha summoned all Liberia's warring parties back to Abuja in August 1995 to talk peace once more. This time, the resulting accord included all factions, but even so it failed. Within three weeks, ULIMO-J and ULIMO-K broke the ceasefire and were fighting in western Liberia (Sesay 1996). The interim government could scarcely function for the faction rivalry and, by October, other parties had also violated the ceasefire.

By mid-1996, the fighting in and around Monrovia slowed to a near-halt—the city and its residents possessed nothing left worth looting—and Abacha convened the main rebel leaders to Abuja to threaten them with increased military action and all manner of retribution if they did not again consent to peace negotiations.⁶⁶ Meanwhile, Taylor and Abacha's relationship continued its honeymoon. Rapprochement between the two allowed Taylor to order the arrest of one of his chief nemeses, ULIMO-J's deposed leader Roosevelt Johnson in April.⁶⁷ Taylor understood that he had much to gain in an atmosphere of increased trust and, “the NPFL explicitly traded military security for political security” (Bekoe 2003: 277), shifting away from increased armed combat towards securing political legitimacy. As of the Accra agreement (December 1994), the NPFL began to consolidate its dominance. Taylor openly usurped the interim government's president and *de facto* assumed leadership.

In August 1996, Abacha again assembled Liberia's warring factions to badger them into implementing the Abuja Accord. With a mounting body count and little territorial gain in the last two years, the warlords seemed to recognise that they were at a military impasse, and signed the Abuja II Accord on 17 August 1996. This accord affirmed the terms of Abuja I, but revised its timeline: A ceasefire was declared for 31 August, and elections were scheduled for 31 May 1997. Although Abuja II included no incentives to ensure disarmament, at the talks' end, Taylor announced he would demobilise first (Deutsche Presse-Agentur 2 Aug. 1996). Taylor always gave good media face, fronting as though he was fully engaged in peace, but in reality, it took him four months and significant prodding from Nigeria, before he moved to fulfil his promise.

⁶⁶ ECOWAS' members supported Abacha's strong-arm tactics, including travel restrictions, evicting family members from West Africa, limiting imports, freezing assets, as well as lining up war-crime tribunals (Bøås 2001).

⁶⁷ Johnson was arrested on the trumped-up charge of murdering the new leader of ULIMO-J (Bekoe 2008).

Meanwhile, under the watchful eye of the international community, Liberia embarked on an election campaign. A total of 13 people tendered their candidacy, out of which two primary antagonists emerged: Prison escapee, warlord and ‘acting’ incumbent, Charles Taylor faced off against Harvard-educated banker *cum* senior UN official, Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf.⁶⁸ Johnson-Sirleaf had been an early supporter of Taylor but withdrew her endorsement as NPFL troops became progressively violent, saying she had been fooled about Taylor’s real intentions (*BBC* 2009). The contest between the two front-runners quickly turned personal and ugly. In a pique of brazen sexism, Taylor called Johnson-Sirleaf’s candidacy “an insult to traditional Liberian women” and said he disapproved of women in public office (McNeil 1997). Conversely, Johnson-Sirleaf defined herself as the only candidate without blood on her hands and called Taylor, “a desperate man, grabbing at straws” (McNeil 1997).

Predictably, Taylor’s campaign war chest was overflowing. While Johnson-Sirleaf allegedly financed her campaign by borrowing against her UN pension and solicited voters in old cars, Taylor gave out heaps of free food and t-shirts to supporters, covering the countryside in a fleet of flashy four-wheel drives, and even a helicopter (McNeil 20 Jul. 1997; Harris 1999). Taylor was also the campaign’s most visible candidate, and not only because he was the “leading” warlord during the conflict—Taylor privately owned two radio stations as well as a newspaper, had editorial control over several television stations (for the few Liberians that owned a set), and he cunningly exploited the media (Committee to Protect Journalists 2000). Taylor also kept an American public relations firm, Swindler & Berlin, on retainer “to represent his movement” (Reno 1995: 113). With brutal candour, Taylor’s most memorable slogan trumpeted, “He killed my ma, he killed my pa, but I will vote for him anyway” (Cooper 2012: n.p.).

For all the rhetorical venom and political uncertainty, the electoral campaign was a time of unprecedented calm in Liberia. In six months of disarmament, belligerents had handed in 20,000 weapons.⁶⁹ ECOMOG troops patrolled the country without entering into armed combat. At the height of electioneering, in early July 1997, ECOMOG’s General Victor Malu claimed Liberian rebels had not fired on his soldiers in six months (McNeil 1997). Even a near-successful assassination attempt on Taylor (*Tribune News Services* 1996) did not decelerate the process. As the campaign progressed, various foreign diplomats and observers declared themselves pleased and reassured by the preparations (McNeil 1997).

Although voter registration was rushed, the final list comprised approximately 700,000 voters (*APIC* 1997).⁷⁰ Liberians of voting age residing in refugee camps outside of the country were not allowed to cast a ballot. Recognising that hundreds of thousands of

⁶⁸ Although he had lost territory to other factions, Taylor controlled most of central Liberia prior to the elections. And while he was already acting as *de facto* President, he was still keen to be “legitimately” elected (Harris 1999).

⁶⁹ This was little more than a drop in the ocean of armaments circulating throughout the country, but it was enough to satisfy international observers that warring factions were committed to peace.

⁷⁰ It is difficult to determine how many voting-aged Liberians there were prior to the 1997 elections. There was no recent census to guide the process. Up to 200,000 people had been killed in the war so far, and an estimated 1,000,000 more refugees were exiled in neighbouring countries.

voters were displaced, the organisers planned for a single election, using countrywide proportional representation to select the president as well as determine legislative seats (Harris 1999).

On voting day, 19 July, the peace that marked the campaign period held fast. All players appeared genuinely committed to respecting the outcome. Even Taylor, in his last campaign speech, assured the crowd, “To those of you who are worried about violence—you have nothing to fear from me” (McNeil 1997). Voter turnout was high, at nearly 85 per cent (Harris 1999). All observation groups declared the elections free and fair, with former US president Jimmy Carter going so far as to declare, “a uniformly excellent election process” (Carter Center 1997: n.p.). Nonetheless, it was impossible to miss the profound power imbalance that inherently made the elections a one-horse race. At the outset of the war, Liberian illiteracy stood at 61 per cent (World Bank 1995), the nation’s few newspapers rarely circulated beyond Monrovia, and television stations had virtually stopped broadcasting (Harris 1999). In this playing field, Taylor’s Kiss-FM radio station—one of only two shortwave radio stations that reached beyond the capital—gave him a singular advantage.

Although all international observers remarked on the freedom and democracy evident in the elections, many critics believe Taylor bought and bullied his way to the presidency. Taylor’s other go-to campaign slogan was “Better the devil you know than the angel you don’t” (Anderson 1998: n.p.). By 17 July, most Liberians had received and internalised Taylor’s implicit threat. Fully 75 per cent of registered voters ushered in the devil they knew (Anderson 1998).⁷¹ Johnson-Sirleaf received less than 10 per cent of the vote, and came in a distant second (Carter Center 1997).

Ultimately, Taylor was elected, not because he was especially beloved by Liberians, but because people believed that if he did not win he would most certainly revive and continue the war. Nonetheless, numerous foreign observers (namely Americans) were emphatically admiring and supportive of Liberia’s “new” leader, festooning him with superlatives, making claims such as, “will become a great African leader,” “intelligent; he knows what sells here,” and “a man we could work with” (Anderson 1998: n.p.).

With the international community declaring Liberia’s elections as both free and fair, and Taylor sitting comfortably (and legitimately) in the seat of power, many declared Liberia’s civil war to be over.⁷² For the next three years, Liberia’s urban centres experienced relative peace. However, armed skirmishes remained common in the hinterland. Still, in the international media at least, Liberia faded from view.

⁷¹ The uneven playing field and a number of “irregularities” may well have affected the vote, but certainly not enough to call into question Taylor’s overwhelming victory.

⁷² Some state the conflict was over with the signing of the Abuja II Accord, prior to the elections. For example, Bekoe (2003: 263) declares “the Liberian civil war finally came to an end in 1996.” Interestingly, there is a relative paucity of scholarly analysis on Liberia between 1997 and 2003. After the 1997 elections, new research virtually dries up. It appears as though many scholars assessed the war as fully terminated, and did not accurately ascertain the risk of renewed conflict.

At home in Monrovia, like the colonial autocrats he claimed to eschew, Taylor took to carrying a carved walking stick and tacking a variety of honorifics to his name, calling himself President Dahkpannah Dr. Charles Ghankay Taylor (French 1998).⁷³ He built a mansion in the Monrovia suburb of Congo Town, known as the “White Flower”, with high walls and state-of-the-art security, filled with numerous Picasso prints, where he would play tennis daily (Doyle 2009). Ever a man of many faces and contradictions, Taylor—once a ruthless and vengeful rebel leader—now began to exhort the virtues of democratic rule of law and national reconciliation. Long known for his avaricious plunder of state wealth, Taylor also began to demonstrate an unexpected financial rigor, paying back wages to civil servants, instead of bestowing cars and pay hikes on his ministers (Doyle 2009).⁷⁴

However, Liberians seeking justice and accountability for war crimes were soundly ignored. Taylor conceded that atrocities had occurred during the war, but he remained unrepentant, let alone accountable. Speaking soon after his election, Taylor said, “Wars are terrible wherever they are, and things happen that you cannot account for” (Anderson 1998: n.p.). He acknowledged that his soldiers had committed “excesses” but insisted that he had executed those who were responsible for “serious crimes like rape or murder” (Anderson 1998: n.p.). He was intent to stress that casualty estimates were “far too high—I don’t think we lost even 20,000 people in the war” (Anderson 1998: n.p.).

For those seeking genuine evidence of reformation, Taylor’s post-election armour was marred by multiple chinks. From the beginning, Taylor demonstrated little tolerance for a critical opposition, and this tendency only became more entrenched under his legitimate administration. Taylor’s government had a particular loathing for Liberia’s independent press and moved to close several newspapers and radio stations. After a few years of relative obscurity, in 2000, international floodlights again shone bright on Taylor, when his regime was named by UN-backed Special Court for Sierra Leone as the RUF’s key supporter in neighbouring Sierra Leone. Taylor himself was named for exchanging arms for diamonds with Sankoh’s rebels next door. Ever the tardy arrival at the table, the following year, the UN Security Council reactivated its latent arms embargo on Liberia (UN Security Council Resolution 1343), while the US and UK dubbed Taylor’s Liberia a “rogue state”, an accusation Taylor ardently opposed.

COUNTDOWN TO PEACE

While researchers claimed Liberia’s war to be well and truly over, many Liberians seethed under Taylor’s autocratic rule. It was only a matter of time—two years to be exact—before new (and old) warring factions emerged to contest the government.

⁷³ Taylor was conscious of his Americo-Liberian elitist roots and thus was eager to broaden his appeal among Liberia’s indigenous majority. This might explain the calculating espousal of indigenous titles. “Dahkpannah” is a traditional Liberian chieftaincy title, while “Ghankay” means *warrior* or *strong in adversity* to the Gola, Taylor’s mother’s ethnic group (Anderson 1998; Doyle 2009). Only vanity explains the appellation of “Doctor”.

⁷⁴ Post-election, Taylor was keen to speak about Liberia’s “limitless potential for becoming a wealthy country”; meanwhile, the country’s foreign debt exceeded \$2 billion, while the national budget for 1998 was a paltry \$41 million (Anderson 1998: n.p.).

Liberia's war began anew in 1999 and was dominated by the shifting alliances of previous rebel groups. Eventually, two primary factions emerged, sharing little ideology apart from being generally committed to overthrowing Taylor's government. Buoyed by mounting international criticism against Taylor and supported (financially and territorially) by Guinea, ULIMO-K troops resurfaced and launched renewed operations in Lofa County, taking on the name Liberians United for Reconciliation and Democracy (LURD). Little is known of the origins of the second group, Movement for Democracy in Liberia (MODEL), save that it surfaced in March 2003 out of a split within LURD (Itano 2003; Jaye 2003). MODEL troops consisted mainly of members of the Krahn ethnic community, and the group launched its initial attacks from the southeast part of the country, near the Côte d'Ivoire border (Kamara 2003). The Ivoirian government supported MODEL's usurpation in retaliation for the aid Taylor previously gave to the rebel Mouvement Patriotique Ivoirien du Grand Ouest (MPIGO) (Jaye 2003). Although the Krahn and Mandingo were often allied prior to Taylor's election, their previous affinity dissolved in the respite following the elections, and the groups remerged as sworn enemies.

In short order, Liberia's relative peace gave way to renewed destruction. However, Liberia continued to receive little international attention until mid-2003, when LURD made a rapid advance toward Monrovia, reaching the outskirts of the capital on 5 June.⁷⁵ Although Taylor's halo of legitimacy had since fallen askew, the international community that had lauded Taylor's free and fair elections a few short years prior had no inclination to get involved in his latest conflict.

The advance of LURD and MODEL troops against the Taylor government's ineffective armed forces was near breath taking in its speed. At the start of the 2003, scarcely anyone outside its borders knew that Liberia was again at war. By early February, LURD was within 25 kilometres of Monrovia, as well as within reach of Taylor's hometown of Gbarnga, and LURD's chairman, Sekou Damate Conneh, was giving Taylor one week to resign (Sengupta 2003a).⁷⁶

With his usual bravado and not a little irony, Taylor swore he would never surrender, especially to a party that would "come to power by violence and force of arms"; instead he invited the rebels to disarm, run for election, and attend peace talks (Sengupta 2003a).⁷⁷ Two months later, in April, MODEL began to attack areas in the southeast, while LURD already controlled 60 per cent of Liberia, including most of its diamond-mining areas, and fully half of the country's population was displaced (HRW 2003b). Thumbing its nose at international embargos, Taylor's government freely admitted to importing arms

⁷⁵ With little known about the resumption of conflict, mostly occurring in the remote northern regions, some observers speculated that Taylor had invented a new war as a means to incite the international community to end its arms and diamond embargos on the country (Itano 2003). Although reports of a new rebel group trickled out, virtually nothing was known about LURD, including its goals and leadership, until mid-2003 (Itano 2003).

⁷⁶ Tax collector and used car dealer Sekou Damate Conneh did not become LURD's leader due to his military acuity, but because he was closely linked to its main supporter, President Lansana Conteh of Guinea (IRIN 2003). Conneh left Liberia's escalating war for Guinea in 1990, and gained the ear of Conteh because his wife was the daughter of his personal seer (IRIN 2003).

⁷⁷ Liberia was slated to hold another election on 14 October 2003, in which Taylor was running as the incumbent. Both LURD and MODEL stated that the elections would not be fair if Taylor was in government.

and ammunition, claiming its right to self-defence. Taylor used a complex network of Serbian arms dealers, Chinese timber companies and fake documents to violate international sanctions, and facilitated the delivery of weapons by these same companies to neighbouring countries, including Côte d'Ivoire (Panel of Experts on Liberia 2003).

Meanwhile, refugee camps in Ghana and Côte d'Ivoire housing hundreds of thousands of displaced Liberians became recruiting grounds for various rebel factions (Panel of Experts on Liberia 2003). Indeed, one key feature of the renewed war was that inter-regional links between government forces in one country aided rebel militias in another. For example, Liberian armed forces would cross into Côte d'Ivoire and return in new cars filled with mobile phones, while Ivorian government forces would recruit Liberian refugees to fight on their behalf against rebels in the West of that country (*IRIN* 2003a); Panel of Experts of Liberia 2003).

By May, 11 of Liberia's 15 counties were termed "war zones" and the situation was so dire that aid workers could no longer deliver food or provide other humanitarian assistance to most regions (UNHCR 2003).⁷⁸ Widespread fighting meant that most agricultural production ceased, and many citizens were facing starvation. Even if there had been food, few Liberians could afford it; businesses and government offices were closed, civil servants had not been remunerated for two years and over 85 per cent of the population was unemployed (Sengupta 2003o). Today, most Liberians believe that statistics and words have a limited capacity to explain the true extent of the war's devastation and their misery during this time.

Into the void, ECOWAS again initiated peace mediation, with the support of the International Contact Group on Liberia (ICGL) and the Interfaith Mediation Council of Liberia (IFMC).⁷⁹ Again, peace talks were scheduled—this time in Accra, but few participants could claim unshakable optimism, considering that both armed factions and the government were engaged in full-out war as the talks began. For the eighteenth time, warring parties assembled to discuss the merits of lasting peace in Liberia. Few dared to hope that this time the results might be different.

⁷⁸ Aid workers working in conflict zones were deliberately attacked, killed and abducted by government and rebel troops (*BBC News* 2003). Armed groups (LURD in particular) also strategically attacked food distribution convoys and centres, looting trucks, food and other supplies; on occasion, they abducted residents and aid workers and forced them to carry stolen supplies over great distances, to their camps deep in the bush (Sengupta 2003b).

⁷⁹ Formed in 2002, the International Contact Group on Liberia (ICGL) emerged from a need for a combined regional and international response to the renewed Liberian war, and comprised representatives from the UN, ECOWAS, African Union, World Bank, UK, US, Morocco, Nigeria, Senegal, Ghana, Germany, Spain and Sweden. The Interfaith Mediation Committee (IFMC) was made of various senior Christian and Muslim clerics, and had been a significant civil society player working toward peace through mediation and negotiations since the early 1990s (see chapter 7).

SIERRA LEONE, 1991-1999

SETTING THE SCENE, SIERRA LEONE

At the height of its civil war, Sierra Leone was the embodiment of state failure and societal despair. What was once a country of promise, both in terms of governance and natural resources, became a place of abject misery, drugged children touting automatic weapons, rampant disease, amputation and rape. Over the course of nearly a decade, bungling government forces tried repeatedly to defeat the rebels, during which time all parties killed at least 100,000 people (Bercovitch & Jackson 1997), displacing more than 2.5 million others, amputating up to 20,000 citizens of all ages (Sierra Leone News 10 Sept. 1999), and committing untold thousands of sexual assaults. Few harboured real hope that the 1999 negotiations would lead to lasting peace.

HISTORY AND DEMOGRAPHICS

Sierra Leone takes its name from the Portuguese explorer, Pedro de Sintra, who in 1462 visited the region and called it Serra Leoa—Lion Mountains—after the geography near Freetown.⁸⁰ At the end of the 18th century, not long before Britain outlawed the slave trade, a group of English philanthropists and abolitionists purchased 52 km² of land from a local chief with the intent of establishing a haven for former slaves. London's poor black population was encouraged to settle in Sierra Leone, or what was then called "the Province of Freedom." (The idea was that it would be cheaper to have them settle elsewhere than continue to provide them with local social assistance.) Many were former slaves who had travelled to Great Britain after having secured their freedom in exchange for fighting for the British Army during the American Revolution. Another contingent was comprised of black Loyalists living in Nova Scotia. The settlement became one of England's first colonies in West Africa. Together, the original colonists formed a new cultural and ethnic group, called the Krio (or Creoles), with their own language, also Krio, which eventually became the *lingua franca* for the entire country. The Krio did not embrace the indigenous population as equals, but they nonetheless became the economic conduit for the British (and the entire country) by directing most trade with the indigenous peoples inland.

Like the American freed slaves who settled Liberia, the Krio imported their knowledge and experiences from the southern United States. Nearly all settled in or near Freetown, and many of the houses they built in the styles of the US southeast coast still stand. Krio manners, culture, religion, and economic structures were also based on those in the US.⁸¹ Initially, the Krio were close to the British colonial rulers, who granted them

⁸⁰ Depending on whom you ask, the geography or meteorological conditions of the area determined the country's name. Some say the coastal hills look like lion's teeth, while others claim the common thunderstorms over the craggy peninsula sound like a lion's roar. The English officially adopted the name Sierra Leone in 1787.

⁸¹ Sierra Leone is religiously diverse. Unsurprisingly, nearly all Krio colonists were strict Protestant Christians. Traders from Guinea introduced Islam throughout the 18th century. Many indigenous Sierra Leoneans found aspects of Islam (i.e. regular prayer and polygamy) to be compatible with their traditional religious practices. Today, not more than 30% of the population define themselves as Christian, while approximately 60% of Sierra Leoneans are Muslim, with the majority of these self-describing as Sunnis. Even so, Sierra Leoneans demonstrate remarkable pluralism in their faith; Christians and Muslims may pray in each

most of the country's prominent economic, government, community and academic positions. One of the reasons the Krio became economically and politically dominant was because the British (particularly religious institutions) encouraged and developed a strong education program in Sierra Leone. Indeed, during the first half of the 19th century, Sierra Leone's Fourah Bay College became the educational hub for British West Africa.

After independence, traditional ethnic enmity between the economically and politically dominant Krio and the country's other communities was eclipsed by intra-community rivalry. In what Bangura (2000: 553) terms "multi-ethnic bi-polar polity," Sierra Leone is dominated by two ethnic groups, the Temne and the Mende, amidst a setting of 15 other communities (see Figure 4). Almost equal in terms of population, the Temne (29.8%) and Mende (30.9%) represent just over 60 per cent of the country's citizenry (Makannah in Bangura 2000). The Mende are found in the South and parts of the East, whereas the Temne hail from the North and Western parts of the country. Non-Mendes in the South and East each represent less than five per cent of the population, while in the North, the Limba account for just over eight per cent of the country's population, with other groups possessing less than four per cent each (Bangura 2000). Throughout the country, the Temne and Mende dwarf other groups in their home territories; as a result, the peoples of the South coalesce around the Mende, while those of the North revolve around the Temne (Bangura 2000).

The Mende are the dominant community in the regions of South and East, which traditionally produced nearly all of the country's exports, including rutile, bauxite, cocoa, coffee and even a few diamonds (Davies 2000). Communities in the South and parts of East traditionally supported Sierra Leone's original post-independence ruling party, the Sierra Leone People's Party (SLPP), whereas the All People's Congress (APC) derived its core support from the North. Traditionally, the Northern districts were particularly poor, producing some gold and coltan, but relying predominantly on subsistence agriculture and rice production. Although some community rivalries persisted, increased urbanisation, socialisation and inter-marriage through the 20th century served to integrate the country to a sufficient extent so that ethnicity was not a determining factor in the civil war.⁸²

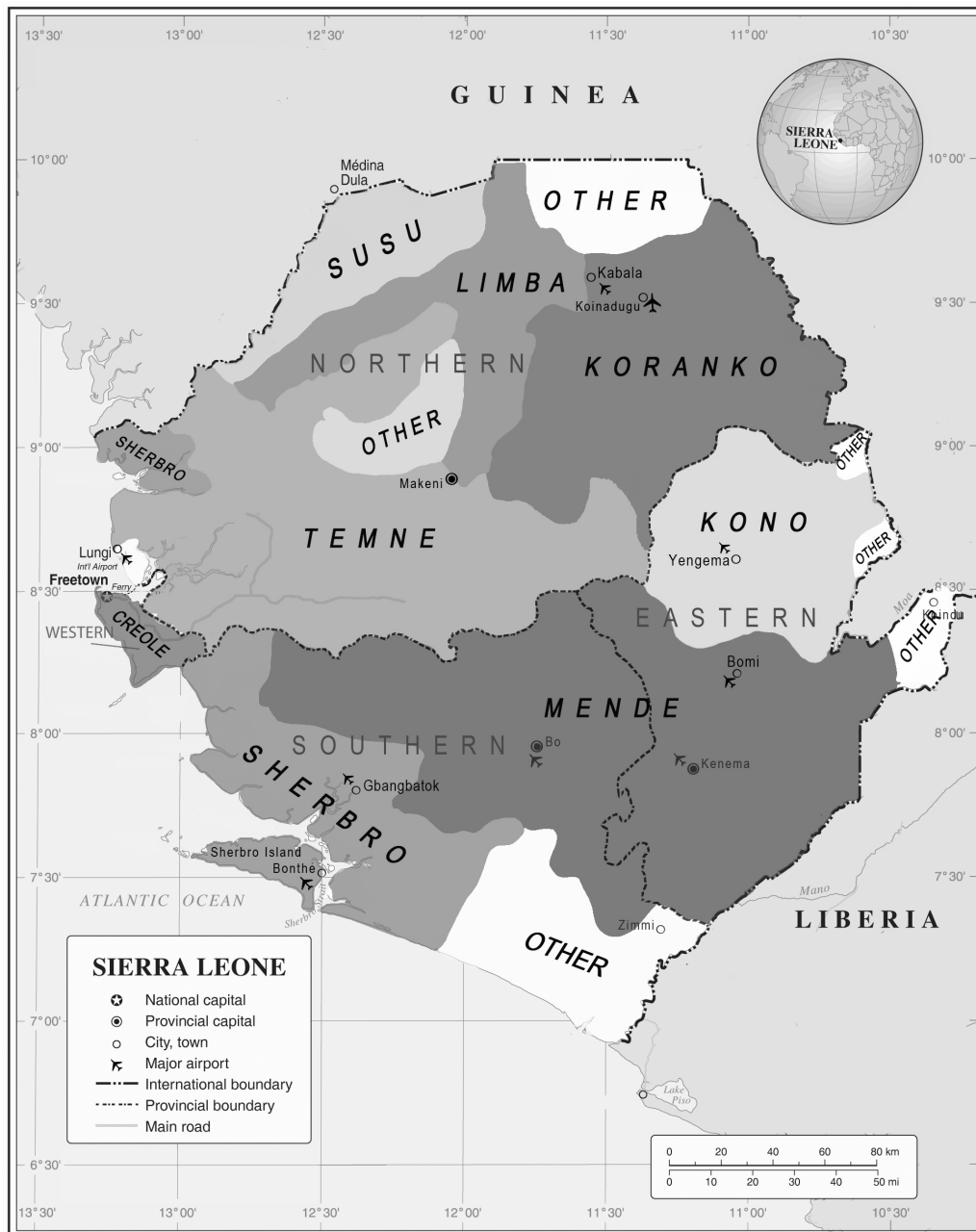
Sierra Leone claimed its independence from Great Britain in 1961, and Sir Milton Margai, a knighted ethnic Mende physician, representing the SLPP, became the country's first prime minister.⁸³ The first years of independence were peaceful and featured a relatively functional democracy. Sierra Leone maintained a parliamentary system of government and was a member of the Commonwealth.

other's places of worship, are free to change religions at any time, and intermarriage is common. While some citizens still practice their traditional belief systems exclusively, many more incorporate traditional beliefs with Christianity and Islam.

⁸² Political strongmen attempted to exploit ethnic tensions and people's widespread illiteracy in the 1960s and again during the war. While their efforts may have helped to precipitate and prolong tensions, it is a testament to "integration", not to mention the collective efforts of Muslim and Christian religious leaders alike, that the Sierra Leonean civil war did not devolve into sectarian conflict.

⁸³ In this respect, Sierra Leone's history is starkly different to that of neighbouring Liberia, where for more than a century all presidents hailed from the minority settler population of Americo-Liberians.

Figure 4. Main ethnic communities of Sierra Leone.



Claire de Rouet and Jonathan Raddatz

(Source: Woldt *et al.*, 2009; UN Map No. 3902 Rev. 5, Dept. of Peacekeeping Operation Cartographic Section, 2004)

In 1962, the SLPP won the country's first independent elections and Margai was re-elected as prime minister. However, Margai died unexpectedly in 1964, after which his stepbrother, Albert, was named his successor. Albert Margai spawned ethnic divisions by granting plum government positions to his fellow Mende (regardless of their qualifications) and attempted to make the country into a single-party state (Pham 2005). In 1967, with Freetown's citizens rioting in protest of these policies, Margai declared a state of emergency and called an election.

Former trade unionist Siaka Stevens and the All People's Congress (APC) defeated the ruling SLPP by a slim margin.⁸⁴ However, in what was to become almost a national custom, the head of the army staged Sierra Leone's first military coup and barred Stevens from taking office. Led by junior military officers, a second coup followed in 1968, after which Stevens officially took power.⁸⁵ In what is best described as a patrimonial dictatorship, between 1968 and 1985, Stevens used an effective combination of corruption and violence to exploit the country's pliable institutions for personal power and wealth, while stifling any opposition.⁸⁶ Stevens perfected Sierra Leone's pre-existing patrimonial system by rationing political favours (including the allocation of mining rights), embezzling public funds, collecting rent from price controls imposed on basic commodities, ever setting himself beyond rules and laws (Davies 2000).

Those hoping that the APC's institutionalised kleptocracy would evolve into a functioning democratic government upon Stevens' departure were sorely misguided.⁸⁷ Stevens' successor, President Joseph Momoh, used violent suppression to quash political dissent with the same abandon as his predecessor.⁸⁸ In a political environment that permitted no opposition, there were few public intellectuals ready to rouse their fellow citizens out of a fearful stupor. As Momoh's government and cronies continued Stevens' practice of lining their pockets with the proceeds of mineral resources, the rest of the country slid into penury, and an increasingly large population of young people saw their (already) limited prospects evaporate. According to this narrative, the Sierra Leonean war was a "crisis of youth" from which the RUF tapped into the frustration of the nation's young people, who vented their anger by reclaiming "their" natural resources and driving out the ruling elites (see Richards 1996 and Peters 2011, among others).

By virtue of its simplicity, the "crisis of youth" explanation for the Sierra Leonean war is attractive. However, this is an incomplete explanation at best. While the country's adolescents and young adults certainly had their share of legitimate grievances, other factors suggest that the war had multiple origins. The initial RUF invasion from Liberia into eastern Sierra Leone comprised approximately 100 men, a number of whom were Liberian, operating with Charles Taylors' express backing and direction to overthrow Momoh's APC government.⁸⁹ While RUF troops became known for their extreme youth,

⁸⁴ Interestingly, Stevens was a co-founder of the SLPP. Ethnically, Stevens was Limba and Mende. However corrupt and ruinous his rule, he was known for diminishing the ethnic divisions that Albert Margai had sustained, and named individuals from multiple communities to his cabinet.

⁸⁵ Sierra Leone became a republic in 1971, and newly minted President Stevens quickly moved (with violence when necessary) to consolidate his power.

⁸⁶ Throughout his presidency, Stevens (and his successor Momoh) regularly employed state-sponsored violence to quash opposition, including during the 1973 elections, when the SLPP was forced to withdraw from the ballot. Sierra Leone was essentially a one-party state between 1978 and 1992.

⁸⁷ Curiously, Stevens was one of but a few dictators who abdicated his position voluntarily. He retired from office at the end of his elected term on 28 November 1985.

⁸⁸ Momoh lacked the intelligence, charisma and leadership abilities of Stevens, and was nicknamed *Dandogo*, meaning "idiot" in the language of the Limba (Akam 2012).

⁸⁹ Sierra Leonean President Momoh had supported the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) intervening in Liberia against Charles Taylor and the NPFL. Infuriated, Taylor extended a helping hand to Sankoh's uprising. Indeed, founding members of the RUF were trained at Camp Namma, a NPFL controlled site in Liberia (Leboeuf 2008). Richards (1996) estimates the original number of RUF

the role of commanders in the recruitment and subsequent use of violence by rebel troops must also be acknowledged. With the RUF practicing a strategy of forced recruitment, many (possibly most) child combatants exercised little autonomous choice when they first took up arms: “their transformation into ruthless fighters was the result of systematic brutalization and conditioning rather than an innate lust for loot and power” (Mitton 2013: 324; see also Maclure & Denov 2006). Suggesting that mass child (because, really, that is what many combatants were) disgruntlement naturally and rapidly evolved into systemic violence undermines the import and necessity of outside (adult) leadership to mobilise and lead disparate youth into war.

ECONOMICS

In the years immediately following independence, Sierra Leone’s prospects for human security and sustainable development were good; the country possessed rich mineral resources, large agricultural and marine assets, and boasted one of the most developed educational systems in sub-Saharan Africa (Davies 2000). Initially, GDP grew at a spry four per cent annually, and while its democratic system may have lacked reliable rule of law and a credible opposition, Stevens’ authoritarianism provided the country with a stable environment for investment. However, by 1990, Stevens was long gone and Sierra Leone’s economic condition was terminal.

National economic meltdown was expedited by natural resources and the politics of personal rule. Sierra Leone was ruled according to a patronage-based strategy, where the President controlled markets (particularly natural resources) and manipulated his subjects’ access to economic opportunity and wealth in ways that would augment his personal power and wealth (Reno 2003).⁹⁰ Fundamentally, Stevens operated through the facade of what Reno terms a “shadow state”, singlehandedly making decisions and taking actions, and generally setting himself outside his country’s laws and institutions, although these were nominally in place (Reno 2000; 2003). For over two decades, Stevens cultivated Sierra Leone’s patrimonial system to defraud the country. The one-party state of the APC and its leader were “rotten to the core; it was a near-kleptocratic outfit serving only a few people... although it still maintained the trappings of state bureaucracy” (Gberie 2005: 35).

Throughout the 1960s and ’70s, diamonds made up approximately 60 per cent of the Sierra Leone’s trade income (Bangura 2000). However, in 1976, Stevens and Jamil Sahid Mohamed, an Afro-Lebanese collaborator, appropriated the national diamond marketing monopoly, the Sierra Leone Selection Trust, “in a bogus privatization exercise” which gave them control over \$300 million in diamond revenue (Reno 2003: n.p.).⁹¹ From a market

insurgents at 100, while Keen (2005) suggests a force of between 100 and 300 troops. Within a month, the RUF was joined by 2,000 of Taylor’s NPFL’s Special Forces (Leboeuf 2008).

⁹⁰ Sierra Leone’s patronage-based system did not begin with independence; this form of rule, whereby the private and public sectors are blended and all power derives from a single leader, predates colonialism (see Reno 1995, 1998, 2003).

⁹¹ The culture of Stevens’ presidency is embodied in his (in)famous motto, “a cow grazes wherever it is tethered” (Davies 2000: 353). Similar to the Asians in East Africa, the Lebanese in West Africa are the region’s “market-dominant minority” (Chua 1998: 7). Note that diamond revenues of \$300 million are at 2001 prices.

high of 2 million carats extracted in 1970, yields plummeted precipitously to 132,000 carats in 1989 (Makannah 1996).⁹²

Diamonds were not the only economic casualties during this time. Sierra Leone's GDP growth declined from nearly four per cent in the 1960s, to 1.9 per cent in the 1970s, and sank to 0.5 per cent in the 1980s; by 1990, more than 80 per cent of the population subsisted on less than \$1 a day and foreign aid bankrolled 90 per cent of development expenditures; as of 1995, the country had amassed \$1.3 billion in external debt, and; not one economic sector or activity recorded any growth whatsoever from 1990 to 1995 (Davies 2000; Kandeh 1999). As its already limited tax base all but vanished (due to a toxic blend of emigration, destitution and war), government spending (such as it was) also dried up. By the war's genesis, infrastructure had disintegrated so much that many rural regions were virtually cut off from the centre of economic and political power in Freetown, which further exacerbated their poverty and isolation.⁹³ Basic utilities such as water and electricity were nowhere to be found, even in most of Freetown. Sierra Leone was deemed a failed state.

To Sierra Leone's near-total economic meltdown, add the "structural adjustment" policies forced onto successive governments through the 1980s and into the '90s by the World Bank and the IMF, including economic deregulation, further reduced public expenditure, currency devaluation, and the cancellation of subsidies for basic commodities (Reno 1996).⁹⁴ As endemic poverty became entrenched, Sierra Leone plummeted into the UNDP's list of world's most impoverished countries.⁹⁵

CAUSES OF THE WAR

While the Sierra Leonean economy disintegrated throughout the 1980s, resources became increasingly scarce, and the nation's rural youth bore the brunt of the crisis. Few were able to access an education and find work, let alone bankroll weddings or build homes. Over time, many began to question the traditional social order, and came to condemn their community chiefs and elders "for monopolizing limited resources and blocking social mobility" (Mitton 2013: 322).

As is common in times of grave economic hardship, large numbers of Sierra Leone's rural youth (most of them male) began to migrate to urban centres in search of

⁹² Compare these figures with neighbouring Liberia, which can only extract a modest 60,000 carats per year, yet still somehow managed to export 8.3 million carats to Belgium—worth approximately US\$600 million—in 1997 and 1998 (Rupert 1999). The closing of the Maputa iron ore mine in the 1970s caused an overall decline in output in the mining sector. The Sierra Leonean economy, including mining production was further hindered throughout the 1980s by high inflation (180% in 1987), low domestic revenues (5% of GDP in 1986), and international fiscal management policies (Bangura 2012).

⁹³ The railway linking Freetown to many rural areas was dismantled in the 1970s, but no roads replaced it until after the war.

⁹⁴ Ironically, Siaka Stevens was one of the first African leaders to protest the stifling lending policies of the IMF. By the time he left office, his subjects were contending with widespread shortages of fuel, food, and foreign currency.

⁹⁵ By the end of the war, in 2000, Sierra Leone's human development index ranked last out of 174 states (Human Development Report 2000).

(non-existent) employment. With no legitimate work options, many drifted into petty crime, including hiring themselves out as part-time thugs and henchmen to political patrons (Williams 2001). In the central and Eastern parts of the country, young men chose instead to move closer to mining operations. Those that were able to work found themselves toiling in abysmal, near slave-like conditions. Predictably, this large group of uneducated and un(der)employed boys and young men, with few prospects and even less to lose, was a “fertile pool” from which all parties to the war came to enlist their troops (Williams 2001).

At a glance, this narrative appears to echo the crisis of youth explanation for war, but shifts when coloured by the suggestion that the nation’s young adults, motivated by self-interest and seeing the economic potential in war, were spurred to join the Revolutionary United Front (RUF) and fight. Seen in this light, this evocation points us to an alternate “resource war” argument, which when applied to Sierra Leone, focuses on the RUF’s looting and diamond mining proceeds, thereby proving that the profit gained from war was in fact the rebels’ end goal (see primarily, Berdal & Malone 2000 and Collier & Hoeffler 1999). From this perspective, the Sierra Leonean war was not propelled by lack of opportunity and social breakdown as much as it was a “rational investment by combatants” (Mitton 2013: 325).⁹⁶

The resource war argument is highly credible, particularly when considered amidst the abject deprivation of most of the country’s citizens. However, suggesting that wanton greed hastened the war ignores the preceding decades, which featured yawning socio-economic gulfs between haves and have-nots without widespread combat. Like the crisis of youth analysis, this explanation also overemphasises the capacity of individual combatants to make autonomous choices to mobilise and kill. Indeed, this is a limitation of agency analysis, which presumes personal choice. Many combatants, most especially children, had little (if any) autonomy during the war. As noted, a rebel’s recruitment and deployment was, in large part, beyond his or her personal control. Moreover, this account belies the actual experiences of most ground troops. Certainly, many enjoyed short-term perks from drugs, low-level looting, sex, and terrorising their fellow citizens, but the lion’s share of proceeds (namely diamonds and valuable looted goods) were passed up to their commanders, and by the end of the war, few rebels had any resources to show for their efforts.

The rebel organisation that became the Sierra Leonean government’s key adversary was the Revolutionary United Front (RUF), a name that came to strike terror and foreboding into the average Sierra Leonean citizen for almost a decade. The RUF was initially formed by a group of student activists that had been expelled from Fourah Bay College, University of Sierra Leone for agitating against the government (Davies 2000). In 1987, the group began to draft other students, as well as volunteers from Freetown’s near-bottomless loch of unemployed, marginalised and restless youth, and provided them with military training in Libya (Abdullah 1997). Their intended goal was to overthrow the elitist APC government and redistribute the country’s mineral wealth. In time, most of the expelled students deserted the nascent rebel movement in hopes of leaving Sierra Leone altogether, and Foday Sankoh took over the group’s command. Compared with the

⁹⁶ This argument just as easily applies to Liberia as well.

students whose company he kept, Sankoh was a significantly older former army corporal, who soon ruthlessly purged those remaining young academics that might have undermined his leadership (Davies 2000).

While the RUF became known for meting out torture on the residents of the villages they occupied, at the dawn of the war, the rebel group found many willing recruits among the alienated communities of the country's southeast regions, who felt especially persecuted by the APC government's policies (Davies 2000). Although the RUF claimed its ultimate aim was to overthrow the corrupt political elites that had ostracised the country's poor, from the outset, Sankoh appeared to recognize that his chances of securing political power were more likely to be fulfilled through an effective use of terror and force than via elections.

THE WAR

With more of a shiver than a bang, the civil war began when a small group of rebels crossed the border from Liberia into Sierra Leone on 23 March 1991. At the time, the RUF's invasion was perceived as Liberian rebel Charles Taylor's way of exacting revenge on Momoh's All People's Congress (APC) government for having endorsed a regional mission by the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) in Liberia (Bangura 2000). In fact, the APC itself perceived the RUF insurrection as "spill-over" from the Liberian civil war. The RUF had committed to take down the ailing government regardless (Abdullah 1997; Abdullah & Muana 1998). As far back as 1987, when they trained together in military training camps in Benghazi, Libya, Charles Taylor and Foday Sankoh had resolved to assist each other's rebel designs to secure executive power in their respective countries.⁹⁷ During this same time, Taylor and Sankoh developed a lasting (and lucrative) relationship with Muammar Qaddafi, who had his own pan-African political aspirations (Richards 1996).

In less than 13 months, what began as a "border skirmish", evolved into an all-out armed insurgency to overthrow the widely loathed and inept APC. On 29 April 1992, the RUF's forces achieved their stated goal of ending dictatorship by proxy when Momoh and the APC, which had held power for 24 years, were overthrown by a group of junior-level army officers protesting their treatment at the front (Davies 2000). Interestingly, instead of trying to topple the ragtag group of soldiers who engineered the coup and seizing power himself, Sankoh supported the presidency of Captain Valentine Strasser within the National Provisional Ruling Council (NPRC).⁹⁸ Although the junta, under Strasser, refused to negotiate a ceasefire with the rebels, the RUF—formerly derided as a barbaric, rebel group of jungle fighters—was perceived as a legitimate power broker with whom the Sierra Leonean government, ECOWAS, and the rest of the international community needed to do business.

⁹⁷ It is commonly said that Taylor and Sankoh first met while training in Libya, but no one knows when exactly, and there is indication that Taylor had left Libya in June 1987, before Sankoh arrived. Another account holds that Sankoh met an NPFL official in Freetown who introduced him to Taylor. According to Abdullah (1998), author of the definitive background text on the RUF, both versions are credible.

⁹⁸ When he seized power in 1992, Strasser became the world's youngest head of state, at the age of 25.

The NPRC claimed that it deposed Momoh because his government was filled by “an oppressive, corrupt, exploitative and tribalistic bunch of crooks” (Keen 2005: 21), which was indeed true. However, Strasser and his comrades were hardly benevolent humanitarians. The NPRC engaged in extensive looting, targeting the homes of politicians and businessmen, and expropriated lavish goods and vast sums of money, none of which was ever accounted for. Aside from their ability to plunder, the members of the NPRC did not prove themselves sophisticated politicians or warriors. At first, they attempted to negotiate peace with the RUF, but their attempts were thwarted by Charles Taylor, who encouraged Sierra Leonean rebels to focus instead on acquiring more arms through the sale of diamonds (Hazen 2013). The NPRC repeatedly fought the RUF, without gaining any significant ground, and the war became “a see-saw conflict with towns changing hands with dizzying rapidity” (Gberie 2005: 79).

Frustrated by the military stalemate and fearing for his leadership, Strasser appealed to the UN in 1994 to help end the war, but despite some negotiation efforts with the rebels, little changed. By year’s end, the government itself acknowledged that at least 20 per cent of its troops were disloyal, and Strasser called the condition of the country, “nothing short of banditry, looting, maiming and raping” (Gberie 2005: 90-91). The NPRC’s battlefield inadequacy was merely indicative of the government’s (and its ruler’s) overall ineptitude. In the first years of the war, Sierra Leone did not possess an articulated, let alone effective, security policy; the focus was on recruiting and training a standing army. Many “new” recruits were, in fact, recycled former members of Republic of Sierra Leone Armed Forces (RSLAF) dating back to Momoh.⁹⁹

In a clear sign that Strasser was cognisant of his own fallibility, the NPRC became the first Sierra Leonean government to employ mercenaries as of 1995. While Strasser’s forces may have successfully undertaken a coup, this did not make them capable of defeating the RUF; state soldiers had little or no training, were often forcibly recruited, and only rarely were paid. With his troops incurring grave military losses, Strasser first engaged Gurkha Security Guards, an English mercenary outfit to train new recruits and protect key mining operations (Akam 2012). However, the firm withdrew after its commander and several Gurkhas were killed in action with the RUF.

Strasser next hired Executive Outcomes (EO) a “private security company” from South Africa, whose core personnel were former apartheid-era special forces. Shortly after EO’s arrival in Sierra Leone, the RUF suffered its first major defeat, when approximately 200 of its troops were killed in action with EO.¹⁰⁰ EO forces promptly made battlefield inroads on behalf of the government while defending important mining areas, and the company was hired as a defence service contractor at \$1.5 million per month (Collier 2004).¹⁰¹ Within months, EO had reclaimed large districts for the government, and the

⁹⁹ The RSLAF is the official name of the nation’s army, which was plagued with deserters. Conversely, the RUF never seemed to have as much difficulty filling its ranks; troops were regularly supplemented with forced conscripts of abducted children and adolescents taken from “conquered” villages.

¹⁰⁰ Conveniently, for the government, another 1,000 rebels deserted after this battle.

¹⁰¹ Working in areas that were under rebel control, UK mining company Branch Energy, with the security assistance of EO, continued operating during the war. In exchange for their services, both Branch Energy and Executive Outcomes sought additional Sierra Leonean mining concessions.

RUF was in full retreat. However impressive their military accomplishments, EO were up against another, more powerful foe than the RUF: structural adjustment policy. Increasingly, Sierra Leone came under international pressure, particularly from the IMF—citing the exorbitant cost of retaining mercenaries—to cancel its contract with EO.¹⁰²

Considering that he took power forcibly and “governed”—the state was arguably a failed one at the time—through the chaos of civil war, it is remarkable that Strasser’s presidency lasted as long as it did. Nonetheless, considering the country’s recent history, perhaps inevitably, four years after Strasser was overthrown in a coup undertaken by his close friend and deputy, Brigadier Maada Bio, in January 1996.¹⁰³ The coup against Strasser was not entirely unforeseen. His government had become divided over whether to attempt brokering a peace agreement with the RUF prior to multiparty elections that were planned for March 1996, or to persist with elections in the midst of war, knowing that the RUF was against this option, and refusing to participate accordingly. Justifying the coup that brought him to power, Bio claimed that he was motivated to end the civil war and return the country to a democratically elected civilian government.

Although Sierra Leone was still very much at war, Bio, ECOWAS and the international community fixated on holding elections. Despite having long maintained that his goal was a change in government leadership, Sankoh did not want elections, and sought to impede them to the extent of his abilities. He loudly pushed to have the vote postponed, and did not run for office. The RUF’s refusal to participate in the 1996 elections should have signalled its lack of commitment to democracy and a peaceful end to the war. However, the international community remained blind to this self-evident fact and instead compromised with Sankoh by pushing back the date of the vote by a month (Riley 1996). In fact, the rebels escalated their intimidation tactics, with a policy of amputations, hoping to make voting physically impossible, but the elections went ahead nonetheless.¹⁰⁴

That Sierra Leone’s wartime elections were declared relatively free and fair is evidence of the low threshold the Western world sets for democracy in sub-Saharan Africa. By voting day, the RUF controlled large territories, while other regions were mired in anarchy, with no infrastructure whatsoever. Considering the circumstances, the international community’s rush for elections was sheer lunacy. When the day came, some researchers breathlessly claimed that a notable majority, or 68.59 per cent, of voting citizens casts ballots (IDEA 2011), but a closer count reveals that less than a quarter of

¹⁰² In hindsight, EO’s services were a discount value. All told, EO was paid \$35 million for 22 months of service (Quirk 2004), an absolute bargain when compared with the UN Mission in Sierra Leone’s (UNAMSIL) \$310.8 million operating costs for 12 months, dating from 1 July 1999 to 30 June 2000 (UN 2002).

¹⁰³ Strasser was flown into exile in Guinea. He later went to study law in the UK, but did not complete his studies. Eventually, he moved back to Sierra Leone, where he lives to this day, an alcoholic, with his mother, in a shack on the outskirts of Freetown (Akam 2012).

¹⁰⁴ Immediately prior to and following the 1996 elections, the RUF carried out a campaign of amputations, named *Operation Stop Elections* (TRC 2004); at first, the rebels amputated “only” the inked fingers and thumbs that indicated whether a person had registered or voted, but this policy further degenerated into widespread terrorism and torture, with citizens being asked if they preferred a long sleeve or a short sleeve (amputation below or above the elbow) (Park 2007). Additionally, the RUF often forced its victims to pass on messages, as evidenced by one eight-year old who was told, “Go to Tejan Kabbah, the President, and tell him to give you nice hands” (Levy & Parker 200: 322).

eligible voters managed to make their way to polling stations on 26 and 27 February (The Economist 07 Jan. 1999).¹⁰⁵

SLPP candidate and lawyer by training, Ahmed Tejan Kabbah, won the elections in the second round. Prior to the elections, Kabbah had spent most of the previous two decades working outside the country working for the UN. Kabbah had returned to Sierra Leone in 1992 to retire, but was lured into politics by friends and advisors, as well as the volatile political situation of the country. Without much of a domestic profile, Kabbah's candidacy for the SLPP was more safe than visionary, but on voting day, this was enough.

Upon election, Kabbah revealed himself to be accommodating and inclusive, by appointing members from all political parties to his cabinet. Quite unlike many other junta leaders, Bio welcomed the electoral results, and gracefully stepped down.¹⁰⁶ Almost immediately, Kabbah started peace talks with the RUF in Abidjan. These were the first official peace negotiations between the government and the rebel forces. Although the RUF had lost many of its initial territorial gains to the effective mercenary forces of Executive Outcomes and regional militias, for the first time, Sankoh and the RUF gained legitimacy with the international community beyond ECOWAS (Bangura 2000). Initial discourse was not very promising, but dialogue continued sporadically for the next six months. The resulting Abidjan Accord, signed by the government and the RUF in November 1996, focused on the causes of the war and set out terms for ceasefire, disarmament, as well as economic and political reforms.

By endorsing the Abidjan agreement, Sankoh acknowledged the legitimacy of Kabbah's elected government. Even so, he emphatically refused to sign the written document until it provisioned that Executive Outcomes—the only military force that legitimately threatened the RUF—withdraw from the country.¹⁰⁷ Although the Abidjan Accord did not allow for a formal division of power between the government and the RUF, both parties formed the Commission for the Consolidation of Peace, which was tasked with implementing the accord. The RUF was also given major roles in the electoral commission and the reformed army, as well as the capacity to establish itself as a political party, all while being immune from legal prosecution. In fact, at a time when the RUF was in chaos, having lost many key military bases to Executive Outcomes and the *kamajors*, Sankoh's rebels emerged “the biggest winners in the Accord” (Bangura 1997: 64).¹⁰⁸ For all these

¹⁰⁵ For these and other statistics on the 1996 elections, see the International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (IDEA): <http://www.idea.int/vt/countryview.cfm?CountryCode=SL> (accessed 12 July 2014). The first round of ballots was cast on 26 and 27 February. A second round of voting took place on 16 March 1996.

¹⁰⁶ Shortly after, Bio moved to the US to continue his studies, and worked in the private sector there for several years. Eventually, he moved back to Sierra Leone, where he ran for the leadership of the SLPP in 2005, coming in third. In 2011, he became the SLPP's presidential candidate, but was defeated by Ernest Koroma in the 2012 general elections. Although there are numerous other political parties, the SLPP remains the only viable political alternative to the All People's Congress (APC) in Sierra Leone to this day.

¹⁰⁷ With the national army in shambles, mercenaries were the RUF's only effective opponents. As Executive Outcomes sought diamond concessions in exchange for its services, RUF also perceived the mercenaries to be competing for “its” resources. Nevertheless, according to the terms of the Abidjan Accord, EO withdrew all its forces from Sierra Leone before the end of January 1997.

¹⁰⁸ Traditionally hunters from the Mende ethnic group, located in east and south parts of the country, the *kamajors* united to form the Civil Defense Force (CDF), a paramilitary group committed to supporting the

gains, Sankoh demonstrated little but “manifest unwillingness to desist from violence” (Van Someren 1997: n.p.), so while the Abidjan Accord was ratified it was never fully implemented.

Meanwhile, despite the legitimacy imparted by “free and fair” elections, Kabbah had little real power. Although the SLPP won the highest number of seats, none of the six contending parties won an absolute majority. In the second round of presidential voting, Kabbah allied with the People’s Democratic Party (PDP) and won with 60 per cent of the votes.¹⁰⁹ The result was a plural parliament, with representatives from both the SLPP and the PDP, and a “formally monolithic presidency” led by Kabbah (Bangura 2000: 566).¹¹⁰ Although all six parties agreed to support the electoral results, many leaders and supporters among the losing parties defected to the AFRC.¹¹¹ Kabbah marked himself as a conciliatory presence, and sought to create a cabinet that reflected the diverse national and political character of Sierra Leone, but his tenure was shaky from the start.¹¹²

Once EO withdrew its forces in January 1997, Kabbah was doomed.¹¹³ Almost a year to the day into his mandate, on 25 May 1997, Kabbah was sent into exile in a coup orchestrated by a group of junior army officers, under the banner of Armed Forces Revolutionary Council (AFRC). The coup began with a mass jailbreak of more than 600 prisoners, including Major Johnny Paul Koroma—ironically, incarcerated and awaiting trial for a previous attempted coup—who, thereafter, became President (Gberie 1997).

The AFRC immediately proposed an alliance with the RUF, which Sankoh consented to. The AFRC-RUF union was profitable, particularly for the RUF. Several RUF members were named to key government posts and Sankoh was named Deputy President (Bangura 2000). Koroma could afford such largesse; departing Cote d’Ivoire suddenly from yet another round of peace talks to Nigeria in March 1997, Sankoh was captured by the Nigerians and had been in custody ever since. As such, Sankoh posed little

democratically elected government of Sierra Leonean against the RUF, who fought alongside Executive Outcomes and later ECOMOG soldiers. The CDF were led by (and answerable only to) Kabbah’s deputy defence minister, Hinga Norman. At the height of the conflict, the *kamajors* numbered nearly 20,000 troops. Fighting with ECOMOG, the CDF was arguably responsible for reinstating Kabbah after he was forced into exile in 1997 (Koinange 16 Feb. 1998). Like all other belligerents, the *kamajors* were accused of committing atrocities, and in 2003, Norman was indicted for war crimes by the Special Court of Sierra Leone (IRIN 2007b).

¹⁰⁹ While the international community crowed about Sierra Leone’s free and fair 1996 elections, second round tallies contradict this account, noting that the turnout in certain districts surpassed the number of registered voters (United National People’s Party 1996, in Bangura 2000).

¹¹⁰ Neither of the two leading parties (the SLPP nor the UNPP) was able to fully capture their core constituencies. Bangura (2000) notes that the 1996 election results mirrored Sierra Leone’s only other relatively free and fair elections in 1967.

¹¹¹ As in 1967 when the SLPP informally united with the armed forces to stymie the APC, the losers of the 1996 elections engaged in crafty maneuvering to impede Kabbah from effectively governing.

¹¹² Kabbah’s peaceable temperament aside, the bipolar nature of Sierra Leonean politics meant that no President could have governed without first developing a coalition with parties beyond their traditional ethnic strongholds (Bangura 2000).

¹¹³ I contend that Executive Outcome’s withdrawal from the country precipitated the coup against Kabbah. With no functioning, loyal army in place, Kabbah was deposed a mere 89 days after EO’s departure (Dunigan 2011).

imminent threat to Koroma's leadership. Meanwhile, members of the elite who had been cut out of Kabbah's democratic government joined or came to otherwise support the AFRC.

Like the dictators that preceded him, Koroma acknowledged that his hold on power would not be buttressed by popular support, so he promptly suspended the constitution, outlawed public demonstrations, and prohibited any political parties (Marriott *et al* 2002). With the failed implementation of the Abidjan Accord and the subsequent merger with the AFRC, the RUF lost the veneer of legitimacy it had gained at Abidjan. This was manifest when ECOWAS and the UN Security Council imposed travel bans on key leaders (Vines & Cargill 2009-10).¹¹⁴

Prior to the AFRC coup, the international community was careful to portray the Sierra Leonean war as an internal "power struggle between the RUF and successive governments" (Bah 2013: 10). The only real foreign military involvement had been in the form of mercenaries, and a small contingent of Nigerian soldiers, stationed in Freetown to safeguard ECOWAS facilities. Although ECOMOG openly supported the Sierra Leonean government forces (including the *kamajor* CDF militia), its mandate was limited to preventing cross-border attacks from Liberia (Hirsch 2001). However, benign indifference switched to rhetorical outrage after the 1997 coup, as the international community began to publicly decry the RUF as savage warmongers, and endorse Kabbah's elected government as peace-seeking lovers of democracy.

Feeling the sting of its costly involvement in Liberia, ECOWAS had steered clear of the Sierra Leonean conflict. However, the regional organisation moved away from its policy of non-involvement after Koroma's coup. Ostensibly responding to a plea from Kabbah (already in exile in Guinea), several hundred ECOMOG troops were hastily summoned from Liberia to support their few beleaguered comrades that were permanently stationed near Freetown and put an end to the uprising. Recognizing that simultaneous wars in Sierra Leone and Liberia threatened to destabilize the region, ECOWAS foreign ministers met in Conakry in late June 1997, where they agreed to counter the coup with a combined use of dialogue, sanctions and force (Bangura 2000). Two months later, ECOWAS formally extended ECOMOG's mission into Sierra Leone, with a detachment of troops predominantly from Nigeria.¹¹⁵

Throughout this time, the UN had indicated no desire to engage in Sierra Leone either. However, the Security Council now voted to support ECOMOG's embargo against the AFRC-RUF. The Organisation of African Unity (OAU) followed suit in its censure of the coup, calling for sanctions against Koroma's *junta* and requesting that ECOWAS restore Kabbah's elected government (OAU 1997). For all the international community's

¹¹⁴ In June 1997, ECOWAS issued a communiqué asking the international community to refrain from recognising the *junta*, while calling for dialogue, sanctions and force. In August, ECOWAS imposed an embargo—including travels bans—against Koroma's government. The embargo was supported by the Commonwealth, which also suspended Sierra Leone. The UN imposed its own sanctions on Sierra Leone in October 1997.

¹¹⁵ The move to extend the ECOMOG mission to Sierra Leone was not unanimously embraced by ECOWAS members. Ghana and the francophone members were particularly critical of the undertaking, although they endorsed the comprehensive embargo against the RUF-AFRC.

posturing, the collective sanctions held little weight; such tactics rarely (if ever) topple illegitimate governments, and the stream of arms into the country barely slowed.¹¹⁶

At the height of its involvement, there were more than 13,000 ECOMOG troops in Sierra Leone.¹¹⁷ Initially, ECOMOG soldiers were supposed to provide security to civilians, assist displaced persons and assist in mediating peace. However, smarting from the castigation of the international community, Nigeria's President Abacha saw in Sierra Leone an opportunity to redeem his reputation, while restoring regional security, and (ironically) demonstrating his commitment to democracy (Adebayo 2002).¹¹⁸ With Abacha's enthusiastic backing, ECOMOG was drawn into Sierra Leone's sticky conflict, engaging rebels in battle as Nigerian warships shelled Freetown in June 1997. In little time, ECOMOG became another belligerent in the conflict.

Echoing its concurrent diplomatic efforts in Liberia, in October 1997, ECOMOG sought to oust Koroma's joint AFRC-RUF government in Sierra Leone, while simultaneously mediating a peace agreement between the warring parties in Conakry. The resulting accord "was effectively an ECOWAS ultimatum to the junta" (Bah 2013: 12); it established a schedule for disarmament, the return of displaced persons, and the restoration of Kabbah's government by May 1998. In exchange for Koroma's compliance, Kabbah was to make his re-established government inclusive, while recognising Sankoh's leadership, and providing immunity to the coup's orchestrators. True to form, Sankoh and Koroma undermined the agreement, setting impossible preconditions, demanding Sankoh's release from prison and opposing Nigeria's leadership of ECOMOG. The *junta's* defiance grew stronger, until it flatly refused to implement the agreement and attacked ECOMOG (Kabia 2009).

Lasting a meagre nine months, Koroma's reign was shorter than Kabbah's first attempt at government. On 12 February 1998, AFRC-RUF troops attacked ECOMOG, and a violent six-day battle ensued in Freetown. Led by Nigerian commander Max Khobe, ECOMOG troops successfully beat back the *junta's* forces, which retreated to the bush, and ejected Koroma from power. Within a month, on 10 March, Kabbah was elatedly brought back from exile in Guinea, his elected government again restored to power.

With its triumph over Koroma, ECOMOG became the champion defender of Kabbah's elected government. As most of the national army had defected to the AFRC-RUF alliance, Kabbah had no state control over the use of force.¹¹⁹ Consequently, Khobe

¹¹⁶ Weapons typically originated in former Soviet enclaves, including Ukraine and Bulgaria, and were transported to Sierra Leone via Liberia, Guinea and Cote d'Ivoire (Amnesty International 2000).

¹¹⁷ Numbering approximately 12,000, Nigerians accounted for nearly all of ECOMOG's personnel; Ghana and Guinea had 600 soldiers each on the ground, and Mali contributed 500 (Adebajo 2002: 91).

¹¹⁸ Nigeria had long been criticized for its numerous human rights abuses, but the chorus of international disapproval reached an all-time crescendo with the detention and execution of writer and activist, Ken Saro-Wiwa, in November 1995.

¹¹⁹ As noted, Stevens and Momoh (probably rightly) suspected the army of limited allegiance and so maintained small national armed forces. From a pre-war low of 3,000 troops, the Sierra Leonean army recruited rapidly, and by 1996, the country's forces comprised 14,000 soldiers. However, like the RUF, most new recruits were very young (many were children), uneducated, and typically from rural and disenfranchised backgrounds (Gberie 1997). Troops were poorly remunerated (if at all) and were perpetually short of

was made Chief of Defence Staff and Nigerian troops came to oversee the use of state force. Khobe (a foreigner) and Deputy Defence Minister, Hinga Norman, had a fractious relationship, but tacit government policy was to endorse the Nigerians, seeing as Kabbah's leadership hinged almost entirely on their continued willingness to absorb the "human and financial costs" of the ongoing civil war (Bangura 2000).¹²⁰

Shortly upon returning to power, Kabbah's government ambitiously began to arrest key AFRC-RUF leaders, taking them into custody, and trying them for treason. Although he was named Deputy Vice President in Koroma's *junta*, Foday Sankoh had been languishing in Nigerian custody for more than a year, since March 1997. In July 1998, Nigeria extradited Sankoh to Freetown where he was tried and found guilty of the capital crime of treason (O'Flaherty 2004). Although Sankoh was sentenced to death, his execution was not carried out and the country disintegrated into renewed conflict with a rebel incursion in Freetown (Shawcross 2000).

Meanwhile, in keeping with its focus on law and order, Kabbah's government simultaneously proposed restructuring, screening and (re)training the armed forces, with a target of 5,000 troops, of which 20 per cent could be reengaged from the erstwhile RSLAF.¹²¹ While the folly of this decision is quite apparent in hindsight, Kabbah defended it from a cost-savings perspective.¹²² Seeing the effectiveness of the regional militias of the South and parts of the East, Kabbah also sought to formalize the *kamajors* into a single civil defence force (CDF) that would supplement and fight alongside government forces on an *ad hoc* basis. While "vicious" and potent fighters, the CDF were not necessarily unanimous in their support of Kabbah, and he viewed them with a mixture of esteem and distrust. Although bolstered by the CDF's reinforcements, it is clear that a modest army of 5,000—even a disciplined, committed force—would in no way have been capable to defeat the rebels, which at this time included most of the national army's former soldiers, as well as all RUF recruits (voluntary and otherwise).

All the same, however fragile Kabbah's revived leadership may have seemed to many citizens, ECOMOG's might, coupled with the fortuitous RUF retreat into the jungle, helped the elected government struggle back from the brink. By September 1998, the government controlled all major urban areas, and fully 80 per cent of the country's territory (Bangura 2000). Bolstered by his electoral win, sustained by international diplomacy (if

necessary provisions. Consequently, like their RUF "enemies", armed forces extracted what "payment" they could from local citizens. In fact, government and rebel forces had more in common with one another than with their respective leaders. However, higher ranked army officials were no more likely to be loyal to the official government (elected or not) than their troops, and many pursued alternative enrichment schemes, mostly diamond mining and trading (Abraham 1997).

¹²⁰ After the 1997 coup, Kabbah's ousted government consolidated the country's disparate *kamajoi* militias into a single civil defense force (CDF), helmed by Hinga Norman, who had been long part of this movement. As effective as the militias were, the state (and President) maintained little control over the CDF, and so any move to augment this force simultaneously meant increasing the strength of the deputy defense minister at the expense of the President (Bangura 2000).

¹²¹ Low-level AFRC officials and soldiers were not tried for treason, but those seeking readmission in the (new) Republic of Sierra Leone Armed Forces (RSLAF) were required to submit to a vetting process in which they ascertained their loyalty to the state (O'Flaherty 2004).

¹²² According to Kabbah, "It takes eight to nine years for a cadet to become a captain...you can therefore imagine the length of time it takes to train a brigadier" (Bangura 2000: 557).

not force), and believing that a newly rehabilitated and united armed forces would cement his leadership, Kabbah started to believe the hype. Eight months after his return from exile, even as the Abidjan Accord fell and war continued through the countryside, on 23 November 1998, Kabbah confidently told the BBC that the war would be over “way before the end of the year” (Bangura 2000: 560).

It is difficult to know whether Kabbah genuinely foresaw the end of the civil war, or if he was trying to conjure some pre-holiday cheer for his beleaguered fellow citizens. Either way, the rebels tallied up multiple battlefield successes over the last months of 1998, reversing earlier government (ECOMOG) gains (Coll 2000). Kabbah maintained his optimistic rhetoric in public, but by December, the RUF was closing in on Freetown and an attack on the capital was imminent.¹²³ Less than a week into the New Year, on 6 January 1999, the *junta* forces of the AFRC-RUF—many of them children—invaded and occupied the eastern part of the city. Their advance was held off in the city centre, while the government remained in the ECOMOG-controlled western suburbs (O’Flaherty 2004). Over the next week, the civilian population of Freetown “experienced an unprecedented savaging” by the RUF (O’Flaherty 2004). Across the city, families were dragged out of their dwellings and rounded up for triage—some were selected for amputation or torture, others for death, while some, inexplicably, were set free (Coll 2000). The rebels’ violence knew no bounds; many children were raped in view or earshot of their parents, their captors delighting in their anguish (Coll 2000). In all, half the city’s homes were destroyed, as were numerous landmarks and government buildings, the prison was emptied, countless residents were maimed, amputated, burned alive, raped and abducted, and up to 6,000 people were killed (Koinange *et al* 1999; O’Flaherty 2004; Gberie 2005).¹²⁴

Although Kabbah—read ECOMOG—still appeared to control a large part of the country, at the time of the Freetown attack many of the rural Northern regions were either held by the RUF or were “effectively outside government hands” (Bangura 2000: 562).¹²⁵ In fact, the only urban areas that remained rebel-free were Bo and Kenema, due mostly to the effectiveness of the regional *kamajor* forces. Before mid-January, the government had not only lost Freetown, but much of the Northern district and Kenema district (the country’s primary diamond producing region, which bordered on Liberia) as well.

While the rebels’ wholesale destruction of Freetown is the event most remembered from this time, the government’s defeat in the Kenema district had two significant benefits

¹²³ Kabbah was not alone in his confidence of a conquest over the RUF. UN chief military observer, Brigadier-General Subhash Joshi, backed Kabbah’s assertions of victory.

¹²⁴ Casualty statistics in Sierra Leone (and Liberia) are notoriously unreliable, and the 1999 Freetown attack was no different. According to various UN reports approximately 5,000 residents were killed, but others (including Gberie 2005) claim that more than 6,000 died.

¹²⁵ It would be mistake to assume that the country was “controlled” by either the government or the RUF throughout the war. Bangura (2000) notes that at various times, certain regions (mostly rural, often in the North) were beyond the oversight of both the state and the rebels. While it is possible that some of these areas existed in a state of anarchy, it seems more likely that the *kamajors*—operating beyond the government’s CDF mandate—provided security in these regions.

for the RUF.¹²⁶ It was able to recruit countless newly unemployed young miners in exchange for “protection”, both domestically and from across the border in Liberia.¹²⁷ Additionally, once the RUF gained control over the Kenema district, it was able to access the financial networks that facilitated the trade of diamonds for drugs and weapons.¹²⁸

The rebels’ massive victory in January 1999 further fragmented the state and weakened Kabbah’s government. In terms of service provision, Sierra Leone could already be said to be failing (if not fully failed), but rural areas now struggled for basic food security and transportation, which were already limited. Hundreds of thousands of people were displaced; malnutrition and disease were rampant. With the loss of the Northern territories, as well as Kono, Kailahun and Kanema, these regions became virtually inaccessible, and rebel atrocities committed against civilians became commonplace. Although the RUF was already known for terrorising the local populations in the areas they captured, in 1998, rebels forces amplified their attacks and tactics, perpetuating summary executions, amputations, mutilations, abduction, rape and other forms of torture on the already suffering and destitute population (O’Flaherty 2004).¹²⁹

In the aftermath of the government’s devastating losses, many were left wondering how, within a few short months, the RUF came roaring back from virtual bush exile to effectively challenge, and nearly break, the elected state’s ascendancy.¹³⁰ One of the Kabbah’s gravest mistakes was to (re)commit to an army that had repeatedly demonstrated its disloyalty to the state.¹³¹ During battles for the North in December 1998 and throughout the fight for Freetown in January 1999, many of Kabbah’s vaunted, retrained soldiers showed themselves as faithless. According to Bangura (2000), the government lost the town of Makeni (the country’s fourth largest city, in the central Bombali district) when “rehabilitated” soldiers turned their weapons on the Nigerian ECOMOG troops they were fighting alongside.¹³²

¹²⁶ The RUF had continued to cooperate with AFRC since 1996. Sankoh had been incarcerated throughout this time, and while the RUF had several key commanders, there is no evidence as to who exactly was leading the rebels on the ground.

¹²⁷ In the course of the eight-year civil war, more than 60,000 Liberians fought for various factions in Sierra Leone (Bangura 2000).

¹²⁸ As in Liberia, ECOWAS and the UN Security Council had imposed a trade embargo on Sierra Leone, which ostensibly prevented it from importing weapons. Of course, this did nothing to stop the flow of arms into the country; it just made them more costly.

¹²⁹ It is important to emphasise that the RUF was not alone in perpetuating war crimes in the Sierra Leonean civil war. The CDF also committed human rights abuses, including ethnically motivated civilian killings, as well as torturing and executing prisoners, while ECOMOG troops were accused of illegally detaining and torturing civilians as well as abusing combatants during capture or surrender (O’Flaherty 2004).

¹³⁰ As Kabbah (ECOMOG) made significant battlefield advances from late 1997 through to mid-1998, rebels began to disengage from combat and sought refuge in the forest.

¹³¹ Even under the military rule of Valentine Strasser and the NPRC, Sierra Leone’s armed forces had turned against the government. It is evident that at least part of the armed forces’ disloyalty lay in their penury. As the war continued, government soldiers discovered alternative means to earn a living, by hiring themselves out as rebels. In time, troops working as “soldiers by day, rebels by night” were called *sobel*s. Although the term originated in Sierra Leone, the phenomenon is not unique to this country.

¹³² Bangura notes, “an entire battalion of Nigerian troops perished because of this treachery” (2000: 562). In two months, between December 1998 and January 1999, more than 1,200 Nigerian soldiers were killed in Sierra Leone, many by government forces.

Predominantly composed of Nigerian troops, ECOMOG was already seeking to exit Sierra Leone. With Nigeria's strongman Abacha's unexpected death in 1998 and a national election campaigning in full swing, contenders were unanimous in their criticism of ECOMOG. The large number of casualties and the tremendous financial cost of the operation to Nigeria meant that there was little popular support for further intervention.¹³³ New President-elect, Abdulsalam Abubakar, asserted that Nigerian troops would be withdrawn from Sierra Leone by June 1999. In fact, the key reason Freetown was taken so rapidly in January was that there were no ECOMOG troops to be found in the city centre; they had retired to their barracks in the western suburbs.¹³⁴

When the RUF took over Freetown on 6 January, the facade of relative prosperity and legal order that had provided a semblance of solace to the capital's residents completely collapsed. Hundreds of inmates were released from the central prison, including numerous political prisoners, some of whom had been active in the joint AFRC-RUF government. Nearly 80 per cent of police offices and the Criminal Investigations Department (where all trial records were kept) were demolished, while hundreds of police officers and legal professionals were killed (Bangura 2000).¹³⁵

For all of the damage it wreaked, holding Sierra Leoneans hostage for nearly a decade, the RUF never delivered on its founding promises of free education and a new, more equitable government. During this time, most of the (relatively few) rebels who claimed to have joined the movement out of shared political and ideological purpose became deeply disenchanted with the organisation and felt fundamentally betrayed. Even so, the RUF never wanted for new fighters—whether or not they were willing recruits—and its cruel tyranny continued.

COUNTDOWN TO PEACE

In January 1999, the capital was in ruins. Legal and security order was inexistent. However, the rebels were unable to maintain their hold on Freetown and were pushed eastward by ECOMOG, after which heavy fighting continued in the "city's hinterland" (O'Flaherty 2004). Kabbah held on, but his optimistic discourse underwent a radical about turn. In late January, he announced a twin-track government initiative of diplomatic dialogue with the AFRC-RUF and renewed military offensive.

Considering that ECOMOG was drawing down its troops, that effective (albeit costly and ethically problematic) mercenaries had been ordered out of the country, and being barely supported by a fractious, disloyal national army, it is difficult to imagine how Kabbah thought he could reinvigorate his military onslaught. The RUF were widely

¹³³ Nigeria's coffers were hemorrhaging approximately \$1 million **a day** to maintain ECOMOG (Kaldor 2007), at a time when the government was unable to provide basic infrastructure and social services to its own citizens. In six months, from late 1998 to mid 1999, world oil prices collapsed by 40%, which further eroded Nigeria's will to support military operations in Sierra Leone.

¹³⁴ ECOMOG and government forces also committed numerous grave human rights abuses during the Freetown attack, including the unwarranted detention of numerous civilians, dozens of summary executions of suspected rebel collaborators, and aerial attacks on civilian targets (O'Flaherty 2004; TRC 2004).

¹³⁵ The RUF specifically sought to detain and kill magistrates, judges, and lawyers who had been government prosecutors.

perceived to be on the brink of full military victory, and few believed that the faltering ECOMOG forces could defeat it. Unwilling to lend further armed forces to support the government's offensive, the international community—namely Nigeria, UK, US, and several key UN officials—pressured Kabbah to pursue peace talks with the AFRC-RUF as a means to re-establish government authority and end the war. In interviews, at least two former government officials claim that they were not pressured to engage in talks, they were forced.¹³⁶ Ultimately, the international community imposed a policy of dialogue on Kabbah's government.

In a few short months, Kabbah went from acclaimed, popularly elected President to beleaguered supplicant. With the international community's overt reluctance to militarily sustain Kabbah's government, combined with the rebels' massive battlefield victories, the political winds shifted to favour Sankoh and legitimise the RUF. Sankoh was conditionally released from prison in Freetown, where he was awaiting a decision on his death sentence appeal, and given access to government facilities to communicate with his commanders in Lomé, Togo.

The concessions made to Sankoh and the RUF before the Lomé talks even began reveal the government's profound disadvantage at this time. Kabbah had plummeted from a battlefield victory high in September 1998, when his government was said to control 80 per cent of the country's territory, including all urban centres, to near military loss by early 1999, when the AFRC-RUF held approximately 70 per cent of the country, including most mining areas.¹³⁷ As Sankoh met his designated negotiators in Lomé in April 1999, even the highway that connected Freetown to the rest of the country was in rebel hands (Bangura 2000).

Meanwhile, also in April 1999, elected and traditional leaders, civil society representatives, and various clergy attended a national consultative conference at which time participants proposed the general terms for a peace settlement.¹³⁸ Based on the (unimplemented) 1996 Abidjan Peace Agreement, attendees advocated limited power sharing prior to national elections, amnesty for combatants, along with the establishment of a truth and reconciliation commission, in exchange for a ceasefire and formal RUF recognition of the government's legitimacy (UN 1996).¹³⁹

Shortly thereafter, ECOWAS and the UN facilitated a meeting between representatives from the Sierra Leonean government and the rebels in Lomé. Prior to the official peace talks, the RUF met and developed its respective strategy for peace

¹³⁶ Interviews with Julius Spencer, Minister of Information and Broadcasting (1996-2001), 16 October 2012 and Sheka Mansaray, National Security Advisor (1998-2000) to President Tejean Kabbah, 16 October 2012, in Freetown, Sierra Leone, as well as Peter Penfold, former British High Commissioner to Sierra Leone (1997-2000), 13 February 2013, in London, UK.

¹³⁷ Military intelligence and formal statistics were hard to come by throughout the war. The cited statistics in this paragraph are from interviews with Peter Penfold and Lansana Gberie.

¹³⁸ Even Sankoh endorsed the proceedings, with a message sent from prison.

¹³⁹ Although the recommendations from the conference were deemed consensual, participants were divided as to whether they should recommend amnesty to combatants. Many participants (including certain government delegates) grumbled that they had been hectored into accepting amnesty, a provision, they claimed, was foisted on them by the international community.

negotiations. Revelling in his conditional freedom, Sankoh was allowed to attend. By mid-May, the RUF had drafted its proposal for peace. Although the government balked at several RUF clauses, including a request for a fully shared transitional government, Kabbah maintained an open and conciliatory stance (O’Flaherty 2004). With recommendations from the government and the RUF in hand, peace talks opened in Lomé on 25 May 1999.

BRINGING THE INDIVIDUAL BACK IN

Understanding the historical and political context in which individual negotiators operate gives us insight into their decisions and behavior at peace talks. In this chapter, I have provided readers with a historical and political account of Sierra Leone and Liberia, noting their similar genesis as colonies settled by freed slaves who perpetuated the inequalities from which they came onto the aboriginal peoples with whom they shared a country but little else. I have outlined some of the numerous legitimate grievances Sierra Leoneans and Liberians possessed at the outset of the wars, while noting that because the countries’ natural resource wealth, conflict was highly profitable which meant that these were also resource wars. None of the rebels in either Sierra Leone or Liberia had a reasoned or compelling political platform. In fact, Steyn (2008) referred to West Africa as “a land beyond politics”—for all the credible causes of the war (namely yawning inequality and inoperative states), few could argue that any Liberian and Sierra Leonean rebels had a legitimate ideology to speak of. With the clarity of hindsight, it is evident that both Taylor and Sankoh helmed criminal operations, not political ones.

During the course of the wars, including the numerous peace agreements that came to naught, the various individual negotiators developed an arsenal of tactics that they used again in the Lomé and Accra peace talks. Neither Charles Taylor nor Foday Sankoh—the original warmongers—were known for being as good as their word; repeatedly, they demonstrated a lack of good faith and evident duplicity in their political and diplomatic dealings, only to be rewarded with power based on fear. Unsurprisingly then, other rebel groups adopted similar ploys. Trying to have it both ways, as belligerents and peacemakers, ECOWAS and its ECOMOG troops were scarcely credible adjudicators. Even so, with the larger international community still resistant to weigh in on the conflicts, ECOWAS remained the only arbiter of two sizable African crises. For the world’s preoccupation with democratic elections (even if they had to be mounted in wartime), the political stewardship of Tejan Kabbah and Charles Taylor was meagre at best, with both states being functional in only the loosest sense of the word.

Against this backdrop, yet another round of peace talks featuring insincere belligerents appeared to be a hollow pantomime. However, the political bookies of Lomé and Accra would be left bewildered by the emergence of additional (even unexpected) players and their tactics, combined with several unforeseen critical junctures. In the following chapter, we meet the first of these unexpected players, Jesse Jackson, and learn of the undeniably troubling role his personality, presence and actions had on the Lomé peace negotiations.

TO THE LOSER THE SPOILS

HOW JESSE JACKSON HELPED FODAY SANKOH BULLY PRESIDENT TEJAN KABBAH AND GO FROM DEATH ROW TO THE VICE-PRESIDENCY AT LOMÉ

The historical account of Chapter 3 highlights the limitations of the existing literature. We have not yet learned which individuals made the offers that encouraged the rebels to commit to peace and why. We have not yet seen the psychological pressures some participants placed on others in the course of negotiations. The information at hand, while exhaustive, remains incomplete. This, and the following chapters, will add nuance to what is already known about the peace negotiation process in Sierra Leone and Liberia.

Encouraged by his closest Western allies, the UK and the US, President Tejan Ahmed Kabbah was essentially forced into talks by ECOWAS. Rebel leader Foday Sankoh was released from prison and lured to talk peace with a conditional travel pass and the promise of all-expenses-paid luxury accommodations. Ultimately, a rather surprising latecomer to the conflict—Jesse Jackson, inveigled Sankoh's disproportionate gains and Kabbah's inordinate concessions at Lomé.

These three men—Jackson, Kabbah, and Sankoh—came to dominate the peace process at Lomé. The following three chapters offer a character sketch of these primary decision-makers and demonstrate how individual behaviours change the denouement of negotiations. Each man had reasons to want to end the war, but their motivations varied greatly. Each man was a leader in his own right. And the shocking unfairness of the resulting peace accord can be placed, in large part, at each of their feet.

The following chapters examine the individual motives and choices of Jackson, Kabbah and Sankoh in weeks preceding the negotiations and during the peace process at Lomé. Individual behaviour patterns in evidence prior to the negotiations are examined in tandem with a historical accounting of important events during the wars, as well as the actual peace talks. My choice to highlight Jackson, Kabbah and Sankoh in no way suggests that these three are the only persons that mattered during the Summer of 1999.¹⁴⁰ Nonetheless, a study of these individuals reveals how each man's personality traits and cognitive structures shaped their motives and choices in war and in peace. The Lomé accord would not have evolved as it did without the personal impact of these individuals.

¹⁴⁰ Other individuals of import include Lomé chief negotiator and Togolese President Gnassingbé Eyadéma along with ECOMOG Commander in Sierra Leone (1999), General Maxwell Khobe. RUF spokesman and legal representative, Omrie Golley, also wielded great influence in the peace negotiations, as did Kabbah's chief negotiator and Minister of Justice, Solomon Berewa. Without a doubt, the President of Liberia, Charles Taylor, was instrumental to perpetuating the Sierra Leone civil war and allowing it to end, but as he is one of the key players in the Liberian peace agreement, his character analysis best fits in the subsequent case study.

CHAPTER 4

ACE IN THE HOLE

JESSE JACKSON

Special Envoy for the US President and Secretary of State for the Promotion of Democracy in Africa, 1997-2000

Just like the Sierra Leonean road from Bo to the Liberian border past Zimmi, the journey to the Lomé peace talks was rough, circuitous, and featured repeated breakdowns. But this trip was complicated, then overshadowed, by an unexpected character who squeezed into the already cramped and sweaty sedan on the last part of the voyage. Remarkably, Jesse Jackson—bombastic, controversial American civil rights leader and black business dealmaker—was instrumental to the Lomé peace accord and the deals therein, but not in ways that ameliorated the process.

This chapter shows how the Clinton administration came to appoint Jesse Jackson, a man singularly inexperienced in African policy, as special envoy to the US president. For his lack of expertise in African affairs, Jackson nonetheless became the most visible US representative in Africa, and for want of a formal charge, he made it a personal mission to bring peace to Sierra Leone. Jackson became a personal friend to Liberia's Charles Taylor, and in time grew sympathetic to the RUF's cause, perceiving its leader, Foday Sankoh, as a fellow legitimate warrior-activist. As a result of Jackson's arbitration, Sankoh was released from prison, and flown to Togo where he could consult with his field commanders prior to the Lomé peace process. Jackson also came to interfere with military operations and halted an ECOMOG counterattack on the RUF. Crucially, Jackson acted to deliberately isolate President Kabbah from his key advisors at the outset of the peace talks, forced him to engage with Sankoh, and hastily presented him with a pre-approved draft of a ceasefire. The chapter reveals Jackson to be a self-centred and competitive negotiator, with biased judgments and skewed cognitive frames who sought a deal (peace) at any cost, even if that deal meant accommodating and rewarding perpetrators of egregious human rights abuses.¹⁴¹

In October 1997, US President, Bill Clinton, and Secretary of State Madeleine Albright, appointed Jesse Jackson "Special Envoy for the President and Secretary of State for the Promotion of Democracy in Africa" (*Wall Street Journal* 1997). As the first person to hold this title, Jackson's job description was not particularly clear.¹⁴² To some,

¹⁴¹ The Sierra Leonean case study has a limited number of respondents. Foday Sankoh is deceased, as are numerous other belligerents, while other players were ill and unavailable during my fieldwork. Moreover, several other Lomé participants—most notably RUF counsel and spokesman, Omrie Golley—would not consider speaking on-the-record with a foreign researcher about the war and its cumulative negotiation process. Nonetheless, numerous members of civil society confirmed the overwhelming view that Jesse Jackson served as a Sankoh and RUF apologist and that his efforts on behalf of the rebels certainly influenced the course of negotiations, particularly at the outset, and contributed to the bountiful outcome that the rebels seized at Lomé.

¹⁴² Special envoys are diplomatic appointees. In the US, the President directly appoints a special envoy without any further vetting by government institutions. The appointee receives formal or informal

Jackson's appointment and the vagueness of his role indicated how uninvested the US was in Africa at the time. According to one analyst, "The fact that Jesse Jackson was made a special envoy of the US to Africa is a statement of their lack of interest. You'd engage your institutions otherwise."¹⁴³ However, to others, including Jackson himself, the title was evidence that he was "the man;" the power broker "with the cash and the contacts" through whom African leaders could gain direct access to the US President (Timmerman 2002: 284). "Clearly, he was thinking that this would enhance his position and his role in Africa," says Peter Penfold, former British High Commissioner to Sierra Leone, but "I can't imagine that he had much knowledge of Sierra Leone, and the knowledge he would have had would have come from Charles Taylor."¹⁴⁴ Although limited in actual power, the special envoy position carried significant prestige. Overnight, Jackson became America's most visible representative in Africa, and to Africans this visibility (magnified by Jackson's natural bravado) equalled wholesale legitimacy.

Certainly, Jackson's appointment was a strategic one, with Clinton acknowledging the African Americans who helped elect him to a second term while giving the Congressional Black Caucus control over Africa policy (Stanford 1997). With only a fuzzy job description to tether him to his handlers at the State Department, Jackson appeared to grant himself permission to enlarge the terms of his hire so that whenever he travelled to Africa as a government representative, he would also negotiate or facilitate private business deals for American companies (Beltramini 2014). In his capacity as a political envoy, Jackson would introduce prominent black business executives to African political leaders "so they could cut deals at the source" (Timmerman 2002: 287; see also Beltramini 2014).¹⁴⁵

According to Zartman's (1988; 1978) negotiation approaches, previously explored in Chapter 2, Jackson undertook his role as envoy-cum-industrialist-cum-negotiator within a strategic context. In Sierra Leone, Jackson believed he was *the one* who could make the years of fighting cease. With the exception of his business engagements, which were a regular source of distraction, Jackson had a mind to end conflict in West Africa. From the time he became formally involved in Africa as a Presidential envoy, Jackson "wanted to be the Peacemaker" says scholar Lansana Gberie. His aim was to be "the African American King Maker. He wanted to solve the war."¹⁴⁶ Thereafter, Jackson sought to achieve this goal using whichever means necessary.

instructions and may be given a rank (i.e. commissioner, delegate, agent) (Wriston 1960). A special envoy is a part-time position that can work on US government business for no more than 60 days a year (Timmerman 2002).

¹⁴³ Interview with former *New York Times* West Africa bureau chief, Nairobi, Kenya, 22 August 2014.

¹⁴⁴ Interview with Peter Penfold, former British High Commissioner to Sierra Leone (1997-2000), London, UK, 13 February 2013. As described later in this chapter, Jackson's connection with the Liberian diaspora predated his appointment as Special Envoy, which led to his developing a personal relationship with Taylor.

¹⁴⁵ To cite but one example, Jackson is close friend of Chester Davenport, one of the owners of Ameritech (Schiesel 1999). Throughout his tenure as special envoy, Jackson frequently promoted telecommunications business opportunities in Africa. Ameritech is now AT&T Teleholdings, one of the largest telecommunications providers and operators in the world, while Ameritech's subsidiary, Ameritech Cellular—now Verizon Wireless, the largest mobile network operator in the US—was the first company to provide cellular telephone service to the American general public (Van 5 July 2000).

¹⁴⁶ Interview with Lansana Gberie, journalist in Sierra Leone during the war, now Coordinator and Finance Expert at UN Security Council Panel of Experts on Liberia, New York City, 18 May 2012.

Jackson's negotiating tactics are important to contextualise within cognitive frames shared by many policymakers at the time. Throughout the 1990s, peace negotiations mediated by the international community (in Dayton for Bosnia, Arusha for Rwanda, and Lomé for Sierra Leone) followed a certain formula. Typically, rival belligerents—no matter how despicable their wartime behaviour—were brought together, without the benefit of large entourages, and offered numerous incentives (usually in the form of political power and resource wealth) in exchange for peace. The resulting agreements favoured stability at all costs, including justice.¹⁴⁷ Jackson worked well within this paradigm and excelled as a negotiator by acting in the ways that he did. Jackson proved himself a master of the negotiating structure of the time.

Meanwhile, Jackson's employer—the Clinton administration—was far more concerned about remaining disengaged from any form of military intervention on the African continent. The Americans had been badly shaken by the death of 18 US soldiers during the Battle of Mogadishu in 1993 (Bowden 1997). The following year, the US suppressed its knowledge of the Rwandan genocide for weeks as hundreds of thousands of civilians died, and even then, it diluted the impact of the horror—along with its indifference—by attempting to downgrade the genocide to “acts of genocide” (Carroll 2004; Power 2001). By the end of the decade, Clinton's primary African policy concern was averting large-scale humanitarian disasters without putting American boots on the ground, and it had all but formally assigned Africa policy to the Congressional Black Caucus and one of its primary members, Congressman Donald Payne, in particular (Stanford 1997; Leigh in Timmerman 2002).

A FRIEND IN NEED, A FRIEND IN DEED

Jackson's involvement in the Sierra Leone conflict began with his relationship with Charles Taylor. Although Jackson had already visited Africa on numerous occasions, as special envoy, he travelled the continent extensively, spending an increasing amount of time in West Africa. Jackson first met Charles Taylor in February 1998 through Romeo Horton, a US-educated Liberian, for whom he had helped to secure a green card during the 1980s (Timmerman 2002).¹⁴⁸ In fact, well before his appointment as envoy, Jackson had developed relationships with several members of the large Liberian diaspora living in the US. Horton had since been enticed back to Liberia where he worked closely with Taylor as Chairman of the Special Presidential Banking Commission and went on to found the Bank of Liberia. Prior to the encounter with Jackson, and concerned that he might be taken to task on his human rights record, Taylor asked Horton to mediate with Jackson (Timmerman 2002). Horton did his job admirably, for Taylor and Jackson's first meeting is said to have been very cordial (Lizza 2000). In fact, Horton said later that, “Instead of meeting an adversary,” Taylor “met a friend” (Lizza 2000: n.p.). Indeed, from that moment, Jackson became a firm ally and confidant to Taylor, and one of his most ardent advocates for years to come.

At the time of his meeting with Jackson, Taylor had recently been promoted from warlord to head of state, having won Liberia's 1997 elections. Until then, Taylor's National

¹⁴⁷ My thanks to Cédric Jourde for encapsulating the structure of negotiations in the late 20th century.

¹⁴⁸ A green card is formal documentation attesting to a person's permanent residency status in the US

Patriotic Front of Liberia (NPFL) had been fighting the state and a host of other belligerents for eight years. Recognising the instability Taylor's guerrilla movement was bringing to the region, in 1990, the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) established a West African multilateral armed force, Economic Community of West African States Monitoring Group (ECOMOG), to intervene in Liberia. Taylor was particularly aggrieved that the Sierra Leonean government had supported the Nigerian-led ECOMOG mission into Liberia and vowed revenge. The sparkle of Sierra Leone's diamond mines served only to stoke Taylor's desire for retribution and he actively assisted Sankoh and the Revolutionary United Front (RUF) when they began their own civil war in 1991. Ever since, Taylor and Sankoh had worked together to mutual profit; Sierra Leonean diamonds flowed into Taylor's coffers, and in exchange, weapons and other goods found their way into the forests and the arms of the RUF. As both warlords benefited handsomely from their arrangement, their fellow citizens starved, bled and died by the hundreds of thousands.

Keen to establish himself as the man who brought peace to West Africa, soon after their introductory meeting, Jackson invited Taylor to speak at a "reconciliation conference" in Chicago in April 1998 (Siapoe 1998). Knowing that the diaspora held strong political clout in Liberia, Jackson claimed that the conference would provide Liberian opposition leaders to meet Taylor in person.¹⁴⁹ Numerous members of the diaspora gathered in Chicago, where Jackson "gave Taylor an opportunity to present himself as a level-headed progressive, Christian leader anxious to bring democracy to western Africa" (Bruns 2005: 122). However, Taylor did not attend the conference in person—although he did address participants in a real-time via satellite—nor were any Liberian political oppositions leaders invited, let alone allowed to speak at the conference.¹⁵⁰ If anything, many in attendance (particularly the opposition leaders) felt the conference was little more than a public relations initiative aimed at burnishing Taylor's tarnished reputation (Greaves in Timmerman 2002: 307). Although the conference was hosted and paid for by Jackson's NGO, the Rainbow PUSH Coalition, numerous participants came away feeling that Jackson was a paid lobbyist for Charles Taylor (Timmerman 2002) and that neither had an urgent desire to create peace in Sierra Leone.¹⁵¹

Meanwhile, Jackson's corporate and government interests continued to coincide nicely, if somewhat unethically. Journalist Kenneth Timmerman (2002) recounts how during a shared flight, Jackson pitched Charles Taylor to grant a stake of the newly privatized Liberian state telecommunications monopoly to an Atlanta company that belonged to his friend Chester Davenport.¹⁵² After, Taylor—no fool, and an accomplished

¹⁴⁹ Indeed, many Liberians living in the US in the 1990s had been forced into exile because of the political and military upheaval in their country of origin.

¹⁵⁰ According to opposition leaders, although they had not been officially invited, a small delegation was allowed to attend the conference after the Deputy Assistant Secretary of the US State Department personally intervened with Jackson.

¹⁵¹ Jackson surely profited from his work as special envoy, but there is no evidence that he was a paid agent of Taylor's government. That said, Taylor was not averse to hiring other Americans to lobby on his behalf, including televangelist Pat Robertson. In 1999, Taylor signed a "Mineral Development Agreement" with Robertson giving the outspoken conservative broadcaster concession rights to a gold mine in the South of the country in exchange for "support" and "insight" (Roston 2010).

¹⁵² Davenport was then owner of Georgetown Partners, which went on to jointly purchase (with GTE) Ameritech (*Bloomberg News* 1999). Jackson's overt sales pitch to Taylor prompted Republican Congressman

“player” himself—turned and asked Jackson if he was speaking as a special envoy of the US government or as a corporate representative. Indeed, few were certain whose interests Jackson served; depending on the day, he attended meetings as a key member of a trade delegation or as the American president’s special representative.

Jackson’s interests in West Africa may not have been evident to the casual observer, but a behavioural approach which considers his personality and character traits, provides us with some indication of his concerns with the outcomes of the Sierra Leonean war, and these, in turn reveal Jackson’s motives as being self-centred and competitive (Zartman 1978; Deutsch 1958; Messick & McClintock 1968). Like many public figures, Jackson is extraverted (Gerber *et al* 2011; Margolis 1987; Barrick and Mount 1991), and certainly, he did use the force of his personality and charisma as means to enhance his personal relations, particularly with Taylor and Sankoh. But while extraverted people typically want to protect face in negotiations (Barrick & Mount 1991), Jackson proved himself to be a highly competitive negotiator as well, and his competitiveness ultimately outweighed any concerns he may have had with saving face.

Competitive negotiators take an “us against them” approach to peace talks. At Lomé, Jackson appears not to have been against Kabbah, as much as he was for making a deal at all costs, even if that meant favouring the RUF over Sierra Leone’s democratically elected president. Jackson’s unapologetic backing of the RUF was criticised by many Sierra Leoneans, but Jackson’s aim was not to be liked as much as it was to get what he sought.¹⁵³ In this, Jackson was an accomplished negotiator. Undoubtedly, Jackson’s competitive streak was fuelled by a sizable ego and a love for a good fight (Cohen 2004; Traum *et al* 2005), which also made him inadequate listener (Brach 2008; Latz 2002). Jackson’s inability or disinterest in listening to others was no more in evidence than in the way he completely disregarded the will of citizens of Sierra Leone, made clear at the National Consultative Conference, stating their opposition to power sharing with the RUF and dissent of a blanket amnesty for combatants.

Back in Washington, whenever the president was quizzed on Liberia and Sierra Leone, Clinton deferred to Jackson and Congressman Payne, both of whom believed that Taylor was essential to broker peace in Sierra Leone because of his longstanding relationship (and influence) with Sankoh. However, it was also becoming clear (to those who sought to look) that the Clinton Administration’s Liberian ally was perpetrating war crimes of his own (Mahoney 2012; Burger 2012). Within this political context, one of Jackson’s key tactics was to “mainstream” Taylor and Sankoh, in an attempt to make the warlords more palatable to their domestic constituents and the US public. Not only was Sankoh the lynchpin to end the war, according to Jackson, he was a legitimate warrior activist who warranted to be freed from prison (where he was awaiting trial for treason). Moreover, Jackson agreed with Sankoh, the RUF deserved numerous seats in Sierra Leone’s post-war government.

Benjamin Gilman to ask the legal advisor at the State Department to clarify the ethics that governed special envoys (Timmerman 2002: 287).

¹⁵³ In interviews with numerous Sierra Leoneans, including members of civil society, many spoke of their dislike for Jackson’s tactics on behalf of the RUF and Foday Sankoh up until and during the Lomé negotiations.

In the field, Sankoh was chief commander to his rebel troops, but in Presidential chambers and conference rooms, the true seat of power was revealed. Throughout the war, keen observers had remarked on the not entirely equal relationship between Sankoh and his former comrade-in-arms, Taylor. Sankoh and the RUF “were really driven by outside forces,” says Gberie. “Taylor was crucial in setting up the RUF and perpetuating the war.”¹⁵⁴ Publicly, Taylor always sought to establish distance between his political goals for the Liberian presidency and the RUF’s civil war against the Sierra Leonean government. However, Jackson, the Americans and RUF commanders all perceived Sankoh and the RUF as Taylor’s “creation” (Timmerman 2002).¹⁵⁵ Indeed, Sankoh’s longevity and guerilla warfare successes were heavily dependent on the political support he received from Taylor and his use of Liberia as a conduit for armaments in exchange for diamonds.

However profitable the war in Sierra Leone was to Liberia, in the months prior to Lomé Taylor was under increasing pressure from the international community for facilitating and prolonging the war. Having worked hard to achieve international legitimacy as the freely and fairly elected leader of Liberia, the mounting criticism stung. Taylor reached out to his “close” friend Jackson and invited him to come to Liberia to quietly discuss how he might help Jackson push Sankoh towards a peace agreement.¹⁵⁶ A US intelligence cable assessing the visit between Jackson and Taylor illustrates the power dynamic between Taylor and the RUF: “After Jackson closed the meeting in prayer, the delegation stepped from the room in the Liberian executive mansion to see RUF leader Sam Bockarie waiting outside. Upon seeing Taylor, Bockarie saluted” (Dywer 2011: n.p.).

Despite multiple visits with Taylor and encounters with Sankoh, publicly Jackson did not appear to be overly concerned about the rebels’ record of human rights abuses. He did, however, become a true believer in the RUF cause—however obscure that cause was. Jackson “had no [real] knowledge of the RUF and its goals,” said Julius Spencer, President Kabbah’s then Minister of Information. “[He] categorised the RUF as just another group of freedom fighters. There was no appreciation of the fact that there had been fair and free elections. The Sierra Leonean government was lumped in with other despotic governments.”¹⁵⁷ Jackson’s seeming indifference to the bloodthirsty tactics of the RUF might also be claimed to be another example of competitive negotiators’ inept listening skills, which conveniently buttressed his single-minded aim to end the war.

SELF-INTEREST AND TUNNEL VISION

To observers, Jackson was not as much interested in ending the war for its own sake, but because *he* had decided that he was the man who would do so.¹⁵⁸ Exclusive self-

¹⁵⁴ Interview with Gberie.

¹⁵⁵ Ironically, one of the ways in which Jackson sought to mainstream Sankoh was in having Taylor publicly speak on his behalf. Unlike the awkward and uncouth Sankoh, Taylor was a chameleon; much as he played up his rural Golan tribal roots among his troops, he could be reflective, soft-spoken and smooth in an international forum. Lansana Gberie, as well as at least two other observers at Lomé, support Timmerman’s assessment of Sankoh.

¹⁵⁶ Interview with Gberie.

¹⁵⁷ Interview with Spencer. An avowed Kabbah loyalist, Spencer is hardly an unbiased witness, however, his views on Jackson were corroborated by numerous members of civil society.

¹⁵⁸ In interviews, Sheka Mansaray, Julius Spencer and Lansana Gberie all upheld this assessment.

interest is also indicative of a competitive negotiator, and Jackson was not inclined to consider others' preferences. From the start, Jackson had determined that peace depended on accommodating Sankoh and the RUF. That the media was filled with stories of child amputations and dismemberment of pregnant women did not appear to dissuade him; Jackson aspired to singlehandedly mediate peace in Sierra Leone and obliging the RUF was the means to achieve that end. This relentless focus on a particular outcome is also an example how Jackson fell into the cognitive bias of framing effect, choosing a particular course of action because he perceived a certain outcome to be a gain (Tversky & Kahneman 1981). Clearly, ending the war was a desirable outcome for many at Lomé, and Jackson was obviously not alone in wanting to secure peace for Sierra Leone; where Jackson differed was in his primary goal to be "the Peacemaker." In this, we also see that Jackson's cognitive frames—how he interpreted and represented issues in a conflict setting (Minsky 1975)—biased his judgment to the extent that he became committed to one course of action only, provided it fulfilled his core aim.

In his time as envoy, Jackson did not invest any time developing a personal relationship with Kabbah, and appeared to care little about the democratic aspirations of Sierra Leonean citizens.¹⁵⁹ Despite all indications that the rebels were motivated by little more than greed and wanton violence, Jackson was swayed by RUF rhetoric. In a February 1999 telephone call, rebel spokesperson Omrie Golley reminded Jackson that "our movement had to start a struggle that leads us to this point" and that "we were forced to use force" (Case ID: 200004266, in Timmerman 2002: 448). Jackson responded by mentioning that he had recently met with Kabbah to ask him (again) to spare Sankoh and he reassured the RUF of his continued support (Case ID: 200004266, in Timmerman 2002: 448).¹⁶⁰

Jackson's partiality towards the RUF may have been ethically troubling, but he was far from being the only outsider pushing for an end to the war in Sierra Leone. As Nigeria became more forceful about withdrawing its forces from the country, regional and foreign leaders alike began to exert pressure on the president to come to a settlement. Kabbah was highly reluctant to engage in another round of peace talks with Sankoh, but with the looming departure of ECOMOG, he needed new peacekeepers and the international community would not provide any without a signed peace agreement (Gberie 2005). Meanwhile, in early July 1998, during a one-day ECOWAS meeting in Freetown, Jackson visited with Kabbah, where he was pivotal in securing Sankoh's release from prison in Nigeria (Denov 2010; *Economist* 1998). On 25 July, Sankoh was sent back to Sierra Leone by the new Nigerian government, where Kabbah insisted that he would stand trial for treason (Johnson 1998). Soon after, Sankoh appeared on national television where he called on his troops to respect a new ceasefire with the government, sustained by ECOMOG troops from Nigeria (Johnson 1998). That Jackson's mission of mercy to rehabilitate Sankoh was successful no doubt coincided with the sudden death of Nigerian dictator Sani Abacha in June. Mindful of Nigeria's tainted reputation and seeking to restore liaisons, Jackson warmly and publicly endorsed Abacha's successor, General

¹⁵⁹ As noted in chapter 3, the democratic intent of the people of Sierra Leone was made abundantly clear at the April 1999 national consultative conference. Unsurprisingly then that few (if any) of the Sierra Leoneans I interviewed remember Jesse Jackson with any fondness.

¹⁶⁰ In interview, President Kabbah supported Timmerman's account, and acknowledged that Jackson had leaned on him on behalf of Sankoh.

Abdulsalami Abubakar for “taking the right steps towards democracy” (*Tribune News Services* 1998).

Throughout Sankoh’s trial in October 1998, Jackson lobbied hard for clemency, appealing to Kabbah to spare Sankoh’s life, and urging the government to “reach out” to the RUF in the “bush battlefield” (Lizza 2000). This time, Jackson’s efforts were less fruitful. In late October, Sankoh was found guilty of seven counts of treason and sentenced to death (BBC 1998c). After the verdict, even as the RUF increased its attacks on civilians, Jackson continued to call for government negotiations with Sankoh. Whether oblivious to the RUF’s horrific actions or merely focused on the task at hand, “Jackson moved to sell the rebels as peacemakers” (Kamara 2000: n.p.) and touted Sankoh and his troops as holding the key to peace in Sierra Leone.

Jackson’s public relations campaign on behalf of the RUF opened up new venues for the Sierra Leonean rebels, at least in the US. Mere weeks after “Operation No Living Thing”—the RUF’s ruinous strike against Freetown that killed approximately 6,000 civilians—in February 1999, the US State Department invited RUF official spokesperson, Omrie Golley to Washington.¹⁶¹ Despite multiple reports of the rebels’ atrocities, Golley’s courteous welcome by the Americans served to legitimize the RUF’s position as a primary player in Sierra Leone politics. “The US bankrolled Golley to be the face of the RUF,” says Gberie.¹⁶² During this visit, Howard Jeter, US deputy assistant secretary of state for African affairs, mediated a telephone conversation between Golley and President Kabbah, and Golley also met with congressman Donald Payne, who subsequently wrote to Kabbah to elicit Sankoh’s release and urge him to negotiate with the RUF “without precondition” (Timmerman 2002; Lizza 2000).

Jackson and Golley’s promotional endeavours on behalf of the beleaguered rebel leader were rewarded on 18 April 1999, when Kabbah grudgingly released Sankoh from prison. In six short months, Sankoh went from facing certain death by hanging to freely strolling the streets of Freetown. In fact, Sankoh not only gained his freedom, he was granted mobility; the US State Department interceded on his behalf with the UN Security Council to lift his travel ban. The day of his release, Sankoh flew to Lomé, Togo to consult with his commanders on the possibility of peace talks (BBC 1999a).

While Sankoh’s freedom represented victory for Jackson, others claim this move cost Kabbah a resounding military victory. According to Sierra Leone ambassador Leigh, Kabbah had persuaded ECOMOG troops to launch a counterattack against the RUF that “would have demolished the RUF” (Timmerman 2002: 314) but Jackson intervened and the

¹⁶¹ Omrie Golley was a polished, UK-educated Sierra Leonean lawyer who became the palatable counterpart to Sankoh’s provincial and uncultured gaucheness. During negotiations, Golley not only acted as the RUF’s spokesman, he oversaw and drafted most of the rebels’ (evolving) positions at the negotiating table, and wrote nearly all Sankoh’s speeches. In 2005, Golley was arrested on charges of “destabilising the state” and was incarcerated for 22 months without trial. After drifting for several years in political exile, Kabbah pardoned Golley in 2007. As of 2015, Golley was Sierra Leonean Ambassador to South Korea.

¹⁶² Interview with Gberie.

attack was halted.¹⁶³ Penfold supports this claim, explaining that just before Lomé, ECOMOG was poised to launch a major offensive on the strategic cities of Lunsar and Makeni, in the RUF-dominated Northern province. “This was the plan and [we were] confident that Lunza would have fallen,” says Penfold. “This would have put the government in a stronger position politically and militarily.” Instead, Jackson sabotaged a well-planned military operation with a strong probability of success. “Jackson undermined a solution that had already been thought through,” says Penfold.¹⁶⁴

THE BODY SNATCHER

British diplomatic rancour notwithstanding, Jackson was pleased to have secured Sankoh’s freedom, but he remained irked by the State Department’s apparent indifference towards West Africa, and certain in the knowledge that he could move the peace process forward.¹⁶⁵ As a result, Jackson became increasingly present in the region through early 1999. With more than 5,000 delegates and 12 presidents on site, Jackson’s attendance at the 5th African African-American summit in Accra was to be expected (*PANA* 1999a).

A day into the conference, the morning of 18 May, Jackson—accompanied by a veritable entourage of State Department staff, American embassy representatives in Sierra Leone, his own aides, and those of Donald Payne—approached President Kabbah, who was walking with two ministers, and told him he had a US government helicopter standing by, and that he had arranged for Kabbah to meet Foday Sankoh in nearby Togo (Timmerman 2002; Rashid 2000).¹⁶⁶ Sensing Kabbah’s initial recalcitrance, Julius Spencer, Sierra Leone’s then information minister, recalls that Jackson tried to sell Kabbah on the apparent affability of the RUF, “His attitude was, these aren’t such bad guys, you should try to find a way to accommodate them.”¹⁶⁷ Although he was prone to acting without first consulting the State Department, here, Jackson was following US government direction. As an administration official said, the choices were Lomé or “chaos”, and that the goal of peace talks and (ultimately) an accord was to “end the killing, restore order, point a way forward” (Onishi & Perlez 2000)

Even so, Kabbah’s advisors were aghast by Jackson’s intention to have Kabbah immediately embark on peace talks. Sheka Mansaray, Kabbah’s national security advisor, claims, “having Kabbah go to Togo was a US idea” that was entirely coordinated by Jackson, which is why “Jackson took Sankoh to Lomé.”¹⁶⁸ Kabbah felt ambushed, but reluctantly agreed to accompany Jackson to Lomé, provided his aides—Spencer, justice minister Solomon Berewa and finance minister James Jonah—could accompany him.¹⁶⁹ At the airport, Kabbah attempted to board the helicopter with his three advisors, only to be told

¹⁶³ Both Leigh and Penfold’s account of the planned ECOMOG counterattack is compelling, but as the assault never took place, the certainty of its outcome cannot be proven. For nearly seven years, the RUF had proved that it could not be easily defeated by ECOMOG’s much larger force (Fortna 2008).

¹⁶⁴ Interview with Penfold.

¹⁶⁵ Interview with Penfold.

¹⁶⁶ According to observers present, Jackson’s entourage was in sway of Charles Taylor.

¹⁶⁷ Interview with Spencer.

¹⁶⁸ Interview with Sheka Mansaray, National Security Advisor (1998-2000) to President Tejean Kabbah, Freetown, Sierra Leone, 16 October 2012.

¹⁶⁹ The two ministers had long been outspoken in their opposition to a government deal with Sankoh.

that there was room for Kabbah, Berewa and Maxwell Khobe (ECOMOG's brigadier general for the Sierra Leone mission) and no one else. Julius Spencer and James Jonah were brusquely pushed off the steps of the aircraft and away from the runway, with Jackson insisting that Kabbah go ahead to Lomé immediately, "which is why some say that Kabbah was kidnapped by Jackson."¹⁷⁰

The distance between Lomé, Togo and Accra, Ghana is 190 kilometres, and the flight took little more than an hour. As the helicopter set down, a large contingent of international and domestic officials, along with a camera crew from the Togolese state television network were already waiting, but although the aircraft door opened, no one emerged. "There was an honour guard," says Penfold, "and Jackson thought it had been laid out for him."¹⁷¹ In fact, the formal welcome was for President Kabbah. As in most of coastal West Africa, Lomé's average May temperature is very warm, averaging about 35°C, and extremely humid. Jackson kept his fellow passengers seated in the sweltering helicopter and the assembled guests wilting on the tarmac for more than an hour until another helicopter coming from Accra and carrying a CNN camera crew, could record him deplaning, with Kabbah in tow (Timmerman 2002).

Separated from his top aides and dispatched to Lomé, Kabbah was given no choice but to face Sankoh and negotiate. After a few token minutes of photo opportunity at the airport, Jackson whisked Kabbah away to convene with Sankoh, who had already been in Lomé for a month, discussing peace options with senior members of the RUF (*AFP* 1999). Discussions took place in haste and in relative secrecy, with only a few people allowed in attendance. Solely Berewa, who was known as less hawkish and more compliant than his colleagues Spencer and Jonah, accompanied Kabbah.¹⁷² Although he had secured a coveted helicopter seat to Lomé, Spencer recalls that "not even Khobe could go to the meetings" that Jackson had set up ahead of time.¹⁷³

Spencer claims Jackson used "a classic negotiation technique" against Kabbah during the ceasefire talks, "Isolate the leader so he can't lean on his advisors for strength."¹⁷⁴ Isolating the leader is not a typical tactic in business or peace negotiations, but it is employed in hostage negotiations, where the preferred course of action is to "contain, isolate, and negotiate" with the hostage taker (Jones 2000).¹⁷⁵ In a true hostage taking situation, a negotiator—usually a junior law enforcement officer who lacks decision-making authority, which gives him the chance to buy time—will stall until the biological and human needs of the hostage taker forces him to negotiate and make concessions (Jones 2000). The negotiator's aim in sequestering the hostage-taker is to persuade him that he is utterly alone, "not in control of the situation," and to help build rapport with the negotiator as the only person who can resolve his predicament (Sargent 2013: n.p.). If we see Jackson as the hostage taker, and Kabbah as the hostage, then ordinarily, a third party would have acted to negotiate Kabbah's release. However, Jackson was at once the hostage taker and

¹⁷⁰ Interview with Spencer.

¹⁷¹ Interview with Penfold.

¹⁷² Interview with Penfold.

¹⁷³ Interview with Spencer.

¹⁷⁴ Interview with Spencer.

¹⁷⁵ In 97% of all cases, negotiations will ensure the safe release of hostages (Lanceley 2003).

negotiator, and that he was not seeking to negotiate Kabbah's safe release but his concessions towards the RUF. In hostage negotiations, the hostage taker often has leverage, but the negotiator can reclaim leverage by making the hostage taker feel "he is all alone in the world, and he needs the negotiator to get out of his problem" (Wagner in Sargent 2013). At Lomé, as both "hostage taker" and negotiator, Jackson had all the leverage, and the only person convinced of his isolation and vulnerability was Kabbah.

There is no evidence indicating whether Jackson's actions that day were meticulously planned or relatively spontaneous. However, the rapidity with which the meeting progressed suggests a certain amount of forethought and assuredness. "Initially, ECOWAS offered Lomé as a venue just for the RUF to dialogue among themselves," Penfold recalls. "Then suddenly, there's Jesse Jackson and it's a much wider meeting."¹⁷⁶ Within an hour of Kabbah's arrival at the presidential palace in Lomé he was presented a draft ceasefire agreement to sign.¹⁷⁷ Prior to Kabbah's arrival and following Jackson's direction, the Americans had clearly consulted with Sankoh as they drafted the document (Penfold 2012). Kabbah demurred but Jackson was insistent, and "low and behold" within 24 hours the world was presented with an endorsed ceasefire agreement.¹⁷⁸

Kabbah was not the only person to be bamboozled by Jackson's "aggressive diplomacy;" his actions "kindled resentment" among numerous members of the international community who were in Lomé (Rachid 2000: 30). Even so, the speed with which Jackson worked in Lomé was not exceptional, but rather characteristic to his leadership style, "when Jackson moves he moves fast, acts decisively and speaks with authority" (Yonge 1999). That Jackson came off as an aggressive negotiator may have been part of his competitive negotiating style, but this was possibly compounded by his cultural reference, in which Americans are often perceived as more aggressive because they engage in confrontational behaviour earlier in negotiations (Graham 1985). Similarly, speed in negotiations often appeals to Americans because they tend to equate speed with efficiency (Salacuse 2008). When Jackson acted decisively and spoke with authority, Kabbah likely perceived him as aggressive and pushy. Negotiators forecast outcomes depending on whether they give in or fight hard; based on their experience, negotiators will then develop "assertiveness expectancies," which serves to guide their future behaviour (Ames 2011). In his experience working with the UN, Kabbah did not typically engage in negotiations where participants bullied and brawled to get what they wanted, whereas Jackson was used to fighting hard and fighting to win (Foster 1987).¹⁷⁹

The ceasefire went into effect less than a week later, on 24 May, the day before official talks were scheduled between the government and the rebels.¹⁸⁰ Ever canny to the presence of the world media, observers recall that following the signing ceremony, Kabbah

¹⁷⁶ Interview with Penfold.

¹⁷⁷ Interview with Penfold.

¹⁷⁸ Interview with Spencer.

¹⁷⁹ Interviews with Mansaray and Spencer. Both state that Kabbah was not used to dealing with aggressive people like Jackson or stubborn, unyielding individuals like Sankoh.

¹⁸⁰ A small contingent of UN observers was ordered to monitor the terms of the ceasefire, including the opening of transportation routes to allow for food and medical aid to reach regions of the country that had been long cut off by the war (*BBC News* 19 May 1999).

and Sankoh held hands as Jackson intoned a prayer “for the crisis in Sierra Leone to be resolved” (*Sierra Leone News* 1999).

KABBAH THE LOSER: PERCEPTION AS REALITY

Inasmuch as the US sought to usher an end to the Sierra Leonean conflict, prior to the formal Lomé talks, Jackson had been told to step back from coddling the RUF and better articulate the concerns of the Department of State.¹⁸¹ Indeed, even as Jackson pushed Kabbah to lift Sankoh’s death sentence earlier in the year, the State Department had urged Jackson to refrain from overtly assisting the RUF. According to a 1998 briefing document by Susan Rice, Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs, Jackson was told, “Given its brutality and previous bad faith, we will continue to insist that the RUF would have to announce publically (and its actions reflect this statement) that there will be no further killing or mutilating of the civilian population before we would encourage negotiations.”¹⁸² Despite his handlers’ calls for moderation, up until and during the Lomé negotiations Jackson appeared to consistently ignore or wilfully reinterpret his instructions.

Soon after the January 1999 RUF attack on Freetown, Jackson received talking points for a telephone call to RUF spokesman Golley, which clearly directed him to question the RUF’s commitment to peace and order the rebels to halt their documented human rights abuses (Case ID: 20004266, in Timmerman 2002: 447). Jackson was told that for Lomé to be successful, the RUF had to begin conversing with the government “immediately and without preconditions”, while releasing all hostages, opening roads to humanitarian relief, as well as immediately ending its attacks on civilians and ECOMOG troops (Case ID: 20004266, in Timmerman 2002: 447). However, a redacted transcript of Jackson’s actual conversation (obtained by Timmerman through a Freedom of Information Act request) reveals that Jackson mentioned nothing of the sort. Instead, Jackson opened the call by assuring Golley, “he is anxious to do whatever [is necessary] to get peace” (Case ID: 200004266, in Timmerman 2002: 448). Rather than accusing the RUF of atrocities and charging them to take the aforementioned steps to ensure an agreement, Jackson merely encourages “all parties to get beyond process and get to [the] table” (Case ID: 200004266, in Timmerman 2002: 448). Vowing to “do all I can,” Golley was full of grace and appreciation, telling Jackson how “heartened” he was, that he was “grateful for the US role” and that he continued to seek Jackson’s “help and guidance” (Case ID: 200004266, in Timmerman 2002: 448).

Repeatedly during the Lomé negotiations, Jackson continued his pattern of arbitrarily redefining instructions, and pursued a bullish approach. Throughout, Jackson pressured Kabbah to negotiate with and concede to Sankoh and the RUF leadership. The isolation that Kabbah experienced during the ceasefire negotiations continued during formal talks. During discussions, “Jackson separated Kabbah from his men and allowed no one else with him,” reports Gberie. “Then they just leaned on him until he signed.”¹⁸³

¹⁸¹ Interview with former *New York Times* West Africa bureau chief, Nairobi, Kenya 22 August 2014.

¹⁸² Briefing memorandum from Susan Rice to Jesse Jackson, 5 November 1998, quoted in Timmerman 2002.

¹⁸³ Interview with Gberie.

It soon became clear that the RUF had a lengthy shopping list of concessions they wanted to wring from Kabbah. According to Mansaray, “Sankoh said Kabbah had to give him something to compensate for all the fighting.”¹⁸⁴ One of the RUF’s key requests was a number of cabinet positions in the transitional government. In the meetings the RUF had in the weeks leading up to the Lomé talks, the rebels had discussed and agreed on power sharing with the government. Before the formal talks began, several RUF commanders had already approached Kabbah, asking him “to grant a number of cabinet positions to Sankoh,” said Spencer, and confirmed, “This demand did not come as a surprise.” Before the very first meeting, both government and RUF negotiators “knew that Sankoh would accept nothing less” than significant representation in the Sierra Leonean government.¹⁸⁵

As the talks opened, the US government and Jackson appeared to be again working in tandem, with Rice noting at a May lecture, “the United States is pressing the rebels, the government and regional leaders to reach a swift cease-fire and comprehensive peace settlement in Sierra Leone” (Rice 1999). However, as discussions proceeded, at least one senior US diplomat stationed in West Africa perceived that Jackson was again overstepping his bounds, actively negotiating several terms of the peace agreement, when he had not been given the authority to do so.¹⁸⁶ When Rice, who wrote the briefing documents that were to direct Jackson, recalled events, she claimed, “We had not expected or planned that an agreement would be achieved in that time frame or that Jackson would have a role in it” (Rice in Timmerman 2002: 428).

Meanwhile, American support for the RUF was based on contradicting evidence. Penfold claims that the Americans, including Jackson, were working under the assumption that at the time of the Lomé talks the RUF controlled most of the country, and that the rebels “were supported by the masses.”¹⁸⁷ Conversely, Kabbah and the UK (Penfold included) believed that the government and rebels were evenly matched, with each controlling approximately 30 per cent of territory.¹⁸⁸ Journalist Lansana Gberie confirms this apportioning, saying, “The RUF controlled 30 to 40 per cent of the territory, and the government of Sierra Leone controlled 30 to 40 per cent, although most people thought that the RUF controlled more.”¹⁸⁹ Having reassessed this information in the years after the war, Gberie reaffirms the accuracy of this figure, but acknowledges, “Perception is everything and Kabbah had no army. This gave the RUF the perception of great strength.”¹⁹⁰ Moreover, even Kabbah’s senior ministers were convinced the government could not defeat the RUF. According to Mansaray, many Sierra Leoneans thought “that we could beat Sankoh militarily, but really, we couldn’t.”¹⁹¹

¹⁸⁴ Interview with Mansaray.

¹⁸⁵ Interview with Spencer.

¹⁸⁶ Interview with an unnamed US diplomat stationed in West Africa, 2 March 2010.

¹⁸⁷ Interview with Penfold. According to Bangura (2000), fully 70% of Sierra Leone’s territory was outside government control and the main highway leading from Freetown to the rest of the country was under RUF control when Sankoh flew to Lomé in April to begin talks with his field commanders.

¹⁸⁸ According to Penfold, the remaining 40% of territory was “no man’s land,” neither held by government or rebel forces.

¹⁸⁹ Interview with Gberie.

¹⁹⁰ Interview with Gberie.

¹⁹¹ Interview with Mansaray.

The Lomé talks did not rank high on the international community's pressing concerns in 1999; most of the world's attention was fixated on the Balkans, where NATO had launched airstrikes against Serbia after the government refused to sign a US drafted peace accord for Kosovo. As official talks began in Lomé, Jackson publically took the US administration to task for protecting Kosovo Albanians from Serbian persecution, while leaving Sierra Leone's war to be "fought in the dark" for seven years (Jackson in Onishi & Perlez 2000). Jackson's comments did succeed in redirecting some American attention to Sierra Leone, albeit with the caveat that US commitment to peace was commensurate with its will to keep American soldiers off the ground.

Jackson had never advocated American intervention in Sierra Leone in any case; like most other foreign observers and participants, he was more focused on bringing Sankoh and the RUF into the fold of legitimate politics to secure a working agreement. With few exceptions, Lomé participants believed that Sankoh was key to any kind of peace (Onishi & Perlez 2000). Jackson and the Americans' preoccupation with peace, regardless of the cost, was seen by some as an example of political expedience, and "seemed to be yet another indication of the US being unwilling to invest the political capital to ensure that a sustainable peace could be arrived at by incorporating the broader issues of human rights," said Janet Fleischman, then researcher for Human Rights Watch. "When you do that, you may have a short-term solution, but it will not buy you peace in the long run" (Onishi & Perlez 2000 n.p.).

All the same, few US officials registered disapproval of Jackson's plan to accommodate Sankoh by giving him a role in government. According to an unnamed administration staffer, only "three high-ranking officials,"—Harold Koh, assistant secretary of state for human rights, David Scheffer, ambassador at large for war crimes, and Julia Taft, assistant secretary of state for refugees—voiced an aversion to giving Sankoh a role in government (Onishi & Perlez 2000). While these were well-regarded bureaucrats, they still ranked well below other officials who favoured coddling Sankoh, including the Secretary of State.

While Lomé participants and observers sought to appease Sankoh, they also widely recognised him as unpredictable and mercurial. Spencer, President Kabbah's security advisor, freely maintains that Sankoh was "obnoxious" and admits, "I couldn't bear to be in the same room as him."¹⁹² Several participants at Lomé claimed that even Jackson felt he could not be sure that Sankoh would keep to his word in negotiations. Aside perhaps from members of his own team, few Lomé participants believed Sankoh to be balanced or dependable. However, nearly all wanted a swift resolution to the war. Although the Nigerians' threatened deadline to drawdown their troops was looming, Kabbah still had no functioning army to speak of, so for the sake of "political expediency and the pressure of the Nigerians to get out," the State Department decided to exploit Jesse Jackson's warm relationship with Taylor (Onishi & Perlez 2000). According to US government officials, Jackson leaned on Taylor to lean on Sankoh to go to Lomé, with the goal of securing a signed agreement (Onishi & Perlez 2000).

¹⁹² Interview with Spencer.

Taylor did not agree to assist his friend Jackson out of the goodness of his heart. Lending a helping hand towards resolving the Sierra Leone conflict gave Taylor the opportunity to play international statesman and wipe off some the dust of disrespectability that had settled over the Presidential mansion in Monrovia. Taylor joined Jackson in championing Sankoh, claiming that there could be no peace without the RUF (Kamara 2003). Then, as talks dragged on, Taylor weighed in, “The war in Sierra Leone must end now! Enough is enough” (*Concord Times* 1999e) and later vowed to “do everything humanly possible” to help resolve the conflict (*PANA* 1999c). Even after the Lomé accord was signed, Taylor continued to play the part of concerned friend and neighbour, securing the release of UN soldiers who had been taken hostage by the RUF, all while continuing to pocket the proceeds of the RUF-mined diamonds that continued to seep through his country’s porous borders.¹⁹³

It is surely true that Taylor’s “friendly” encouragement of Sankoh during Lomé contributed to his amenability and a ratified peace agreement. However, even Sankoh could not have anticipated the two final concessions that Jackson helped to secure on his behalf. It was Jackson’s idea to have Sankoh take official charge of the Commission for the Management of Strategic Resources, the government body created to oversee the diamond mines.¹⁹⁴ During the talks, the RUF had maintained control over the country’s mining region, and Sankoh had not considered taking the Chairmanship for himself when his troops already owned the mines’ bounty. Penfold asserts that the decision to offer Sankoh the Chairmanship was entirely engineered by Jackson, “No one [inside] could have conceived of such a thing,” Penfold exclaims. “The end result was just unbelievable.”¹⁹⁵ In effect, the position of Chairmanship was the political equal to the vice-presidency, which made Sankoh second only to Kabbah in the transitional government.

Jackson’s largesse cumulated when he introduced the idea of a full pardon for Sankoh.¹⁹⁶ A few days before Lomé was signed, on 12 June, Sankoh expressed concern about whether he would remain free upon his return to Sierra Leone in a telephone conversation with Jackson.¹⁹⁷ “Don’t worry, you are going to be free,” Jackson promised him, the “world will make it happen. You are going to be free and pardoned” (Case ID: 200004266, in Timmerman 2002: 449). There is no documentation supporting Jackson’s pledge, nor do any of the officials in attendance recall the US instructing Jackson to proffer a full pardon. Nonetheless, Jackson promised exactly that before encouraging Sankoh to speak to Joseph Melrose, then US ambassador to Sierra Leone, also in attendance at the Lomé talks, “if you need something.” According to Penfold, “Melrose was a Sankoh

¹⁹³ In addition to abetting and profiting from their neighbours’ war, Liberian authorities acknowledged that over 3,000 Liberian mercenaries also fought “on all sides” in Sierra Leone (*PANA* 1999). Interestingly, days before the Lomé agreement was signed, Taylor travelled to Libya to meet with Qaddafi, ostensibly to keep him apprised on the latest developments in the peace process (*PANA* 1999bb). The implications of Taylor’s visit indicate that Qaddafi (and Libya) was at least indirectly (if not overtly) involved with the politics of West Africa at this time, likely facilitating arms purchases for both Taylor and Sankoh.

¹⁹⁴ Interview with Penfold. Kabbah’s chief negotiator and minister of justice, Solomon Berewa, proposed the Commission itself.

¹⁹⁵ Interview with Penfold.

¹⁹⁶ Interview with Penfold.

¹⁹⁷ The transcript of this telephone call was unclassified and released in full as part of Timmerman’s (2002) Freedom of Information Act request.

apologist.”¹⁹⁸ The American diplomat had spent very little time in Sierra Leone until then, and his knowledge of the complexity of the situation was limited at best.¹⁹⁹ All the same, Jackson directed Sankoh to seek out Melrose, before again guaranteeing that the “world will know that yours is the biggest role. You will be free when this is over” (Case ID: 200004266, in Timmerman 2002: 449).

MUCH PRIDE, A SLIGHT STUMBLE, BUT NO FALL

Jackson alone did not secure the Lomé peace agreement, but it is unarguable that the great rewards reaped by the RUF, including Sankoh being elevated to the second most powerful political office in the country, were in no small part due to Jackson’s machinations. But while Sankoh and the RUF emerged from the war and peace talks triumphant, Jackson ultimately came to lose credibility with all Sierra Leoneans save the rebels themselves. The citizens of Sierra Leone felt utterly betrayed by the terms proffered to Sankoh and the RUF, and even within the Kabbah government, the final tally outraged many senior ministers.²⁰⁰

Jackson’s actions on behalf of Sankoh were not to be forgotten, and over the following months a groundswell of public resentment built. According to one analyst on the ground, “Rev. Jackson is considered a civil rights leader in America, but in Africa he is a killers’ rights leader” (Kamara 2000a: n.p.). Indeed, when Jackson stated plans to visit Sierra Leone the following year, he bid a hasty retreat when advisors warned him that his life would be in danger (*The Progress* 2000c).

Jackson achieved much both before and at Lomé, and his success in negotiations was in no small part due to his ego. As noted in Chapter 2, there are many ways that a person can demonstrate a lack of objectivity and bias in negotiations, the biggest of which is a person’s inflated sense of self, which results in egocentric bias. On one hand, a person’s pride is positively associated with perseverance and motivation to achieve their goals (Williams & Desteno 2008). However, individuals who are concerned with ego-enhancement and pride will often engage in competitive behaviour in order to maintain their self-esteem (Butt & Choi 2006). Going into Lomé, Jackson was both motivated and competitive. He “wanted to solve the war...to return triumphant,” says Gberie.²⁰¹ The more a negotiator is self-seeking, the less likely he is to come to an agreement (Thompson & Lowenstein 1992). That Lomé resulted in agreement was not because Jackson became any less self-seeking, but rather due to Kabbah being a cooperative negotiator who made concessions in the face of Jackson’s egocentric bullying. Throughout, Jackson demonstrated no particular finesse in negotiating or self-awareness, “he’s a showman and he didn’t know anything about the war in Sierra Leone,” says Mansaray. The “African Americans all felt that they should be allowed to handle Africa’s problems, but we didn’t take him seriously.”²⁰² Kabbah’s ministers were perhaps right in their assessment of Jackson’s lack of cultural insight, but

¹⁹⁸ Interview with Penfold.

¹⁹⁹ Interview with Penfold.

²⁰⁰ Interviews with Spencer, Mansaray, Penfold, and several members of civil society.

²⁰¹ Interview with Gberie.

²⁰² Interview with Mansaray.

this did not limit his abilities as a negotiator. In hindsight, the President's advisors ought to have ascertained Jackson's negotiating skills and considered these more seriously.

Jackson possibly picked up on the Sierra Leoneans' aspersion, and feeling challenged, he resorted to an ego-defensive position to sustain his status (Chopra 2014). In negotiation, this leads to competitive behaviour, negative views of one's opponent, and extreme attitudes (De Dreu & Van Knippenberg 2005). Initially, Jackson felt that working with the rebels would yield peace, but as time passed he became convinced that accommodating Sankoh and the RUF was the only means to achieve this end. This narrowing of parameters is not only an ego-defensive position, it is also an example of focusing failure and bounded awareness (Chugh & Bazerman 2005; 2007). For all these limitations, Jackson's behaviour had all the hallmarks of an accomplished negotiator working within the bargaining structures of the time.

Ultimately, the cease-fire that Jackson brokered disintegrated within six months. The lull in fighting provided by Lomé gave the RUF the opportunity to rearm and redeploy. With the modesty that only failure breeds, Jackson refuses to shoulder any responsibility for the policies he pushed at Lomé, and claims only that he helped to shape the peace agenda as a mere representative of US government policy (Timmerman 2002). Jackson maintains that all his actions were "on assignment for the US government" and that "until the UN got close to the diamond mines, everything was all right" (Jackson in Timmerman 2002: 311)

Jackson's appearance in and influence on the Lomé negotiations was unforeseen. When he was appointed the US president's chief envoy to Africa in 1997, few would have speculated that this vainglorious African-American politician with a penchant for shady business deals would have made peace in Sierra Leone his passionate pursuit. All the same, Jackson went on to become the RUF's highest-ranking apologist. Although he was not an official participant to the Lomé peace talks, Jackson's ambition and ego made him a fearsomely competitive negotiator who greatly influenced the outcome of the Lomé negotiations. Ultimately, Sierra Leone's measured and mild President Kabbah was no match for Jackson's forceful personality, his inability to listen, and his singleminded focus on a speedy resolution to the war. Jackson would stop at nothing to secure a win for himself, and focused with single-minded intent on his goal. Freeing Sankoh from prison, then rewarding him and the RUF with the apex of political power was a fair price to pay for personal victory. The next chapter scrutinizes the improbable warlord that Jackson fought so hard to elevate.

CHAPTER 5

DIAMONDS AND THE RUF

FODAY SANKOH

Leader of the Revolutionary United Front (RUF), 1991-2000

There are those who carry the mantle of power as though they are to the manor born. Tejan Kabbah was neither a fierce or forceful man, but his supporters never questioned his authority even when they doubted his judgement. Jesse Jackson was the son of an unwed, teenaged mother from the deep American south—hardly the most propitious of platforms—but his self-assuredness and capacity to command public attention were evident from a young age, as was his ego and arrogance. In contrast, there are men like Foday Sankoh—a coarse, portly, barely literate, inarticulate, low-ranking army officer, ex-convict, and itinerant wedding photographer—who improbably emerged as the polestar of Sierra Leone's nine-year orgy of torture, pillage and bloodshed.

This chapter charts the unforeseen rise of Foday Sankoh, leader of the Revolutionary United Front (RUF) through Sierra Leone's civil war, and his ultimate conquest at the Lomé peace negotiations. For the first half of his life, Sankoh was utterly unexceptional; he was not intellectually inclined, or especially likeable, and his decade and a half as a career soldier was unremarkable as to be forgettable. After several years in prison, however, Sankoh trod a different path, that of rancorous revolutionary. With the help of a few key friends along the way, the man and his movement soon became synonymous with savagery, terror and unhinged violence. Sankoh's rebels rampaged for more than eight years of bloodsoaked civil war, during which time his aims—beyond those of avarice and mayhem—were never entirely clear.

Sankoh's immediate goals from the Lomé peace process did not extend much further than his immediate desire to evade a looming death sentence. Supported by his tireless advocate Jesse Jackson, Sankoh soon realized that he controlled the balance of power and he began to exploit his leverage ruthlessly against a depleted opponent. For all his loathsome qualities, Sankoh's negotiating tactics yielded splendid dividends. Winning countless concessions, Sankoh is shown to be a fiercely competitive arbitrator, as well as being unreliable and dishonest. The RUF emerged from Lomé with the lion's share of the country's pickings and within months the agreement looked sure to fail.

Sankoh was born sometime in the early 1930s to peasant farmers from the Tonkolili area of the Northern Province, a relatively poor region known mostly for mining and subsistence agriculture. By his own recollection, Sankoh was stubborn, a bully, and often fought with other children (Gberie 2005); he completed primary school with only perfunctory intellectual foundations. He joined the army in 1956 at a time when the only people who voluntarily signed up for duty were poor and uneducated. The idea of the army being a public service was anathema, "The army was the place for those who could not make it into the civil service or any other white collar employment" (Gberie 2005: 40). However much he came to loathe the armed forces and sought to fight them to the death,

Sankoh remained employed by the army for fully 15 mediocre years, never moving above the rank of corporal.

In 1971, while working for Sierra Leone's national television station, Sankoh claims to have participated in the coup against Siaka Stevens by broadcasting the event. Sankoh had not participated in the actual planning or execution of the coup, but he was tried for not reporting the plot ahead of time and sentenced to seven years in prison (Dupuy & Binningsbø 2007). Released in 1978—the year Stevens imposed a one-party state—Foday was by then middle-aged, as well as penniless and deeply bitter.²⁰³ For no apparent reason, Sankoh moved to Bo (a town he had no history or connection with) and hired out his services as an itinerant portrait photographer. It was in Bo, Sankoh later claimed, that “he started ‘organising’ his ‘revolutionary movement’” (Gberie 2005: 45). In fact, Sankoh did little more than attend the occasional meeting hosted by former university lecturers and students bannered together under the auspices of the Pan-African Union (PANAFU), but he did meet numerous activists and radicals intent on overthrowing the state (Kandeh 2005). Although he was willing to listen and learn, Sankoh was “an action-oriented man, impatient with the slow process of acquiring knowledge and understanding of the situation which a military project entails” (Abdullah 2005: 218). If Sankoh was emphatically disinterested in reading about pan-African theory, he certainly nursed a grudge against those who had imprisoned him, and fantasised about seizing “power by any conceivable means” (Abdullah 2005: 218).

Against the backdrop of nationwide economic downturn in the 1980s, student protests made way for open talk of revolution. Radicals embraced an odd rhetoric of violence, ‘people power,’ pan-Africanism, and Muammar Qaddafi's Green Book ideology.²⁰⁴ Under Qaddafi, Libya had entered Sierra Leone in the mid-1970s using religion and money as a means to establish a political presence and further its foreign policy goal of “revolution.” Thin on political philosophy but flush with cash, part of this aim involved recruiting activists committed to radical change and sending them to training camps in the Libyan desert. In 1987, by virtue of his slack affiliation with PANAFU, Sankoh was among those selected to receive guerrilla training at Qaddafi's World Revolutionary Centre (WRC) near Benghazi (Abdullah 2005; Farrah 2011).

²⁰³ As of 1978, under Stevens, labour strikes and trade unions were outlawed. For months, university professors and students demonstrated violently across the country against Stevens and the APC; their actions were viciously suppressed, as was the media (Keen 2005). Sankoh held an abiding hatred towards Stevens, which he transferred to his successor, Joseph Momoh, and resolved to destroy the APC (Jackson 2007).

²⁰⁴ Qaddafi termed his political ideology, “Islamic socialism”, the key tenets of which can be found in his *Green Book*. Although the Libyan dictator saw himself as a statesman-philosopher, the *Green Book*, first published in 1975, is not much more coherent than the RUF's own political tract, *Foothpaths to Democracy*. Qaddafi endorses a blend of “utopian socialism, Arab nationalism, and Third World Revolutionary ideology...along with a streak of Bedouin supremacism” (Bazzi 2011: n.p.). Qaddafi claims to offer salvation from western-style democracy and communism by way of “mass democracy” where people govern themselves without the trappings of elections, political parties and popular representation. Pledging to his ideals, Qaddafi resigned from his official positions in 1977, and stated that Libyans would henceforth govern themselves through a network of people's committees. However, Libya was anything but free; popular congresses met irregularly according to their leader's fancy, and only ever affirmed Qaddafi's ambitions (Bazzi 2011).

For all the talk, there was little debate, and a clear lack of critical ideas. There was no organization or any leadership either. Sankoh and the loose collection of activists that went to Libya with him appeared not to have considered what action to take after training was complete. However, upon their return to Freetown in 1988, three formerly disconnected militants now formed a closely-knit group.²⁰⁵ Soon after, they moved away from the city to the rainforest near the Liberian border, which further linked them to Taylor's NPFL (Abdullah 2005).²⁰⁶

In time, this nameless and leaderless group grew in numbers and evolved into an insurgency. It is not known whether Charles Taylor and Sankoh were close in Benghazi, but by mid-1989, they were united enough in their desires to overthrow their respective governments that Sankoh had agreed to assist Taylor "liberate" Liberia, in exchange for a base from which Sankoh could launch his own revolution.²⁰⁷ At this time, the itinerant militia christened itself the Revolutionary United Front/Sierra Leone, and while the organisation remained without formal leadership, Sankoh became its spokesman (Abdullah 2005). However, less than two years later, when the RUF crossed the border from Liberia and entered the town of Bomaru—its first notable conquest—on 23 March 1991, Sankoh was no longer just the public voice of the organisation, he was also its leader (Abdullah 2005).²⁰⁸

The nascent RUF comprised troops that had received military training in Libya and fought with the NPFL in Liberia, as well as untrained combatants who were Sierra Leonean citizens residing in Liberia, and seasoned NPFL fighters from Liberia on loan to the RUF (Abdullah 2005). The Sierra Leoneans recruited in Liberia were mostly political exiles and economic refugees (Richards 1996). An influx of an educated elite might have added an ideological component to the group. However, Abdullah (1998: 207) refutes this, asserting instead that the Sierra Leoneans living in Liberia that were recruited to or joined the RUF's cause were "lumpen" school dropouts, petty criminals, and disaffected agricultural workers or miners. No intellectuals of note joined the ranks of the RUF, and the organisation did not develop a coordinated affinity with the rural peasantry. "Richards paints a picture of a well-meaning liberal movement," Penfold adds, "but I could never buy that. Maybe the RUF started off like that, but it was dissipated by its subsequent leadership. There was no great philosophy of movement."²⁰⁹ Considering that the RUF did not evolve and acquire the "ideology, organisation and discipline, which mark revolutionary movements in Africa or elsewhere" (Abdullah 2005: 222), Abdullah's claim appears more likely than Richards'.

²⁰⁵ All trained in Libya. Foday Sankoh, Abu Kanu, and Rachid Mansaray became the founding members of the RUF.

²⁰⁶ Recall that Sankoh met Taylor while undergoing military training in Libya. Sankoh, Kanu and Mansaray travelled extensively through Liberia and Sierra Leone from the time they returned from Benghazi until the beginning of the war (March 1991), ostensibly seeking support and the means to "further their "revolutionary" objectives" (Abdullah 1998: 220).

²⁰⁷ It's not known if Sankoh himself fought alongside the NPFL during 1989 and 1990, but other RUF members were active militarily in Liberia (Abdullah 2005).

²⁰⁸ Interestingly and probably not coincidentally, exactly twenty years earlier, on 23 March 1971, Sankoh delivered a speech to a number of his fellow soldiers in the Sierra Leone Army, presenting his views on an alleged coup plot, for which he was subsequently arrested, tried and imprisoned (TRC 2004).

²⁰⁹ Interview with Penfold.

The RUF may have possessed neither ideology, organisation, or discipline, but they did share a general revolutionary understanding that the use of force to achieve power was not only desirable, but also mandatory. However, the rebels' use of force quickly dissolved into uncontrolled violence, which morphed into a widespread tactic of terrorising the very people it claimed to be liberating.²¹⁰ According to Abdullah, the rampant use of torture, mutilation, and rape are incompatible with a revolutionary project; that such acts were systematically perpetuated by the RUF and became part of the movement's culture reflects its lack of a "concrete programme of social transformation" (Abdullah 2005: 223). Indeed, Abdullah claims the only other "movement with revolutionary pretensions comparable to the RUF was the NPFL" (Abdullah 2005: 223).²¹¹ Both groups emerged from the same cultural environment, recruited members with the same profile, and they used the same tactics of "indiscriminate use of drugs, forced induction and violence," to achieve power (Abdullah 2005: 223).

It is unclear whether the RUF's embrace of human rights atrocities was a direct result of Sankoh's initial leadership and vision for his organisation. What little there is of the man's personal insight and organisational doctrine can be found in *Footpaths to Democracy: Towards a New Sierra Leone*, a haphazard pamphlet of little literary merit, filled with various quotes by Mao Zedong, Amílcar Cabral, and Sankoh himself.²¹² The sum of these does not yield a theory or vision, but does offer some understanding of the RUF's fighting experiences and abiding relationship with the forest:

Initially, we fought a semi-conventional war relying heavily on vehicles for mobility. This method proved fatal against the combined fire power of Nigeria, Guinea and Ghana...Frankly, we were beaten and on the run...We dispersed into smaller units...We now relied on light weapons and on our feet, brains and knowledge of the countryside (*Footpaths to Democracy* 1995: n.p.).

Much of Sierra Leone's countryside is steamy, dense rainforest, and while the rebels' brains may often have been in question, their knowledge of the forest never was in doubt. The RUF launched its operations from a Liberian forest outpost and, at the outset, recruited almost exclusively from subsistence farmers and miners hailing from the same contiguous rainforest shared by Liberia, Sierra Leone, Guinea and Côte d'Ivoire. Conditions ranged from unpleasant to utterly miserable, but throughout the war the forest was ever a haven for RUF troops. They knew its recesses far better than either the inept national armed forces or the able mercenaries.

The rebels soon developed a most effective defence tactic of retreating to the forest when under relentless attack, where old troops would rest, while new ones were recruited.

²¹⁰ Abdullah (2005) remarks on the deep similarities between the RUF and the Mozambican National Resistance or RENAMO—a counter-revolutionary movement created to sabotage the Mozambican revolution, which continued to commit atrocities even after it reinvented itself as a political party committed to liberation and democracy. Both movements shared a propensity for "wanton" violence against women and children, theft and destruction of the economy, as well as terrorising rural populations (Abdullah 2005).

²¹¹ Led by Charles Taylor, the activities of the National Patriotic Front of Liberia (NPFL) and its leader are explored in chapter 9.

²¹² An agricultural engineer and writer influenced by Marxism, Amílcar Cabral led the nationalist movement of Guinea-Bissau and Cape Verde Islands, and the war of independence in Guinea-Bissau.

The RUF's tract over-romanticises the forest, but accurately acknowledges its importance to their movement:

We moved deeper into the comforting bosom of our mother earth—the forest. The forest welcomed us and gave us succour and sustenance. The forest continues to be our main source of survival and defense to date (*Footpaths to Democracy* 1995: n.p.).

Whenever the RUF withdrew to the forests, observers would assume the rebels were gravely wounded, if not entirely beaten, when in fact they simply sought rest and reinforcement in its embrace.

Sankoh spearheaded the RUF's knowledge and tactical exploitation of the forest and built his military and political legitimacy accordingly. "When he was in Freetown, or in an environment where he wasn't in control, Sankoh was quiet, docile even" Spencer recalls. "Take him to the bush somewhere and it was a completely different story."²¹³ In the forest, Sankoh "was in complete control of his men," says Mansaray. "No one could do anything at all without his go-ahead."²¹⁴ At the outset of the war, and as his troops gained in numbers and battlefield victories, Sankoh was seen as both convincing and charismatic. Sankoh may have lacked the finesse of more traditional politicians, but even Kabbah's government recognised his other charms. Mansaray recalls, "This was a man of whom it was said, 'he could sell you a used car to replace your new one.'"²¹⁵ While not particularly intelligent, Sankoh was nonetheless cunning and ruthless, as well as magnetic and warm when the whim suited him. Writing on the political psychology of leaders, Post's partial description of Slobodan Milosevic also applies to Sankoh, his "charm is rooted in deception, for his charm is malignant" (Post 2004:179). That Sankoh's charm was grounded in deception is key to understanding his duplicitous behaviour throughout the war and most particularly during peace negotiations.

Capitalising on his popularity and the RUF's initial battlefield victories, Sankoh sought to consolidate his power by executing the RUF's two other founding members on trumped up charges. Abu Kanu (failing to follow instructions and conniving with the enemy, August 1992) and Rashid Mansaray (technical sabotage, or failing to defend a strategic position against the enemy, November 1993) had both trained with Sankoh in Libya and had accompanied him during itinerant years of wandering prior to the formation of the RUF and the launch of the war (Abdullah 2005). Both men were popular with their troops, contributed with Sankoh on strategy, and neither fully endorsed the violent terror tactics employed by the RUF; either could have contested Sankoh's leadership (Abdullah 2005).²¹⁶ There was no residual fealty towards the brothers who had fought at his side for years; Kanu and Mansaray were threats. Sankoh was hardly the first warlord to ruthlessly destroy budding opposition in order to secure his own status. He evidently recalled the effectiveness of this tactic, as he subsequently came to employ a similar strategy throughout

²¹³ Interview with Spencer.

²¹⁴ Interview with Mansaray.

²¹⁵ Interview with Mansaray.

²¹⁶ Abdullah (2005) claims that Kanu did not use unnecessary violence against civilians in the areas under his control and one of the reasons with Mansaray was killed was because he opposed the indiscriminate killing of innocent civilians.

the war and at the negotiation table—treating Kabbah, government and ECOMOG forces, along with blameless citizens, as opponents requiring extermination.

A QUEST FOR CHANGE, OR AN EXCUSE FOR PILLAGE AND DISORDER?

Initially, however, the Sierra Leonean public was not entirely adverse to the RUF's desire to overthrow the widely despised APC government. While Sankoh was never able to articulate more than general querulous discontent, this was something most of the population shared at the time, and he used people's antipathy to bolster his claim to popular support. "I did not start a war," Sankoh insisted, "It is a people's struggle" (Gberie 2005: 46). But the RUF never grew into a genuine populist movement. The savage cruelty and vice of its fighters saw to that. Within a year, "The RUF's main power lay in its armed fighters," says Gberie. "They had no popular support."²¹⁷ The rebels may have lacked for popular support, but this did not stop them from effectively tormenting the country's citizens, domineering the government, and besieging ECOMOG's troops for years.

Sankoh's vision was a broadly sketched, facile quest for change. The RUF claimed to be fighting for political reform and equality. "You ask me about my war aims. Everyone knows what Sierra Leoneans want," Sankoh declared, "free education, free health care, proper use of our natural resources, provision of basic necessities which the politicians have denied them. That's what the people's struggle is all about" (Gberie 2005: 46). Considering his troops' habit of forcibly recruiting children to his ranks, it is ironic that Sankoh professed an abiding commitment to education. All the same, eight years into civil war, few had any sense of Sankoh's revolutionary ideology or his troops' motivations, aside from incontrovertible evidence of greed. "Initially, the RUF saw themselves as having revolutionary ideas," says Gberie. "They wanted change."²¹⁸ But as years passed, Sankoh and his combatants were known for nothing but battlefield atrocities, widespread terror, destruction and plunder.

Beyond refining their use of cruelty and torture, the rebels' battlefield tactics did not evolve much over the war. The RUF was fundamentally a guerrilla fighting force whose strength remained limited to Sierra Leone's rural geography of densely forested hills. Sankoh had not trained or equipped his troops in conventional warfare, and despite repeated gains in rural regions, they were consistently unable to overcome the ECOMOG forces that protected most urban centres (Gershoni 1997). Until 1996, Sankoh's troops had been repelled repeatedly from entering Freetown by the predominantly Nigerian and Guinean troops comprising ECOMOG, as well as Executive Outcomes' mercenary forces. Moreover, Executive Outcomes and the loosely organised Civil Defense Forces (CDF) had proven that the RUF was hardly invincible, even in the rural regions where they were thought to hold sway. Kabbah's ministers knew that the RUF's war tactics were profoundly unpopular and finite. "The RUF ruled by terrorising everyone, including their own troops," says Spencer, noting that after a surge of volunteers in the first year or two of

²¹⁷ Interview with Gberie. The RUF's lack of popular support was evident in its recruitment tactics; the rebels could never enlist enough voluntary draftees and so resorted to kidnapping and using child soldiers to further their cause.

²¹⁸ Interview with Gberie.

fighting, nearly all rebel fighting forces were forcibly conscripted.²¹⁹ However, instead of seeing these limitations as fallibilities to exploit, the government was as terrorised by the RUF as the rest of the country's population.

While the RUF's battlefield tactics of lawlessness and carnage became widely known and greatly feared, few could claim much knowledge of the rebels' leader. Unlike many revolutionaries who would not hesitate to speak into a camera or microphone, or gather and rouse the passions of large crowds, Sankoh was most frequently described as "elusive." His voice was heard only rarely in radio messages to the Red Cross, and he was never photographed (French 1996).²²⁰ Short and squat, Sankoh was not a physically imposing man, nor was he a natural orator. Reporters and politicians recall him as soft-spoken and inarticulate, building sentences "with almost painful deliberation" (French 1996).²²¹ When he did speak publicly, Sankoh would invariably cite the myriad slights—some real, many imagined—that caused him to mount civil war (French 1996).²²² While paranoid and suspicious thoughts regularly occur in over 10 per cent of the population, persecutory delusions are common symptoms of psychosis (Freeman & Garety 2006). During the course of the war, Sankoh was not treated for any kind of mental illness, although his mental health was frequently questioned (see below).²²³ However, when Sankoh was imprisoned again, shortly after Lomé, his mental state rapidly deteriorated to such an extent that he could no longer reason or speak. As indicated by persecutory delusions, I suggest that Sankoh had at least some propensity towards psychiatric illness and that his mental well being was likely weakened over an extended period of time, and that this would have somewhat influenced his actions during the war, and certainly in the course of negotiations.

By 1995, the RUF had been marauding through the Sierra Leonean countryside for four and a half years, but outside the country, little was known about Sankoh, save that he led an "an enigmatic guerrilla movement that has never publically put forth a coherent program or ideology" (French 1995). Sankoh was evasive, remaining almost exclusively in the rainforest, and rarely appearing in public. One of the few journalists to spend extended time in Sierra Leone during the war, Howard French, noted that Sankoh came across as having a dual or Jekyll and Hyde personality. Various foreign hostages who had been held captive for extended periods, forced to accompany rebels during their military campaigns, saw Sankoh as a kind of "naive humanist" (French 1995: n.p.). One businessman who was

²¹⁹ Interview with Spencer.

²²⁰ The few photographs that exist of Sankoh were taken at public events such as peace negotiations.

²²¹ Interview with Spencer.

²²² Although he had served seven years in prison for ambiguous charges, Sankoh always appeared to be more disgruntled by the coup masterminds who had not made him part of their inner circle than he was towards his wardens (French 1996).

²²³ There is no direct evidence suggesting that Sankoh consumed various illicit substances, although throughout the 1980s, the use of drugs was common and ritualised among student activists, and "those who did not use drugs were excluded from radical politics" (Rosen 2005: 81). One can infer that it is quite possible that Sankoh was at least an occasional drug user. The use of drugs and alcohol among the RUF is widely documented. Former director of Children Associated with War, Dr. Edward Nahim, claims that drug use was "out of control" among the RUF, "and largely accounted for much of the violent barbarism of the RUF" (Gberie 2005: 149). If Sankoh were a regular drug user—a suggestion not beyond the realm of possibility—this would have also factored into his mental health and behaviour.

held for four months said the French Revolution inspired Sankoh; he wanted to abolish the army, hold multiparty elections, and distribute wealth to those people that had been robbed by the government (French 1995). Certainly, in his ardent defence and recasting of Sankoh, idealistic naivety is part of the image Jackson sought to portray of the rebel leader. Others, namely Sierra Leonean citizens who had been victimised by the rebels, saw a man who was callously vicious in the style of a “Pol Pot extremist, without the well-defined ideology” who would not hesitate to decapitate children and burn a village to the ground on nothing more than a whim (French 1995: n.p.).

People with a predilection toward sociopathy or psychopathy are often described as having a Jekyll and Hyde personality. In Robert Louis Stevenson’s 19th century novella, Dr Jekyll is a decent and kind man who lives with integrity. Jekyll’s alter ego is the cruel and deceptive Mr. Hyde who metes out remorseless violence at every turn. Sankoh has been frequently described as a psychopath, including by Dr. Edward Nahim, Sierra Leone’s only psychiatrist and Lillian Wong, then with the UK Foreign and Commonwealth Office, who noted,

The psychology of rebel leaders or warlords, is...important. Both Sankoh and Taylor had personal grievances, there was nothing ideological about them. They were criminals in alliance with each other... Sankoh has proved to be a cheat and a liar... Neither is interested in governing in any conventional sense... The RUF, composed of semiliterates at best and illiterates, could not articulate their grievances and demands at the Peace Talks in 1996 and 1999. Some concerned but well educated Sierra Leoneans attended the talks and interpreted what they believed the RUF stood for, but they were wrong. They put a romantic gloss on a very brutal group of people... (Wong 2003: n.p.).

Chief among those to romanticise Sankoh and the RUF, or at least scour away the worst of their muck, was Jackson.²²⁴ Others remained unconvinced. Having watched the rebels and their leader for several years, the former British High Commissioner recalls, “I was never prepared to play Sankoh’s game. His was the way of a bully.”²²⁵ Sankoh bullied the nation’s politicians and foreigners alike, but he had a potent personal hold over his men, “The RUF was a cult,” says Penfold, “And Sankoh was its messianic leader.”²²⁶ To the abducted children who fought to the death daily for him, Sankoh was at once father and deity. But to the sceptic, a warlord’s actions speak far louder than his words. Never known to be a persuasive orator, Sankoh’s actions were nonetheless blaring and unmistakable. “Anyone who looks at the RUF in search of what they represent,” Gberie says, “will find the answer to who they are in what they do.”²²⁷

²²⁴ Jackson was an unabashed apologist for Sankoh, but his colleagues in the US government did not paint Sankoh with the same glowing superlatives. In one of his more hyperbolic moments, Jesse Jackson compared Sankoh to Nelson Mandela, whereas Richard Holbrooke, then US Ambassador to the UN, described the RUF as “a bunch of ragtag machete-wielding murderers” (*The Economist* 18 May 2000).

²²⁵ Interview with Penfold.

²²⁶ Interview with Penfold.

²²⁷ Interview with Gberie.

AN INSINCERE AND DUPLICITOUS OPPONENT

Four years into the war, Sierra Leone was a failed state dissolving further into anarchy. The government itself admitted that at least 20 per cent of its soldiers were disloyal to the state (Gberie 1997).²²⁸ Lest the casual observer think that the rebels took the prize for wartime atrocities, in a press statement President Strasser acknowledged his own armed forces' wrongdoings and characterised the situation as "nothing short of banditry, looting, maiming and raping" (Strasser 1994: n.p.). Although ECOMOG troops had been sent to support the ineffectual army, the country was out of control. Strasser then made what was arguably the best decision of his presidency. At the behest of Branch Energy, a mining company with interests in Sierra Leone diamond deposits, Strasser hired controversial South African mercenary outfit, Executive Outcomes, which offered its services in exchange for future mining concessions (Rubin 1997).

Executive Outcomes rapidly proved the RUF's fallibility, as the rebels suffered their first real battlefield losses at the hands of the mercenaries. Working with ECOMOG, Executive Outcomes brought the RUF to heel by the end of 1995. The war was not over, but the RUF retreated to the rainforest long enough for the *junta* to conduct the elections it had promised when it first seized power. Disastrously, Strasser's blundering attempts to transform himself into a civilian candidate caused him to be deposed by his own deputy, Julius Bio, in January 1996 (Gberie 2005). The RUF might have eased its attacks in the face of the mercenaries' offensive, but they remained unanimously opposed to the 1996 elections, and they promised to do their utmost to disrupt the proceedings. Journalists and politicians alike realised the RUF wanted to rid the country of the multi-party system altogether, but did not know to what end.²²⁹ In an effort to upset the polls, during the weeks preceding the elections, rebels amputated the limbs of scores of civilians, including infants and children (*Human Rights Watch* 1998). Nonetheless, indicating the waning power of rebel and *sobel* forces alike, the vote went ahead in relative stability, and Ahmed Tejan Kabbah emerged as President.²³⁰

Peace talks between the RUF and the government had already begun under Bio, and soon after the elections, Kabbah was at the negotiating table in Abidjan. There is no doubt that the RUF learned from the NPFL's experiences with repeated failed peace agreements in Liberia.²³¹ Proclaiming an irrefutable commitment to peace, Taylor would attend frequent peace talks, while having his troops regroup in the forest to plan their next tactical move. Sankoh did the same at Abidjan. Beyond his regular pronouncements on peace, Sankoh was known for a fondness of luxury while at the talks. Overcompensating for years of privation during prison life and jungle dwelling, Sankoh's demands and excesses at Abidjan became one of the hallmarks of the negotiations.²³² Participants were certain that a taste of *la dolce vita* would dissuade Sankoh from returning to the bush. "Every

²²⁸ This is undoubtedly a very conservative estimate; according to Abdullah & Rashid (2004), fully 80 per cent of the Sierra Leonean army defected to the rebels in 1997

²²⁹ Interviews with Kabbah, 2011 and Gberie.

²³⁰ Coined during the war, the term *sobel*, meaning soldier by day and rebel by night, encapsulates the activities of much of the Sierra Leonean armed forces.

²³¹ As discussed later in this chapter, the RUF's actions during the Lomé negotiations mirrored those used by Taylor and the NPFL throughout the Liberian civil war.

²³² Interviews with Mansaray and Spencer.

chateaubriand he eats will be a meal for peace,” said one Western diplomat, optimistically justifying the exorbitant costs of the talks (French 1996: n.p.). Clearly inspired by Qaddafi, Sankoh also took to surrounding himself with a coterie of adoring, beautiful female “bodyguards” (Gberie 2005).

Whatever he thought of Sankoh’s loucheness away from the table, Kabbah negotiated at Abidjan as though he believed Sankoh to be serious about peace. Others were less sure. “How naïve Kabbah was, I can’t say,” tells Penfold. “Either way, Sankoh was not the kind of person Kabbah was used to dealing with as a UN official.”²³³ However elusive Sankoh was in wartime, during peace talks, he was consistently described at insincere and patently dishonest. As a former senior-level executive in an international organisation, Kabbah was not a complete stranger to conflict resolution and should have recognised that most negotiations involve a certain amount of deception, in which a certain amount of “puffing” and “embellishment” is to be expected (Steele 1986). However, Kabbah himself was not the adept poker player negotiations require. Kabbah himself admitted that he never sought to mislead his opponent and was more fair and truthful than the process required.²³⁴

Negotiations require some obfuscation; indeed, the difference between successful and negotiators and those who are not “lies in this capacity both to mislead and not to be misled” (White 1980: 927). In this respect, Sankoh far surpassed Kabbah. Familiar with the extreme competitive tactics of hardened battlefield combat, Sankoh did not appear to be constrained by personal ethics and had no trouble whatsoever deceiving Kabbah while questioning his integrity at every intersection. Lacking the same capacity for duplicity, Kabbah claims he was never anything but forthright. He was also frequently incapable of imagining that Sankoh might be utterly unscrupulous and indifferent to the misery and suffering his actions caused.²³⁵

Sankoh was perfectly aware of the anguish his movement caused, but he was so blinded by the righteousness of his cause—however vague and disjointed—that he could not generate either care or empathy. When asked about the atrocities his men were accused of committing, Sankoh responded with a smile, “When two lions or elephants are fighting, who is going to suffer? The grass, of course. I cannot deny it” (French 1996: n.p.). It was his most telling statement.

Where the RUF’s 1995 political tract *Footpaths to Democracy*, borrowed heavily from Mao and Cabral, the following year, Sankoh claimed his role model to be Bai Bureh, a 19th-century Sierra Leonean mystic who led a rebellion against British rule (French 1996).

²³³ Interview with Penfold. Recall that Kabbah was a political outsider who had spent much of his career overseas, rising through the ranks of the UN. He was certainly not familiar with the duplicitous tactics of warlords such as Sankoh.

A further note on this respondent to the Sierra Leone case study: Peter Penfold supported Kabbah as Sierra Leone’s democratically elected President, but he was in no way an indiscriminate acolyte. Penfold was overtly critical of the Lomé peace process and of Kabbah’s choices in particular. As a diplomatic representative of the UK, Penfold surely had his own personal and professional biases, but he also retained sufficient distance to be considered a diverging perspective.

²³⁴ Interview with Kabbah 2012.

²³⁵ Interview with Mansaray and Penfold.

Sankoh was particularly roused by Bureh's moniker *Kebalai*, meaning "one who never tires of war" (*The Patriotic Vanguard* 2008; see also Reed & Robinson 2012). With one hand Sankoh signed the Abidjan Accord on 20 November 1996, while his mouth was giving orders to mount a new insurrection.

Sankoh never had any intention of keeping to the terms of the Abidjan Agreement.²³⁶ But he did reap the benefits of appearing to be a "team player." Abidjan was the site of the inaugural official peace negotiations between the government and RUF and, for the first time, Sankoh and the RUF gained (grudging) credibility with the international community, if only as the gatekeepers to peace. No sooner had the accord been signed, than the RUF sentinels vacated their post. Within days of endorsing peace, Sierra Leone intelligence intercepted a message from Sankoh to RUF field commander, Sam Bockarie, in which he told Bockarie to ignore the agreement, that he had no intention of satisfying its terms, that he had only signed the accord to abate the pressure he was under from the international community, and urged him to continue military action (Berewa 2011: 121).

Sankoh signed the Abidjan Accord "purely to give the RUF time to regroup," claims Penfold.²³⁷ Certainly, regrouping was one RUF aim at Abidjan, but the other was to ensure the departure of Executive Outcomes. This was proven when, within four months, Kabbah's government was overthrown in a coup orchestrated by Johnny Paul Koroma and the Armed Forces Revolutionary Council (AFRC). While the RUF quickly engaged in a partnership with the AFRC, Sankoh and his men did not plan or participate in the coup, it was evident to all but Kabbah that the departure of the mercenaries would leave a military vacuum in the country. The RUF needed only to wait for it to be filled.²³⁸

The AFRC coup buried the Abidjan Accord. Soon after, Sankoh was named the *junta*'s Deputy President, but the title was little more than show. Sankoh posed no imminent threat to Koroma's leadership. Prior to the coup, in March, Sankoh had been captured by the Nigerians and had been incarcerated since.²³⁹ Just as Kabbah was forced to relocate to Conakry by the *junta*, Sankoh was also out of the country in a kind of exile.

²³⁶ In addition to the formal peace agreement, Sankoh and Kabbah were to sign a second document requesting the UN to deploy peacekeepers to Sierra Leone. Although Kabbah signed, Sankoh "refused or declined to sign by making himself unavailable" (Berewa 2011: 120). Immediately after signing the Abidjan Accord, Sankoh quickly exited the hotel and disappeared. Berewa went to find Sankoh in his hotel room and at his Abidjan compound, but he was nowhere to be found and the document remained unsigned (Berewa 2011). Sankoh's disappearing act was no accident; he knew that if UN peacekeepers could not be sent to Sierra Leone, a key aspect of the accord could not be completed.

²³⁷ Interview with Penfold.

²³⁸ Almost immediately, the RUF revealed itself as the dominant partner in its alliance with the AFRC and effectively controlled the seat of government. Koroma became a virtual hostage to the RUF. At a meeting in May, RUF combatants tore the insignia off the AFRC's army uniforms to show them who was truly in command (Gberie 2005). Increased violence and chaos prompted many Sierra Leoneans (particularly those living in Freetown) to leave the country, often seeking refugee in neighbouring Guinea, Liberia, and Côte d'Ivoire. In the three months following the coup, over 400,000 people fled the country, more than during the previous last six years of wartime (Gberie 2005).

²³⁹ Sankoh was arrested at the Lagos airport for carrying firearms while attempting to enter Nigeria (Keen 2005).

Sankoh was only extradited to Sierra Leone in July 1998, when he was quickly tried and found guilty of treason.²⁴⁰

On 23 October 1998, Sankoh was sentenced to death for treason by the Sierra Leone High Court (*BBC* 2002). Two days later, in apparent retaliation, RUF troops tore through the Northern town of Alikalia, beheading and amputating numerous civilians, as well as rounding up another 48 people, locking them into hut and blowing them up with explosives (*AFP* 1998). Government records indicate that the US was aware of the RUF's attacks at this time. On 21 October, in a plea for increased awareness and some form of intervention, Senator Spencer Abraham warned that Sankoh's deputy intended to launch "Operation Spare No Soul" in reprisal for Sankoh's trial, with the RUF vowing to kill "every living thing, including chickens" (Abraham 1998: n.p.). Additionally, the media was filled with dire reports of new RUF terror tactics, including immersing victims' limbs in boiling oil (MacJohnson 1998). Whether indifferent to peoples' suffering or hoping to assuage it by ending the war, Jackson's motivations were unclear. Jackson's actions, however, were less obscure and he continued his campaign to liberate Sankoh.

On behalf of Kabbah's government in exile, in October 1997 ECOWAS brokered Sierra Leone's next fated peace accord in Conakry.²⁴¹ The Conakry plan made way for an end to the fighting and the restoration of Kabbah's constitutional government (Conakry Accord 1997). The UN supported the Conakry Accord, labelled the coup perpetrators war criminals and placed a travel ban on leading members of the RUF and AFRC (Francis 2000). With ECOMOG troops fighting on behalf of the Sierra Leonean government, the *junta* did not perceive ECOWAS as an impartial mediator. Moreover, the agreement did not provide any mechanisms to oversee its implementation or ensure compliance. As a result, Koroma refused to allow ECOMOG to disarm any former government soldiers or RUF rebels. Eclipsed and domineered by the RUF, the AFRC reneged on the agreement, which in turn gave ECOMOG reason to forcibly engage its troops until it beat back the *junta* and restored Kabbah's government in March 1998.

With Sankoh behind bars, the rebels continued to fight, although few—including senior cabinet ministers—knew who was formally in command. *Sotto voce*, some claimed Liberia's Charles Taylor was ultimately controlling Sierra Leone's rebel forces. While few could deny the close ties between Taylor and the RUF, Kabbah and his cabinet believed that Sankoh was still directing rebel operations, with Sam "Mosquito" Bockarie carrying out his plans.²⁴² However, Bockarie was known to be on excellent terms with Taylor, frequently travelling to Liberia to deliver diamonds to Taylor, while also seeking his advice (Sesay 2009).²⁴³ Claims that Taylor had control over the RUF and that rebel commanders were taking his orders gained credence when Bockarie returned from a trip to Liberia in

²⁴⁰ Sam "Mosquito" Bockarie is thought to have been the rebels' primary field commander during Sankoh's detention.

²⁴¹ The Government of Sierra Leone was not a formal signatory to the Conakry Accord. Kabbah's Minister of Justice, Solomon Berewa, was permitted to attend the talks in an observer capacity only.

²⁴² Interview with Mansaray. Considering that his access to visitors and telecommunications was strictly limited, how Sankoh could direct rebel operations in remote forest locations while in prison is a mystery.

²⁴³ Testifying at the Special Court for Sierra Leone, Taylor refuted claims that he had a "superior-subordinate" relationship with Bockarie, saying instead "I dealt with him as leader of his own group. I respected him, I did not order him" (Sesay 2009: n.p.).

1998 declaring that Taylor had promoted him to the rank of General in the RUF (Sesay 2010).²⁴⁴ Domestic and international pressure mounted for peace talks to commence, but first, the rebels' leadership structure needed to be resolved.

Once Kabbah had been persuaded by Jackson and various ECOWAS representatives that dialogue with the rebels was necessary, he needed to ascertain who was their primary commander and decision-maker. This was particularly important in the shadow of the failed Abidjan Accord. The RUF sent its "respectable faced" negotiators to Abidjan, Penfold recalls, and the impression they gave was that the RUF a serious and cohesive movement. "What we discovered was that these people had no clout at all," Penfold recounts.²⁴⁵ It is widely agreed that the 1996 accord collapsed before it could be implemented because rebel representatives with no real leadership authority negotiated it, and of those who signed the accord, all negotiated in bad faith.

Sankoh had been incarcerated, away from the bush and his troops, for four years by April 1999. Questions of Taylor's alleged authority aside, for all intents and purposes, former disco dancer champion, miner and hairdresser, "Mosquito" Bockarie was commanding the rebels on the ground when Sankoh was imprisoned (Jones 2003). Meanwhile, the post coup affiliation between the AFRC and the RUF disintegrated. Even before the *junta* was swept from power, Bockarie had assumed primary control over the two forces. At the time the Lomé talks began, AFRC Chairman and leader of the 1997 *junta*, Johnny Paul Koroma, was being held hostage and tortured by Bockarie (Johnson 1999; *BBC News* 1999e). International observers recognised disunity among the rebel forces, and Sankoh used this as leverage to gain conditional release, ostensibly to ascertain what the RUF wanted out of negotiations. That Sankoh did not know what his own forces wanted after eight years at war was odd, notes Penfold, but it indicated how little direct contact Sankoh had with his troops in the field (Penfold 2012). As much as Sankoh's release was self-serving, it was also to the benefit of Lomé's other participants to know the rebels' command structure. Consequently, Sankoh was conditionally released on 18 April 1999.

STABBING FOR A SLICE OF THE PIE

Inasmuch as the aspirations of the rebels were unclear when Sankoh was freed, the people of Sierra Leone had made their desires abundantly apparent. The National Commission for Democracy and Human Rights hosted a two-day national consultative conference from 7-9 April at which over 300 representatives of various civil society groups voiced their goals for a peace process. Although there was disagreement over Sankoh's status, the conference laid out several pre-conditions to be met prior to the start of negotiations, including the full cessation of hostilities, RUF recognition of the Kabbah

²⁴⁴ On trial, Taylor called these allegations false. Witness, Issa Hassan Sesay—a senior RUF commander believed to be second only to Bockarie—told the court that Johnny Paul Koroma promoted Bockarie (Sesay 2010). Convicted in 2009 for crimes against humanity and other crimes at the same court, Sesay's testimony is suspect and self-serving. The RUF was in no way subordinate to the AFRC. In 1998, Koroma was held in "protective custody" under Bockarie's orders (Penfold 2002) and by the following year it was widely believed that his life was in danger. That Koroma would have had the legitimacy to promote Bockarie is absurd.

²⁴⁵ Interview with Penfold.

government, no rebel demands for the withdrawal of ECOMOG forces, the immediate and unconditional release of all hostages, and limited powersharing between the elected government and the rebels up until the next round of national elections.

Sankoh was invited to the conference, but as he was still incarcerated in a Freetown prison, he did not attend. He did, however, deliver a message to the delegates underscoring the RUF's "continuous commitment" towards lasting peace (Sankoh 1999: n.p.). Peace depended on the RUFs' cooperation with Kabbah, Sankoh wrote, and went on to describe the President as "genuine, sincere and committed to peace and development in Sierra Leone" (Sankoh 1999: n.p.). For the first time, the rebel leader proffered a seemingly heartfelt apology, stating, "I am genuinely sorry for all the pain and grief that my revolution has caused you," and urged his fellow citizens to look forward and "let us now put all our hurt behind us" (Sankoh 1999: n.p.). Those who knew him met Sankoh's words of cooperation and repentance with a certain degree of scepticism. The message—like most public RUF missives—was almost certainly not written by Sankoh, who was barely functionally literate, and revealed ulterior motives.²⁴⁶ "He was clearly trying to curry favour to be released from detention," said Penfold, noting that Sankoh wanted to be able to travel to meet his commanders.²⁴⁷

The rebranding of Sankoh continued. With the people of Sierra Leone, he used an apology; with the media, Sankoh invoked God. Exercising the religious pluralism practiced by many Sierra Leoneans, Sankoh had often admitted to consulting witchdoctors while maintaining that he was a "born-again Christian." Although the disconnect between his faith and his murderous actions had never previously appeared to cause Sankoh any particular anguish, in late March—just as Jackson stepped up his efforts to secure Sankoh's freedom—during an interview with the BBC, Sankoh claimed to have turned to the Lord in his prison cell and said he was praying daily. In keeping with his newfound piety, Sankoh declared himself to no longer be "a rebel leader, but a condemned prisoner of peace" (Uchendu 1999a: n.p.). In a show of devotional humility, Sankoh vowed that were he were to emerge from prison alive, he would continue his struggle as a politician instead of using armed force as a rebel (Uchendu 1999b). No man or god ever held Sankoh to his oath.

Within hours of his release, Sankoh was on a flight to Lomé. A welcome committee of five Togolese ministers greeted Sankoh at the airport and accompanied him to his five-star hotel, where he awaited the arrival of his commanders (Penfold 2012).²⁴⁸ Having been in prison for several years and in the bush longer still before that, Sankoh forewent his short-lived Christian restraint and luxuriated in his newfound accommodations and "indulged himself in an orgy of food, drink, and sex" (Penfold 2012: 142). Peace process participants and foreign observers alike were amazed at Sankoh's hedonism and his capacity for debauchery. Out of prison, the government wanted to keep Sankoh from returning to the bush to galvanise his troops, "We did that by providing him with nice

²⁴⁶ Lawyer and RUF spokesperson, Omrie Golley, drafted nearly all rebel statements and documents, including Sankoh's speeches.

²⁴⁷ Interview with Penfold.

²⁴⁸ The UN had agreed to fly the RUF's commanding officers to Lomé from Monrovia where they were meeting with Charles Taylor—proof positive of the collusion between Sierra Leone's rebels and Taylor.

accommodations,” says Mansaray.²⁴⁹ At other meetings including the Abidjan peace talks, “we saw that he liked luxury. So, we convinced the Ivoirians to provide Sankoh with lush accommodations, including a huge compound, four cars and so on, but he chose to live in the hotel where he could ask for and get what he wanted,” Mansaray recalls.²⁵⁰ Sankoh embraced this pattern again in Lomé, where excluding the services of dozens of prostitutes, the UN collected the tab for Sankoh’s hotel bill, which exceeded \$400,000 USD by checkout.²⁵¹

For all his profligacy, Sankoh retained the vestiges of leadership. By the time Kabbah landed on the hot tarmac in Togo, Sankoh had been meeting with his field commanders for several weeks and was clearly entrenched as the rebel forces’ commander-in-chief.²⁵² According to both Kabbah and Jackson, Sankoh was the key decision-maker upon whom the future peace process rested. Government representatives were keeping a close eye on Sankoh during those preliminary meetings, Mansaray says, and it quickly became apparent that “Sankoh was the only person who could make any decision on behalf of the organisation.”²⁵³ That Kabbah succumbed to Jackson’s pressure and hastily signed the ceasefire agreement that RUF deputies had drafted ahead of time underscored Sankoh’s clout in the peace process.

The regional and international media portrayed Sankoh and his men as the peacemakers and the rebel leader revelled in the deference. In a rare public appearance following the ceasefire agreement, sporting a bespoke French suit, Sankoh loftily claimed, “My fighters have been fighting for peace ever since we started our campaign” (*The Progress* 1999a).

Unsurprisingly, Kabbah did not remember the beginnings of Lomé with the same enthusiasm. In a 2002 interview, the President claimed he felt tremendous pressure engage with Sankoh but did not trust him, “I had grave misgivings about [Lomé], and didn’t want to go,” Kabbah said. “I knew from my past dealings with Sankoh that it wouldn’t work. Sankoh is the most treacherous and evil man I have had to deal with in my over 40 years of public service. His words simply can’t be trusted” (Gberie 2005: 157).²⁵⁴ Twelve years later, Kabbah’s opinion of Sankoh had not changed. If anything, Kabbah’s disdain was more succinct, “Sankoh was a strong and wicked man.”²⁵⁵ These statements appear to indicate that Kabbah was not altogether wide-eyed as to Sankoh’s temperament.

²⁴⁹ Interview with Mansaray.

²⁵⁰ Interview with Mansaray.

²⁵¹ Interview with Penfold.

²⁵² Politically, Sankoh was in charge of the RUF at the Lomé negotiations, but in the jungle, Bockarie continued to command the rank-and-file. The interests of the two rebels were not always aligned, and Bockarie ultimately broke away from Sankoh soon after Lomé.

²⁵³ Interview with Mansaray.

²⁵⁴ Compare Kabbah’s assessment of Sankoh with Jesse Jackson who, in one of his more hyperbolic moments, compared the RUF with South Africa’s ANC and likened Sankoh to Nelson Mandela (*Newsday* 21 May 2000). Other Americans did not necessarily share Jackson’s views. Richard Holbrooke, then US Ambassador to the UN, described the RUF as “a bunch of ragtag machete-wielding murderers” (*The Economist* 18 May 2000).

²⁵⁵ Interview with Kabbah, 2012.

Nonetheless, Kabbah persisted in negotiating with Sankoh and continued to hope that his counterpart would be reformed eventually.

However objectionable Sankoh's personal characteristics, in negotiations he was merely playing to type. Competitive negotiators are disingenuous and manipulative in their quest to secure the best deal possible for themselves (Craver nd). Although some studies show that ill-mannered and odious competitive negotiators are not as effective as their cooperative counterparts (Schneider 2002), this did not prove to be the case in Lomé, where Sankoh's abrasive style may not have won him much popularity, but yielded ample other rewards. All the same, Penfold agrees that Kabbah was right to distrust Sankoh, and suggests that the president should have refrained from trying to appease him. Prior to and during the talks, Penfold says, "Sankoh had no respect at all for Kabbah."²⁵⁶

Kabbah's overarching recollection of the peace talks is that Sankoh "was always trying to see what he could get out of me."²⁵⁷ One of the tactics Sankoh used to pressure Kabbah and extract concessions was to have his spokesman Omrie Golley portray the President negatively in the media. Before formal talks began, when Kabbah sought to pause prior to accepting the terms of a ceasefire, Golley publically questioned Kabbah's sincerity saying, "We are about to come to the conclusion that he is not interested in peace at all" (*Concord Times* 1999c). When speaking to the media, Sankoh and Golley frequently retracted statements, denying things they had conceded earlier in peace talks. For example, hours after chief mediator, Togolese President Eyadéma, had obtained the RUF's concession to open highways to humanitarian aid, Golley recanted and told the media, "The issue of opening the roads remains unresolved. The RUF had only agreed to consider the issue and hold more consultations" (*Concord Times* 1999). Manipulation—of the media or otherwise—is a classic persuasive tactic, often used by competitive negotiators. Sankoh and Golley may have been unscrupulous but they were nonetheless effective; their tactics only underscored Kabbah's lack of communications savvy, as he continued to refuse to develop a rapport with the media although he had been advised to do so by Spencer.

Kabbah's ministers rightfully saw Golley as a threat during negotiations. Golley was Sankoh's secret weapon, Mansaray recalls. By all accounts, Golley was smooth, charming and well spoken "and there were some on the US team who were mesmerised by his crisp English accent."²⁵⁸ The youthful Golley may have sounded like an elder statesman, but he was always Sankoh's man. Many participants "didn't realise that Golley would never do anything that Sankoh wouldn't want him to," confirms Mansaray.²⁵⁹

Throughout the talks, Golley repeatedly told the media that Sankoh's release was not a precondition for productive peace talks, but whenever Kabbah would resist a RUF-led motion, Golley would bog down the process by calling on the government to release Sankoh unconditionally. One of the RUF's initial requests at the outset of the talks was for a four-year transitional government—lead by a respected, neutral public figure, not Kabbah (*The Progress* 1999b; *PANA* 1999). When Kabbah's negotiators predictably claimed the

²⁵⁶ Interview with Penfold.

²⁵⁷ Interview with Kabbah 2012.

²⁵⁸ Interview with Mansaray.

²⁵⁹ Interview with Mansaray.

sitting President's constitutional right to government until his five-year term ended in 2001, Golley raised the issue of Sankoh's release and brought the talks to a halt (*IRIN* 1999a).

To the frustration of other participants, Sankoh extended this tactic of going back on his word into the peace talks. "Even after we had teased out an agreement, [negotiators] would appear after having discussed matters with Sankoh and they'd say everything from yesterday needs to be discussed all over again" recalls Penfold.²⁶⁰ In cross-cultural negotiations with China, Europeans have a tendency to assume agreement where none exists. Europeans make this assumption because, often, Chinese negotiators will nod and appear to agree, when they are only acknowledging that they have heard what has been suggested (Zhou & Zhang 2008). However, it is unlikely that the Sierra Leonean rebels suffered from a cultural miscommunication with their government opponents. Rather, by repeatedly reneging on issues, the RUF was engaging in surface bargaining (bargaining without intent to reach a settlement), a bad faith tactic (Sims 2002). It is bad faith for a party to enter into or continue negotiations if they have no resolve to reach an agreement. Although the government claimed to distrust Sankoh and the rebels, it did not appear to consider that the RUF might have been negotiating in bad faith. Kabbah and the government were unwise and naive to assume their opponents shared their "values, ethical codes, and intentions" (Churchman 1995: 30). If, in fact, Sankoh's surface bargaining tactics were evidence of bad faith, there was no hope that an agreement at Lomé would hold. But having not planning for a BATNA, or anything but a ratified peace agreement, Kabbah felt he had no choice but to continue negotiating with Sankoh.

Despite having signed a ceasefire agreement, Sankoh's troops continued to fight. Two days after the ceasefire was ratified, rebels launched an attack on the mining town of Kenema, which was repelled by ECOMOG and CDF troops (Keelson 1999). Meanwhile, Golley claimed ECOMOG helicopter gunships fired on RUF troops in the Tonkolili district, also known for its extractive industries, and called on their commander to "have more control over his men" (*IRIN* 1999b). ECOMOG claimed they had merely returned fire after its soldiers had come under "a massive rebel attack" (*IRIN* 1999b). Less than a week later, the RUF increased their demands from Kabbah, threatening to "wreck" the peace process if the government did not reinstate all former soldiers—whether AFRC or RUF affiliates—into the army (*The Progress* 1999e).

In fact, UN Secretary General Kofi Annan reported atrocities against civilians increased after the ceasefire, claiming the rebels "were carrying out summary executions, mutilations, limb amputations, abductions, sexual abuse and large scale destruction of property" particularly in the Northern province and noted "the humanitarian situation has gotten worse" (*PANA* 1999d). Only after the Security Council agreed to expand the role of the UN Observer Mission in Sierra Leone (UNOMSIL), by first establishing a committee to oversee and process the release of all prisoners of war and non-combatants being held by both government forces and rebels, did participants agree that peace talks had made a significant step towards peace (Conteh 1999).²⁶¹

²⁶⁰ Interview with Penfold.

²⁶¹ The Security Council established UNOMSIL in July 1998 for an initial period of six months, with 70 authorised military observers. The small mission was mandated to monitor and advise efforts to disarm

No sooner had participants began to congratulate themselves, when progress slowed again. Government negotiators would table suggestions and rebel representatives would indicate initial approval, contingent on Sankoh's confirmation. However, securing confirmation for even the most banal of compromises was virtually impossible. "He would just refuse," says Sesay. "Believe me, Sankoh was a very difficult man."²⁶² Sankoh's right hand man, Golley, favoured Sankoh's intractability. "Golley encouraged a very entrenched and belligerent view," says Penfold, and the talks degenerated into economic conquest. "It became a commercial deal," recalls Penfold, with the rebels quarrelling over "how big is the slice of cake that we are going to get out of this deal."²⁶³

Sankoh and Golley came to Lomé with a "fixed-pie mindset," which led them to see the negotiations as a zero-sum competitive undertaking, with only one winner (Bazerman 2003) The mythical fixed-pie belief is an example of cognitive bias; those who hold to this bias cannot see the possibility for a mutually beneficial exchange. In politics—and the Lomé negotiations were fundamentally political—fixed pie bias is even stronger than in commercial or legal negotiations, and competitiveness only reinforces this bias (Bazerman *et al* 2001; Foster *et al* 2013). Fixed-pie bias is easy to overcome; when negotiators trust each other, they no longer see that which they are haggling over to be fixed. However, at Lomé, trust was in gravely short supply on both sides, and diminished further as Sankoh became ever increasingly bellicose.

Only one person ever openly browbeat Sankoh into submission at Lomé. During the second week of talks, Eyadéma invited the government and rebel delegations, along with key foreign facilitators to his country home for a weekend retreat. Olusegun Obasanjo, President-elect of Nigeria, also attended, and asked for a private meeting with Berewa and Sankoh.²⁶⁴ No sooner had introductions been made, Berewa recounts, when Obasanjo began hectoring Sankoh, "demanding to know the source of his authority or mandate for subjecting the people of Sierra Leone to that degree of atrocities and mayhem from which they were suffering" (Berewa 2011: 131). Obasanjo did not allow Sankoh to inject a single word into the conversation, says Berewa and, "in a military manner, ordered Foday Sankoh to desist forthwith from his criminal enterprise" (Berewa 2011: 131). Obasanjo threatened Sankoh with "dire and appropriate consequences" if he did not make his rebels stand down and then summarily dismissed him from the room (Berewa 2011:

combatants and restructure the country's security forces. Working under the protection of ECOMOG, unarmed UNOMSIL teams documented ongoing atrocities and human rights abuses committed against civilians. Secretary-General Kofi Annan named Special Envoy Francis Okelo as his Special Representative to the mission. After the January 1999 attacks on Freetown, UNOMSIL personnel were evacuated and the mission was downsized. Working jointly with ECOWAS, Okelo helped broker the Lomé peace talks. (UN 2000) After a shaky start, UNOMSIL eventually expanded into the largest UN peacekeeping mission of the time.

²⁶² Interview with Sesay.

²⁶³ Interview with Penfold.

²⁶⁴ Until Abacha's sudden death, Nigeria had been governed by a series of military dictatorships for 16 years. In the country's first elections since 1984, Olusegun Obasanjo won the Presidency with 62.6 per cent of the vote on 29 May 1999. A former general, Obasanjo had previously lead Nigeria in a military government from 1976 to 1979, when he stepped down and Nigeria (briefly) returned to civilian rule. Obasanjo spoke out against Abacha's dictatorship (1993-1998) and human right record and was imprisoned. He was released when Abacha died, and soon after recommitted to politics. Obasanjo handily won a second term in 2003, left office in 2007, and remains active in public life.

131). Sankoh had gone into the meeting fully expecting a dialogue of equals with Obasanjo. Instead, he was rebuffed and berated. It was, Berewa says, “the first time I saw Foday Sankoh subdued” (Berewa 2011: 131). Unfortunately, Obasanjo soon departed the peace talks, only to return to Lomé shortly before the agreement was signed. Meanwhile, Sankoh reverted to his double-dealing ways.

SANKOH’S SWEEPING SUCCESS

Sankoh postured, threatened, and recanted, but participants at the talks continued to grant him credence. That said, those in attendance did not see any alternative to engaging with Sankoh. Kabbah’s cabinet were dismayed that Sankoh’s luxurious accommodations and conciliatory treatment did not make him more cooperative. Noting that Sankoh had been incarcerated and sentenced to death in the years prior to the peace talks, Mansaray noted, “Considering all the trouble he’d had since Abidjan, we thought that Sankoh would have mellowed, but he hadn’t.”²⁶⁵ Throughout the rest of the talks, Sankoh came across as an infantile and disreputable king. Penfold recalls, “Sankoh was playing the leader through which all had to go, that is if he could break away from all the sex and food in his hotel room.”²⁶⁶

Outwardly at least, Kabbah was steadfast and intent on finding a way to peace with the rebel leader. Speaking long after Lomé, Kabbah remembered the Lomé talks as a way to get Sankoh “to behave like a human being. Until then he just wanted to kill as many people as he could.”²⁶⁷ Kabbah continued to distrust Sankoh but he “wanted to make Sankoh understand that he was destroying his own country, that he was killing his own people,” says Sorie Fofana, *Global Times* editor. “Kabbah really wanted to make him understand what was at play. He knew that Sankoh was unstable, but he was the only person in the RUF whom we could deal with.”²⁶⁸ Sankoh had Kabbah cornered, or at least that is how the government saw things; Kabbah had no military to speak of and did not necessarily trust the rebels, but he continued to believe that there was no option but to contend with an opponent who might have been negotiating in bad faith. An ethical negotiator will avoid placing his adversary on the defensive by making ultimatums, but Sankoh never pretended to be principled. He had his foe exactly where he wanted: Kabbah and his cabinet were trapped.

It took another two weeks of wrangling before negotiators had anything else to show for their efforts, but for Sankoh it was worth the wait. On 19 June, Berewa publicly announced his bid to make Foday Sankoh Chairman of the to-be-established Commission for Strategic Resources. Berewa’s offer placed Sankoh at par with the country’s constitutional vice-president. “I would suggest that the Chairman of this Commission be answerable only to the President and not to the Vice-President or any other minister and that this provision be inserted in the penultimate paragraph of the first page of section E,” said Berewa’s written offer (Bakarr 1999: n.p.). For constitutional reasons, Sankoh would

²⁶⁵ Interview with Mansaray.

²⁶⁶ Interview with Penfold.

²⁶⁷ Interview with Kabbah, 2012

²⁶⁸ Interview with Sorie Fofana, *Global Times* editor and personal confidant of President Kabbah, Freetown, Sierra Leone, 18 & 19 October 2012.

not receive the title of vice-president, but he would “enjoy the autonomy of action and hierarchy within the Sierra Leone structure,” Berewa affirmed (Bakarr 1999). That Berewa tendered such an offer was astonishing. Going into Lomé, Kabbah’s cabinet may have perceived Sankoh as an armed anarchist, but that did not stop the government from playing into his hands. According to Kabbah, Sankoh and the rebels used “politics as a camouflage to conceal their real intent to take over the country’s natural resource wealth.”²⁶⁹ Knowing this, Kabbah still gave Sankoh the metaphoric candy store. The Commission was yet to be created, but Berewa’s offer placed Sankoh in control of all of the country’s “strategic resources”—representing fully 80 per cent of the country’s economy—including gold, diamonds, rutile, as well as donor assistance. Oddly, Berewa did not consider that the Commission he proposed to give Sankoh would create direct conflict with the pre-existing Ministry of Mines. As Chairman of the Commission on Strategic Resources, Sankoh would see himself as outranking the Ministry of Mines, but Berewa’s proposal did not spell out whether the ministry would fall under the rubric of the Commission. This oversight would come to threaten the Lomé Accord at the eleventh hour.

The Lomé talks became a lavish endowment that kept on giving to Sankoh. Having secured control over the country’s resources, the following week, the rebel leader accepted the government’s offer of four ministerial positions and three deputy ministers.²⁷⁰ After requisite haggling, with both parties consenting to a power-sharing arrangement, chief mediator Eyadéma declared the negotiating phase of the talks effectively over. “I think we have come to the end of negotiations,” the Togolese president announced. “It is just a matter of getting a mandate... Then I think we’ll come to a final conclusion” (*Concord Times* 1999g). With his gift bag bulging with diamonds and cabinet posts, Sankoh became less insistent that all Nigerian troops in ECOMOG leave the country immediately.²⁷¹ Nonetheless, this remained one of the last sticking points of the talks.

With most hurdles seemingly cleared, participants began to prepare for the formal signing of the agreement. By 21 June, the RUF had agreed to accept a total of four ministerial and three deputy ministerial positions. Although it would not yet agree to drawdown its troops, ECOMOG had agreed to stop further military deployment. However, two days later, in an act of shocking reversal, Sankoh rejected the power-sharing deal, claiming that his men had not fought nine years for a mere four cabinet positions. “We are still demanding a transitional government,” Sankoh said. “The RUF leadership will never

²⁶⁹ Interview with Kabbah, 2011.

²⁷⁰ The RUF’s rapaciousness was never more in evidence than during the “pie-slicing” phase of the negotiations. In early June at Eyadéma’s request, the RUF submitted a gluttonous list of eleven ministerial and four deputy ministerial positions including the posts of constitutional vice-president, defense and finance. The rebels asked for six lucrative diplomatic positions, including ambassadorships to the US and Liberia, high commissioner to Nigeria and deputy high commissioner to the UK. The RUF sought eleven para-statal positions, namely the governorship of the Bank of Sierra Leone and the directorship of the Port Authority. Finally, the rebels demanded the position of mayor of Freetown and the Chairmanship of the to-be-established post-war reconstruction commission (Rashid 2000). Kabbah’s first response to the RUF’s inflated list was two full ministerial and two deputy posts in a sixteen-member cabinet, with the assurance that these would include justice, defence, foreign affairs or finance, as well as some chairmanships for proposed committees (Rashid 2000).

²⁷¹ Nearly 90 per cent of ECOMOG soldiers were Nigerian citizens. Sankoh knew full well that their departure meant Kabbah would have no real armed forces to defend the state and fight the rebels.

back down” (*BBC News* 1999c). Sankoh reissued the RUF’s original demand for an expanded government and more ministerial positions, claiming that the rebels sought a “real” transition, not mere access to “a corrupt SLPP” government (Rashid 2000: n.p.).

The agreement teetered on the brink of collapse, and Edéyama appealed to the one person who had been able to intimidate Sankoh. Nigerian President Obasanjo agreed to a hasty meeting with Sankoh and Kabbah’s negotiators in Kara (northern Togo) on 25 June. Together, they agreed that Sankoh would head an enlarged Commission of Strategic Resources, National Reconstruction and Development (Rashid 2000). The government negotiating team declined to consider rebel demands for a transitional government, deeming the proposition unconstitutional (Hayner 2007; Rashid 2000). However, the rebels finally agreed that Nigerian troops could remain part of ECOMOG, under a revised peacekeeping mandate until a UN force was implemented (Rashid 2000). After many intense hours of negotiation, Obasanjo departed Togo 26 June, exhausted but hopeful.

No sooner was Obasanjo out of sight, when Sankoh put him out of mind, and brought the talks to a final impasse on 5 July. Less than two days before the signing ceremony, Sankoh made a last-ditch play to control the Ministry of Mines. He also reintroduced his previous demands for a transitional government, the vice-presidency and ECOMOG withdrawal (Rashid 2000). In another interview with the BBC, Sankoh stated that the positions of vice-president and seven other cabinet posts were rightfully his due, and claimed, “above all, the Ministry of Mines” should be granted to the RUF (Fofana 1999). The chairmanship of the Commission on Strategic Resources was insufficient reward to his men, Sankoh claimed, they “want the ministry of mines, because they say rebels already control the mining areas” (*BBC* 1999d). For much of the war, the rebels had fought for and controlled the country’s mining regions. During negotiations, the RUF held fast to their territorial gains in the diamond-rich districts. In their relative ignorance, RUF troops saw the Ministry of Mines as the true prize, not the as-yet-established Commission Kabbah had promised. Similarly, Sankoh also wanted to ensure that the Ministry of Mines would not be more powerful than the Commission he was assured. What better way to prevent any friction than by controlling both the Commission and the Ministry of Mines alike?

Once again, Eyadéma resorted to outside support, calling on Obasanjo anew, but this time he sought the additional backing of Blaise Compaoré (President of Burkina Faso) and Charles Taylor—the RUF’s key regional supporters. The four West African presidents met with Kabbah and Sankoh, individually and together.²⁷² Compaoré and Taylor pushed Sankoh hard to accept four ministerial and four deputy ministerial positions, urging him to

²⁷² The sequencing of the meetings is what truly resuscitated this last set of talks (Rashid 2000). Neither the RUF nor the government negotiating teams were aware that the meetings were carefully choreographed ahead of time. First, Taylor and Compaoré met to determine a common strategy for dealing with Sankoh, as well as to agree on a joint position on the draft accord (Rashid 2000). Eyadéma and Obasanjo, who had shared perspectives from the first meeting in June, also met to develop a common position (Rashid 2000). Subsequently, the four presidents met and concurred that the RUF should receive four ministerial and four deputy ministerial positions, while Sankoh would retain the Chairmanship of the Commission of Strategic Resources. They also agreed that ECOMOG would remain in charge of peacekeeping and demobilisation until replaced by a UN force (Rashid 2000). Only then did the presidents meet with Sankoh and Kabbah individually and collectively.

consider the aftermath as a “transitional phase rather than transitional government,” and not be overtaken by the moment (Rashid 2000). Here, Compaoré and Taylor reframed the sticking point of transitional government by shifting the timeline from present to future, which made it more acceptable to Sankoh. All four leaders also leaned on Kabbah to elevate the status of the Chairmanship of the Commission for Strategic Resources above all other ministries, and pressed him to grant Sankoh with a full pardon (Rashid 2000). The collective deathbed entreaties were sufficient to revive the recalcitrant patients. Kabbah and Sankoh consented to the revised terms, and also agreed that ECOMOG would continue to oversee peacemaking and demobilisation operations until a UN force was in place.

There were no further stumbling blocks, and on 7 July 1999, Kabbah and Sankoh signed the Lomé peace accord. Eyadéma, Obasanjo, Compaoré and Taylor were all present as witnesses and guarantors to the agreement.²⁷³ Carrying a small child with an amputated arm, Kabbah declared he was signing the accord in his capacity as President and “for the thousands of children of Sierra Leone” (Onishi 1999). Sankoh remained silent for most of the ceremony, but after the signing, he apologised for rebel war crimes, “We are asking for forgiveness,” Sankoh said earnestly. “We need the support of everyone, especially our brother the president” (CBS 1999).

As ink dried on the paper in Lomé, Sierra Leone’s nine-year civil war formally ended. On the ground and in the country’s forests, however, peace remained illusory.

AN IGNOMINIOUS END

The Lomé agreement outlined a very tight implementation schedule. From the start, certain parties had more difficulty than others at honouring their obligations (O’Flaherty 2004). The government, for example, promptly made available the necessary number of cabinet seats to the rebels, and expedited the creation of the Commission for the Management of Strategic Mineral Resources. The UN High Commissioner for Human Rights (UNHCR) and UN Observer Mission in Sierra Leone (UNOMSIL) established a variety of Lomé implementation monitoring bodies and facilitated the creation of the truth and reconciliation commission. On the other hand, true to the tactics they demonstrated during the peace process, Sankoh and the RUF were anything but cooperative. Nearly all actions required protracted negotiations and tremendous prodding. Hostages were very slowly released, and only under international duress. The rebels continuously hindered humanitarian access to the regions they still held. Combatant demobilisation was also sluggish; few rebels initially came forward and in many locations fighting and human rights abuses were on going. During peace talks, the Sierra Leonean president had been repeatedly willing to trust Sankoh, but assessing the RUF’s actions shortly after Lomé, Kabbah changed his opinion on Sankoh and his motives. “I came to believe that this man had no intention of helping to bring about peace,” Kabbah said.²⁷⁴ Otherwise, few observers heeded the signs that the rebels really had no intent on relinquishing the weapons that were their source of power (Karon 2000).

²⁷³ UN Special Representative for Sierra Leone, Francis Okelo, witnessed the agreement, with a disclaimer stating that the blanket amnesty of the agreement does not cover human rights violations. At the time, he could not say how the UN would punish those who violated the agreement.

²⁷⁴ Interview with Kabbah, 2012.

ECOMOG's foreseen drawdown and the UN's inability to deploy a robust peacekeeping force in a timely manner only intensified the RUF's interference with and disregard for the Lomé agreement. Fully five months after Lomé, the UN Mission in Sierra Leone (UNAMSIL) was finally established in October 1999, but the first troops only arrived at the end of November. From the start, the RUF did not perceive the UN troops as anything more than a nuisance. While Lomé clearly authorised a peacekeeping role for the UN, in January 2000, Sankoh warned that blue helmets "had no business in Sierra Leone" (Karon 2000: n.p.). By May 2000, many of UNAMSIL's "lightly armed, under-manned, and poorly led" soldiers had been directly attacked by RUF combatants (O'Flaherty 2004: 36). From the very start, Kabbah had wanted UN troops in Sierra Leone, but UNAMSIL's initial showing did not inspire confidence, even among Kabbah's cabinet, "We saw the UN wasn't going to stand and fight," says Spencer, "This was clear."²⁷⁵ As of mid-May, eleven peacekeepers had been killed and 352 more had been abducted and were being held hostage by the rebels. Only the unilateral deployment and intervention of British armed forces prevented Lomé from being yet another failed West African peace accord. "Fighting had begun anew," notes Spencer. "It was the presence and involvement of the British troops that brought back order."²⁷⁶

Lomé was only pulled from the grave once Sankoh and a number of his senior commanders were captured and taken into custody. At dawn 17 May 2000, a father and son on their way to mosque crossed paths with a poorly disguised Sankoh (wearing a towel around his head) near his Freetown home, where his guards had killed 19 unarmed protestors but 10 days before (*The Guardian* 2000). Seeking to retrieve his personal stash of diamonds with which he planned to bribe Nigerian troops to help him flee the country, Sankoh entered his home where several members of Kabbah's armed forces captured him a few minutes later (*The Guardian* 2000).²⁷⁷ A crowd quickly formed and began to bay for Sankoh's blood, and he was shot in the leg and stripped in the ensuing melee. Naked and loudly insisting his peaceful intent, Sankoh was dragged to a nearby car and brought to army headquarters where he was transferred into protective custody. Where the ratification of the Lomé agreement was met with subdued joy, Sankoh's capture prompted massive elation in the streets of Freetown.

The instability of May 2000, most particularly the kidnapping of hundreds of peacekeepers, created "huge crisis" in the international community, says Gberie, "The UK intervention was crucial at that point. They defeated the RUF."²⁷⁸ Images of British troops crushing the RUF militarily were the equivalent of mouth-to-mouth resuscitation for the UN. UNAMSIL was redesigned and given the right to use force under a Chapter VII peace enforcement mission and became the largest UN peacekeeping mission in the world.²⁷⁹

²⁷⁵ Interview with Spencer.

²⁷⁶ Interview with Spencer.

²⁷⁷ Documents discovered at Sankoh's residence indicated that Taylor was claiming the lion's share of RUF diamond sales—estimated to be anywhere between \$7-20 million USD a year (Davies 2000).

²⁷⁸ Interview with Gberie.

²⁷⁹ At its zenith in 2002, UNAMSIL had more than 17,000 military personnel, police, and civilian staffers stationed throughout Sierra Leone. UNAMSIL was an even larger mission than the 2003 UN Mission in Liberia (UNMIL), although by only a few hundred soldiers. At the time of this writing, the UN's largest peacekeeping operation is the UN Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO), with more than 25,000 personnel.

Even so, several months passed before the country was considered stable. As late as July, the UN was still describing Sierra Leone's political situation as resembling civil war (*Fifth Report* 1999), with British troops exchanging fire with former army combatants outside of Freetown, as well as fighting and instability along the Guinean and Liberian borders (O'Flaherty 2004). It was only in November 2000, when the RUF conceded to a new ceasefire and ratified the Abuja Agreement, which reiterated the terms of the Lomé agreement, that Sierra Leone's war ended conclusively.

This chapter analysed the personality and actions of the chief antagonist of the Sierra Leonean civil war, Foday Sankoh. Evidence indicates that Sankoh did not enter the negotiating process with high-minded ambitions, nor was he ever betrothed to peace. At first, he merely saw Lomé as an opportunity to escape incarceration in a fetid Freetown prison. However, once peace talks began, Sankoh revealed himself to be as he had been in the battlefield—unrestrained, capricious and deceitful. Using hardball competitive tactics, he always sought to get more for himself, and his opponent usually gave him that which he demanded. With each government concession, Sankoh's claims only became more outlandish, but Kabbah still yielded. Incredibly, this neither reasonable nor clever man became the keystone upon whom Lomé's success rested, demonstrating again the impact a single agent can have on the negotiating process. Counseled by a few discerning comrades, including Jesse Jackson, up against a desperate and weakened opponent, Sankoh's odious traits mingled in such a fashion as to create a winning negotiator who trampled mild-mannered Sierra Leone president Kabbah. The following chapter endeavours to better understand this inconspicuous and unacclaimed political leader.

CHAPTER 6

THE BIGGEST LOSER

AHMAD TEJAN KABBAH

President of Sierra Leone, March 1996-May 1997; March 1998-2007

An investigation of the key players involved in the Sierra Leonean negotiations at Lomé does not yield many protagonists. Jesse Jackson was combative and self-serving. Foday Sankoh was stupid, cruel and grasping. Crushed between these two forces sat Ahmad Tejan Kabbah, a man unanimously described as honest, inclusive, conciliatory, and trusting. None of these adjectives are commonly assigned to politicians, let alone West African presidents in the late 20th century. Why then is Kabbah remembered as spineless and irresolute at the Lomé talks, instead of formidable and bold?

This chapter demonstrates the motivations and actions of Sierra Leonean President Kabbah up to and during the Lomé peace talks. At the height of the war, Kabbah was fairly elected to the Sierra Leonean presidency but that was not enough for him to keep his perch in the catbird seat. Within months, Kabbah was deposed by a military coup, which saw much of his army formally join ranks with the rebels. For almost a full year of his presidency, Kabbah tried to juggle the competing exigencies of governance while in exile, overseeing the ongoing war by trying to keep a lid on his delinquent soldiers and maintaining goodwill among the foreign troops that were dying for his cause, all while receiving tremendous pressure from the international community to settle the conflict.

Throughout, we see a man who was genuinely well intentioned and even honourable, but Kabbah was never his own man. By virtue of his dependence on foreign military forces, not to mention large amounts of external aid, Kabbah was beholden not as much to the electorate who brought him to power as to those who were keeping him there. Consequently, Kabbah lacked a degree of autonomy, which combined with his reticence to be seen as pandering to the rebels, served to lock him into a course of action that saw him make unimaginable concessions to those who had perpetuated the war. Although he was limited within the structural confines in which he led, Kabbah still influenced the Lomé negotiations as an individual agent. In negotiations, Kabbah consistently displayed the traits of a quintessential cooperative negotiator. The peaceable president demonstrated himself to be far more pliable and conciliatory than his rebel opponent, and we see how Sankoh exploited these characteristics repeatedly. Seeking to create a negotiation environment where all players emerged satisfied, Kabbah ultimately gave up the little leverage he possessed for the sake of peace at the expense of the democratic will of his constituency.

Throughout his career, Kabbah was known as respectful and agreeable, a consensus builder, who did not like to take risks and appreciated security (Merill & Reid 1999). Kabbah's social style was "amiable" and his conflict management style is best described as "accommodating" (Lewicki *et al* 2010: 20). These traits demonstrate Kabbah's propensity towards cooperation. Early research into negotiator personality indicates that when a person is responsive to interpersonal aspects of relations with others, they have a strong

level of interpersonal orientation (IO) and negotiations yield greater gain when both sides are cooperative (Rubin & Brown 1975). Inasmuch as he was cooperative, it is arguable that Kabbah was simply too nice to make peace in Sierra Leone. Cooperative negotiators seek to develop trusting relationships and find mutually beneficial goals. However, at Lomé, negotiators had few goals in common and many more in conflict. Both cooperation and competition were necessary to achieve a peaceful resolution (Spangler 2003). Jackson and Sankoh were inclined to be competitive with little interest in cooperation, whereas Kabbah could not or would not adjust his cooperative tactics accordingly. Kabbah's inability to be anything but cooperative meant that he emerged from Lomé as the biggest loser.

Born of a Mandingo father and a Mende mother, Kabbah was raised a Muslim, trained as a lawyer in the UK, then returned to Sierra Leone to work as a civil servant for several ministries, including Trade and Industry as well as Education, before moving to New York for a career with the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) (Whiteman 2014). The dictatorial rise of Siaka Stevens and the All People's Congress (APC) prompted Kabbah's decision to work outside of the country (Whiteman 2014). Practicing the ethnic and religious pluralism that Sierra Leone is known for, Kabbah was married to a fellow lawyer, a Catholic from the Sherbro tribe. Kabbah was not known as a forceful or charismatic individual and he had no experience in national politics (Sesay 2014). However, he was widely considered as "honest, sincere and incorrupt," qualities that were scarce indeed in Sierra Leone at the time (Penfold 2012: n.p.). When he returned to Sierra Leone after more than two decades abroad, Kabbah was 60 years old and claimed he wished to stop working.

Kabbah may have returned home to retire, but he obviously knew that his country was in the midst of bloody civil war. Having lived through decades of corruption and inefficiency, many Sierra Leonean citizens saw Kabbah as the one person who could stop their country's free-fall and establish democratic governance. To the world and his fellow citizens, Kabbah presented himself and was perceived as "a committed democrat and seasoned administrator" (Sessay *et al* 2009: 60) and this was precisely what many believed the country needed. At first, Kabbah had no interest in engaging in national politics. His wife was particularly against the notion, knowing full well that they would lose any semblance of a private life (Sesay 2014). However, after several months, "I yielded to considerable pressure," Kabbah said, and he agreed to run in the 1996 presidential elections for the Sierra Leone Peoples' Party (SLPP).²⁸⁰

A MANDATE MAINTAINED BY MERCENARIES

From the time his name appeared on the ballot, Kabbah was already at odds with the country's inadequate armed forces. "I felt the country was not in a position to conduct 'full' elections," Kabbah said, and "I struggled with the military to accept the idea of elections at all." Nonetheless, with a remarkable thirteen different political parties contesting, the electoral campaign proceeded (CNN 1996). While he may have initially been reluctant to take on the mantle of politician, Kabbah claims he was driven to rid the country of the scourge of "the warlords, who were a threat to peace, national security and

²⁸⁰ Interview with Ahmad Tejan Kabbah, former President of Sierra Leone (1996-1997; 1998-2007), 17 October 2012, in Freetown, Sierra Leone.

development.”²⁸¹ Kabbah won in the second round run-off vote and was sworn into office 29 March 1996 (Sesay 2014).

At his inaugural speech, Kabbah was clear about his first concern, “The pursuit of lasting peace is my priority,” he said, “And in this regard I emphasize here that with that determination I am ready to meet the leader of the RUF, Corporal Foday Sankoh, at the earliest opportunity” (Kabbah 1996: n.p.). Recalling his first days of office, Kabbah says that he was preoccupied with “reversing the downward trend of a failing state and bringing the war to an end.”²⁸² Kabbah felt a duty and burden to “provide vision” to the people of Sierra Leone, and act as the country’s “primary taskmaster.”²⁸³ Within a month, Kabbah was engaged in peace discussions with the rebels in Yamoussoukro, Côte d’Ivoire.

As noted in Chapter 2, peace negotiations risk failing because of bargaining problems that arise from the very reasons that states are embroiled in war. Kabbah may have been Sierra Leone’s democratically elected head of state, but the state he led was so weak as to be considered invalid. With the country at war, Kabbah’s government did not have a monopoly on the legitimate use of force. In fact, with thousands of his armed forces supplementing their meagre incomes by moonlighting as rebels, Kabbah did not even possess a monopoly on the use of force by his own government soldiers. When the state is weak, rebel forces—even those with limited means—can inflict tremendous damage on the state as well as gain popular legitimacy. While at first, the RUF did enjoy some measure of popular support; their battlefield tactics ensured civilian acclaim quickly dried up. The RUF had started out as a small and destitute organisation, but as soon as it gained control over the country’s diamond mines and began to trade with Taylor, what it lacked in popular support it more than made up for in financial profit. When Kabbah went to negotiate at Yamoussoukro, he did so in the spirit of cooperation, but he was at a strategic disadvantage, and his actions there—which he repeated at Lomé later—saw him lose much of the little leverage he had at the outset.

Kabbah commenced peace negotiations at a time when Executive Outcomes (EO) had been successfully meeting the terms of its contract with the Sierra Leonean government for 18 months and “it looked as though the RUF was a spent force” (Pratt 1999: n.p.). Observers believed that the mercenaries had real potential to beat back the rebels.²⁸⁴ However, instead of capitalising on the RUF’s vulnerability and working with Executive Outcomes to crush the RUF militarily, Kabbah met with Sankoh to discuss peace.²⁸⁵

Kabbah never purported to be a military leader, and true to his electoral campaign promises, he sought peace for his people. For him, the way to peace did not include an increase in violence, even if that meant the possibility of quelling the rebels. By not

²⁸¹ Seminar (Two Decades of Conflict and Democracy in Sierra Leone: A Personal Experience) and subsequent interview with Ahmad Tejan Kabbah, 25 October 2011, at Institute for Security Studies (ISS), in Pretoria, South Africa. Hereafter, Interview with Kabbah, 2011.

²⁸² Interview with Kabbah, 2012.

²⁸³ Interview with Kabbah, 2011.

²⁸⁴ Interview with Penfold.

²⁸⁵ Among the concessions the Sierra Leonean government gave up at Abidjan, RUF combatants received amnesty. According to Penfold (2012), a confidential annex to the agreement also gave the RUF several positions in government.

considering the option of broadening the terms of the mercenaries' contract, Kabbah showed himself as risk adverse, a key trait of cooperative negotiators. Kabbah's aversion to further loss of life, while laudable, biased him towards the status quo—the pursuit of peace via negotiations—because he was more preoccupied with the comparative drawbacks of a military option. The combination of status quo bias and loss aversion made Kabbah unwilling to grant greater fighting allowance to Executive Outcomes to reach the shared gain of routing the RUF (Samuelson & Zeckhauser 1988). If Kabbah had favoured the status quo, he might not have expanded EO's terms of reference, but he would have maintained the working relationship that he had with the only force that was committed to keeping him in power. Instead, in an extreme example of “focalism” (Wilson *et al* in Bazerman & Chugh 2005), Kabbah fixated on the pursuit of peace by means of settlement, and overlooked the essential knowledge that his hold on power depended on the same mercenaries that posed a legitimate threat to the rebels.

On 20 November, the RUF and the government of Sierra Leone signed the Abidjan Accord, in which one of the primary clauses stipulated that Executive Outcomes leave the country by January 1997.²⁸⁶ Considering the rebels' presence at the negotiating table was entirely due to their battlefield deficiencies in the face of Executive Outcomes, it is no surprise that Sankoh refused to sign the accord until the government conceded to terminate the mercenaries' contract. Conversely, Kabbah's capitulation should have been unforeseen, but instead exemplified his cooperative habit of trusting his partner, even one that never had any intent to be true.

EXILED: TREADING WATER, STAYING AFLOAT

For all Kabbah's fine intentions of bringing peace to Sierra Leone and revitalizing his country's moribund economy, his decision to cut ties with Executive Outcomes surely lead the country into the seventh circle of hell and his demise as president. In May 1997, disgruntled army troops under the banner of the Armed Forces Revolutionary Council (AFRC) staged a coup, took control of the government, and formed a coalition with the RUF. The few legal structures that remained in the country completely broke down as “the RUF quickly took control of the military junta” (USSD 1997: n.p.). Just as quickly, the RUF regained control over the diamond mines they had previously lost to Executive Outcomes, and the rebels no longer had any reason to make nice by feigning a commitment to peace.

The international community was quick to castigate Koroma's *junta*. Secretary General of the Organisation of African Unity (OAU), Salim Ahmed Salim described the coup as “a setback for Africa” (PANA 1997). The US State Department condemned the coup and called on “those claiming power in Freetown to return authority promptly to the country's elected leadership” (Dinger 1997: n.p.). Even usually measured UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan made a particularly strong statement against the coup:

²⁸⁶ Article 12 of the Abidjan Agreement states: “The Executive Outcomes shall be withdrawn five weeks after the deployment of the Neutral Monitoring Group (NMG). As from the date of the deployment of the Neutral Monitoring Group, the Executive Outcomes shall be confined to barracks under the supervision of the Joint Monitoring Group and the Neutral Monitoring Group.”

“Military elements in Sierra Leone toppled a democratically elected government. Africa can no longer tolerate, and accept as *faits accomplis*, coups against elected governments...Let us dedicate ourselves to a new doctrine for African politics: where democracy has been usurped, let us do whatever is in our power to restore it to its rightful owners, the people” (Annan 1997).

Predictably, albeit dishearteningly, that which was in the UN’s power—the capacity to intervene with troops to restore Kabbah’s democratically elected government to power—was the one thing Annan refrained from offering to Sierra Leone. Seeking perhaps to soften the blow, Annan conceded, “Verbal condemnation, though necessary is not sufficient. We must also ostracize and isolate the putchists. Neighbouring states, regional groupings, and the international community all must play their part” (Annan 1997). Sierra Leone was not a strategic international hub, with ostracisation and isolation costing little or nothing, this was a promise the international community could keep. Soon after Annan’s statement, embargoes and sanctions were placed against Sierra Leone.²⁸⁷

After the coup, Kabbah’s life was in danger. ECOMOG troops smuggled him to Lungi International Airport and from there he flew to Conakry (Woods 2010). Kabbah was not the first Sierra Leonean president to flee to Guinea; Presidents Momoh and Strasser had also been forced to take refuge there. However, when President Conte accompanied Kabbah to a villa near the Sierra Leonean embassy, most observers believed it would only be a matter of weeks before his government would be restored in Freetown. Instead, Kabbah’s elected government worked in exile for the next 10 months. Sending a clear message to the AFRC/RUF *junta* that Kabbah’s was the legitimate government of Sierra Leone, the British government set up an office in Conakry as well, and sent Sierra Leonean high commissioner Peter Penfold to work alongside Kabbah and his ministers (Penfold 2012).

Meanwhile, it was quickly apparent that the coalition between the AFRC and the RUF was not a partnership of equals, as the RUF dominated both Koroma and the AFRC (Penfold 2012). Unlike Jackson, Penfold was acutely aware of the RUF’s atrocities and actively urged Kabbah as well as his own government to refrain from engaging in negotiations with the RUF. Penfold vehemently disagreed with those who portrayed the RUF as a “well-meaning liberation movement,” instead describing the rebels as “a bunch of brutal thugs, surrounded by a mass of confused, simple people, led by a power-crazed, untrustworthy zealot” (Penfold 2012: 44). Having lived in Sierra Leone and witnessing some of the RUF’s abuses first-hand, Penfold was adamant that Kabbah not bargain with the RUF as this might allow the rebels to achieve legitimate power or influence. Once in Conakry, Penfold concluded that neither he nor the British government should pressure Kabbah to make a deal with the RUF. “It was not in our interests; it was not in Africa’s interests; it was not in Sierra Leone’s interests,” he said. “And, as they had demonstrated most courageously, it was not what the Sierra Leoneans wanted.”²⁸⁸ For while, at least, Kabbah seemed to listen.

²⁸⁷ This set of embargoes was utterly ignored by Liberia, and RUF diamonds continued to sustain the *junta*, while also enriching Taylor.

²⁸⁸ Interview with Penfold.

Marooned in Conakry, Kabbah and his ministers could do little governing. Most of their efforts were aimed at underscoring their democratic legitimacy and keeping their plight in the international spotlight. Even so, the months of exile dragged on. During a visit to London in October 1997, Kabbah tried to appear upbeat about the government's prospects of returning to Freetown, and announced an optimistic 90-day programme during which he anticipated a return to power (Davies 1997). Throughout his exile, Kabbah was successful in sustaining international censure against the coup. Koroma's *junta* was vilified the world over. Not one country, including even Libya or Cuba, moved to recognize the AFRC/RUF coalition.

Back in Freetown and elsewhere in Sierra Leone, resistance towards the *junta* was widespread. Citizens' suffering was acute but many fought against the AFRC/RUF alliance using what little means they had, namely nonviolent resistance. In keeping with Annan's statement, the international community had imposed sanctions on Sierra Leone (NYT 1997). While food and fuel were scarce and people were going hungry, residents in Freetown would call their families and friends in neighbouring countries and implore them not to send supplies because they did not want any to fall into the hands of the soldiers and rebels (Penfold 2012). The country ground to a virtual standstill when the Sierra Leone Labour Congress and Teachers Union organised mass strikes and demonstrations to protest the coup and were joined by most civil servants (Global Nonviolent Action Database 2008). In a show of solidarity and sacrifice, students refused to attend classes until Koroma stood down (Keen 2003). Over the country, schools and colleges remained closed. Although access to education was one of very few policies the RUF had claimed as a platform, this collective action infuriated both soldiers and rebels. Several students were murdered and others imprisoned, and it became a crime against the military government to be a student (Amnesty International 1997).

The fight to reinstate Kabbah was kept alive through a clandestine pro-democracy radio station, funded by the British government, produced by Julius Spencer.²⁸⁹ Located in a tent at the Lungi airport, held by ECOMOG, the station broadcast programming 16 hours a day, reporting on international calls for the AFRC to step down and restore Kabbah's government. Sustained by a network of student informers, the station was able to effectively and accurately report on the (frequently criminal) activities of the AFRC/RUF government (Sierra Herald 2009). Station 98.1 Democracy posed an immediate threat to the *junta*, which continually tried to detect its broadcasting location.

Despite Annan's commendable statement against the coup, there was little international desire or intent to meddle in what was seen as a civil war in a non-strategic location.²⁹⁰ However, regionally, ECOWAS actively pursued Kabbah's return to leadership in Sierra Leone. Nigeria's leading role in this endeavour was quite ironic considering Abacha's dictatorial regime was anything but a paragon of human rights. While content to allow Nigeria a leading role in returning democracy to Sierra Leone, the UK tried to have it both ways by "ring fencing" Nigeria's laudable actions on behalf of Kabbah's government, while still publicly criticising Abacha for his domestic politics

²⁸⁹ Spencer went on to serve as Minister of Information under President Kabbah.

²⁹⁰ Unlike the rest of Europe and the United States, the UK maintained active interest in Sierra Leone throughout.

(Penfold 2012). For all the frenetic regional activity to reinstate Kabbah—the Commonwealth in particular continued to condemn the coup while urging for the restoration of the elected government—the man himself appeared to be rather passive about his predicament. Penfold recalls that in Conakry, fellow Sierra Leoneans nicknamed Kabbah, “Pretty Soon,” as this was the stock answer he would give to anyone who asked when they would return to Sierra Leone (Penfold 2012).

ADRIFT AND DEPENDENT

Inasmuch as Kabbah was later prodded at Lomé by Jackson, throughout his exile, Kabbah was increasingly pushed by Britain “to be more proactive” about getting himself back to Sierra Leone (Penfold 2012: 49). In fact, Penfold claims, “For a government that was seemingly embarrassed about its colonial past,” the instructions he was sent by the Foreign Office became increasingly insistent and overbearing (Penfold 2012: 49). Instead of capitulating to his former colonial masters, Kabbah resisted and did nothing. For those who otherwise perceived Kabbah as amenable in the extreme, particularly to western countries, this intransigence was unexpected. However, the UK’s nudging was nowhere as intense as the pressure Nigeria and ECOWAS placed on Kabbah. Sierra Leone was being called “Nigeria’s Vietnam” (Doyle 1999: n.p.). The Nigerian army and general public were “heartily sick” of their country’s involvement in both Sierra Leone and Liberia, which had cost nearly \$8 billion and more than 1,000 Nigerian lives (Ilfie 2011: 218). Military withdrawal from Sierra Leone had been a major campaign promise for newly elected President Olusegun Obasanjo, and he was eager to deliver, stating, “Nigerian troops would not remain a day longer than necessary” (Doyle 1999: n.p.). Of the many international leaders urging Kabbah to once again engage in peace talks, Obasanjo’s voice was among the loudest.

Feeling the burden of his allies’ displeasure, Kabbah was also losing ground among his electorate. Kabbah may have been an honest and inclusive leader, but in his many years of working overseas for the UN, he developed a leadership style that has been described as “patently bureaucratic and out of touch with...street conditions” (Sessay *et al* 2009: 58). It is true that Kabbah was not known as “a man of the people,” but his natural reserve did not mean that he was not mindful of or insensitive to his constituents. Kabbah was, in fact, keenly aware of the destruction, deaths and suffering of citizens, along with the impunity, lawlessness, and economic disruption in his country. But he was short on charisma and a populous touch, which made him appear as remote and lacking empathy. Kabbah’s finest traits of courtesy, honesty and balance were ideally observed in person. Living in exile, it was difficult for him to put his best face forward. Meanwhile, Kabbah’s constituency, suffering hundreds of kilometres away, was losing the will to provide him with the benefit of the doubt.

In all fairness, there was little Kabbah could do stranded in Conakry. Without an army, he was totally dependent on ECOWAS troops for his nation’s security. He may have been legitimately elected, but with a non-functioning wartime economy, Kabbah’s government had no source of income, which further limited his options. Moreover, for all of his efforts to create an inclusive and representative government, Kabbah’s cabinet was made up of more or less effective members, who made it only partially effective, and he

had few advisors he could truly confide in. Kabbah also lacked political and military acumen. “It did not help that [Kabbah] was so inexperienced in dealing with military/security measures,” says Penfold (Gberie 2005: n.p.). Aside from a Special Security Division (SSD) stationed with ECOMOG at the main airport, Kabbah’s only ‘home-grown’ fighting force were the Kamajor-led Civil Defence Forces (CDF), who had maintained loyalty and support for the elected government through much of the South of the country. Even so, Kabbah saw the CDF as having mixed allegiances, and remained distrustful of their leader, Sam Hinga Norman. However effective they were as fighters, the CDF’s logistical support and equipment was as inadequate as the national coffers whose duty it was to arm them.

In so far as Kabbah depended on the largesse of British foreign aid and that country’s diplomatic support, he was more beholden still to the Nigerians. Ultimately, Kabbah knew his return to Freetown rested on the military support of ECOMOG and he was keen to stay in their favour.²⁹¹ Kabbah had learned a bitter lesson from severing ties with Executive Outcomes, and he knew he could not expect to last as president if ECOWAS troops departed without a backup. So while he continued to meet with Penfold regularly, Kabbah could not be seen as kowtowing to the UK, especially as long as it remained overtly critical of President Abacha’s regime.²⁹² Kabbah chose to lay low and stay stoic. As his exile lengthened, Kabbah rarely went to visit the large refugee camp housing thousands of displaced Sierra Leoneans on the city’s outskirts, did not visit his embassy although it was only metres away from his residence, and confined himself to his Conakry villa (Penfold 2012). Kabbah had political reason enough to lay low while in Conakry, but his depressed mental state at the time was surely exacerbated by his wife’s ill-health from cancer.²⁹³

For eight months, while ECOWAS leaders pursued a diplomatic route of talking to the *junta*, ECOMOG troops stationed at the Lungi airport and Kosso Camp (25 km and 15 km respectively outside of Freetown) had been forced to sit patiently. Believing that assaults against the military government would be condemned by the international community, which would compel ECOMOG to withdraw, AFRC and RUF forces repeatedly launched raids on ECOMOG positions in an attempt to provoke them. Although ECOMOG repulsed these forays, they incurred numerous casualties. As ECOMOG troops became increasingly restive, so too did Abacha, who decided to launch and pursue aggressive military action after the rebels’ attack on Freetown (Dumbuya 2008; Vann 1998).

ECOMOG troops quickly regained large swathes of territory, and by early February 1997, they were poised to take Freetown. Radio 98.1 accompanied ECOMOG troops as they moved into the city and broadcast live reports; reporters would announce the location of troops as ECOMOG took various neighbourhoods, advising people to remain in their homes (Tarawalie 2010). Anyone outside was taken to be a Koroma supporter, and there

²⁹¹ Interview with Penfold. More than 90 per cent of ECOMOG troops in Sierra Leone were Nigerian (Howe 2001).

²⁹² Obasanjo was only elected 29 May 1999. General Abacha was Nigeria’s head of state from 1993 to 1998, when he died suddenly.

²⁹³ Patricia Kabbah died in May 1998, shortly after the President was reinstated in Freetown. According to Gberie (2012), Kabbah had been distraught during her illness and never recovered from her loss.

were few civilian (or military) casualties (Penfold 2012). By 12 February, *junta* forces had either surrendered or run away and ECOMOG controlled Freetown. In the following weeks, Nigerian soldiers proceeded to take back much of the rest of the country.

PROSECUTION, PRIVATION AND A PUSH FOR PEACE

On 10 March, accompanied by Abacha, President Kabbah returned triumphant to Freetown. Although he claimed his primary mission was peace, Kabbah immediately moved to try dozens of members of the *junta* for treason, including Foday Sankoh (Woods 2010).²⁹⁴ Upon his return to power, “we found a complete breakdown of the state and any security,” Kabbah said. “I had to address our legitimacy as a first step, and that meant making people know that the actions of the *junta* were null and void.”²⁹⁵ Kabbah set about trying former coup officers, including Sankoh, with a vengeance. On 23 October 1997, Sankoh was found guilty of seven of nine counts of treason and sentenced to death. Notwithstanding the morality of the death penalty, had the subsequent appeal failed and Sankoh been executed, it is arguable that Sierra Leone’s war might have concluded without further suffering or loss of life. But this was not to be. While Kabbah was busy prosecuting Sankoh, the rebels, having learned a tactic that Taylor used repeatedly and well, had the chance to retreat, rest, regroup and recruit (see Chapter 9).

In the year after his return to Freetown, aside from trying and executing traitors, Kabbah concentrated on stabilizing the country’s economy and curbing corruption, both of which required claiming and controlling the diamond industry, long held by the RUF. Kabbah’s plans did not sit well with Charles Taylor, who had enriched himself beyond measure during Sierra Leone’s war. Kabbah and Taylor were as dissimilar as the proverbial chalk and cheese. Although both were democratically elected leaders, Kabbah was a reliable, earnest, albeit somewhat bland life-long bureaucrat, while Taylor was a charismatic, sly, and immoral warlord. As long as Sankoh caused chaos, but held the diamonds in Sierra Leone while Taylor was “pulling the strings” in Monrovia, the two despots made for “easy bedfellows” (Penfold 2012: 102). With Kabbah back in power and aspiring to be ethically upright, three became a crowd.

Recognising the imminent threat of his neighbour, Kabbah had approached Taylor about the possibility of collaborating toward rebuilding both their war-torn nations. Over tea, Taylor was obliging, Kabbah said, “He said, yes, no problem” and agreed to work together. But Kabbah also emphasised, “I could not trust him. No one could in this country.”²⁹⁶ Predictably, Taylor reneged on his word. “I came back home and at that point he sent fighters to the North side of Sierra Leone,” said Kabbah. Eventually, ECOMOG troops pushed back the Liberian mercenaries and RUF rebels, but Kabbah knew it was a matter of time until Taylor made another territorial play. Taylor did not necessarily want to occupy Sierra Leone’s mines himself, Kabbah said, but “he wanted to be in control of that part of the country and the resources that were there” and the best way to achieve his aim

²⁹⁴ In July, the Nigerians returned Sankoh to Freetown, where he had been imprisoned at an undisclosed location away from the main prison.

²⁹⁵ Interview with Kabbah, 2011.

²⁹⁶ Interview with Kabbah, 2012.

was to have Sankoh and the RUF do the dirty work, while he reaped the profits.²⁹⁷ Kabbah acknowledged that Taylor was hardly forthright, but he felt that because of Taylor's close ties with the RUF, he had no choice but to maintain some communication and the possibility of cooperation with the Liberian president.²⁹⁸

Taylor's response was less reasoned and based purely on a cost benefits analysis. Kabbah's return threatened Taylor's diamond supply. Instead of working with Kabbah for the benefit of their respective countries, Taylor moved to redouble his support for the RUF. "[Taylor] decided to be aggressive," Kabbah recalls. "It was very clear that Taylor's interest was in taking over Sierra Leone's mining areas." Taylor may or may not have had cross-border designs on Sierra Leone's territory, but he was certainly intent on its diamonds. With Taylor contributing a growing supply of arms, ammunition and a number of his own fighters, the RUF resurged with vengeance in the second half of 1998. The speed with which the rebels reclaimed territory "indicated significant improvement in their capabilities," said Penfold (2012: 99). By December, the RUF once again had taken Koidu, centre of the diamond-mining district, and was gaining fast on Freetown.

Up until Christmas 1998, Freetown remained peaceful. Both ECOMOG and the Sierra Leonean government carried on broadcasting statements denying any rebel advances. Throughout this time, ECOMOG "continued to either keep Kabbah in the dark or paint a rosy picture to him about the security situation" (Penfold 2012: 103). Behind the scenes, Kabbah and his cabinet carried on as though they were mere days from winning the war, focusing on development projects and planning overseas visits to drum up financial and political support for the government. "While there was nothing wrong in government trying publicly to stop people from panicking," Penfold observed, "In private, they acted as if they believed their own propaganda" (Penfold 2012: 102). The British High Commissioner was not the only person to be critical of Kabbah; civil society groups also felt let down by the government's performance. Citizens felt that the government should have been concentrating its energy and resources on ensuring peace and stability before directing its time and money elsewhere (Pomeroy 1999). Ignoring or downplaying the severity of one's weaknesses is a negotiating tactic (Blake *et al* 2014), and it is possible that Kabbah employed this strategy deliberately. However, this approach is typically used by competitive negotiators, and while it can be effective against a feeble opponent, it is usually ineffectual in the face of a strong adversary (Blake *et al* 2014: 203). If this was a conscious ploy it was not especially well conceived; typically cooperative, Kabbah had not revealed himself as having any competitive cunning and the RUF was in no way an ailing rival.

Two days before Christmas, it was obvious to anyone that the security situation was not as bright as the Kabbah government had maintained. In a BBC interview, RUF commander, Sam "Mosquito" Bockarie publicly threatened to attack Freetown on New Year's Day (*BBC News* 1998d). Both the US and the UK announced the closure of their missions and evacuation of all citizens, including diplomatic staff. Penfold recalls that Kabbah called him, disheartened and tired, and said that Sierra Leone's closest friend was abandoning them. Kabbah accused the British of falling for the rebels' ploy to create

²⁹⁷ Interview with Kabbah, 2012.

²⁹⁸ Interview with Kabbah, 2012.

tension and panic while undermining the government. “He claimed that ECOMOG had the situation in Freetown under control,” said Penfold, and “he denied reports that Makeni in the north had been attacked” (Penfold 2012: 107). Kabbah’s cabinet did not seem as worried about the rebels’ encroachment as they were about the diplomatic withdrawal of their key supporters. Spencer was particularly concerned, stating, “If the British go then that’s the end of our country, and our attempts to achieve democracy” (Spencer in Penfold 2012: 107).

The RUF did not attack Freetown on Christmas Day, but fighting outside the city increased and an attack was imminent. ECOWAS called an emergency meeting in Abidjan, Côte d’Ivoire of regional foreign ministers. Sierra Leonean foreign minister, Sama Banya, and national security advisor, Sheka Mansaray, were present, but the Nigerians dominated the meeting, seeking increased support for ECOMOG troops and public shaming of Taylor for supporting the rebels (Penfold 2012). According to Penfold (2012: 110), Banya and Mansaray were virtually silent during the meeting, and a “casual observer would not have realized that it was their country that was being discussed.” Banya and Mansaray’s silence at this meeting can be interpreted in several ways. Many people find long silences to be embarrassing or uncomfortable; inexperienced negotiators become so uneasy by silence that they will seek to fill it with a concession (Whitfield 2012). More seasoned negotiators can use silence to their advantage when highlighting something that is important (Lanceley 2003) or to get their opponent to reveal their inexperience or vulnerability (Kozicki 2005). Negotiators commonly use silence to collect and subsequently manage information (Lewicki *et al* 2010). Without actively participating in the discussion, Mansaray and Banya would have certainly been able to gather a great deal of information as to the intentions of their fellow participants, most particularly, immediate plans for ECOMOG troop deployment or withdrawal.

Aside from information gathering, none of the aforementioned explanations is applicable to the Abidjan meeting. Instead, a gap in the literature is revealed: Negotiation research does not assess the role of African cultural context in negotiator behaviour. Sierra Leonean culture is hierarchical (*Hofstede Center* nd; Hofstede 2010) and subordinates expect to be told how to handle a situation. Although Mansaray and Banya were senior advisors, unless they had been specifically prepared by Kabbah to address the participants in Abidjan a certain way, they would have refrained from making a public stand. The use of silence as a tactic by African negotiators is not documented, but without suggesting that it is homogenous to the continent, there is another explanation for Mansaray and Banya’s reticence. As in some Asian countries, to maintain steady relations, Africans will rarely express displeasure or disagreement directly. Dissent may be communicated indirectly, through hints and suggestions (*Diversity Council* 2008), or silence. Viewed in this light, Mansaray and Banya’s silence at Abidjan was anything but mute indifference. Kabbah’s cabinet was frequently frustrated in fora with its regional neighbours, feeling that they had little sway in discussions about their own country, and even less influence on the decisions being taken on their behalf.²⁹⁹ Consequently, it is more likely that Mansaray and Banya used silence to express their dissatisfaction about the direction of the discussion and

²⁹⁹ Interviews with Mansaray, Spencer, Gberie.

employed laconism as a means to indicate passive resistance of the Nigerians' dominance and lack of sovereign consideration of the Sierra Leoneans.³⁰⁰

All the same, the last minute meeting in Abidjan did nothing to halt the rebels, and on 6 January 1999, the RUF launched "Operation No Living Thing" on Freetown. Almost immediately, the international community—which had remained mostly silent since Kabbah had regained power (no doubt preoccupied by ongoing instability in Kosovo and looming demands for Clinton's impeachment over the Lewinsky scandal)—reignited an interest in Sierra Leone. The UN announced a dual track policy of sustaining and strengthening the democratically elected government while engaging in dialogue with the rebels, which the UK acclaimed. Speaking to the House of Commons in March, British Foreign Secretary Robin Cook passionately called for increased awareness and intervention, "In their brief occupation of Freetown in January, the rebel forces vividly lived up to their reputation for brutality and butchery... What should concern the House most of all is how we can prevent such evil from gaining power by force of arms in Sierra Leone" (Cook 1999).

The UK was by far the largest national donor of Sierra Leonean aid and Cook announced an additional £10 million aid package to support the UK's three-pronged policy, which included assisting in the creation a new national army, helping ECOMOG "to roll back the rebels" by providing their troops with equipment (vehicles, boots and rations, as well as light weapons and ammunition), and creating an opportunity for dialogue to "encourage the rebels to lay down their arms" (Cook 1999; Lloyd 1999). While the UK hoped that its abetment of ECOMOG would restore its troops from "their dismal performance in January" (Penfold 2012: 139), it was not lost on Sierra Leoneans that international donors were able to amass fully US\$2 billion for reconstruction in Kosovo a mere three months later (*IPS* 1999).

The British government was not alone in encouraging Kabbah to engage in dialogue with Sankoh. The US had its own reasons for supporting peace talks, not least of which was their trepidation of being called upon to contribute troops to the region. As discussed in chapter 4, Jackson wanted to personally pave the way to a ratified peace agreement. It was the neighbouring countries of ECOWAS, however, that were most anxious to see Sierra Leone at peace. Ongoing conflict was seeping into neighbouring Guinea and Cote d'Ivoire, and combined with Taylor's political machinations, the region was becoming unstable. Finally, and possibly most importantly, Nigeria was under a new leadership, one that was steadfastly resolute to end its significant financial commitment to ECOMOG, and bring home its battered troops.³⁰¹

Kabbah was first to acknowledge his dependence on international friends and neighbours. From the time he was elected, "our government had to make recourse to outside security forces to help defeat the RUF," he said. "ECOMOG and the UK played key roles to ensure the implementation of democracy in Sierra Leone. [They] stood firm

³⁰⁰ I thank Nyambura Githaiga for her insight into the political use of silence as resistance in African contexts.

³⁰¹ President Olusegun Obasanjo was elected in 1999; his commitment to scale down ECOMOG was widely supported by Nigerians.

throughout, avoiding promises of a quick fix.”³⁰² But hundreds of casualties and countless millions of dollars later, Kabbah and his ministers were sensitive that their arrangement with their West African neighbours had outlasted its welcome. Ultimately, the Lomé process “wasn’t an agreement between the Sierra Leone government and the rebels,” says Shekou Sesay, Kabbah’s former Minister of Presidential Affairs, “It was an ECOWAS decision.”³⁰³ Sierra Leone had already read the writing on the wall after the Freetown invasion, Spencer says, “We were already seeing the troops being reduced. Troops would go on leave and not return.”³⁰⁴ Complete Nigerian drawdown was certain, the only question was when.

Kabbah was anxious to pursue peace talks, claiming, “I had to persevere...because I knew that people were weary of war.”³⁰⁵ However, Penfold urged Kabbah to proceed with patience and care. Believing the government’s position to be shaky, Penfold was cautious about moving from dialogue to negotiations “too quickly”.³⁰⁶ UK intelligence claimed that the government held 30% of the country in much of the south and east, while the RUF commanded an equal 30%, mostly in the north and east, and that fully 40% of the country was without any control (Penfold 2012). While the government and rebels appeared to possess equal territory, “most people thought that the RUF controlled more,” says Gberie.³⁰⁷ So while the two main forces were evenly matched in terms of land resources, “perception is everything”; knowing that the government had no real troops of its own and depended entirely on a foreign interventionist force meant that the RUF was perceived as being militarily dominant.

MENTALITY OVER MUSCLE: THE PSYCHOLOGY OF THE LOSER

In the months leading up to Lomé, the various parties to the war locked into their own interpretations of relative military strength or evenness. The rebels by no means controlled a majority of the country’s territory, but they (and their raucous champion Jackson) certainly fronted as though the RUF had a surplus of manpower and were within a hair’s breadth of full military victory. Kabbah’s ministers bought into the rebels’ puffed-up assertions of dominance. In addition to hardliner RUF belligerents, “There were other rebel freelancers out there,” claims Mansaray. “There were also mercenaries working for the RUF. And always, there was Charles Taylor, the middleman, benefitting from it all.”³⁰⁸

Although they controlled as much territory as the rebels, Kabbah and his cabinet consistently believed and acted as though they were losing the war. “We didn’t have the capacity to defend ourselves,” says Spencer, noting that the government went into Lomé feeling that “We were in no position to refuse the demands they made on us.”³⁰⁹ The

³⁰² Interview with Kabbah, 2011.

³⁰³ Interview with Dr. Shekou Sesay, former Minister of Presidential Affairs, 25 October 2011, in Pretoria, South Africa. This supports Spencer and Mansaray’s view that the Kabbah government had no real sovereign control over its affairs, least of all the use of military force.

³⁰⁴ Interview with Spencer.

³⁰⁵ Interview with Kabbah, 2011.

³⁰⁶ Interview with Penfold.

³⁰⁷ Interview with Gberie.

³⁰⁸ Interview with Mansaray.

³⁰⁹ Interview with Spencer.

majority of Sierra Leone, or 40%, was without any real leadership or control, but Kabbah never appeared to consider the military possibilities for victory by suggesting that ECOMOG make a consolidated effort to take over some of these areas.³¹⁰

Perceptions of relative strength and weakness tend to endure throughout the negotiating process; negotiators will change their minds at the very beginning of negotiations or not at all (Thompson & Hrebec 1996). The boastful and vainglorious claims of Sankoh and the rebels developed at the outset of the war remained ingrained up to and throughout the Lomé negotiations. Negotiation outcomes are predictable when negotiators have inflexible mindsets (Ma 2008). As much as Sankoh would later be accused of inflexibility and intransigence during Lomé, Kabbah's government's self-perception as frail in the face of the rebels was equally intractable.³¹¹ Kabbah's sense that his government was in a losing position was a cognitive frame, and these are biased, incomplete reflections of the world (see Chapter 2). A person's cognitive frames can change, but when an individual feels under threat, they cling to their pre-existing frames and even reinforce them (Aarts & van Woerkum 2002). Clearly, Kabbah felt militarily and politically threatened by Sankoh and the RUF. In negotiations, the cognitive frames of the various actors fed into Kabbah's sense of imminent defeat. By repeating, strengthening and adding to each other's claims, this perception became so entrenched as to be a "frozen frame", meaning that it became absolutely true to Kabbah, and all subsequent decisions and concessions were made in the context of this frame (Aarts & van Woerkum 2006; Ford 1999; Gray 2003).

Public perception of the rebels' military might over the government was fed by the RUF's media savvy spokesperson, Omrie Golley. Spencer, who by now had moved from Radio 98.1 to become President Kabbah's Minister for Information, admitted that in the public relations battle between the government and the rebels, the government was perpetually on the defensive for lack of resources and presidential interest. "With support from Taylor and Golley, the RUF had a good PR campaign going on," says Spencer.³¹² The government's media presence was so ineffectual it prompted BBC Africa reporter (and Sierra Leonean) Lansana Fofana to publicly call on Kabbah to "intensify the propaganda war against AFRC/RUF rebels" (Momodu 1999). Fofana noted Kabbah had "a very serious information gap and this is very dangerous...Government should wake up" (Momodu 1999). According to Penfold, the RUF's capacity for media manipulation was a perpetual sore spot between Kabbah and Spencer. "The President was not PR-minded, and

³¹⁰ Kabbah never claimed to be a military strategist. In conversation, he clung only to the notion that discourse would bring peace to Sierra Leone. So it is possible, that Kabbah would not have conceived of creating new frontlines. Even if he had made any tactical suggestions to ECOMOG commanders, it is also possible that Kabbah's proposals would have been disregarded. ECOWAS, and Nigeria in particular, were directing the Sierra Leonean government's war efforts, and by 1999, they were committed to withdrawing their troops.

³¹¹ Kabbah was for all intents and purposes a cooperative negotiator, but inflexibility is typically a hard-bargaining or competitive strategy. While Kabbah did not deliberately choose to be inflexible in order to attain a particular advantage, the disadvantages of locking into a particular viewpoint were the same. Being inflexible "can lead to missed opportunities for easy gain" (Anderson 2011: 63) and Kabbah's inflexible mindset in this regard prevented him from seeing other alternatives, which may well have yielded relative gains for the government.

³¹² Interview with Spencer.

did not want to spend financial resources on this,” said Penfold.³¹³ Kabbah was intent on being a careful user of the public purse and he simply did not see the value of investing in “propaganda,” continues Penfold, but in so doing he inadvertently undermined his aims. Kabbah may have saved the government treasury a few Leones (the national currency), but his refusal to play up to the media cost him dearly and made him seem weak. After the Freetown invasion and in the months up to Lomé, most Sierra Leoneans, including Kabbah’s own cabinet—and likely even himself—believed the government forces did not stand a chance to win a military victory over the RUF.

With the UK’s well-timed donation of money and equipment, ECOMOG’s commander, General Maxwell Khobe, reconsidered backing out of Sierra Leone and supported Penfold in suggesting that Kabbah fight back militarily and assert increased government authority over a larger part of the country.³¹⁴ For a time, it appeared as though Kabbah had rediscovered his will to fight. In April, the President was photographed in full military combat uniform in a test-flight of two newly acquired M1-24V helicopter gunships. The gunships were bought from the Ukrainian government (*Concord Times* 1999b), although it is a mystery where the near bankrupt Sierra Leonean government found the financial means to make the purchase. The new weapons would be used to “reinforce our defence system” Kabbah said, warning that the government determined to repel “any aggression against this nation” (*Concord Times* 1999b). Very nearly announcing imminent strikes on the RUF and shaking a pointed finger at Taylor, ECOMOG indicated that the helicopters would be most effective in policing “the very porous Sierra Leone-Liberia border” to halt the flow of arms, ammunition and mercenaries from Liberia (*Concord Times* 1999b).

While Penfold encouraged Kabbah to take a stronger military stand against the RUF, he also advised the President to use caution and patience before committing to peace talks with the rebels whom he believed to be utterly treacherous. But Penfold’s counsel fell on Kabbah’s deaf ears. The President wanted to engage in talks immediately. “I got the feeling that Penfold wanted to move slowly,” Kabbah recalls, noting that he wanted to hasten peace for his countrymen.³¹⁵ Penfold’s key recommendation, that Kabbah needed to build his government’s capacity prior to negotiating so it could participate in peace talks from a position of strength, appears to be a self-evident assertion. Prior to Lomé, ECOMOG was preparing a major strike against the rebels, and was “poised to take Lunsar and Makeni,” two major towns to the east of Freetown. The governments’ new gunships were already inflicting heavy damage on the rebels, and ECOMOG was “back onto the offensive” (Penfold 2012: 140).³¹⁶ Penfold had spoken to ECOMOG’s brigadier general, and “Khobe was confident that Lunsar would fall. This would have put the government in a stronger position politically and militarily.”³¹⁷

³¹³ Interview with Penfold.

³¹⁴ Interview with Penfold.

³¹⁵ Interview with Kabbah, 2012.

³¹⁶ Several years prior, helicopter gunships had provided Executive Outcomes with significant military leverage against the RUF, so Penfold and ECOMOG has every reason to be optimistic.

³¹⁷ Interview with Penfold.

Both ECOMOG and Penfold saw the benefits of pushing a military strategy prior to committing to peace talks, but because Kabbah continued to perceive his government as losing the war, he never gave himself the opportunity to develop a position of strength (militarily or mentally) prior to engaging in negotiations. Kabbah had determined the only path to peace was via negotiations, and he did not deviate from this avenue. The President's fixed or frozen frame prevented him from preparing adequately for the negotiations he claimed to hold so dearly.

One of the most important issues a negotiator needs to resolve prior to commencing talks is deciding what action she will take if parties cannot reach agreement and negotiations fail. Fisher & Ury (1983) describe this as setting one's "Best Alternative to a Negotiated Agreement" (BATNA). Negotiators who do not know their BATNA cannot ascertain whether an offer is worth considering or retreating from. Without a BATNA, negotiators have less power because they do not foresee the alternatives they could pursue in case they cannot come to an acceptable agreement. A clearly defined BATNA acts as a kind of insurance policy; it gives a negotiator the ability to walk away from negotiations if it becomes evident that the outcome will be of limited benefit to him (Ventner n.d.).³¹⁸ Once a negotiator finds his BATNA, he knows what he will do or what will happen if the parties fail to achieve accord in negotiations. Just as couples who are about to marry usually do not consider the possibility of divorce, most negotiators do not want to think about what might happen if they withdraw or defect from the process, but prior to Lomé, Kabbah refused to even hypothesise about this option—to him, defection meant continued war, and this was no option at all.

With Kabbah's assurance floundering, it was clear that an end to the war necessitated some discourse with the rebels. General Khobe may have been considering increased military assaults, but ECOMOG troops were already beginning to withdraw and the international community had no intention of establishing a peacekeeping force in Sierra Leone. Observers were unanimous that Kabbah's government needed to accommodate the rebels, with the UK going so far as to make this a requirement in exchange for further military aid.³¹⁹ At Kabbah's request, in April 1999, the National Commission for Democracy and Human Rights organised a national consultative conference to solicit the people's views on the peace process and reach consensus on the ceasefire, civil-military relations, amnesty and immunity, power-sharing and the role of civil society at upcoming peace talks (Dyfan 2003; see also chapter 3). Political and traditional leaders, as well as civil society representatives, including women's groups, trade unions, student organisations and religious groups, heavily attended the conference. Even Sankoh consented to send a personal message in which he apologised for "the pain and grief my revolution" may have caused, while reaffirming "our continuous commitment to work towards genuine and lasting peace in Sierra Leone" (Sankoh 1999).

³¹⁸ Fisher & Ury (1983) outline a three-step process to find one's BATNA: Develop a list of actions to take in case there is no agreement; refine the more favourable of these into applicable options; and tentatively choose the option that appears best. Kabbah never considered what he might do if the terms of a peace agreement were disadvantageous to him; no matter how lopsided, an agreement was all that mattered.

³¹⁹ Interview with Penfold.

Following three days of intense debate, the organisers produced a document proposing terms for a peace agreement, based on the provisions of the non-implemented 1996 Abidjan Peace Agreement. In exchange for laying down arms and recognising the legitimacy of Kabbah's elected government, the RUF would receive the benefits of limited powersharing in the transitional government leading up to national elections as well as conditional amnesty—although Sankoh and other “cases of serious human rights violations” were to submit to due process (Hayner 2007; Rahall 2010). While the aim of the conference was to obtain citizen consensus on next steps to end the war, not all participants felt their opinion was considered in the final report. According to Gberie, most civil society voices were ignored, “They didn’t want Sankoh to be allowed into any position in government. They didn’t want amnesty or power-sharing.”³²⁰ According to Spencer, Kabbah and his advisors knew that many citizens were in “strong opposition” to the conciliatory tone of the consultative conference report.³²¹ Kabbah’s advisors also believed the “government was vulnerable” and allowed arrangements to proceed for formal peace talks.³²²

Meanwhile, Kabbah had acquiesced to Jackson’s lobbying and granted temporary amnesty to Sankoh so he could meet with his commanders and discuss peace. Publicly, however, Kabbah claimed that his decision to grant Sankoh amnesty was in response to an informal offer of peace from the RUF and in exchange for several hundred children that had been abducted and were being held hostage in the bush by the rebels (Uchendu 1999a). However, Mansaray acknowledges that the government used Sankoh’s temporary amnesty, “to prove there was a Sankoh. Some [commanders] didn’t believe he existed.”³²³ Sankoh had been incarcerated since mid-1997 and during that time rebel field commanders had been directing the war. Sending Sankoh to consult with his officers was a means to determine whether they still acknowledged his leadership, Mansaray said. Once formal talks began, “we needed to have someone significant to negotiate with. If we got someone peripheral, we knew we’d get nowhere.”³²⁴ All the same, in an effort to emphasise his leadership autonomy, Kabbah was intent to state that Sankoh’s freedom was temporary, and that he would still be required to answer for his conviction of treason.

Sierra Leonean citizens were somewhat reluctant to warm to formal peace talks, especially since Kabbah had already started to warn them of the costs of peace.³²⁵ At the National Consultative Conference, Kabbah had indicated that unpleasant options lay ahead when he asked participants, “Are you prepared to give power to those who impose terror on you? Do you wish some ministers to be dropped in order to accommodate the RUF” (*Concord Times* 1999a)? Previously, upon announcing temporary clemency for Sankoh, Kabbah said that if this is what will bring last peace, then “he had no option but to consider it as the price his government and the people of Sierra Leone will pay for peace” (*Spice News* 1999). Talks had not yet begun, but Kabbah had already freed Sankoh; the underlying implication to many Sierra Leoneans was that they were some time away from receiving the final mounting invoice for peace.

³²⁰ Interview with Gberie.

³²¹ Interview with Spencer. Gberie also supported this assessment in our interview.

³²² Interview with Gberie.

³²³ Interview with Mansaray.

³²⁴ Interview with Mansaray.

³²⁵ Interview with Spencer and several members of civil society.

Some citizens may still have believed that Sankoh and the RUF could be defeated militarily, but once Jackson circumvented ECOWAS' counterattack, Kabbah and his advisors did not believe the rebels' downfall loomed anytime soon. With the RUF back controlling the diamond mines—the country's only real export—the government was further hamstrung by its financial limitations. While Nigeria and other ECOWAS members were shouldering the bulk of the cost of the intervention, the Sierra Leonean government still had to supplement for the cost of basics such as helicopter engine replacements, and this “was costing the administration more than it had,” says Mansaray. “We couldn't sustain it.”³²⁶ Consequently, the government decided that it would move forward wholeheartedly with the peace talks.

Freeing Sankoh and allowing him to travel to speak with his men marked the point at which Kabbah decisively pledged to the enterprise of peace. “Once Kabbah was committed, he couldn't extricate himself from the process,” says Penfold.³²⁷ From the beginning, Kabbah failed to see that he was more committed to peace than his counterpart. The tendency to maintain a particular course of action in which a person has heavily invested is called “escalation of commitment” and individuals often make choices to their detriment if they have already invested resources into a particular outcome (Staw 1976, 1997). Kabbah had determined that a peace agreement was the only way to end the war, and he pursued this end with single-minded focus since he was elected. Since he had not established his BATNA, Kabbah failed to manage his escalation of commitment and in so doing perpetuated an uneven playing field at Lomé. However laudable the desired outcome, Kabbah did not see how his opponent could (and would) capitalise from his desire to achieve peace, regardless of the costs incurred.

ROCK, PAPER, SCISSORS: PLAYING FOR PEACE AT LOMÉ

After the ceasefire, once the formal talks began, Kabbah was pushed from all sides to make a deal. Kabbah felt duelling pressure from the international community (particularly Jackson), and the people that had elected him to power. In his first speech after the ceasefire, Kabbah acknowledged that he was aware that this was an unpopular move, but that “peace means accepting the rebels as brothers and sisters of the same family” and that “peace means taking very strong decisions” (*The Progress* 1999c). Even so, for all of his willingness to cooperate and engage in talks, Kabbah had no desire to extend much largesse towards Sankoh personally, particularly when it came to elevating his position in the transitional government's cabinet. “Kabbah didn't want to give Sankoh anything,” says Mansaray. “He wanted to make him some kind of advisor.” Kabbah righteously defended his recalcitrance, continues Mansaray, “Because he was backed by civil society who wanted peace, but who also didn't want to give Sankoh anything.” Kabbah sent Mansaray to meet with Sankoh outside of the talks at his hotel and offer him a position of government advisor. Sankoh scoffed at Kabbah's suggestion and dismissed it summarily, “He said, I'm not an advisor of anyone,” recounts Mansaray, “I fought to be the President.”³²⁸

³²⁶ Interview with Mansaray.

³²⁷ Interview with Penfold.

³²⁸ Interview with Mansaray.

Sankoh's fractiousness served to slow the talks, which made Kabbah uneasy. From the start, Kabbah was concerned that the rebels would use the lull in fighting that the ceasefire provided to rearm, and he had sought assurances that the negotiations would be expedited. Once the UN agreed to monitor the ceasefire, Kabbah felt optimistic enough to predict, "talks should not last for more than 10 days" (Conteh 1999a). Inevitably, the process was encumbered by the rebels' increasing demands.

Kabbah's congenial, cooperative negotiating style was increasingly in stark contrast to the hardball tactics employed by the ultra-competitive rebels. The RUF's strategy to stack exigencies is a common hardball move called the "flinch tactic" in which one side makes additional and deepening demands, trying to see how much they can get before their opponent makes a visible sign that he is at breaking point (Mnookin *et al* 2000).³²⁹ A negotiator's greatest fear is the loss of that which he most values. The mere thought of a failed peace agreement caused Kabbah untold dread and pushed him to persist negotiating with Sankoh. "I had to show patience and steely determination that peace would be realised at any cost," Kabbah claimed, "and that none of the rebels' strategies would be allowed to succeed."³³⁰

Albeit possibly misguided, the president's perseverance in negotiations is a classic feature of cooperative negotiators. Kabbah also demonstrated a clear cooperative motivational orientation, in which his motives to achieve peace sought to maximise outcomes both for the government as well as the RUF (De Dreu *et al* 2000; Messick & McClintock 1968). These behaviours and considerations are in direct opposition to groups with individualistic orientations, which are primarily preoccupied with their own outcomes (Kern & Weingart 2002).³³¹ Cooperative negotiations typically proceed without hurry, with negotiators taking the time to achieve common ground. Such negotiators strive towards low-risk solutions and personally assure outcomes. By doing so, "Negotiators must learn, in part from each other, what is jointly possible and desirable. To do so requires some degree of cooperation. But, at the same time, they seek to advance their individual interests. This involves some degree of competition" (Lax & Sibenius 1986: 29). Kabbah never found the balance between these approaches. Instead, the balance shifted in favour of the individualistic group: Kabbah, the cooperator, changed his negotiating behaviour to be more yielding and less dominating, with the results yielding lower individual outcomes for the government negotiating team overall (Shei 2007).

The rebels' strategy of stacking their demands had thus far resulted in profitable dividends, and they saw no reason to change tactics. With Kabbah softening to the idea of powersharing, the rebels next set their sights on unconditional freedom for Sankoh. Again, Kabbah resisted. The rebels were furious. With Golley claiming that Kabbah was treating the RUF as "unequal partners," they "stormed out of the meeting" (*Concord Times* 1999d).

³²⁹ One way to combat the flinch tactic is to be conscious that this is an actual strategy, and question whether the other side is truly expecting to have all of their demands met or if they are trying to diminish expectations (Coburn n.d.). According to Lomé participants, Sankoh and the RUF had limited expectations at the outset of the negotiations, but noticing Kabbah's inclination to make concessions, their expectations increased and they began to augment their demands

³³⁰ Interview with Kabbah, 2011.

³³¹ Sankoh and the RUF most certainly demonstrated individualistic orientations at Lomé.

Kabbah knew that Sankoh's unconditional pardon was sought by the rebels and Jackson alike, but the government had determined that this would be the last item on the peace agenda to be implemented once the rebels had irreversibly committed to peace (*Concord Times* 1999d).

Talks dragged again, with the rebels' refusal to allow ECOMOG troops to remain in the country for more than 14 days after the signing of any agreement. Host and chief mediator, Togolese president Gnassingbé Eyadéma stepped in to smooth ruffled feathers, and talks resumed, circling back to powersharing. On this issue, Kabbah was not only under pressure from Jackson, but his regional neighbours as well—led by Eyadéma who was also serving as ECOWAS chairman. Eyadéma urged Kabbah to accept the RUF's demand for a powersharing deal in order to end the war (*The Progress* 1999e). Knowing full well that Eyadéma's position was supported by Nigeria, Kabbah began to yield. In an overt sign of compliance, at the opening of parliament on 11 June, Kabbah recast powersharing as "political inclusion" and said that the government's position was evolving to provide for "the enhancement of political participation" (Kabbah 1999). Edéyama was able to identify powersharing as an issue that the two parties perceived differently, and Kabbah then "refreshed" both sides' perceptions of the issue to explore acts and solutions that had not previously been attempted (Kaufman *et al* 2003). Thus, reframing made way for managing at least one of the key areas of negotiation under dispute. Kabbah's ability to reframe powersharing into something more palatable served to placate the numerous members of his parliament that were opposed to such a deal. The fact that ECOMOG was indicating its willingness to review the "mandate and concept" of its operations no doubt helped to mellow the opposition (*Concord Times* 1999f).

Despite ample evidence to the contrary, Kabbah appeared to be persuaded that Sankoh was genuinely committed to peace at Lomé. "Perhaps a lot of it was wishful thinking," says Penfold, "Kabbah really believed that Sankoh was sincere."³³² Sesay says that Kabbah's willingness to trust Sankoh was rooted in his commitment to peace: "In negotiations, the only thing that we were thinking about was ending the death and the maiming."³³³ With the benefit of hindsight, Mansaray takes a slightly less naive view of Sankoh. "Did we trust him? We had a percentage of trust with a percentage of suspicion," Mansaray recalls, "We knew that if we were to present something to him, it had to be in his interest for him to agree with it. If something was in his interest, then we could trust him."³³⁴ However, it was not always easy to fix what Sankoh's interests were.

From the time he mounted his revolution through to Lomé, Sankoh's interests evolved significantly. Gberie says that when he spoke to Sankoh in 1996, the rebels' demands were vague, and that it was after Sankoh hired a lawyer (referring to Golley) to "articulate his position for him" that Sankoh began to pursue "absolute power."³³⁵ By late May 1999, it was clear that Sankoh wanted a four-year transitional government, with himself as the Chair (Kuma 1999). According to the electoral terms in Sierra Leone, the next elections were scheduled in three years time. Extending the transitional government

³³² Interview with Penfold.

³³³ Interview with Sesay.

³³⁴ Interview with Mansaray.

³³⁵ Interview with Gberie.

into a fourth year would require altering the constitution, and Kabbah refused to consider this option. Mansaray says that the constitutional limit on the electoral cycle gave the government some hope, “In less than three years...we knew [the RUF] would be running for elections. And we knew that they would never win the vote of the people.”³³⁶

For all Sankoh’s trickery, Kabbah’s team was still inclined to foresee the future with confidence and hope. The persistent belief that the future will be better than the present and past is known as the optimism bias (Sharot 2011). The government negotiators were not unusual in this respect; the tendency to underestimate potential calamity and aggrandize chances of well-being and success is virtually universal. The downside of the optimism bias is, “risk-takers underestimate the odds they face and, because they misread the risks, optimistic entrepreneurs often believe they are prudent, even when they are not” (Kahneman 2011: n.p.). While few would describe Kabbah or any member of his team as being genuine risk-takers, they certainly underestimated the odds of the RUF maintaining the terms of a peace agreement for three years.

Meanwhile, Penfold was increasingly critical of Kabbah’s mindless rush towards a settlement and cautioned his own government that the wrong agreement could exacerbate the fragile situation on the ground, “I felt Kabbah was being pressured into making a choice between peace and democracy, and that he couldn’t have both,” he said. “The UK simply wanted peace at any cost, and they saw a negotiated settlement as the only way to solve the conflict. As in Northern Ireland, they thought powersharing was the answer.”³³⁷ The concerns of the British High Commissioner fell on deaf ears. The international community shared the view that an imperfect, not necessarily democratic peace was better than no peace at all. This was not the prevailing view of those Sierra Leoneans that had resisted Koroma’s *junta* in the name of democracy. Nonetheless, Penfold says this reflects the international community’s “paternalistic way of dealing with Africa,” and that in the march on peace the sentiments of the population were not thoroughly considered.

KABBAH’S FIRE SALE OFFER OF BLANKET AMNESTY

The paternalistic imposition of peace, regardless of the cost, is one of the hallmarks of Lomé and is most apparent in its clause providing blanket amnesty to the rebels. Indeed, amnesty was one of the government concessions to cause the most public outrage after the peace agreement was signed (Kaiba 2013). Most ironically, however, at the talks, amnesty was the first significant agenda item to be agreed on, and “it was settled quickly as ‘a prerequisite for any meaningful negotiation’” (Hayner 2007: 13).³³⁸ It was Kabbah’s chief negotiator, Attorney General and Minister of Justice, Solomon Berewa, who first offered amnesty to the rebels as a gesture of goodwill, in hopes that it would propel the talks

³³⁶ Interview with Mansaray.

³³⁷ Interview with Penfold.

³³⁸ Although the amnesty provision was decided on early in the talks, discussions were closed and details were not widely known until much later. According to Hayner (2007a), details of this provision were still a secret on 24 June, only two weeks before the agreement was ratified. At the April Consultative Conference, many members of civil society had voiced vehement opposition to any kind of amnesty, but Kabbah’s government remained undaunted. Berewa is remembered as saying, “at the time the government was not so concerned with the amnesty...its immediate priority was stopping the war, and other questions of justice would have to be addressed in the future” (Hayner 2007a: 15).

forward and ensure lasting peace.³³⁹ The issue of amnesty had been raised and agreed on back in 1996 at the Abidjan peace talks, consequently, Berewa claimed his proposal at Lomé was neither unexpected or a surprise government concession.³⁴⁰

Typically, the side that makes the first or opening offer in negotiations has an upper hand. This advantage is attributable to a cognitive bias called anchoring, which describes the tendency for negotiators to be heavily influenced by the other side's first bid (the anchor) when considering a decision (Tversky & Kahneman 1974). Indeed, initial offers better predict final outcomes than conventional haggling and concessions, which further proves the robustness of the anchoring bias in first offers (Galinsky & Mussweiler 2001). Theoretically then, Berewa's decision to present the first offer at Lomé should have set the tone for negotiation outcomes that would have benefitted the government's interests. However, the choice of anchor backfired spectacularly. By offering blanket amnesty as the first significant concession to the rebels, Berewa did in fact anchor the subsequent negotiations, but in a way that favoured the RUF at the expense of the citizens the government was elected to represent. Sankoh's rebels would have assessed the bounty of Berewa's first offer of blanket amnesty and it would have influenced their subsequent counter-demands and outcomes (Liebert *et al* 1968). The government could have saved the offer of some kind of amnesty for later in the negotiations, but foolishly they did not seem to allocate much value to this issue. Knowing that the government was willing to grant such a significant concession at the outset, the rebels increased the worth of their subsequent demands.

Kabbah's government feared that without an amnesty clause, Sierra Leone would go the way of Uganda, where rebel leader, Joseph Kony, refused to sign a peace agreement for fear of being prosecuted by the International Criminal Court (Berewa 2011). "Foday Sankoh would equally have refused to sign the Lomé Peace Agreement without the amnesty provision inserted in it and for the same reason" Berewa claims (2011: 141). Penfold concurs, claiming that the possibility of ICC indictments acts as a "disincentive" particularly on older, more experienced—and often senior—belligerents.³⁴¹ Conversely, "Indictments are not a disincentive to a 20 year-old with a gun," Penfold states. "What is a disincentive to a 20 year-old with a gun is a Mercedes-Benz. If that's what it takes, what's wrong with offering them what they want?"³⁴²

Based on the (non-implemented) 1996 Abidjan Agreement, Lomé grants all rebels and soldiers with full immunity for their actions "in pursuit of their objectives" for the full duration of the war, from March 1991 to July 1999 (Lomé Accord, Article IX). Last minute edits emphasising "pardon" over amnesty were inserted at the behest Sankoh and of rebel commanders who were appealing death sentences (Hayner 2007). However much the

³³⁹ Like Kabbah, Berewa was considered to be a moderate and cooperative negotiator, with a "style" familiar to the other UN participants in attendance (Interviews with Mansaray and Spencer; O'Flaherty 2004). Although civil society was not formally in attendance at the Lomé talks, Kadi Sesay, chairperson of the National Commission for Democracy and Human Rights (NCDHR) was a member of the government's negotiating team.

³⁴⁰ According to participants at the 1996 talks in Abidjan, amnesty was both "inevitable," a "forgone conclusion", and is remembered as the "least controversial" of all the issues discussed (Hayner 2007a).

³⁴¹ Interview with Penfold.

³⁴² Interview with Penfold.

offer of amnesty affronted the people of Sierra Leone, no one present at the Lomé talks believes that an agreement could have been reached without this provision. Even Kabbah acknowledged, “The amnesty provision was criticised by many,” but said it was necessary nonetheless.³⁴³ Moreover, because Kabbah had not developed a BATNA, he did not perceive or explore any alternatives to the concessions he offered in course of peace negotiations. Mansaray supports Kabbah, saying the government was “in a hurry to end this thing. As far as amnesty, looking at how other places had handled things, it was the only way we knew how to end it.”³⁴⁴ In fact, few (if anyone) considered alternative possibilities. Some local and international human rights actors contend that amnesty ought to have been considered alongside various conditions or limitations, but none of these options was explored at the time (O’Flaherty 2005).

The amnesty provision was the first of many government concessions at Lomé. Slowly but surely, Kabbah’s negotiating team relented against the two-pronged onslaught of the RUF at the conference table and in the bush. Disregarding the ceasefire, the rebels continued to attack villages and civilians. Penfold recalls hearing one rebel leader explain that the ceasefire solely prevented shooting, but that maiming, burning and looting were still acceptable (Penfold 2012). Kabbah tried to hold fast, but the strain became too much. Led by Jackson, and supported by the Togolese and Nigerians, Kabbah’s government was pressed to offer numerous ministerial positions to the rebels. A Lomé ‘Facilitation Committee’ comprised of several ECOWAS officials and international participants flew to Freetown to meet with Kabbah. Led by the Togolese foreign minister, Joseph Koffigoh, the group noted that while the RUF had cut down on some of their demands, a gap remained as to the participation of the RUF in government, and they advised Kabbah to make the necessary allowances that would lead to a peace agreement.

Sankoh knew that Sierra Leoneans loathed him, and before Kabbah released him to meet with his commanders, he believed the most he could hope for was personal amnesty.³⁴⁵ Noting the ease with which the ceasefire was passed, Sankoh’s hopes soared as talks began. His ultimate outcome was to have “the charges of treason against him dropped and his sentence of execution stayed,” says Penfold. “Then, all of a sudden, he’s being asked how many cabinet appointments he wants. It was beyond his wildest dreams.”³⁴⁶ Seeing Kabbah’s weakness in the face of international pressure, Sankoh said the rebels would settle for the vice-presidency, 10 Cabinet ministerial positions, five deputy ministers, six ambassadorships, and the directorship of six parastatals (Penfold 2012).

When the news reached Sierra Leone, citizens were incensed. In less than 12 hours, civil society groups organised a 24-hour “stay at home” in opposition to Sankoh’s power-

³⁴³ Interview with Kabbah, 2012.

³⁴⁴ Interview with Mansaray. Because ECOMOG troop withdrawal was imminent, the government felt under extreme time pressure (TP) to settle negotiations. Time pressure works to the advantage of the side with greater negotiating power; when TP is an added dimension of negotiations, the weaker side often loses the ability to systematically process information and instead relies on cognitive heuristics (De Dreu 2003; Dawson n.d.). Time pressure increases the likelihood that a person will rely on the affect heuristic (a mental shortcut in which emotions such as anxiety and fear influence decisions) over analytic reasoning (Yudkowsky 2008), indicating that Kabbah may well have been influenced by his emotions because of time constraints.

³⁴⁵ Interviews with Mansaray and Penfold.

³⁴⁶ Interview with Penfold.

sharing proposal (Mesa 1999). The organisers of the protest met with Kabbah in Freetown and warned him that things would become much worse if he succumbed to Sankoh's proposal. Kabbah assured people that he would not bow to pressure, but soon after, Jackson telephoned and urged him to accept the RUF's proposal. Kabbah told Jackson "that he would be signing his own death warrant if he did so," says Penfold.³⁴⁷ All the same, Kabbah told his ministers that he was prepared to accept two RUF ministers in cabinet as part of his policy of inclusion (Penfold 2012). Kabbah's cabinet expressed "strong opposition to the fact that the President acceded to the demands of powersharing by the RUF," says Mansaray, but nonetheless complied.³⁴⁸ The Minister of Information made the announcement, "I didn't want to reveal the exact number of positions that Sankoh was getting," says Spencer, "but the BBC pressed me. I said between two and four."³⁴⁹

Sankoh had already received the chairmanship of the newly created Mineral Resources Commission, which gave him formal authority over all the country's diamonds and other natural resources, but this was not enough to slake the rebels' greed. By the time the government negotiators returned to Lomé, the RUF had heard the government's announcement, "and they had already decided the number was too small," says Spencer. "They wanted more. So we had to go back to the President and get more." At this point, Kabbah's government all but surrendered to Sankoh.³⁵⁰ Lead negotiator Berewa suggested that in his capacity as chairman of the Mineral Resources Commission, Sankoh be granted the "*status* of Vice President but he was not to be Vice President" (Berewa 2011: n.p.). Knowing Sankoh's fondness for the trappings of wealth and power, the status vice-presidency meant, "Sankoh would get a salary, a large house, an office space like any other senior minister," says Mansaray, "and he would only answer to the President."³⁵¹ Gracious in victory, Sankoh agreed.

The last week of negotiations was spent belabouring the wording of the settlement. The RUF was given four ministerial positions in an expanded cabinet of 18, four deputy minister positions, as well as several ambassadorial and public service postings. As suggested by Berewa, Sankoh was given a status vice-presidency and managerial oversight over the country's mineral resources. All combatants were granted blanket amnesty and pardon for their actions from 1991 until the signing of the agreement. New mandates were sought (but not finalised) for ECOMOG and a UN monitoring force.

All plots need a climax and Lomé offered plenty of last minute drama. Following a June 1999 visit to Freetown by UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, Mary Robinson, where she decried atrocities and human rights abuses committed by the rebels, the UN became adverse to the blanket amnesty provision in the Lomé agreement. The day of the ratification, UN headquarters told the Secretary General's Special Representative, Francis Okelo, not to sign the accord (Penfold 2012). As a senior international observer who had

³⁴⁷ Interview with Penfold.

³⁴⁸ Interview with Mansaray.

³⁴⁹ Interview with Spencer.

³⁵⁰ Kabbah came to regret the power sharing provisions he allocated to the RUF in Lomé. "From the hindsight of retirement, I see that some of the conflict resolution mechanism we used were a drawback to our cause," he said in 2011, and noted that he should not have made it possible for the rebels to form a political party.

³⁵¹ Interview with Mansaray.

been in attendance throughout the process, withdrawing his support at the eleventh hour would have caused Okelo tremendous embarrassment. Okelo prevailed by telling the UN that his signature was essential to the peace, and signed the document, but included a handwritten disclaimer to the terms of the amnesty, noting that UN would not recognise amnesty for acts of genocide, crimes against humanity, war crimes, and serious human rights violations. Although of limited legal weight, this caveat was used as a justification for the creation of the Special Court for Sierra Leone to prosecute those most responsible for international law violations during the civil war (Hayner 2007).

NOT GOOD, BUT BETTER THAN DEAD

On 7 July 1999, President Kabbah and Foday Sankoh signed the Lomé Peace Accord. Weary of war, and grieving countless lost loved ones, Sierra Leoneans were sceptical of the peace that was presented to them and gravely distrustful of the justice—or lack thereof—in the agreement. Paper and pen were held up as evidence that the war was over, but fresh blood on the ground in the rain forest indicated otherwise.

In Freetown, residents claimed to be relieved, although celebrations were muted. The President was mindful that many felt the government had been fleeced at Lomé, but insisted, “Sierra Leoneans saw this accord as a means to end their suffering.”³⁵² Kabbah’s cabinet was lukewarm at best. “I was disappointed,” recalls Spencer, “But I didn’t think that an agreement would have been possible without powersharing. Also, because we didn’t have any capacity to defend ourselves, we were in no position to refuse the demands the RUF made on us.”³⁵³ Many remained doubtful that the rebels would never again resort to violence, but “the day Lomé was signed,” says Mansaray, “you could openly drive around Freetown at night.”³⁵⁴

Foreign participants, and African leaders in particular, hailed the Lomé peace process as “an achievement of peace” (*All Africa News Agency* 1999). Cynics might say that neighbouring states belonging to ECOWAS had particular incentive to embrace the signed accord. However, Kabbah’s main foreign supporter had little good to say about the agreement. Indeed, more than a decade later, the former British high commissioner remains incensed by how Lomé played out. “Kabbah was forced into the agreement. I am outraged by what is in that document,” says Penfold. “We helped restore democratic government, only to have the international community come in and say that we need to condone an agreement that’s clearly non-democratic. Lomé undermined everything we had stood for until then, and it flew in the face of everything the people had sacrificed.”³⁵⁵

Kabbah’s intentions at Lomé were undeniably cooperative and well intentioned. Nonetheless, a combination of poor personal negotiation choices, a lack of military sovereignty, and tremendous foreign duress saw Kabbah lose what little leverage he had at Lomé and handsomely reward the rebels for their heinous wartime actions. To many, Kabbah emerged from Lomé a castaway, buffeted by hurricanes over which he had little

³⁵² Interview with Kabbah, 2011.

³⁵³ Interview with Spencer.

³⁵⁴ Interview with Mansaray.

³⁵⁵ Interview with Penfold.

control. “Kabbah undoubtedly has his place in history, but perhaps more as victim of events than shaper of them” (Whiteman 2014: n.p.). History has judged Kabbah’s leadership during Lomé as lacking and irresolute, but he maintained that his decisions and actions were motivated exclusively by a desire to ease the suffering of his country’s people and put an end to the war. “I believe, then and now, that a good leader had to act long range to ensure peace for all,” Kabbah said a decade after Lomé. “And I remain convinced that Lomé was instrumental in peace.”³⁵⁶

Whatever the reviews of his handling of Lomé, Kabbah was handily re-elected to office in 2002, with 70 per cent of the vote, campaigning as the man who brought peace to Sierra Leone. Kabbah remained a widely respected statesman, whose second term in office was remembered for relative stability and restored democracy. And while Kabbah confessed to having regrets about his handling of some aspects of the Lomé agreement, most particularly powersharing, more than a decade later, he could still rightfully claim, “I moved Sierra Leone from the brink of social collapse. The road was torturous and bumpy,” Kabbah reminisced, “But Sierra Leone is better today.”³⁵⁷ Kabbah died in 2014 after a lengthy illness.

At peace for nearly 15 years, Sierra Leone remains one of the world’s ten poorest countries (UNDP 2013).³⁵⁸ Recently beset with an Ebola epidemic, the country continues to suffer more than its share of hardship.³⁵⁹ Even so, most Sierra Leoneans agree with their former president: The road is rough, the sights harrowing, but the country is still better off today than during the war.

This chapter has considered the personality, motives, and actions of President Tejan Kabbah up to and during the Lomé peace negotiations. In the midst of war, Sierra Leoneans freely elected a likeable, decent, but otherwise politically inexperienced man to office in hopes that he would guide them to peace. Although Kabbah’s political leadership was hampered by structural confines, he nonetheless demonstrated a great deal of personal agency at Lomé. An archetypical cooperative negotiator, Kabbah was quick to pursue peace talks and, ultimately, did sign the Lomé agreement, which eventually brought peace to his ravaged country—but not before he gave away a cornucopia of power and wealth to his opponent. Despite all evidence to the contrary, Kabbah believed that his counterpart, rebel leader Foday Sankoh, also sought peace and could be depended upon to keep his word. Because he was blind to Sankoh’s true self, Kabbah escalated his commitment to peace talks at a time when he also perceived himself as losing the war. As a result, Kabbah came away from Lomé the biggest loser.

³⁵⁶ Interview with Kabbah, 2011.

³⁵⁷ Interview with Kabbah, 2012.

³⁵⁸ In all the years since the war ended, Sierra Leone has not once moved out of the world’s 10 poorest countries. According to the UN Development Program, “The country has made significant progress since the end of the civil war” (UNDP 2012) but life expectancy at birth is a shocking 48 years, and more than 60 per cent of the population lives on less than \$1.25 USD a day.

³⁵⁹ As one of the three countries most affected by the Ebola epidemic, Sierra Leone’s economic growth rates for 2014 were revised sharply downwards to 4.0 per cent, compared to 11.3 per cent before the crisis (World Bank 2014: n.p.).

The last three chapters have assessed three players who were key to ending the Sierra Leone civil war at the Lomé peace talks in July 1999. I have shown how Jesse Jackson, Tejan Kabbah and Foday Sankoh came to dominate the peace process and how their personalities, biases and negotiation tactics created unforeseen results and consequences both for the Lomé peace accord and for the country as a whole. I now turn to Liberia, whose civil war recommenced shortly after Sierra Leone's had ended. The following three chapters will introduce and appraise four individuals who were vital to the Accra peace process in 2003.

YOU CAN LEAD A HORSE TO WATER

HOW LIBERIA'S CLERGY MADE THE BELLIGERENTS TALK, BUT COULD NEITHER PREVENT LURD'S CHIEF NEGOTIATOR FROM SQUANDERING HIS LEVERAGE, NOR HASTEN CHARLES TAYLOR'S DEMISE

Liberia's peace process took place four years after negotiations for Sierra Leone ended with the Lomé agreement. The historical account of Chapter 3 highlights limitations in the literature and gaps in our understanding of peace talks. We have seen that the Liberian conflict was complex, featuring multiple warring parties and even more failed peace agreements, but our knowledge remains incomplete. We still know little of the people who shaped the 2003 peace process and how they did so. The following three chapters assess the individuals who developed trustworthy enough relations with the warring parties to persuade them attend a final round of negotiations. I explore the belligerents' negotiations styles and the tactics they used on each other and the citizens of Liberia throughout the process. The results of this research add important insight to what is already known about Liberia's peace negotiations.

Hosted in Accra, Ghana, the Liberian peace talks of 2003 feature two equally competitive and uncompromising belligerents: Charles Taylor and Liberians United for Reconciliation and Democracy (LURD).³⁶⁰ Both parties believed their troops were within imminent victory over the other in battle, and consequently, neither saw the value in discussing peace. That the belligerents even agreed to meet in Accra was due to the unflagging efforts of Liberia's Muslim and Christian religious leaders, who had thus far collectively prevented the war from taking a sectarian turn.

In 13 years, Liberia's many belligerents collectively hatched 17 peace agreements. Charles Taylor was the one participant present at all negotiations. If practice makes perfect, the Liberian president had ample opportunity over the years to hone his trademark negotiation strategy of saying the right things to the right people in such a way as to lull them into believing that this time Taylor really aspired to peace, all while plotting his next strike. Unsurprising then that most Liberian peace agreements held for little more than weeks or months, just enough time for factions to emerge from the rain forest, acquire new weapons, and muster their next attack.

In June 2003, Liberian religious leaders leaned on ECOWAS to convene yet another round of talks. The prospects were hardly favourable for conducive discussions. Indeed, the rebels were uncertain as to the value of negotiations and had to be coaxed into attending. LURD troops occupied more than half of Liberia's territory, and its forces were stationed across the bridges from Monrovia waiting for orders to invade. The rebels believed themselves unassailable. Consequently, LURD's chief negotiator justified a

³⁶⁰ The second Liberian civil war also featured a third rebel group, the Movement for Democracy in Liberia (MODEL), but as explained further in Chapter 8, they worked as one with the LURD rebels at the Accra peace talks.

rigidly competitive approach and an initial negotiating position of violence. Led by an inexperienced, hotheaded chief negotiator, LURD was nonetheless ill-prepared for Taylor's manipulative trickery. Moreover, the rebels lacked organisational unity, were too distrustful to ever cooperate, and always prone to violence. Consequently, LURD chief negotiator fumbled during negotiations and the rebels lost much of the leverage they possessed at the outset.

Beyond the first day, Charles Taylor was not actually physically present at Accra. The day the talks were scheduled to start, the chief prosecutor of the Special Court of Sierra Leone indicted the Liberian president for war crimes. Taylor avoided capture in Ghana and returned to Liberia where he continued to wage war while controlling the talks remotely. Taylor's demeanour demonstrated nothing but defiance, and this only served to infuriate the rebels who scourged all Liberians for the sins of their president. The religious reference is apt; all Liberians, regardless of their belief system, remember the summer of 2003 as hell on earth.

Two religious leaders, Reverend Benjamin Lartey and Imam Sheik Konneh, were crucial to creating dialogue and were essential to setting up the peace talks and having all warring parties attend. However, at the negotiations, Lartey and Konneh's power to persuade did not commensurate with their spotless reputations. Two other men—Charles Taylor and LURD's chief negotiator—dominated the Accra peace process. The following three chapters offer a descriptive assessment of these primary decision-makers and demonstrate how their individual behaviours influenced and changed how the negotiations unfolded. Although all parties claimed to want peace, only the religious leaders practiced what they preached. LURD actively waged war on innocent civilians to garner negotiating leverage, while Taylor—in a habit perfected through myriad other peace talks—negotiated in bad faith.

The subsequent chapters examine the individual motives and choices of Konneh and Lartey in the months preceding the negotiations, then subsequently, LURD's chief negotiator and Taylor's impulses, decisions, and actions during the peace process at Accra. I highlight the behaviour patterns of these individuals prior to the negotiations, while providing a historical account of critical events during the war and the Accra peace talks. My choice to feature these four men in no way suggests that they are the only persons of import at the Accra negotiations.³⁶¹ Nonetheless, a study of these particular individuals reveals how each man's personality traits, biases and cognitive structures shaped their motives and choices in war and in peace. The Accra accord would not have evolved as it did without the imprint of these individuals.

³⁶¹ Other key individuals at Accra include former Nigerian President and the chief mediator at the Accra peace process, Abdulsalami Abubakar, women's peace activist and Nobel peace prize winner, Leymah Gbowie, as well as Archbishop Michael Kpakala Francis.

BLESSED ARE THE PEACEMAKERS, FOR THEY SHALL TOIL IN OBSCURITY

SHEIKH KAFUMBA KONNEH

Chairman, Muslim Council of Liberia

BENJAMIN LARTEY

Secretary General, Liberia Council of Churches

The Quran exhorts, “The worshippers of the All-Merciful are they who tread gently upon the earth, and when the ignorant address them, they reply, “Peace!” (25:63), and the Bible counsels, “Blessed are the peacemakers” (Matthew 5:9). Even so, religious leaders and their devout followers have all too often wilfully ignored their sacred texts in times of war. Few religious institutions resisted Nazism or came to the aid of its victims. For the most part, European catholic and protestant churches remained silent while millions of Jews were persecuted, arrested, deported and murdered. There was mass Turkish Muslim participation in the Armenian genocide of 1915 (Donef 2010); at best, residents stood by while their fellow citizens were deported or killed, or worse, they raped, stole from and then murdered their Christian neighbours themselves. And these are just two examples from the first half of the 20th century.

For all its wanton depravity, the Liberian civil war never degenerated into sectarian conflict. “The war affected everyone in the country,” says James Torh, from the Independent Commission on Human Rights. Every person had a least one family member who had been killed, “homes were destroyed, and villages burned” but Liberians never turned against each other *en masse* on the basis of religious difference.³⁶² That this already complex war, with multiple belligerents, and more than a dozen broken peace agreements, did not deteriorate further is due in no small part to the determined efforts of a few Liberian clergy.

This chapter demonstrates the tireless efforts of two Liberian religious leaders—one Muslim, the other Christian—to bring about an end to the civil war by urging the country’s warlords to talk peace. Members of the predominantly Muslim Mandingo ethnic community were among the first targets of Taylor’s brutal uprising in 1989. Liberia’s wartime rhetoric could have easily taken a religious tone, but instead, Christian and Muslim luminaries united to smother any smoking embers and committed to bring about peace. For more than a decade, without any remuneration, religious leaders took the time to get to know the country’s belligerents and establish trust. This allowed them to facilitate numerous peace conferences, including the one at Accra. Even so, they could not achieve the lasting peace they so desired. Although the religious leaders were universally respected, they had limited ability to influence the belligerents during negotiations by virtue of the

³⁶² Interview with James Torh, Commissioner, Independent Commission on Human Rights (INCHR), in Monrovia, Liberia, on 23 February 2011.

neutrality they prized. They could lead the belligerents to the negotiating waters at Accra but could not make them inclined to peace.

Liberians are fundamentally devout. Organised religion—particularly Christianity—is interwoven into the country’s political landscape. The freed slaves who ‘colonised’ Liberia in the early 19th century imported Christianity. Settlers believed that the spiritual belief systems of the indigenous residents were inherently pagan, heathen, and uncivilised (Novati 2007). Consequently, a significant part of the settlers’ *mission civilisatrice* was to convert the region’s various ethnic groups to Christianity. New arrivals belonged to (and were assisted by) a variety of protestant churches based in the US; Liberian branches of these churches sprung up throughout the country, along with numerous parochial schools (Beyan 1985). The burgeoning churches and their institutions of learning were very effective at conversion, and within a short time thousands of aboriginal Liberians had joined the flock. One historian claims, “The effects of the roles of the various Christian denominations on Liberia cannot be underestimated, especially if one is to understand the social characteristics of the country” (Beyan 1985: 2).

As the number of believers increased, the church and nascent state merged. Initially, all government administrators were protestant ministers, and church elders held most legislative, executive, and judicial positions (Barrett 1982). For the first two decades, all laws were grounded in Christian doctrine (Barrett 1982), while the government observed the Christian Sabbath and enshrined all major Christian events as national holidays (Kieh 2009). Most government meetings were called to order with a formal Christian prayer, a tradition that endures to this day. In fact, Christianity so permeated the state apparatus that the majority of Liberians conceived their country as a “Christian state” (Kieh 2009: n.p.).³⁶³

While Christian institutions were ubiquitous in Liberia up until the war in 1989, the country’s churches never advocated the social justice and human development agenda that many Latin American congregations championed in the latter half of the 20th century. In fact, Liberian churches were a staunch “defender of the status quo” (Kieh 2009: n.p.). The entire country was based on abject inequality, rife with mass poverty and unemployment, and substandard public health and educational facilities, but by and large the church taught Liberians to accept their circumstances and destiny as the will of God (Kieh 2008). Religious scholar Paul Gifford notes,

“Liberian Christianity—far from being a force for justice and human advancement—diverted attention from the causes of Liberia’s ills, left change to God’s miraculous intervention, encouraged obedience and acceptance of the status quo, and thus served to entrench [the ruling elites’] power” (Gifford 2002: x).

The passive endurance in the face of adversity that the church taught is arguably one of the reasons that Liberia was kept from developing a strong and vibrant civil society.

³⁶³ Kieh (2009: n.p.) notes that this claim is factually incorrect; while many Liberians consider themselves to be Christian, “traditional African religions collectively had the largest number of adherents” with 75% of the population holding membership in aboriginal religions, compared with 15% who were formal members of Christian churches (Taryor 1989). Christianity’s pervasiveness and influence in Liberia is not grounded in the number of its adherents as much as it is due to historical, social and political factors (Kieh 2009).

Where Christianity arrived and spread with the freed slave settlers, Islam came sooner, slowly permeating the region with the Islamic traders that often crossed into Liberia from the north (in what is now Guinea) in the 16th and 17th centuries (Hill 2009). As Muslim traders established posts—particularly in the west and northwestern parts of the country—they built mosques and actively proselytised. As the number of Muslim converts grew steadily, many Christians continued to perceive Islam with suspicion and distrust (Kieh 2009).³⁶⁴ Despite its growing number of adherents, Islam had little political influence in Liberia until Samuel Doe seized the presidency in 1980.

When Doe toppled William Tolbert, executing him along with dozens of his senior cabinet ministers, the church changed course. Clergy abandoned their tacit support of the political status quo and began to criticise the human rights abuses meted out by the Doe regime. Rebuffed, Doe began to cultivate an “opportunistic relationship” with Islamic clerics who were less censorious, and subsequently named several Muslims to key cabinet positions (Kieh 2009). According to Kieh (2008; 2009), one of the most significant and damaging consequences of Doe’s rapprochement with Islam was that many Christian Liberians began to automatically brand all Mandingo—Liberia’s ethnic group with the largest Muslim population—as Doe collaborators. The assumption that all Mandingos were Doe sympathisers was so prevalent that the entire community became one of Charles Taylor’s primary targets as he set out to supplant Doe. In the first months of the war, countless Mandingos (most of whom had little to no association with Doe) were tortured and killed by Taylor’s National Patriotic Front of Liberia (NPFL) (*Africa Watch* 1991).

A FEW GOOD MEN

Be they Christian or Muslim, Liberians are almost without exception highly religious, and hold their clergy in the highest esteem. As the war intensified, in addition to filling enormous gaps in what should have been government services in education and health, religious institutions continued to provide spiritual and moral guidance, as well as comfort to the devout. “People look to the church when all else fails,” says Reverend Benjamin Lartey. “When others were afraid to talk under Doe or Taylor, the religious community became the main voice speaking out against human rights injustices and calling for good governance.”³⁶⁵ Before Doe seized power, civil society was not present in Liberia and “the church did not make any political statements,” says peace activist, Ezekiel Pajibo. “With Doe’s oppression and the war, churches emerged because circumstances catapulted them into play.”³⁶⁶ Religious leaders recognised that they were the only Liberians in a position to speak out and be heard about the widespread hardship and abuses being perpetuated by all warring parties.

³⁶⁴ The data is rather old (records ceased to exist once the war began), but remains indicative of the trend: Whereas in 1978 Muslims represented 15% of the population, five years later, 19% of Liberians self-identified as Muslim (Kieh 2009).

³⁶⁵ Interview with Reverend Benjamin Lartey, Secretary General, Liberian Council of Churches (LCC) in Monrovia, Liberia, 19 & 21 March 2012.

³⁶⁶ Interview with Ezekiel Pajibo, former policy analyst with Africa Faith and Justice Network, now Project Director, Trust Africa-Liberia, in Monrovia, Liberia, 13 March 2012.

From the start, religious leaders were appalled by Taylor's vicious battlefield tactics, and foresaw that the war would create great suffering among the civilian population. "We felt that we could not sit quietly and watch this continue," says Imam Sheikh Kafumba Konneh, founding member of the National Muslim Council of Liberia (NMCL).³⁶⁷ Three weeks after the NPFL crossed the border into Nimba Country from Côte d'Ivoire, on 20 January 1990, Christian leaders (under the banner of the Liberian Council of Churches) issued a statement noting their concern about the deteriorating situation, denounced the violence, and called on the government and the rebels to peacefully settle their differences (Dolo 2007). Neither party acquiesced to their request. Taylor believed that he could defeat Doe militarily and saw a peaceable end to the war as depriving him from an all-out victory. Like Taylor, Doe also believed he could defeat his foe in battle. Additionally, Doe had become progressively wary of the church. He perceived Christian ministers as partisan and underhanded, and believed that they were seeking to use peace talks to further weaken and overturn his government (Kieh 2009).

The Christian clergymen were undeterred and issued another statement "concerning the rebel incursion and the present state of chaos and anarchy, and lack of objective information in Liberia" several months later, on 30 May 1990 (Liberian Council of Churches in Gifford 1995: 279). This time, the clergy specifically noted that "the church stands ready to mediate" to bring an end to the fighting (Liberian Council of Churches in Gifford 1995: 279). In the intervening months, the NPFL had only increased its battlefield leverage against the government; so again, Taylor rejected the clergy's appeal. Conversely, Doe accepted the clergy's offer to arbitrate the conflict. Government forces were being slaughtered by the NPFL and Doe hoped that a peace agreement would allow him to stay in office until the end of his term in January 1992 (Kieh 2009).³⁶⁸

The Christian leaders recognised that they could not mediate the war alone. Acknowledging Doe's amicable relations with certain Muslim clerics, and believing that these might have some influence on the government in peace talks, the Christians reached out to Imam Konneh at the NMCL about collaborating in the peacemaking process. "Prior to the war, there was no formal interaction between Christians and Muslims," tells Lartey, founding member from the Liberian Council of Churches (LCC). "But we felt that we needed to defuse the situation. We wanted to prevent a religious war."³⁶⁹ Soon after, the LCC and the NMCL united to form the Inter-Religious Council of Liberia (IRCL).³⁷⁰ "The Bible speaks of how blessed are the peacemakers, while Islam describes peacemakers as servants of God," Konneh recounts. "We were each inspired by our respective scriptures."³⁷¹ Although none of Liberia's clergy had any formal negotiation training, they knew instinctively that negotiations are often feats of endurance in which relationships are

³⁶⁷ Interview with Imam Sheikh Kafumba Konneh, founding member of the National Muslim Council of Liberia (NMCL), subsequent dissenting member of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Liberia, in Monrovia, Liberia, 19 March 2012.

³⁶⁸ Presidential and legislative elections were set for October 1991 and Doe was not expecting to win. However, he clung to the hope that he could hold onto office for a dignified end.

³⁶⁹ Interview with Lartey, 2012.

³⁷⁰ Prior to becoming the Inter-Religious Council of Liberia (IRCL), Muslim and Christian clerics cooperated under the banner of the Inter-Faith Mediation Committee (IFMC). For the sake of clarity, I have grouped collective actions by Christian and Muslim leaders under the Inter-Religious Council of Liberia.

³⁷¹ Interview with Konneh, 2012.

key. Haste and agitation are “viruses” that lead individuals to try to force an outcome before their counterparts are ready (Cleary 2001: 101). Conversely, in using long-term tactics of patience and persistence, Liberia’s religious leaders were able to truly understand the issues and explore belligerents’ expectations, all while maintaining trust and respect (Karass 2011). The religious leaders agreed that they would work towards peace in Liberia for as long as it took. Little did they know that it would take 13 years before peace would at last come to Liberia.

Konneh and Larthey were fundamentally collaborative negotiators who approached the process from an integrative approach. A collaborative negotiator will seek to fulfil his interests and needs in tandem with the needs and interests of his fellow negotiators. Collaborators first assess the players and issues, generate and evaluate options, then develop a plan or agreement (Smutko 2005). When collaborators use an integrative approach, they generally seek to work together to achieve something that is mutually desirable. A collaborator working using an integrative approach needs personal knowledge; at the outset participants must get to know one another. This requires a certain investment of time and resources, which few negotiators are willing to part with. Over years, with no external financing, Liberia’s religious leaders crisscrossed the region to meet and develop genuine relations with each of the various fighting forces tearing apart their country.

Unlike the belligerents, Konneh and Larthey did not perceive negotiations as distributive, where participants squabble over a fixed sum.³⁷² Instead, the religious leaders considered negotiations as integrative, where talks create opportunities for all participants to further their shared interests. The goal of an integrative approach is to have all parties to a negotiation leave the process with the knowledge that they have achieved their wants and in so doing, they have also gained something of value (Zartman 1988; see also chapter 2). As a result, a negotiator with an integrative approach will get to know his colleagues and learn what they value, as well as problem-solve to create value. This is an unhurried approach that takes the longer view. While the belligerents saw only that they could gain through violence, Larthey and Konneh, along with the other members of the IRCL, believed that lasting peace was in everyone’s interest. The religious leaders hoped that in getting to know the belligerents and ascertain what they sought, they would also be able to create value in peace.

In an effort to learn what the warring parties valued, the religious leaders developed genuine personal relationships with them to the extent that they shared their perspectives with each other. Taking the perspective of one’s fellow negotiators can help egotistical parties seek mutually rewarding solutions, while making “logrolling”—when one favour is exchanged for another favour based on personal preference—more likely (Trotschel *et al* 2011: 774). However, the Liberian religious leaders undertook their worthwhile efforts under a faulty presumption. They assumed that they were sure to find common interests with the belligerents. But while Liberia’s fighting forces maintained admiration and respect for their religious leaders, they did not share their interest in peace or their

³⁷² Repeatedly in the peace process, Liberia’s clerics played down the importance of material (distributive) gain and focused instead on the value of dialogue, which they believed would eventually make way to peace.

commitment to collaboration. Over a period of years, despite every indication to the contrary, Lartey and Konneh nonetheless held out hope that the belligerents would come to see the value in peace and the mutual benefits in collaboration.

Meanwhile, the international community did not appear to be at all interested in becoming involved with Liberia's ugly uprising. The United Nations, the Organisation for African Unity (OAU), and the US were all preoccupied elsewhere—first in the Gulf, later in Somalia and the Balkans. Although many Liberians expected the US to intervene in its unofficial colony, from the start, the US distanced itself from the conflict stating, “the resolution of this civil war is a Liberian responsibility...a solution to Liberia's current difficulties will be viable if it is worked [out] by Liberians themselves and has broad internal support” (Herman Cohen in Ero 1995: 3). Although statements of this kind were common, Liberia's clergymen remained hopeful of gaining American sympathy, “At this time, we felt that US intervention was the way to avoid war in the capital,” says Konneh.³⁷³ However, as the international community's indifference slowly sunk in, the IRCL set its sights closer to home. The Liberian war was making many West African leaders uneasy, so “We appealed to ECOWAS leadership for intervention,” says Konneh.³⁷⁴ To bolster their request, the religious leaders formulated a peace plan, which they submitted to ECOWAS on 5 June 1990. “Our document was moderate,” Konneh continues; the religious leaders called for an immediate ceasefire to be monitored by a (preferably African) neutral outside force, a peace conference including Doe and Taylor, as well as recommendations to address ethnic violence and the targeting of civilians by the warring parties.

Konneh and Lartey presented their plan to Doe and Taylor, as well as to the other regional leaders of West Africa. By this time, Doe was losing the war against Taylor, who was poised to take on Monrovia in a final battle. Unsurprisingly then, Doe accepted the peace plan and agreed to attend a peace conference. Taylor continued to see any offers of joining peace talks as getting in the way of his troops supplanting Doe. Taylor rejected the peace plan specifically because the IRCL's plan did not call for Doe's immediate departure, but after numerous conversations and appeals by the religious leaders, he conceded to attend the peace conference, provided he could choose the venue.

While ECOWAS pondered its options, everyone else moved ahead. On 12 June 1990, delegates from the Liberian government and the NPFL arrived in Freetown—Taylor's venue of choice—to talk peace. Religious leaders from the IRCL served as mediators and talks began at the US Embassy. However, it was quickly evident that the American hosts were less than sympathetic to the clergy's efforts. “Very soon, the US was saying over and over that Liberia wasn't their problem,” says Konneh. Participants were negatively impacted by the Americans' rhetoric, Konneh says, “So we changed sites and moved to a hotel.”³⁷⁵ Negotiations lasted for four long days, until discussions stalled over what would become of Doe (Woods II 1996). Taylor would only agree to a ceasefire if Doe resigned immediately, whereas Doe insisted on staying in power until the 1991 elections, although he agreed that he would not present himself as a presidential candidate (Kieh 2009). Talks were adjourned for two weeks, but in a move that would become all-

³⁷³ Interview with Konneh, 2012.

³⁷⁴ Interview with Imam Sheikh Kafumba Konneh, in Monrovia, Liberia, 17 February 2011.

³⁷⁵ Interview with Konneh, 2012.

too common in subsequent negotiations, Taylor reneged, then withdrew from the talks altogether. Taylor wanted a full military victory over Doe and saw it to be within his grasp. According to Archbishop Michael Francis, “It was only a matter of hours for him to take Monrovia, and overthrow Mr. Doe... He would take Monrovia even while peace talks were still taking place” (Francis 1990 in Kieh 2010: 194). Peace negotiations were impeding Taylor’s military goals, and he had no motive to stay the course. Taylor’s defection from Freetown was an unexpected turn for the religious leaders, but in the years ahead, he would return to this pattern time and again. Taylor would break his word, defect and ignore the terms of more than a dozen peace talks.

Immediately after the Freetown talks failed, the war spread to Monrovia. Atrocities were committed indiscriminately by both parties and reached “astounding proportions” (HRW 1993: n.p.). By late July, the situation had deteriorated so badly that five European ambassadors released a statement warning that Liberia was moving toward “anarchy and national suicide” (HRW 1993: n.p.). A flood of tens of thousands of refugees pouring across the borders into Sierra Leone, Guinea and Ghana “was compromising regional security,” says Pajibo, a policy analyst at the time. “ECOWAS felt it had to intervene.”³⁷⁶ Amidst considerable internal controversy and disagreement, in early August, ECOWAS (or at least its Anglophone members and Guinea) created the ECOMOG (ECOMOG). Nearly 4,000 armed troops from five member countries arrived in Monrovia on 23 August 1990.

ECOMOG ECLIPSES THE CLERGY

Prior to ECOMOG, there was a regional practice of non-interference on the basis that intervention of any kind would usurp members’ right to sovereignty. In their initial peace plan, the religious leaders had first proposed that an African force should hold the terms of any forthcoming ceasefire. ECOMOG’s mandate was a near copy of the IRCL peace plan: Troops were to impose a ceasefire, assist in the creation of an interim government and oversee state elections, all within 12 months. However, it was very apparent to arriving troops that Taylor’s NPFL was on its way towards a battlefield victory. “ECOMOG was supposed to be a monitoring force,” says Lartey. “But it quickly became an enforcement force too.”³⁷⁷ With no peace to keep, ECOMOG troops decided to fight to impose peace. Soldiers were ordered into combat with the aim of forcing Taylor’s NPFL to retreat from Monrovia.

Taylor’s near-assured victory was thwarted as ECOMOG’s superior firepower compelled the NPFL to withdraw all the way to Gbarnga in Bong County. Within weeks, ECOMOG had gained some semblance of control over Monrovia. However, anarchy soon resumed when Prince Johnson—a former Taylor commander who had broken away to form his own rebel group, the Independent National Patriotic Front of Liberia (INPFL)—moved to take Monrovia from ECOMOG and in the process killed President Doe. Like most citizens, the religious leaders “never anticipated that Doe would be killed,” says Lartey. “When Doe died it became a free for all.” During the war, the belligerents “muzzled any critical media, student activism was closed down, as were political parties,” says Pajibo.

³⁷⁶ Interview with Pajibo.

³⁷⁷ Interview with Lartey, 2012.

“Only the churches had the space to continue their activities.”³⁷⁸ Citizens and most belligerents esteemed religious leaders, and this made them “less vulnerable than other people or groups”.³⁷⁹ Although religious leaders remained mostly unharmed, the war accelerated as the warring factions moved to “control as much territory as possible before they would sit down and negotiate,” continues Pajibo.³⁸⁰ Rebels, AFL soldiers and ECOMOG troops alike preyed upon innocent citizens, visiting untold misery on the population.

With ECOMOG’s arrival in Liberia, religious leaders believed their guidance in peace enterprises remained important, albeit with somewhat less urgency. Woods (1996) claims that the religious leaders’ perception of ECOMOG’s intervention as “an immediate panacea to the Liberian nightmare” was misguided; Taylor was vehemently opposed to ECOMOG, never ceased resenting its deployment, and refused to attend the national conference to appoint an interim government because it was convened by ECOWAS. Instead, Taylor published his own “peace plan”, which stated that there were two sides to negotiations, the “ECOMOG-backed, Monrovia-based supporters of the Interim Government of National Unity (IGNU)” and the unblemished NPFL (Waugh 2011: 156). Predictably, the next round of peace talks failed. For the next two years, religious leaders led or mediated numerous initiatives aimed at persuading ECOMOG and the interim government to end the ongoing war.³⁸¹ None lasted. Defiantly, Taylor established a rival capital government in Gbarnga, Bong County.

Although ECOMOG was created to be a multinational force, the chain of command from the top down suggested otherwise. ECOMOG commanders were chosen directly by the Nigerian president, and after the first commander, Ghanaian General Arnold Qainoo stepped down soon after Doe’s death in 1990, all subsequent commanders were Nigerian (Waugh 2011). ECOMOG’s second commander, Nigerian General Dogonyaro was able to disarm the INPFL, after which time Johnson’s faction lost much of its military relevance (Waugh 2011). Numerous scholars have noted that ECOMOG was an interventionist force that compromised Liberia’s state sovereignty (see Adebajo 2002; Oluwadare 2014; Pitts 1999), and in so doing, it conformed to Taylor’s denunciation of the body as aggressive and not a peace force (Bassey 2013). Nigeria’s overt dominance of ECOMOG remained an unresolved source of contention for both Taylor and numerous ECOWAS members alike.

ECOMOG’s presence militarised Liberia’s quest for peace, but its commanders simultaneously pursued numerous diplomatic options to further their aims. In the multiple peace talks that took place over the following years, ECOMOG replaced Liberia’s religious leaders as formal mediators—with equal lack of success. Meanwhile, the country’s clergy remained active behind the scenes. Warring parties were all too aware that ECOMOG was a partisan belligerent and were rightfully wary. Conversely, members of the IRCL

³⁷⁸ Interview with Pajibo.

³⁷⁹ Interview with Pajibo.

³⁸⁰ Interview with Lartey, 2012.

³⁸¹ These included the Bamako Ceasefire, signed in 1990; the Banjul Joint Statement, from December 1990, the Lomé Agreement dated February 1991, and the Yamoussoukro I-IV Accords signed (and broken) between June and October 1991. Meanwhile, academic Amos Sawyer led the interim government, but for all intents and purposes, his was little more than a puppet administration propped up by ECOMOG.

remained almost universally respected. Religious leaders were able to engender trust because they undertook negotiations with a distinctly integrative approach, in which they considered the interests and goals of all those they dealt with (Zartman 1988). While the interests and the goals of the warlords were considered, this in no way means that the clerics automatically complied with or acquiesced to their demands. In the interest of mutual gain, the clergy focused on gathering and exchanging information, emphasising common interests and problem solving (Lewicki *et al* 2003). Using tact and restraint—often qualities in short supply among armed rebels—leaders such as Lartey and Konneh were able to engage with the rebels recurrently, even as the belligerents intensified the violence between themselves, the government and civilians. The IRCL was seminal in bringing the belligerents together time and again. But while religious leaders had the legitimacy to get warlords and their troops in the same room to talk, they still couldn't bring them to commit to peace.

Admirable as the goals of collaborative negotiators operating with an integrative approach may be, this method has its downsides. Collaboration is not a solo activity; it takes two (or more). When one or more parties to a negotiation resist the integrative approach, the collaborative negotiator is undermined in several ways: He must either embrace a competitive mindset or back down; if there is no agreement, he may see himself as having failed; and whenever he shares genuine information that is not rendered in kind, he makes himself vulnerable (Melamed 2013). As noted earlier, Liberia's religious leaders assumed that the belligerents could be persuaded to see the value in collaboration. Although Lartey and Konneh were fully committed to peace, try as they might, they could not persuade the belligerents to join them in the problem-solving required from an integrative approach.

That so many early accords collapsed was no direct fault of the clergy. The belligerents simply did not see what they could gain by laying down their arms that they were not already achieving for themselves in combat. This was particularly the case for Taylor and the NPFL who, in 1991, controlled 95 per cent of the country's territory (Waugh 2011). While Taylor signed all the agreements mediators placed in front of him, he had little enthusiasm for peace. Instead, he used peace negotiations as an opportunity to gain "breathing space" to rest, rearm, and then relaunch new military operations (Sesay 1996: 22).³⁸² Likewise, sustained by ECOMOG, the AFL began to cooperate with breakaway faction, United Liberation Movement (ULIMO), in the conviction that together they could overpower Taylor militarily (Sesay 1996). Instead, the propagation of a host of new warring parties perpetuated new misery on Liberian civilians.

THREAT OF SECTARIANISM

Until Doe seized the presidency in 1980, Americo-Liberian descendants of the original settlers dominated Liberian politics. Although they represented only five per cent of the country's population, Americo-Liberians controlled business and politics, as well as holding much of the country's private land (see Chapter 3). The relationship between indigenous Liberians and their Americo-Liberian counterparts was intermittently fractious

³⁸² Foday Sankoh used the same tactic with great success in Sierra Leone.

but generally stable. This changed with the blatant political favouritism Doe lavished on his fellow Krahn throughout his rule. Doe's increased unpopularity was fuelled by rampant government corruption, economic incompetence, and widespread political oppression, but the marginalisation of other ethnic communities added greatly to the bitterness Liberians bit down on daily. In 1985, when Thomas Quiwonkpa attempted to depose Doe in an unsuccessful coup, the Gio and Mano ethnic communities supported him. Their "disloyalty" provoked the Krahn to launch savage reprisals against the Gio and Mano. Taylor, who received his initial support from the Gio and Mano, perpetuated these divisions, and ethnic tensions were especially high in the first years of the war.

Despite an opening locus on ethnicity, Liberian citizens of all communities retained their history of religious harmony as evidenced by ongoing syncretism (Dolo 2007). Liberians continued to mix their adopted faiths with traditional religious conduct. Prevailing Christian and Islamic faith practices also seamlessly mingled with traditional cultural practices found within the country's various secret societies, such as the Poro and the Sande (Ellis 1999). Even foreign-educated Liberians sought the assistance and intervention of diviners and witch doctors for physical ailments as well as business and social relationships. Political leaders and warlords were no different, and frequently ingratiated themselves with various religious groups and practices. As noted earlier in this chapter, Doe strategically solicited the goodwill of the Muslim community when Christian leaders began to censure him. While Taylor was an avowed Christian, he was not averse to catering to Muslims either; for example, in 2001 he extravagantly sponsored 100 Liberians' pilgrimage to Mecca (Dolo 2007).

The two primary foes at the start of the war—Doe and Taylor—were both Christian, which meant, initially, the war lacked a religious bent. However, this shifted in 1994, when the United Liberation Movement (ULIMO) split, and Alhaji Kromah founded a predominantly ethnic Mandingo splinter group, unimaginatively called ULIMO-K. Kromah was Muslim, and in order to raise money for his cause, he appealed to other Muslims, saying that Christians were cutting out the tongues of Liberian Muslims so they could not call out to God, and breaking their legs so they could not kneel to pray.³⁸³ Both Christian and Muslim clerics were alarmed at Kromah's attempts to reframe the conflict as a religious war. "We felt that Kromah was making the war into a jihad cause," says Lartey. "This was very dangerous."³⁸⁴ In this case, the moderate voices of Muslim clerics within the IRCL worked hard to douse Kromah's inflammatory rhetoric by meeting with him and his commanders and after a few tense months demagogic discourse highlighting religious divisions disappeared.³⁸⁵

NEUTRALITY AND PERSISTENCE

Throughout the war, Liberia's churches and mosques were full. Where civil society activists were forced into exile, religious leaders continued to minister to their flocks and

³⁸³ As explained in Chapter 3, Liberia's war featured numerous rebel factions. I have found no documentation to support Lartey's account of Kromah's actions, but other interview subjects, including Sheikh Kafumba Konneh (2011 & 2012) and Aaron Weah (2011), support this narrative.

³⁸⁴ Interview with Lartey, 2012.

³⁸⁵ Interview with Konneh, 2011.

overtly preach for peace. Clerics continued to consult with ECOWAS and the growing number of warring factions, encouraging them to meet to discuss peace, and often set the agenda for talks. The clerics considered their role as peacebuilders with utmost seriousness and sought to preserve “absolute neutrality” in their interactions with all parties (Woods 1996).

While Liberia’s religious leaders aspired to neutrality and perceived it as a virtue, in negotiations, the concept of neutrality is often unclear. To some, neutrality means not taking sides, to others it indicates indifference to participants’ welfare or outcome, others still believe that it is not possible to be neutral and still have a personal relationship with the participants (Field 2000). Participants in peace talks will often expect mediators to be impartial, not favouring one side over another. Certainly, their perceived impartiality was a trait that Liberia’s warlords respected in the religious leaders. However, the clergy were not at all indifferent to participants’ welfare or outcome; they actively favoured a peaceful outcome and were overtly concerned with the welfare of civilians. Over years of meetings, they also developed personal relationships with the participants. Indeed, the clergy learned a great deal about the various combatants’ military strength and motivations, which made them more capable of bringing them together at the various peace talks, if not fully resolving their disputes (Walter 2009; see also chapter 2). The clergy’s personal knowledge of the various rebels and individuals in government allowed them to engage critically with all parties to Liberia’s conflict. “During the war, our stand was to remain neutral and impartial,” says Konneh. “But we also didn’t believe that Taylor listened to our talk, so during negotiations, we continued to fight—not with arms, but reason.”³⁸⁶ IRCL members attended all Liberian peace talks, usually as formal observers, and were typically identified by most Liberians and foreign observers as the processes’ only neutral participants.

In 1993, after multiple failed peace accords, warring parties signed yet another one. The Cotonou Accord was the most exhaustive of Liberia’s numerous agreements; all subsequent agreements merely clarified or amended it. Participants at Cotonou focused on the inclusion and interests of Liberia’s various warring factions. The result was a power-sharing document that attempted to accommodate the rebels by providing them with access to political power. Those in favour of the accord, namely ECOWAS and the other signatories, argued that faction leaders should be given a deserved stake in the transitional process towards peace.³⁸⁷ However, outside observers noted that the accord compensated warlords for perpetuating violence.

The clergy had been a significant part of the Cotonou negotiations, but led by Catholic Archbishop Michael Francis, they became increasingly troubled by the content of

³⁸⁶ Interview with Konneh, 2011.

³⁸⁷ The signatories of the Cotonou Agreement of 25 July 1993 included Amos Sawyer, President of the Interim Government of National Unity of Liberia (IGNU), Enoch Dogolea, Vice-President of the National patriotic Front of Liberia (NPFL), and Alhaji G. V. Kromah, Leader of the United Liberation Movement of Liberia for Democracy (ULIMO), as well as Nicephore Dieudonne, ECOWAS Chair and Beninese president, James Jonah of the UN, and Canaan Banana, on behalf of the Organization for African Unity (OAU). Other warring factions, including the United Liberation Movement, the Lofa Defense Force and the Liberian Peace Council did not endorse the document, which explains in large part why this agreement did not stick.

the accord “on legal, moral and religious grounds” (Woods 1996: 29). Soon after the agreement was signed, Taylor (as the dominant faction leader) attempted to disrobe the AFL of its status as the lawful national army and replace it with a new military force with fighters from all factions (Woods II 1996). Taylor also actively meddled to replace the head of transitional government to someone more compliant to his cause.³⁸⁸ The religious leaders overtly disagreed with Taylor’s planned policy changes. Francis and the other clerics argued that Taylor’s recommendations would reward the rebel factions for their criminal activities, which in turn would sustain violence and make true reconciliation impossible (Carver 1996).

Amidst popular dissent, fighting continued in rural regions in 1994 and 1995. The clergy and women’s groups increased their calls for peace, but some civilians began to violently attack individual warlords and their supporters. Recognising the need to quell developing civil violence and unite various civic groups, the clergy created a consortium of approximately 50 organisations, with a single agenda of “disarmament, peace, free and fair elections” (Woods II 1996: 30). In March 1995, led by the clergy, the consortium launched a one-day “stay-home” action to demonstrate popular commitment to peace and to pressure the militias to disarm. Still, the rebels continued to fight and sign peace agreements only to fight again. “The war lasted longer than we could ever have thought because of the ongoing grab for territory,” says Lartey. Taylor repeatedly reneged on past accords to “buy time,” Lartey continues, “both to exploit the natural resources on his territories, as well as to gain more territory.”³⁸⁹ In February 1996, a few months after rebels signed another power-sharing peace agreement (at Abuja), the consortium staged another ‘stay-home’ action, which led to the creation of Civic Disarmament Campaign (CDC). Chaired by members of the IRCL, the CDC went on to become the country’s single most influential organisation for disarmament. Religious leaders were not able to get Liberian warlords to keep the peace, but over time they were seminal in creating a vibrant civil society in the midst of war.

In between numerous accords, Taylor had consolidated his political power. In 1995, the Abuja Accord made way for the free and fair elections the IRCL had been lobbying for, but fighting continued for more than another year. Overseen by a small United Nations Observer Mission in Liberia (UNOMIL), elections finally took place on 19 July 1997. “By the time we got to the 1997 elections, we felt that if Taylor won, he would end the war,” says Lartey.³⁹⁰ On the surface, the clergy got their wish. The war officially ended with the 1997 elections and Taylor’s inauguration.

Following Taylor’s victory, members of the IRCL decided to step back and allow democracy to take its course, while still advocating for peace and delivering social services.

³⁸⁸ At the time, lawyer David Kpomakpor lead the transitional government. Taylor, along with the leaders of ULIMO and AFL, proposed that Chief Tamba Taylor, a wealthy, well-spoken, illiterate traditional chief in his 90s from Lofa County, replace Kpomakpor (Dunn *et al* 2001). The warlords claimed Taylor’s advanced age gave him broad-based legitimacy, while the religious leaders noted that his advanced years made him too old and feeble to assert any meaningful authority over the transitional government—a fact that was likely not lost on the rebels.

³⁸⁹ Interview with Lartey, 2012.

³⁹⁰ Interview with Lartey, 2012

Although fighting died down in Monrovia and most large towns, former rebel forces—numbering in the thousands—lived a hand-to-mouth existence with other citizens in the rural regions. Resorting to wartime tactics, they regularly robbed and terrorised ordinary Liberians and returnees. Additionally, the international community imposed severe sanctions against Liberia for shipping arms to Sierra Leone in exchange for diamonds, which created additional penury for an already destitute population. “After he won, Taylor had the opportunity to reach out to the Liberian people,” Lartey recalls, “But regrettably, he still had the mindset of a rebel.” In rural areas, former rebels who had not been embraced by Taylor’s government grew increasingly restive.

After a peace of sorts, Liberia again erupted into war. In 1999, a new faction, comprised primarily of Krahn and Mandingos based in Guinea, began to cross the border and attack communities in Lofa County. In the next two years, the rebels, ironically named Liberians United for Reconciliation and Democracy (LURD), expanded their campaign from Lofa County into the west and centre of the country, capturing a large territory. Once more, the clergy stepped up to organise peace talks, only to be rebuffed. “Taylor resisted recognizing that we were at war again,” says Lartey. “When we approached Taylor in 2001 to negotiate peace, he said that there was a legitimate state government in place, and that there was no war.”³⁹¹ By mid-2001, Monrovia alone was spared; the rest of the country was in the midst of full-blown combat.

With the first shots, the clergy went public to warn of “trouble brewing” in Lofa and Nimba counties, but no one wanted to listen (Dukule 2001: n.p.). “The international community was tired of Liberia’s problems,” says then civil society leader, Conmany Wesseh. “And Liberia didn’t affect Western interests.”³⁹² On their own initiative, religious leaders travelled to the affected two regions and met with villagers and community leaders, but Taylor government officials stepped in, told them to leave and that they would handle the problem. Instead, the fighting got worse. Adopting a less acquiescent position than they had in the past, the IRCL contacted religious leaders in Guinea to develop a common position on the conflict, and asked them to speak with LURD officials residing in Guinea. As the fighting worsened, Islamic clerics in particular were intent that the war not take on a religious bent. “Nobody I know, Christian or Muslim, is waging a religious war in Liberia,” Konneh stated in 2001. “The people who are in Lofa are not fighting for Islam or for any other religious belief. That kind of thinking makes it very hard to find a solution” (Konneh in Dukule 2001: n.p.).

Repeatedly, Liberia’s clergy stood at the brink, decrying Taylor’s government, the rebels, and citizens alike. “Things are very bad, to say it bluntly,” Konneh said. “There is a lack of national conscience... People have turned their back to each other. People are hardly surviving” (Konneh in Dukule 2001: n.p.). As the war escalated, the IRCL redoubled its efforts, emerging from the shadows to become one of the loudest voices for peace. The clergy gave themselves a three-pronged agenda of human rights, humanitarianism, as well as conflict mediation and resolution. Liberia’s religious

³⁹¹ Interview with Lartey, 2012.

³⁹² Interview with Conmany Wesseh, civil society representative-elect to the National Transitional Assembly of Liberia (NTAL) in 2003, subsequently Liberia’s Minister of State, Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary to the European Union, 20 March 2012, in Monrovia, Liberia.

leaders retained absolute commitment to their agenda, not only because these were the issues they most believed in, but because they saw these three goals as opportunities for gain.³⁹³ No matter how many setbacks they experienced, the clergy concentrated on the benefits and rewards of achieving their goals.

The single-minded pursuit of maximising gains and avoiding missed opportunities is termed *promotion focus* (Galinsky *et al* 2005). Promotion-focused negotiators perceive their goals as “opportunities to gain—to advance or to achieve, to end up better off than they are now” (Halvorson 2013: n.p.). Negotiators who frame their goals as potential gains can handle risk and do not preoccupy themselves with thoughts of what might go wrong.³⁹⁴ The clergy’s promotion focus was perhaps a natural extension of their collaborative approach to negotiations, where individuals treat each other with respect, exchange truthful information, and look for solutions that satisfy all participants (see chapter 2). Collaborative negotiators tend to trust their fellow participants, and are trusted in return. In fact, collaborative tactics often result in negotiations with increased outcomes and high levels of satisfaction for all involved. All the same, while all those who worked alongside the clergy retained general satisfaction and trust in them years after the fact, Liberia’s religious leaders could not secure lasting peace.

By March 2003, fighting was so pervasive that the UN estimated 80 per cent of the country was inaccessible to relief agencies (*IRIN* 2003d). The World Food Program had stopped distributing food to more than 200,000 internally displaced people living in camps across the country as rations were being looted by armed rebels upon arrival at the camps (*CWS* 2003). Tapping into the extended networks of their churches, Liberian Christian leaders pleaded with their American counterparts to come to their aid, “There are no safe corridors, relief supplies are unable to reach the affected,” said Lartey, “As a result people are dying from starvation and diseases” (Lartey in *CWS* 2003: n.p.). American churchgoers responded in droves, but their efforts were but a drop in the ocean. More than food, Liberians needed peace.

READYING WARLORDS FOR PEACE

As always, the clergy was at the forefront campaigning for peace. Members of IRCL approached ECOWAS to help organise peace talks, but the regional organisation balked. “They told us, ‘Charles Taylor says there is no war, but you say there is. Who should we believe then, and with whom should we negotiate,’” recounts Lartey.³⁹⁵ ECOWAS told the IRCL it would consider helping with peace talks, provided the clergy first sought out the warring parties, determined why they were fighting, then persuaded Taylor to negotiate. Essentially, ECOWAS asked the Liberian religious leaders to work on their behalf, and to do so free of charge. Lartey remembers, “We even had to find funding for all this.”³⁹⁶ Archbishop Michael Francis was able to secure some backing from the Catholic Church, “and then we began to travel, nonstop into Guinea and through Liberia,”

³⁹³ Interviews with Konneh and Lartey, 2012.

³⁹⁴ Conversely, prevention-focused individuals see their goals in terms of what they stand to lose if they do not succeed; consequently, they are more conservative and risk adverse (Halvorson 2013).

³⁹⁵ Interview with Lartey, 2012.

³⁹⁶ Interview with Lartey, 2012.

Lartey recalls.³⁹⁷ The primary three IRCL leaders (Konneh, Lartey and Francis) along with Leemah Gbowee, leader of the women's peace movement in Liberia, crisscrossed the region. "We had no money and travelled overland for hours at a time on terrible roads," says Lartey. "I developed blood clots from the cramped taxis we took."³⁹⁸ Health tolls notwithstanding, the country was at war, and travelling without armed protection—which the clergy couldn't afford—was near suicidal. It is a testament to the near-universal respect that religious leaders commanded that they were not killed during any of the thousands of checkpoints they crossed.

"In our travels, I got to be convinced that people were ready for peace," says Konneh.³⁹⁹ "All warring parties and their respective supporters and sympathizers got to the point where they realized that a military solution wasn't going to happen."⁴⁰⁰ The clergy went back to ECOWAS and reported that there was general willingness to have peace talks. "But Taylor was still saying there was no war, and no one wanted to cross Taylor," says Lartey.⁴⁰¹ ECOWAS told the clergy that since Taylor refused to acknowledge the conflict any talks would have to take place in another country. Sierra Leonean president Kabbah said that preliminary discussions could be held in his country, but Taylor refused to personally attend because he was concerned for his safety. The clerics returned to negotiate with Taylor and finally persuaded him to send a delegation to Freetown to observe the meeting. Meanwhile, ECOWAS designated former Nigerian president Abdulsalami Abubakar to mediate any Liberian peace talks, because he was a palatable choice for Taylor. "Taylor had been impressed with Abubakar during an earlier state visit to Nigeria," and was taken in by the Nigerian's calm and controlled demeanour (Hayner 2007: 7).

Aside from LURD and Taylor, the religious leaders recommended that women's groups and the bar association join them for the preliminary meeting on 27 May. Participants recognised that the Freetown meeting was just the beginning, "We already knew we were going to have to have longer negotiations afterwards," says Lartey.⁴⁰²

As the primary belligerent, LURD was a necessary participant at the peace conference, but the rebels' attendance was fraught with diplomatic complications. ECOWAS members had to be united in the pursuit of a peaceful solution to the Liberian conflict. But one ECOWAS member sought to prevent the LURD delegation from attending the Freetown meeting. "We had to have secret talks with the government of Guinea because to them, LURD didn't exist," Lartey recalls.⁴⁰³ Publicly, Guinea denied any dealings with LURD, even as Taylor filed a security complaint to the UN Security Council against Guinea, for "supporting a terrorist organisation" (*IRIN* 2003b). Eventually, Guinea withdrew its dissent and LURD delegates were dispatched to the Freetown talks.

³⁹⁷ Interview with Lartey, 2012.

³⁹⁸ Interview with Lartey, 2012.

³⁹⁹ Interview with Konneh, 2011.

⁴⁰⁰ Interview with Konneh, 2012.

⁴⁰¹ Interview with Lartey, 2012.

⁴⁰² Interview with Lartey, 2012.

⁴⁰³ Interview with Lartey, 2012.

Getting participants to Sierra Leone was a challenge, but once in Freetown, the meeting got off to a positive start. LURD was on its way to agreeing to a conditional ceasefire and attending future talks when “Halfway through our discussion, we get a call from this group called Movement for Democracy In Liberia (MODEL) complaining that they’d been left out of the talks,” Lartey reveals. “But we hadn’t even targeted them as a key player yet!” MODEL was a break-away faction from LURD that had recently started attacking communities in the east, coming over the border from Côte d’Ivoire. However, “LURD didn’t want to negotiate with MODEL at all,” said Lartey.⁴⁰⁴ After placating LURD, Abubakar emerged from the conference room to say that he was “trying to make contact” with MODEL, and that he hoped to speak with them prior to any further peace talks (*AFP* 2003a). The meeting in Freetown ended with LURD agreeing to attend further talks with Taylor the following week, although the rebels still did not want MODEL to be included in future discussions. For all the drama at Freetown, the clergy were cautiously hopeful. But as they discussed the upcoming formal talks—pitched by ECOWAS as a “national conference”—Lartey notes, “we knew we were going to have to bring MODEL on board, so we went to Côte d’Ivoire to meet with them.”⁴⁰⁵

Liberia’s formal, more lengthy talks, scheduled for the first week of June 2003, were to take place in Accra, Ghana, but in a foretaste of things to come, even the simplest discussions around the venue were fraught. Prior to the Freetown meeting, in their encounters with the government and rebels, religious leaders asked about preferred venues for a national conference. “Geneva, Vienna, South Africa, and even Nairobi were suggested,” Lartey says, “But not a single country in West Africa.” Every warlord expressed concern over his personal safety and the possibilities of being arrested in the region, “so Sierra Leone was out, as was Guinea, and Côte d’Ivoire, and even Burkina Faso, as they all had some links with the belligerents.”⁴⁰⁶ The religious leaders thought that Ghana was an excellent location for peace talks, but getting the government’s consent required great persuasion. “It was a little thorny with Ghanaian President Kofu because he was much more democratic than his predecessor, seeking consultations with his party and government,” Lartey recalls. “There were mass protests when it became known that Ghana would host the conference. People were upset about the presence of warlords in the country.”⁴⁰⁷ Ghanaians were also increasingly frustrated about the thousands of Liberian refugees living inside their borders. Upon acknowledging the public’s apprehension, religious leaders and Kofu received grudging public support for the peace talks.

ECOWAS billed the Accra event as “more” than peace talks. While the pursuit of peace was the primary goal, this was to be a comprehensive “national sovereignty conference,” which meant that representatives from all social, professional and government sectors were encouraged to attend. “There was a big scramble as all the political parties wanted to be a part of it,” says Lartey. “Then we identified civil society and professional

⁴⁰⁴ Interview with Lartey, 2012.

⁴⁰⁵ Interview with Lartey, 2012.

⁴⁰⁶ Interview with Lartey, 2012.

⁴⁰⁷ Interview with Lartey, 2012. While Ghana’s citizens worried about the influx of warlords on the streets of Accra, the rebels were preoccupied about ensuring their personal safety during the talks. Prior to the Accra meeting, religious leaders had to meet repeatedly with the warlords’ legal representatives and provide them with assurance for their safety during the talks.

groups.”⁴⁰⁸ Civil society players at Accra arrived with a multitude of perspectives and aspirations, but were “united on one thing,” says Conmany Wessah, a civil society veteran at Accra, “That war and violence must end, and that the rebel groups must be disarmed.”⁴⁰⁹ ECOWAS brought together the political leaders of the region, as well as members from the international community.

After nearly two years of voluntary work by Liberia’s clergy, hundreds of people crowded Accra’s Plaza Hotel on the day of the opening ceremony 3 June 2003. Indeed, the broad spectrum of participants at Accra, and the subsequent agreement’s inclusivity made this an exemplary event.

That the Accra peace talks came about at all is due in large part to the tireless efforts of Liberia’s religious leaders and their staunch commitment to ending the suffering of their fellow citizens. “We had passion and we had hope,” recounts Konneh, “We felt that unless Liberians became reconciled and reunified, then our work amounted to nothing.”⁴¹⁰ At the Accra peace talks, and again following the agreement’s endorsement, Liberia’s clergy discreetly continued to pursue their agenda of human rights, humanitarianism, and lasting peace.

Liberia’s religious leaders played an indispensable role in facilitating the Accra peace process. They brought the three belligerents together and kept them talking even though they disagreed on nearly everything. However, once negotiations began Lartey and Konneh had limited influence because of their neutrality. As non-belligerents, the religious leaders had no personal interests in the war save a desire for peace. They were not affiliated with any fighting force, which also made them acceptable mediators to all sides. As neutral mediators, the religious leaders did not seek to influence the parties’ perceptions of power balance difference (Benjamin 1988). They sought to set aside their personal feelings and opinions (Gibson *et al* 1996). They refrained from making judgements about the parties and retained no bias for or against any of the parties (Field 2000). These attributes allowed credibility, trust and respect between the clergy and the warring parties. Nonetheless, there are occasions when restraint and impartiality are ineffective and mediators need to question and even challenge parties on their negotiating perspective (Moore 2004: 355). Liberian belligerents, particularly LURD’s chief negotiator, could have benefitted greatly from wise advice and some assistance.⁴¹¹ However, the opposite of neutrality is not “partisan” but “involved” or “engaged” (Benjamin 1988: n.p.). Konneh and Lartey’s self-made oath of neutrality did not allow them to move beyond their role as trusted confidants into being purveyors of wisdom, advocates, and pilots who could steer the fighting parties towards finding mutually beneficial solutions.

⁴⁰⁸ Interview with Lartey, 2011.

⁴⁰⁹ Interview with Conmany Wessah, civil society representative-elect to the National Transitional Assembly of Liberia (NTAL) in 2003, subsequently Liberia’s Minister of State, Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary to the European Union, in Monrovia, Liberia, 20 March 2012.

⁴¹⁰ Interview with Konneh, 2011.

⁴¹¹ As noted in Chapter 8, LURD’s chief negotiator not only lacked resolute direction from his movement’s Chairman, he did not have the benefit of a outside advocate or wise counsel.

A truly neutral mediator does not have an interest in the negotiations' outcome, but it was clear that Lartey and Konneh cared a great deal about a peaceable end to the process. As such, the clerics were not genuinely neutral. The religious leaders did not see this contradiction and remained inactive. Their inactivity made the religious leaders ineffective at the talks. Religious leaders were involved in the conflict by virtue of their citizenship; the war permeated all aspects of life in Liberia, it was inescapable. While this made Konneh and Lartey partial and non-neutral, they were still known and respected by the belligerents who trusted them to be fair.

The process would not have benefited from Lartey and Konneh aligning with one of the warring parties, but the clerics' distinct interest and preference for a peaceable end to the war made them partial. Konneh and Lartey could have increased their authority and leverage at Accra by embracing a form of "insider-partial mediation" (Lederach & Wehr 1991: n.p.), in which someone who is already involved in a dispute aligns with one of the parties. The religious leaders' deep knowledge of the issues and their personal relationships with the belligerents could have put a "systematic perspective advice" approach to use, in which Konneh and Lartey might have provided insight and advice to the fighting parties (Gibson *et al* 1996). In so doing, the religious leaders would have moved from being strictly neutral (and inactive) to having an intervening role, but this would have allowed them to serve the belligerents as a trusted go-between while helping them achieve mutually desirable outcomes. Instead of losing their momentum at Accra, Konneh and Lartey could have achieved a successful collaborative negotiating outcome.

This chapter has demonstrated how for 13 years of war, during which time belligerents showed no interest in alleviating the suffering of innocent civilians, Liberia's religious leaders were tireless champions of peace. At great personal cost, Konneh and Lartey established genuine respectful relationships with the belligerents, who in turn trusted the clergy enough to share their thoughts and perspectives. Lartey and Konneh's personal approach to peace and the negotiation process was distinct and influential. Although the warring parties had a limited desire to talk peace, religious leaders were able to persuade them to attend negotiations. Throughout the killing, Konneh and Lartey still kept the warring parties talking. Nonetheless, because of the religious leaders' strict commitment to the precepts of impartiality, they were unable to aggrandize the trust and respect they commanded to include real influence over the process and the individual warlords. As we will see in the next two chapters, it was the belligerents who really controlled the Accra peace process; the other participants were simply along for the ride.

CHAPTER 8

THE LURD IS THEIR SHEPHERD, BUT THE REBELS STILL WANT CHIEF NEGOTIATOR (CN)

Liberians United for Reconciliation and Democracy (LURD) June-August 2003

Liberia's wartime history is littered with the bones of failed peace agreements. The country's wars also resulted in a veritable breeding factory of rebel movements; just as one group would coalesce into a legitimate movement, it would invariably break apart like a calving iceberg. So it was with Liberians United for Reconciliation and Democracy (LURD).

Born from the melting ice shelf formerly known as ULIMO, a rebel group that proved a significant foe to Taylor in the first years of his rebellion, LURD emerged from the cold waters of Taylor's elected government excesses. The group listed the usual catalogue of grievances—ethnic oppression, marginalisation, lack of opportunity—but lacked a real platform. It also lacked a strong leader. From its inception, LURD's command structure was fractured; a fissure only grew between its political and military branches, each increasingly brittle from the grasp of so many inflexible warriors.

This chapter explains the LURD rebel movement's evolution, its fractious leadership structure, and the emergence of its chief negotiator at the peace talks. LURD was not a unified force at the negotiations. Internal strife within the movement and communication problems between members in Accra, the leadership stationed in Guinea, and fighting forces throughout the Liberian countryside also limited the chief negotiator's decision-making authority on behalf of the rebels. LURD's fractured structure frequently conflicted with the efforts of its chief negotiator at Accra. Moreover, although President Taylor had been indicted for war crimes in Sierra Leone the day that the Accra negotiations were to begin, he continued to live (and kill) freely in Liberia during the peace process. The Liberian government had a negotiating team in place at the talks, but Taylor was the real decision-maker, which created additional structural barriers to discussions between the belligerents.

Significantly, the Accra peace talks took place while the warring parties continued to wage full-on war across the country. This chapter appraises LURD's chief negotiator's behaviour at Accra amidst his group's extreme battlefield tactics of shelling the capital city to gain leverage at the peace talks. In time, these tactics came to cost the chief negotiator his credibility and bargaining advantage. After reaching a stalemate, the escalating threats of outside participants slowly reached the rebels' heretofore deaf ears and persuaded their negotiator to feast together with his fellow belligerents on Liberia's rotting carcass.

From its genesis, LURD had one agenda only: to rid Liberia of Charles Taylor. It never deviated from this one aim. Initially, this single-mindedness served the rebels well. LURD soon controlled large swaths of the Liberian countryside and was well endowed by Guinea, a country that shared its antipathy for Taylor. However, the tactics that worked so well for LURD on the battlefield did not yield much of a harvest in peace talks. The rebels

were clueless (albeit successful) operators at Accra, and their chief negotiator's recollections provide a wealth of insider information about individual motives and behaviours in the negotiating process.

As single-minded as LURD was in its commitment to unseating Taylor, both sides behaved similarly in negotiations. From the beginning, LURD's chief negotiator employed positional bargaining techniques, meaning he argued for allowances and concessions based on a position.⁴¹² LURD adopted an extreme negotiating position based on its wants (to achieve political power, especially the leadership of the transitional government), its needs (to topple Taylor), and its limitations (a military edge in battle but no outright victory) (Long 2013). The rebels then treated the Accra peace talks as a zero-sum game, in which only one party was allowed to win.

LURD's extreme initial position in negotiation was war: The rebels were clear that they would not stop fighting until the day Taylor resigned and left the country. The rebels justified this rigid position because they held more than half of the country's territory at the outset of the negotiations and were poised to invade Monrovia to secure a full military victory. According to numerous participants at Accra, LURD members believed themselves invincible. When one side commences negotiations with an extreme position, they are necessarily forced into making concessions to achieve an agreement. When one negotiator makes only a small concession, he perceives his side as particularly triumphant, but when he is cornered into acceding something significant, he is rancorous and vexed. LURD started negotiating at Accra without even considering small concessions—a possible exception being its commitment to uphold a ceasefire agreement that lasted less than 24 hours.⁴¹³ Unsurprisingly then, the peace talks were strained and sluggish. Negotiations fail when talks reach a stalemate. LURD's uncompromising tactics meant that the Accra talks were very much on their way to failing like so many other Liberian peace accords before.

Ultimately, the Accra peace talks actually yielded a peace agreement and, most exceptionally, this agreement has held for more than a dozen years. However, for all its pre-negotiation leverage, LURD did not fare any better than either of the other two belligerents in the war. This is not to say that the rebels did not prosper at Accra—all the warring parties did—but they in no way emerged the swaggering champions they perceived themselves as.

A LITTLE HISTORY REPEATING

Liberia's seven-year-long civil war came to an end when Charles Taylor won the 1997 elections. With Taylor legitimately seated as president, most international non-governmental organisations and media representatives either pulled out of Liberia voluntarily or were pushed out in the name of state sovereignty. Various anti-government forces mounted several attacks against Taylor following the 1997 election, but the rebels failed to gain any traction and, with occasional exceptions, most parts of the country reverted to placidity.

⁴¹² Positional bargaining is also known as distributive negotiation.

⁴¹³ Interview with CN, chief negotiator for Liberians United for Reconciliation and Democracy (LURD), in Monrovia, Liberia, 4 March 2010.

For nearly two years, violence was limited to parts of the country's near-inaccessible northern areas, where few aid workers or reporters ventured, which meant that tales of conflict were virtually unheard of in Monrovia, let alone outside the country. Indeed, many foreign observers, including the media, questioned the veracity of conflict reports coming from the few individuals who made their way out of the bush, and speculated that Taylor's National Patriotic Party (NPP) had fabricated tales of escalating clashes in an attempt to pressure the international community to cancel its arms and diamond embargoes on Liberia (Itano 2003).

Concealed from the prying eyes of the international community, Taylor's multiple security forces perpetuated countless abuses, which in turn motivated rebel groups operating in rural regions to relay their discontent further afield. Groups, such as the Mandingo-led United Liberation Movement of Liberia for Democracy (ULIMO-K), which had remained somewhat intact since 1997, became active once again (Foster *et al* 2009). Neighbouring Sierra Leone was finally at peace, which meant that there were few opportunities for resident unskilled rebels, save pillage and murder. Former RUF fighters "frequently crossed into, recruited from, took refuge in, and launched attacks from Liberia" (Foster *et al* 2009: 186). Violence continued to break out around the country, but perpetrators were disordered and indistinguishable in their aims; many Liberians were not able to identify the factions to whom the "rebels" or "armed men" belonged (Foster *et al* 2009). The various factions were less methodical and organised than Taylor's security forces, but were nonetheless responsible for numerous abuses of their own (HRW 2002).⁴¹⁴

In time, some of the rebels began to coordinate. Former ULIMO troops claimed they continued to be deliberately targeted by government forces in the months after Taylor came to power and many had sought refuge in Guinea.⁴¹⁵ Sharing common frustration over their perceived exclusion from the 1997 Abuja Accords, groups of Liberian exiles—many comprising ex-combatants—in Guinea and Sierra Leone, mostly from the Mandingo and Krahn communities, began to meet.⁴¹⁶ Liberians United for Reconciliation and Democracy (LURD) was born after one such meeting in Freetown in July 1999. From the start, the movement was dominated by ULIMO ex-combatants from the Mandingo and Krahn communities.⁴¹⁷ Although the Mandingos are primarily Muslim and the Krahn are mainly Christian, religious differences did not hinder the organisations' operation (Brabazon 2003a). LURD had no particular founding ideology, and beyond its sole stated objective to oust President Taylor, the group appeared to have no further ambitions.

Acknowledging that the ethnic communities of the south were widely suspicious of both the Mandingos and Krahns, LURD actively urged Liberians of all ethnic backgrounds

⁴¹⁴ Rebel abuses reflected those carried out by government forces, including among others, forced recruitment, rape, torture, forced labour, looting and destruction of property, and murder (Foster *et al* 2009; HRW 2002).

⁴¹⁵ The Mandingo and Krahn communities are not confined to northern Liberia; they reside in Sierra Leone and Guinea border regions as well (see Figure 3 in chapter 3).

⁴¹⁶ As noted in chapter 3, the Mandingos and Krahn had a long history of opposing Taylor. As a result of their defiance, both communities had been the victims of brutal reprisals by Taylor's forces.

⁴¹⁷ ULIMO-J and ULIMO-K were Taylor's chief opponents in the mid-1990s (see Chapter 3). Following the implementation of the 1997 Abuja Accords, both groups formally disbanded. Many ULIMO combatants were supposed to have been incorporated into Liberia's reformed armed forces, but Taylor reneged on this commitment.

to join their movement (Brabazon 2003a). In a commendable but futile effort to clean house, the group also claimed that no former warlords from the civil war would be allowed membership. Nonetheless, the distinction between rebel soldier and warlord is so fine as to be interchangeable, and from the very start, the organisation contained a disproportionate number of experienced ULIMO servicemen.⁴¹⁸ Likewise, most of LURD's senior commanders were also former ULIMO fighters.

LURD's first chairman was a non-combatant businessman, Mohammed Jumandy, who secured his position by promising to bring US\$1 million in financing to the movement (Brabazon 2003a). When it became apparent that the money was not forthcoming, Jumandy was relieved of his duties. Subsequent leadership was fractured, as several members maneuvered for position, each gaining some support on the basis of ethnic affiliation (Lidow 2011).⁴¹⁹ LURD's top position was essentially vacant from 1999 until 2001, when an unnamed group of Taylor-backed rebels crossed into Guinea and attacked the town of Guékédou. Armed by the Guinean military, ex-combatants from a nearby Liberian refugee camp fought alongside government soldiers and recaptured the town (Lidow 2011). Until then, Guinean President Lansana Conté had not seen the political benefits of supporting another armed faction in Liberia, but he now agreed to provide assistance to LURD, on the condition that a relatively unknown member, Sekou Damante Conneh, was appointed chairman (Lidow 2011).

Conneh did not have a base of support among LURD members. He possessed neither military nor political experience; prior to seeking exile in Guinea he was a used car salesman who had served time in a Monrovia prison for questionable business dealings (Tamba 2002). Conneh's favour with Conté was courtesy of his wife, Ayesha, a Guinean citizen who was the President's adopted daughter and spiritual advisor (Lidow 2011).⁴²⁰ Conneh was neither mature nor cerebral, and was described as clearly lacking "the rigorous political and judgmental acumen needed for such a demanding assignment" (Tamba 2002: n.p.). Despite these limitations, Conneh was capable of publicly articulating his organisation's limited and concise platform, which remained Taylor's immediate eviction from the presidency.

⁴¹⁸ Disillusioned former members of other factions, including the Independent Patriot Front (IPF), several hundred troops hailing from Sierra Leone (*kamajors*, Civil Defence Force (CDF) and RUF fighters), Taylor's own National Patriotic Front of Liberia (NPFL), and numerous government soldiers from the Armed Forces of Liberia (AFL) also joined (Brabazon 2003a).

⁴¹⁹ Mandingos supported respected lawyer Kabineh Ja'neh, while Lormas sustained another lawyer, Lavala Supuwood, who previously served as Minister of Justice in a previous transitional government, and Krahns were divided between Jackson Doe, a career politician, as well as Chayee Doe and George Dweh, both relatives of late President Samuel Doe (Lidow 2011). While none of these was able to achieve LURD's top position, all had political aspirations and all went on to occupy government positions after the war. Another council member, Thomas Yaya Nimley, a US educated psychologist also had a few supporters, but could not gain much influence (Lidow 2011). Nimley subsequently became the chairman for the Movement for Democracy in Liberia (MODEL).

⁴²⁰ Ayesha Conneh was previously married to Sekou Conneh's brother. According to traditional dictates, when he died, she became Sekou's wife (Brabazon 2003a). As a displaced person, Ms. Conneh fled to Guinea, where she earned a living as a clairvoyant. In 1996, she became Conté's spiritual advisor after correctly warning him of a coup attempt and later was formally adopted by the President (*The Economist* 2004).

In addition to the direct support LURD began to receive from the Guinean government, the newly minted rebels were backed by a number of foreign supporters, with indirect aid coming from Sierra Leone, the UK and the US (*Armed Conflicts Report* 2005). In a place as poor as Liberia, LURD's newfound affluence was the source of immense speculation. "We all wondered where was LURD getting all their support," recalls civil society activist and politician Conmany Wesseh. "We thought much of it came from the United States. The US had no policy coherence; they dealt with Taylor from one hand and LURD from the other. But if you listened to LURD people, they talked and that's where they were getting their support."⁴²¹ Publicly, the tale was different; senior LURD leaders asserted that their funding came exclusively from the Liberian diaspora, mostly exiled in the US (Brabazon 2003a). Considering that few Liberians in exile were moneyed, it seems somewhat improbable that they could have fully bankrolled LURD's activities.

Liberia was cash-poor, but there were other potential sources of revenue to be exploited. Initially, LURD was vociferously opposed to the commercial logging and diamond extraction that financed Taylor's operations and, up until 2002, there is little evidence that the rebels engaged in these practices (Brabazon 2003a). However, as armed skirmishes turned into full-scale war, LURD captured and exploited territories in the north of the country that were rich with timber (Hazen 2013).⁴²² Although there are reports that some LURD commanders and fighters sold diamonds on an individual basis, the rebels lacked the resources to mine alluvial diamonds in the regions they held and diamond mining never was an important source of funding for the group (Hazen 2013). With its military victories came territory, and LURD came to systematically exploit gold and timber in these areas. While natural resources yielded considerable income, Conneh's inability to curb organisational infighting and develop adequate infrastructure meant that the group was never consistently prosperous.

Although LURD members were ever seeking to increase their cash flow, they had no trouble securing arms and ammunition. "Guinea started providing tonnes of ammo to LURD, and they would just shoot all day," recalls documentary filmmaker Zubin Cooper. "So much fire made people think that they were very numerous."⁴²³ Although the UN had imposed an arms embargo against all armed groups in Liberia in May 2001, none of Liberia's belligerents suffered from a shortage of weapons. Taylor's government obtained weapons from Slovakia, Ukraine, Libya and Yugoslavia (*Armed Conflicts Report* 2005), as well as Kyrgyzstan, Moldova, Egypt, Côte d'Ivoire, Burkina Faso, and even Nigeria (Wenzel & Faltas 2009).⁴²⁴ Most of LURD's armaments came from neighbouring Guinea

⁴²¹ Interview with Conmany Wesseh, civil society representative-elect to the National Transitional Assembly of Liberia (NTAL) in 2003, subsequently Liberia's Minister of State, Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary to the European Union, in Monrovia, Liberia, 20 March 2012.

⁴²² Timber concessions were seen as valuable assets for all belligerents, and continuous attacks on these territories led to a decline in timber production, which precipitated the departure of the corporations that managed resource extraction. By 2003, there was little profit to be made from timber.

⁴²³ Interview with Zubin Cooper, then self-described "bird dogger" and documentary filmmaker, now media executive and Lead Consultant at MultiSolutions Inc., in Monrovia, Liberia, 21 March 2012.

⁴²⁴ Flush with cash from diamonds and timber, Taylor obtained arms from a plethora of sources. The Guinean Pecos Company repeatedly falsified documents for international arms dealer, Victor Bout, who sent shipments to Taylor from various East European countries in 2000 and 2001 (*HRW* 2001). Côte d'Ivoire also falsified necessary documents to facilitate arms shipments from Russia and Ukraine (*HRW* 2001). Burkina

(Wenzel & Faltas 2009), although there is evidence that at least some of its arms were sourced from the United Arab Emirates (GlobalSecurity.org 2015) with certain munitions deriving from Iran (Hazen 2013).⁴²⁵

Taylor may have made or purchased many friends in the previous decade, but he had also gained numerous enemies. By supporting Foday Sankoh and the RUF in Sierra Leone, he alienated President Kabbah. Similarly, Taylor supported Guinean dissidents committed to overthrowing President Lansana Conté and helped establish the fledgling Mouvement Populaire Ivoirien du Grand Ouest (MPIGO) in Côte d'Ivoire. It is unsurprising, then, that both the Guinean and Ivorian governments backed rebel movements intent on deposing Taylor. The Guinean government's support and financial assistance of LURD was "an open secret" (Jaye 2003: 646).⁴²⁶ Likewise, beginning in early 2003, the Gbagbo government in Côte d'Ivoire provided the Movement for Democracy in Liberia (MODEL) with a staging ground for their own rebel campaign.

Unlike Taylor's forces, which by this time were universally feared but only partially supported, LURD enjoyed widespread assistance and cooperation from the civilian population in its core regions of Nimba and Lofa counties.⁴²⁷ But Liberia was still at war, and LURD was certainly not a saintly organisation. With the exception of Monrovia, the war's frontlines lay deep in the bush. Infrastructure was lacking; with few roads and no railway, every bullet had to be hand carried through the dense rain forest. At the beginning, LURD had ample volunteer fighters and did not resort to kidnapping children to serve as cannon fodder. However, it was not averse to impelling civilians (including children) to carry their supplies for weeks and hundreds of kilometres at a time. Initially, porters volunteered their services and were paid in foodstuff, but when some balked at the distances and harsh conditions, LURD troops would force civilians to work according to their bidding as virtual slaves (Brabazon 2003a).

With an organisational structure in place and its leadership vacancy filled, LURD began to behave like the rebel force it aspired to be. In mid-2000, LURD had sufficient troops and a valuable base in Guinea to begin fighting in earnest. Fewer than 70 fighters partook in the rebels' first cross-border military operations, but this was enough to capture the northern city of Voinjama, where LURD established its headquarters (Brabazon 2003a). The rebel attacks sparked numerous retaliatory assaults. "After 1999, the LURD incursion

Faso both falsified documents and acted as a intermediary for weapons shipments, while Nigeria doctored shipping documents for weapons sourced in Serbia (Wenzel & Faltas 2009).

⁴²⁵ Wenzel & Faltas (2009) claim that some of the military supplies the US provided to Guinea as aid were used in Liberia. Kieh (2010) supports this assertion, noting that the US was not only aware of Guinea's support of LURD, but acceded that weapons it had provided to Guinea be transferred towards LURD.

⁴²⁶ In addition to funds and the use of its territory, Guinea provided LURD with "religious, political, and military" support (GlobalSecurity 2015).

⁴²⁷ For the most part, although their appearance was a ragtag combination of rappers in drag accessorised with military uniforms, LURD troops possessed higher levels of morale (augmented by large amounts of marijuana) and training compared with government soldiers (Brabazon 2003). LURD field discipline was also better than in the armed forces, but depended on the quality and experience of the commander in charge; in areas where there were few senior commanders, discipline disintegrated, and LURD rebels were as likely to harass, steal from and kill civilians as Taylor's troops were. For these reasons, LURD retained the public support of the residents of its core regions in Naimba and Lofa counties.

picked up steam. Except they had underestimated Taylor, they didn't expect him to push back," says Cooper. "At first, Taylor just sent in a few forces. The real fighting started in 2000 and 2001."⁴²⁸ Although Taylor would not admit publicly that his government was under attack, he moved swiftly to mobilise former soldiers and import weapons.

Claiming that Guinea was both arming and sustaining LURD from September 2000 until April 2001, Taylor summoned Guinean dissidents in northern Liberia and residual RUF troops in Sierra Leone to mount attacks on Guinea (*HRW* 2002). In turn, the Guinean government began to arm Donsos, a civil defence force in eastern Sierra Leone, increased its support of LURD and sent some of its own soldiers to assist the Liberian rebels (Hazen 2013). In early 2001, LURD also began to recruit heavily, mostly from Sierra Leone, including *kamajors*, the RUF, and the West Side Boys (another rebel group from the latter part of the Sierra Leone civil war) (*HRW* 2002). The combination of additional troops and Guinean assistance allowed LURD to push back. The Guinean army helped LURD force RUF fighters back into Sierra Leone, and LURD started a new assault in Foya, a town about 65 kilometres from Voinjama.

By February 2001, Taylor considered LURD to be a real enough menace to his regime that he officially requested that the UN Security Council lift its arms embargo against government forces (Kamara 2001). Not only did the UN deny Taylor's request, it voted unanimously to impose more rigorous sanctions against his government (UN Security Council 2001). The UN's refusal only compelled Taylor to purchase arms from other sources. For a while, Taylor also started paying his troops to encourage new recruits, but the increased sanctions along with the huge amounts of money he continued to funnel into his personal accounts meant that the government began to experience financial shortages.

BLESSED BE THE LURD WHO TRAINS MY HANDS FOR WAR AND MY FINGERS FOR BATTLE

Taylor's remobilisation of ex-combatants had the unwanted effect of boosting LURD's numbers. As Taylor began to actively repress the Mandingo, Krahn and Gbandi ethnic communities, accusing them of supporting the rebels (*Armed Conflicts Report* 2005), hundreds of young men flocked to join LURD. The rise of violence in Liberia also began to attract international attention because it threatened recent peace in Sierra Leone. Numerous former RUF combatants crossed the border into Liberia and joined either LURD or government forces as mercenaries (*HRW* 2002).⁴²⁹

As evidence of Taylor's arms smuggling, human rights abuses and rampant corruption became incontrovertible in the years following his election, the international community turned away from Taylor and refused to come to his aid. As of early 2003, external observers finally acknowledged what Liberians had known for almost three years:

⁴²⁸ Interview with Cooper 2012.

⁴²⁹ Liberia's renewed civil war was noteworthy for the relatively low number of fighters that perpetuated the conflict. By their own estimates, in early 2003, LURD forces did not exceed more than 3,000 combatants (Barbazon 2003a). Taylor's troops were not very numerous either. According to radio intercepts, no more than 500 soldiers could be deployed to the field during a crucial battle over Tubmanburg in July 2002, and government recruits were hampered by a desertion rate of more than 10% (Barbazon 2003a).

A rebel group was fighting Taylor's government, and beating it badly, although the group's aims and leadership were still obscure (Itano 2003).⁴³⁰

Until September 2002, Taylor's troops seemed incapable of halting LURD's advances. However, the rebels were kept from a full victory by numerous logistical hindrances, including limited road networks and available vehicles. Meanwhile, fuelled by multiple arms shipments, Taylor was able to pick up his offensive (*Global Witness* 2002). At the exact time that Taylor was able to supplement his weapons cache, LURD had "accidentally destroyed 40,000 rounds of their own ammunition in a vehicle fire," and a lack of ammunition resupply meant the rebels lost significant battles in Bomi county, just west of Monrovia (Brabazon 2003a: 7). LURD forces were slowed by these events, but Taylor's troops were unable to stop them. LURD regrouped and made further military gains through the rest of the year, occupying the city of Bopolu in Gbarpolu county, capturing Tubmanburg, just 60 km from the capital, and expanding the frontlines to Robertsport and Gbarnga (*IRIN* 2003c).⁴³¹ By April 2003, LURD controlled 60 percent of the country, and UN Secretary General Kofi Annan was calling Liberia "a humanitarian tragedy" (*Reuters* 2003).

Liberia's war had began to garner international attention in the early months of 2003, but media scrutiny was ignited when LURD troops reached the outskirts of Monrovia. "Between March and May, the level of hostilities was very high," says former cabinet minister Blamoh Nelson. "LURD was getting stronger and posed a direct threat to Monrovia. There was no way to stop them. At that point, Taylor abandoned any efforts for peace and all soldiers were deployed."⁴³² Taylor still had enough menace to cow his citizens and forcibly recruit new fighters. New troops were no better paid than existing ones and were less trained. They did however possess brutality and armaments in abundance.

From the beginning, LURD swore that it would neither negotiate nor compromise with Taylor. LURD was also reluctant to engage with ECOWAS or ECOMOG, claiming that both organisations were monopolised by Nigeria, whom they suspected of supporting Taylor.⁴³³ However, the rebels did maintain contact with Liberia's clergy throughout and expressed their willingness to cooperate with Reverend Lartey, Imam Konneh, and other key religious leaders (see Chapter 7). Moreover, by February 2003, LURD had made sufficient military gains to justify relaxing its position somewhat. Although it continued to insist on Taylor's departure, LURD stated that interaction with the government was longer contingent on the president's resignation (Brabazon 2003a).

Liberian elections were scheduled for October 2003. Believing that Taylor had already rigged the ballot, LURD was adamant that free and fair elections were impossible.

⁴³⁰ Many Accra participants question whether Taylor himself possessed much by way of military intelligence about the rebels in general, and LURD in particular. Although fighting had been ongoing since 1999, Taylor did not perceive the insurgents as any kind of a real threat until early 2001 (Kamara 2001).

⁴³¹ More than 15,000 civilians were displaced from the Gbarnga attack alone (*IRIN* 2003c).

⁴³² Interview with Nelson

⁴³³ In previous years Taylor had nothing but enmity towards Nigeria, although his uncompromising stance had eased significantly. As noted above, it is also true that some Nigerians were facilitating the supply of weapons to Taylor's soldiers.

Beyond striving for Taylor's departure, the organisation did not appear to have any particular political aspirations. Ideally, most LURD troops wanted to see Taylor die in combat or be captured and brought to justice—although LURD justice was likely to be different than the brand practiced by the UN. As their movement gained in military prowess, the rebels believed a military victory was simply a matter of time. Most assumed that Taylor would save his own skin and would seek comfortable exile with old friends in Burkina Faso, Libya, or Nigeria.

LURD assured its fellow citizens that if Taylor left Liberia of his own volition, it would lay down arms and work towards legitimate elections. However, the rebels were not able to articulate how these elections might take place. The group's official position (as of February 2003) was that a non-elected transitional government (made up of LURD members, other political parties and select members of Taylor's government) would govern in the interim, with the oversight of international peacekeepers, preferably from the UN (Brabazon 2003a). LURD said it would only continue fighting to "eliminate pockets of resistance" and once these were eradicated, it would fully engage in a national disarmament program (Brabazon 2003a).⁴³⁴

Once the transitional period had passed, LURD claimed it would support and participate in the free and fair democratic elections of a genuinely representative government, comprised in large part of Liberia's indigenous majority. While commendable in principle, the rebels' claims rang somewhat hollow, especially when compared with statements of individual commanders, such as Deputy Chief of Staff Seeya Sheriff (also known as General Cobra) who was resolute that if LURD won the war elections would be a distant priority. Instead, Sheriff claimed the rebels would set up a military *junta* (Malet 2003).

LURD's mixed messages and the ongoing conflict began to make outside observers steadily nervous. Both sides would make gains, only to lose them again, and the war reached deadlock. "The international community had all been reading the signs in Liberia. The stalemate, without an end in sight was very problematic," says Ambassador Ansumana Ceesay, ECOWAS special envoy to Liberia. The alternative of a resounding battlefield victory was not necessarily embraced either. "If there had been a military defeat of Taylor, it would have been worse," Ceesay continues. "There would have been more fracturing, more splintering. One big devil is better than many small devils."⁴³⁵ Taylor remained the big devil that people knew, while LURD rebels were small devils that might grow big. Outsiders clung to the adage that the devil you knew was best, and continued to maintain diplomatic relations with Liberia, as well as publicly legitimising Taylor's leadership.⁴³⁶ Taylor held fast, and Liberia's impasse persisted.

As LURD's challenge to Taylor grew and the war extended through all parts of the country, the rebels broke their unofficial rule of not using underage fighters, and in 2002

⁴³⁴ As outlined in countless previous peace agreements, LURD—like all rebel forces before it—anticipated that its troops would be folded into a reformed Liberian army.

⁴³⁵ Interview with Ambassador Ansumana Ceesay, Special Representative of the President of the ECOWAS Commission in Liberia, in Monrovia, Liberia, 3 March 2010.

⁴³⁶ Both ECOWAS and the UN imposed sanctions against Liberia, but neither organization halted diplomatic relations with Taylor.

began to recruit children as young as 13 at the Guinean border and in refugee camps in Guinea (*CSUCS* 2004). Along with other conscripted refugees, children would carry supplies, including armaments, into Liberia from Guinea. LURD also forcibly took hundreds of adolescent girls from refugee camps both as fighters or, more often, to serve as “camp wives” where they were raped or kept as sex slaves (*IRIN* 2003j; *HRW* 2002). To many Liberians, LURD was but another wolf, dressed in slightly better sheep’s clothing. Like all the other belligerents before, “Their people looted and accumulated wealth. Was that the purpose of their rebel movement?” asks Saa Philip-Joe, a civil society activist. The prospect of a LURD-led government was not especially palatable, he continues, “The train would be the same, it was just a matter of changing drivers.”⁴³⁷

LURD appeared to be militarily robust, but the same could not be said for its hapless leader. In addition to ethnic divisions (which were initially smoothed by the recruitment of members from other parts of the country), the group was rift with political dissent (*HRW* 2002; *ICG* 2002; *ICG* 2003). Based in Voinjama, LURD’s military branch was under Conneh’s hawkish command, while the political wing was stationed across the border in Conakry. Publicly, Conneh was in control of both branches, but behind the scenes, one of the group’s lawyers held particular sway over the political side of the organisation.⁴³⁸ Conneh favoured a strong military approach and was untroubled by the accusations of human rights abuses that were being laid against the group (Hazen 2013). Conversely, “the politicians,” as Conneh dismissively referred to the lawyers of his group, preferred a two-prong approach of diplomacy and military pressure to unseat Taylor, and were against waging war in Monrovia (*ICG* 2003; Hazen 2013).⁴³⁹ Like Conneh, many members of the political wing were from the Mandingo community. Although Mandingos had resided in Liberia since the 16th century, many Liberians continued to label them as foreigners, and the LURD political wing knew that the country would not tolerate a post-war Mandingo-led government (*ICG* 2003). Conneh grew increasingly suspicious of the moderates in the political wing—also called “intellectuals”—in part because they sought to bring more diversity to the group, but also because they had gained American favour and were directly receiving financial assistance from the US (*ICG* 2003). In an attempt to limit the politicians’ reach, Conneh informed on some of his own members who were active in Sierra Leone to the Kabbah administration, which led to their arrest. One of those arrested and imprisoned was the nettlesome lawyer with influence in the political wing. Members of the Liberian clergy interceded with the Sierra Leonean government to secure his release and he was deported to Guinea.⁴⁴⁰ Instead of curbing his influence, this person went on to become LURD’s chief negotiator at Accra.

⁴³⁷ Interview with Saa Philip-Joe, civil society representative at the Accra negotiations, now President of the Association of Liberian Professional Organizations & Civil Society Movement of Liberia, in Monrovia, Liberia, 24 March 2012.

⁴³⁸ Two lawyers were prominent in LURD’s political wing. Many members from the Mandingo community supported Kabineh Ja’neh, while Lavala Supuwood, who previous served as Minister of Justice in a previous transitional government, was endorsed by much of the Lorma community.

⁴³⁹ Conneh’s dislike for “the politicians” was no doubt fuelled by some members’ presidential aspirations; in 2002-03 six senior LURD members left the group as a result of differences in organisational objectives or competing leadership goals (*ICG* 2003).

⁴⁴⁰ Interview with Lartey, 2012.

Conneh's bid to muzzle the political wing resulted in massive internal distrust and a breakdown in communication that lasted the rest of the war. The political leadership in Voinjama no longer communicated with its troops, and military bases in Sierra Leone and Guinea no longer shared information (*ICG* 2003). Antagonism towards Conneh became widespread among the group's rank and file. In March 2003, antipathy towards LURD's leader caused the movement to splinter. Predictably, friction arose along ethnic fault lines, with the Krahn's choosing to go their own way. The Krahn community had long harboured resentment against Taylor for having ousted President Samuel Doe (a Krahn) in 1990 and his numerous subsequent attacks on Krahn civilians in Nimba and Grand Gedeh counties. Comprising approximately 1,000 fighters, the breakaway faction called themselves the Movement for Democracy in Liberia (MODEL) and, supported by the Ivorian government, soon captured vast territories in the south and east parts of the country (Foster *et al* 2009; *HRW* 2004).⁴⁴¹

In their respective quests for power and vengeance, LURD and MODEL laid Liberia to waste. After years of war and successive kleptomaniacal governments, the poor people of Liberia had nothing left. "What the warring factions had in common was mass looting and destruction by all," says Ezekiel Pajibo, a leading Liberian civil society advocate. "Liberia has got to be the only place where people were fighting over shit!"⁴⁴²

PURSUING PEACE WITH THE LURD

Although Taylor's troops were twenty times more numerous and far better equipped than the rebels, government forces had been unable to smash the LURD insurgency (*ICG* 2003). By the end of May 2003, LURD troops surrounded Monrovia and it had regained the territories it had lost to government forces in the latter part of 2002.⁴⁴³ The rebels believed that a full military victory was inevitable. Because it believed a full military victory was within its grasp, LURD was a reluctant participant at the Accra peace talks.

Conversely, Taylor was floundering militarily, but he was equally unenthusiastic to negotiate. However, according to members of his negotiating delegation, Taylor hoped that a peace agreement might usher an end to the UN embargo on Liberian diamonds and timber. Taylor's forces were having little difficulty acquiring arms from illicit sources, but the sanctions meant that they could not easily offload the nation's timber, which made it more difficult for Taylor to acquire necessary cash to help fund the war.⁴⁴⁴ In truth, the

⁴⁴¹ Coming across the Côte d'Ivoire border, MODEL swiftly gained territories in Grand Gedeh county, then moved into Grand Kru. In April, MODEL battled Taylor forces to capture the town of Greenville, in Sinoe county, site of several important logging concessions (Global.Security.org 2015; Lidow 2011). By July 2003, MODEL was moving through Grand Bassa where it captured the strategically important port city of Buchanan, Taylor's key site for exporting timber (*HRW* 2004).

Support from the Ivorian government came at a price; in exchange for supplies and munitions, up to 20% of MODEL's forces were required to stay in Cote d'Ivoire to fight alongside government troops (Lidow 2011).

⁴⁴² Interview with Ezekiel Pajibo, student activist sentenced to death under the Doe administration, then exiled for 18 years, now leading civil society advocate, in Monrovia, Liberia, 13 March 2012.

⁴⁴³ With every LURD victory, Taylor's forces grew more demoralised. An ongoing lack of remuneration hollowed troops' loyalty, and desertions increased exponentially. Poor payment also meant increased looting, although it is hard to imagine that Liberians had much left of value to steal.

⁴⁴⁴ The war in Sierra Leone over, the RUF was no longer funneling its diamonds through Taylor. Liberia itself is a relatively small diamond producer, so timber became the nation's most profitable resource. The

sanctions were hurting Liberian citizens far more than they were punishing Taylor's government. "The sanctions are having a very negative effect... on the common people," said Sheikh Konneh (Dukulé 2001: n.p.). In an attempt to encumber Liberia's elite, the UN Security Council's embargoes exacerbated the nations' worsening humanitarian situation. For the most part, mining and logging was carried out by small local businesses earning subsistence wage; these enterprises were most affected by the sanctions, not the government. Nonetheless, many at Accra (particularly members of the clergy) believed that the possibility of alleviating the sanctions helped motivate Taylor to participate in peace talks.⁴⁴⁵

After much persuasion, Liberian religious leaders were able to entice LURD to participate in peace talks at Accra, while ECOWAS ultimately convinced Taylor that the time was right to seek a peaceable end to the conflict. As participants arrived in Accra, it was pandemonium on the ground in Liberia. LURD troops were rapidly closing in on the perimeters of Monrovia. "The pressure was huge," says Blamoh Nelson, a government negotiator at Accra. "LURD had come as far as Tubmanburg. They're firing and it's serious all-out war, even as the two main parties are trying to meet."⁴⁴⁶

No sooner had the various delegates arrived in Accra, when David Crane, Special Prosecutor for the Special Court of Sierra Leone dropped a bombshell indictment on Taylor for war crimes. That same day, just as he was about to speak to the media, LURD chairman Conneh heard that Taylor was heading back to Liberia, and he used his interview with the BBC to tell LURD troops to make a move on Monrovia (Hayner 2007). Conneh later said that LURD attacked the city because Taylor had the temerity to return to govern in Liberia, "Whether indicted or not indicted, we were going to fight until he would leave. That was our goal" (Conneh in Hayer 2007: 11). If Taylor had been arrested or tendered his resignation in Ghana, the rebels insist they would have refrained from assailing the capital city. However, Taylor was neither detained nor did he resign, and a rain of LURD shells fell on the people of Monrovia as peace discussions commenced.

Until the ceasefire was signed, nearly three weeks into the talks, the government, MODEL and LURD negotiated among themselves with little participation from other domestic actors save a few key religious leaders (see chapter 7). The presence of all three warring parties was a first for Liberia, and one of the reasons why—despite its flaws—the subsequent peace agreement was successful. "Accra cannot be underestimated because all the forces that made up the conflict were there," says Nelson, one of Taylor's negotiators. "There was no exclusion, no outside threat."⁴⁴⁷ The international community, namely

logging industry sustained an estimated 10,000 jobs, most of which were lost when the international ban on timber exports went into effect (*afro News* 2001).

⁴⁴⁵ Interviews with Konneh, 2012, Verdier, and Lartey, 2012.

⁴⁴⁶ Interview with Blamoh Nelson, former Director of Cabinet 1997-2003 and negotiator at Accra, now Senator in the Liberian Legislature, in Monrovia, Liberia, 23 March 2012.

⁴⁴⁷ Interview with Nelson.

ECOWAS, the US, and the European Union was also in attendance.⁴⁴⁸ As of mid-June, members from civil society and 18 political parties fully engaged in the plenary sessions.⁴⁴⁹

From the start, progress was slow and fraught with mistrust. Believing that it had established a sound working relationship with both Taylor and the rebels, the US thought it had nearly convinced Taylor to leave by mid or late summer (Cobb 2003). Consequently, the timing of Taylor's indictment left US officials feeling frustrated and stalled.⁴⁵⁰ The US was also bankrolling part of the peace talks, so it had particular interest in seeing the war come to an end. Even so, LURD ignored the Americans' calls to refrain from bombarding civilians.

By mid-June, LURD controlled fully two-thirds of the country's territory (*BBC* 2003i). As a result, in Accra, "The biggest group to appease was LURD," says Ceesay of ECOWAS. "They had, or were within grasp of, a military victory."⁴⁵¹ LURD's military advantage made its members particularly competitive at the start of the talks, and the rebels demonstrated little desire to compromise. MODEL forces and Taylor's troops were not particularly amenable either. "The warring factions held the veto on almost everything, and the mediators gave them that power," says Cooper. Aided by Liberia's clergy, initially, the ECOWAS mediators were satisfied simply to keep the various parties talking.

Both the government and the rebels were equally hostile at the outset. "We always knew that the people with the power at the table were the belligerents," recalls clergyman Lartey.⁴⁵² Even so, it was evident to all that, because of its recent military conquests, LURD had the strongest bargaining position going into the negotiations. The man LURD sent to Accra on its behalf was none other than the aforementioned rabble-rouser lawyer who "headed the political wing" (*IRIN* 2006).

Depending on the venue or reporter, he went by many titles, from the benign—LURD "spokesman" (Zangar 2003), "a former leader" or "leading member" (Gow *et al* 2013; Ellis 2006), and "legal advisor" (Hahn 2015)—to the sinister, "maximum leader and chief warlord" (Nanka 2003). The then young lawyer, who acted as LURD's "chief negotiator at the peace talks" (*IRIN* 2003i) still prefers not to be named, and is referred to herein as CN, for "chief negotiator."⁴⁵³ CN volunteered to be part of the peace talks, because "At the time I couldn't practice law in any real way," and he believed he could best further LURD's goal of ridding the country of Taylor as a negotiator.⁴⁵⁴

⁴⁴⁸ Members of ECOWAS included several legal and political advisors to General Abubakar, while the US was represented by officers from the State Department's Bureau of West African Affairs in Washington, and the EU was represented by the director of the European Commission mission in Monrovia (Hayner 2007).

⁴⁴⁹ Many, if not most, of the political parties in attendance were either created or supported by Taylor, and their input reflected this bias. Conversely, civil society members were not supported by Taylor. In fact, the President actively sought to detain many of them from reaching Accra. Nonetheless, unlike many of the political parties, civil society representatives did not always work in unison towards common goals.

⁴⁵⁰ Interviews with Nelson and Ceesay.

⁴⁵¹ Interview with Ceesay.

⁴⁵² Interview with Lartey, 2012.

⁴⁵³ Interview with CN.

⁴⁵⁴ Interview with CN.

Men who have been leaders in times of combat never lose a certain imposing physical presence. Although the Comprehensive Peace Agreement was signed over 12 years ago, LURD's chief negotiator still exudes power and just a touch of menace. While he is an influential political player in Liberia today, little is known about his background and upbringing, save that he is a member of the Mandingo community, a Muslim, and a lawyer by profession. His exact age is a mystery, although he says he was a young man during the Taylor era.⁴⁵⁵ The former negotiator has an authoritative and charismatic demeanour. He is not a tall man, and while he is thickening at the middle, he still moves with grace and agility. He is clearly physically strong and fit. He claims that he was not a combatant in the war—that he was always a member of the political rather than the military arm of the movement—although I have no doubt that he received at least some military training and knew his way around his groups' weapons of choice at the time. For all his physical and intellectual attributes, this rebel was neither a humble or experienced negotiator. And while he helped his organisation profit handsomely from the Accra negotiations, his gains were far less than he had hoped for.

ARROGANCE AND AMBITION

Tempers were high even before the surprise indictment. Ghana was perceived as biased in favour of Taylor and LURD felt the security of its delegates would be at risk in Accra (*IRIN* 2003d). CN recalls, "Many of us didn't think that Ghana was credible enough to host the meeting," and LURD only agreed to the venue after receiving significant reassurances by chief mediator, General Abubakar.⁴⁵⁶ Although LURD had agreed to negotiate, the rebels did not seem to have any idea of what exactly was expected of their representatives. "We arrived in Accra not knowing what peace negotiations were all about," CN claims. "We were told, first thing, to stop fighting, but we needed to know *why* we should stop fighting."⁴⁵⁷ LURD felt "put on the spot" and this made its main negotiator defensive. As far as CN was concerned, LURD was within reach of its goal to unseat Taylor and so did not see the rationale to lay down its weapons.

The first step in negotiations is agreeing on their purpose and coming to a shared grasp of the aims of the process (Wolff 2013). Assuming that all parties possess a common understanding of the goal—ostensibly, peace—a well-functioning peace process depends on basic principles that guide how participants should work together towards their objective. These ground rules usually facilitate how participants interact with each other, meeting etiquette, ensuing discussions and how decisions get made.⁴⁵⁸ It seems self-evident that establishing ground rules is a necessary first step towards effective negotiations. However, the facilitators and mediators at Accra did not formally spell out

⁴⁵⁵ Considering his peer group, I estimate CN to be somewhere in his mid-50s.

⁴⁵⁶ Interview with CN.

⁴⁵⁷ Interview with CN.

⁴⁵⁸ Most ground rules focus on general conduct, such as "start and end on time" or "treat everyone with respect." However, Schwarz (2002: 2) asserts that "effective group process" requires ground rules that go beyond outlining procedure, including: test assumptions and inferences; share all relevant information; use detailed, factual examples and agree on key word definitions; explain personal reasoning and intent; emphasise interests, not positions; combine advocacy and investigation; collectively determine next steps and outline ways to test disagreements; discuss "undiscussible" issues; use a decision-making rule that generates support and commitment.

the expectations of the meeting to the participants. Consequently, certain players remained unclear on the primary aim of the process, and why their collective cooperation was so essential. According to CN, LURD delegates knew that they would be attending a conference of sorts, and that they were being urged by ECOWAS and members of the clergy to make peace with the government, but no one explained why or how this would benefit the rebels at a time when they were within reach of a military victory, or how negotiations would help them achieve their goal of unseating Taylor when he remained very much in power. As a result, the very structure upon which the Accra peace process was conceived was shaky. Participants “should be oriented,” CN notes.⁴⁵⁹ The Accra mediators appear to have overlooked that ineffective group process and structure undermines peoples’ ability to problem-solve and make decisions (Schwartz 2002).

The participants’ inability to understand and commit to shared aims at Accra created an environment of distrust, which is “the confident expectation that another individual’s motives, intentions, and behaviours are sinister and harmful to one’s own interest” (Lewicki 2006: 195). Because distrust makes individuals feel fearful, under threat, and generally uncomfortable, they will act to protect their interests and lessen their vulnerability. As noted in chapter 2, negotiators will trust their opponents if they appear to be cooperative and unselfish (Pruitt 1981). When negotiators trust each other they are more inclined to collaborate towards achieving integrative outcomes (Ma 2008). Conversely, distrust can both spark conflict and impair negotiations because it makes negotiators more inclined to be competitive rather than cooperative (Lewicki 2006).

When negotiators distrust one another they are less likely to share information. However, it is by sharing information that people build trust in each other. In competitive negotiations, rife with distrust, negotiators make a habit of withholding information. When negotiators suppress information—be it about their motivations or their aims—they narrow the area in which all parties can come to a satisfactory agreement and hinder their chances for a settlement. The practice of sharing or concealing information begins even before negotiations commence.

Understanding the individuals who will do the negotiating for the other side is as important as the aims of the process and the issues that will be discussed. Negotiators will often build files on their opponents to assess their strengths and weaknesses, going so far as to determine their political beliefs, where they went to school, and whether they have children. The goal is to mitigate risk by gathering so much in-depth knowledge about the opposition that their preferences and sticking points can be identified ahead of time. Lawyers do the same thing when identifying prospective jury members. Being human, all potential jury members have biases that can derail civilian and criminal cases alike (Bennett 1977). Although lawyers claim to be seeking impartial jurors, in fact, they want their cases to be decided by partisan jurors and deliberately choose individuals who, by virtue of their background, personality, and beliefs will be more likely to find in their clients’ favour (Farhinger 1980). Prospective jurors are typically reluctant to have their prejudices revealed publicly, and lawyers have to crack the safe that houses their intolerance in order secure a jury that is most likely to identify with the people in the case—defendant, witness,

⁴⁵⁹ Interview with CN.

even attorney (Fahringer 1980; Kairys *et al* 1975). Similarly, the head of a government or a rebel organisation will want to nominate a partisan negotiator that is an unquestionable supporter of their cause, who will ensure that their group or government is best served during the course of peace talks, and who will maximise gains for their respective membership in any deals. That CN was chosen to head the LURD delegation is indicative that Conneh's hold on power was limited, and that the political wing of the organisation held sway at the time. Conversely, Taylor's choice of his hawkish minister of defence, Daniel Chea, as chief negotiator, clearly demonstrates that the government had every intention to continue fighting, and any commitment to peace was to secure the status quo.

The Liberian belligerents sought out and gathered actual and apparent knowledge of their adversaries prior to negotiations (Ross 2010). Actual knowledge is built from empirical facts and personal experience. At least a few of the negotiators knew each other personally, and some went as far back as before the war. "These were people I knew," recalls CN. "I went to university with one of the key Taylor guys. We studied politics together."⁴⁶⁰ Liberia's relative small size is quite evident when examining the demographics of the average participant at Accra. "In every warring faction, I knew at least one member personally," recalls civil society activist, Pajibo. "We knew whether what someone was saying was true. This made it easy to debunk what they were saying and determine if they were telling the truth."⁴⁶¹ Indeed, one of the distinct aspects of the Liberian civil war was the overtness of the violence. From the senior-most warlord to the lowliest child soldier, no one hid even their most unspeakable acts. In fact, many flaunted them.⁴⁶² "Violence in Liberia was open, not like in South Africa" where much of the apartheid regime's violence was undertaken covertly, says Aaron Weah, a leading civil society activist. "People knew who was who, and who did what because it's a small country where everyone knows everybody."⁴⁶³

Despite their shared time at school, the LURD negotiator did not necessarily trust his government counterpart. Following Taylor's indictment and return to Monrovia, the rebels attempted to determine whether any of the government's delegates had any decision-making authority. Without insider access to the government's delegation, LURD could only speculate, but the rebels nonetheless came to believe that Chea was untrustworthy and lacked any influence.⁴⁶⁴ Inferred facts and conjecture coalesce to form apparent knowledge. While their assessment may or may not have been valid, the rebels nonetheless believed their knowledge to be true and acted accordingly. According to CN, "I was never sure that [the government delegation] had the capacity to really act in the ways we had agreed on. I thought they were stooges."⁴⁶⁵ As it turns out, LURD was right to be dubious of the government representatives. Chea's clout was limited to the Accra hotel's conference

⁴⁶⁰ Interview with CN.

⁴⁶¹ Interview with Pajibo.

⁴⁶² Even now, more than a decade after the war, few of the former combatants interviewed expressed any remorse for their wartime activities.

⁴⁶³ Interview with Aaron Weah, civil society activist and policy specialist in transitional justice, currently Program Manager, Search for Common Ground Liberia and policy analyst for the Governance Commission, in Monrovia, Liberia, 23 February 2011.

⁴⁶⁴ Interview with CN.

⁴⁶⁵ Interview with CN.

rooms. Throughout the peace talks, Taylor dominated all decisions; his negotiators were mere puppets.⁴⁶⁶ While the negotiators' actual and apparent knowledge was plentiful, it was incomplete and often inaccurate. A culture of distrust emerged which came to overshadow the process.

COMMUNICATION BREAKDOWN

The distrust between negotiators was compounded by technology limitations. For the most part, government forces, rebel fighters, and negotiators communicated via high-frequency (HF) radio, cellular phone and field radios. These kinds of communication technologies have their limitations during negotiations, primarily in that they do not allow for face-to-face interaction.

Radio and telephone technology can impede negotiations because they limit the transmission of social information that comes from the visual cues—facial expressions, gestures, posture—people can get in face-to-face communication (Nadler & Shestowsky 2006). Many behavioural psychologists believe that face-to-face contact lends itself to mutual cooperation, and experimental evidence supports this claim. Studies indicate that business managers working through workplace conflicts prefer to resolve friction through face-to-face communication (Johansen *et al* 1979; Mintzberg 1980). Another study indicates that in conflict situations where negotiators share common and competing goals (mixed-motives), outcomes are better when individuals communicate face-to-face (Dawes *et al* 1977). Indeed, when negotiators in mixed-motive conflicts have visual access to nonverbal behavioural signals, they build rapport and coordinate more quickly, which can lead to mutually beneficial settlements (Drolet & Morris 2000). If conflict negotiators stand to come to better agreements when they interact face-to-face, rather than picking up the telephone or relying on email, it is no surprise that diplomats and business negotiators the world over often travel great distances to have a personal meeting.

Non face-to-face communication methods such as telephone and email can succeed in in-group environments where a basis for trust already exists (Moore *et al* 1999), but this was not the case for LURD members. With its high-ranking leaders sheltered in the rainforests of Guinea, its troops scattered throughout the rainforests of Liberia, and negotiators in Accra, LURD was at a communications disadvantage. “The bulk of our membership was all over,” states CN. “We had to find ways to convey assurances to them. I travelled from Accra to Guinea four times during the peace talks, to consult and just to state which were the actual issues at stake.”⁴⁶⁷ In addition to having limited opportunity to communicate face-to-face, the rebels were internally divided; the military and political wings of the organisations were at odds, and troops on the ground often received conflicting messages from their superiors.

Meanwhile, West Africans with satellite television access—admittedly a privileged few—were able to follow the war via CNN, which provided live coverage from Monrovia through much of the negotiations. In turn, the rebels were avid consumers of foreign media coverage of their wartime activities and would try to manipulate the media to their own

⁴⁶⁶ Interviews with Nelson and CN.

⁴⁶⁷ Interview with CN.

ends, with varying levels of success. While various African media outlets would report on the peace talks in Accra, the only news of Liberia coming from international broadcasters focused on the indiscriminate shelling of Monrovia.⁴⁶⁸ There is no doubt that the situation for Monrovia was dire, but the sensationalist media coverage of LURD's shelling of the capital impacted the peace talks. Live reports of rockets exploding over the city, complete with soundtracks of the panicked cries of civilians begging for mercy pressured participants to cave to LURD's demands. "In civil war and peace agreements, there is more attention given to appeasing the perpetrators, warlords and combatants than in dealing with the victims," observes civil society activist Weah. Compassion is not what drove participants to come to a deal, it was the concern that the attacks were making participants appear indifferent to the anguished exhortations of innocent civilians—they were, of course, but they did not wish to be seen that way.⁴⁶⁹

Participants claim that the first weeks at Accra were the hardest and that progress was agonisingly slow. By 12 June, talks had deadlocked over the rebels' three main conditions—that Taylor should dissolve the government and resign within 10 days, that a foreign intervention force be deployed to monitor any ceasefire, and that a transitional government (without Taylor) be implemented within 10 days of a ceasefire. These terms were already a familiar refrain to negotiators and observers. However, CN presumptuously indicated that LURD would be "honoured to lead the proposed government of national unity" (*IRIN* 2003e). By publicly suggesting they were fit to lead government, the rebels made clear their emerging political aspirations. CN's personal goals to this effect were in evidence at this time, and grew clearer as negotiations progressed. The talks dragged and "we felt that the war was ongoing because of personal ambition," recalls Muslim cleric Sheikh Konneh.⁴⁷⁰ According to the religious leaders, all Liberian belligerents wanted power, but LURD and CN made power a condition of peace.

Although the government and mediators continued to question LURD's aims, eventually CN backed down from his "emphatically clear" demand that Taylor "leave office before we sign any formal ceasefire agreement" (*BBC* 2003b). For his part, Taylor stated that he would not seek re-election, nor would he be part of the transitional government (*BBC* 2003b). These concessions were sufficient for all parties to sign a ceasefire agreement on 18 June. Although the signatories had made provisions for a Joint Monitoring Committee (JMC) to supervise and monitor the ceasefire, there was no consensus as to which nations' troops would keep the warring factions apart long enough to establish a transitional government to make way for elections (*IRIN* 2003b).⁴⁷¹ Consequently, no peacekeeping troops were to be found in Liberia when the ceasefire was signed.

⁴⁶⁸ By July, fighting was so intense that few media outlets retained reporters in the country, none of whom ventured outside of the capital. As a result, the privation of rural Liberians and a large part of the war remained hidden from the outside world. There was one exception; throughout, *BBC News* issued regular reports on the peace talks, as well as on the fighting on the ground.

⁴⁶⁹ Interview with CN.

⁴⁷⁰ Interview with Konneh, 2012.

⁴⁷¹ The participants had discussed the matter enough to determine that an estimated 2,000 troops would be required, but no one had come forward with an offer to fund the operation (*IRIN* 2003k).

A quiet lull fell over Monrovia for several hours as LURD stopped its shelling. The ceasefire gave way to looting, as pro-government forces roamed the streets and robbed the city's residents at gunpoint, shooting into the air as they loaded their jeeps with ill-gotten goods, all the while proclaiming they had administered a crushing blow to the rebels (*BBC* 2003c). Taylor's troops in the city pillaged Monrovia, while government forces outside the city continued to fight. Across the country, both LURD and MODEL alleged that Taylor's soldiers persisted in attacking their positions after the ceasefire came into effect at midnight (*IRIN* 2003k). With the government refusing to respect the terms of the ceasefire, and no outside forces on-site to enforce the agreement, the rebels did not see the value in keeping their weapons silent, and the ceasefire collapsed within 24 hours. CN claims that part of the reason the ceasefire failed to hold was because the negotiators lacked the time to garner the buy-in of troops in the field. "The time given to implement things was insufficient," he claims. "We were given 48 hours to put the ceasefire into effect, but that wasn't enough time to earn the confidence and carry the troops."⁴⁷² CN acknowledged that the lack of a peacekeeping force on the ground jeopardised the ceasefire, but insisted that the breakdown of the agreement was because the belligerents had not been given an achievable timeline. It is impossible that troops would instantly accept a ceasefire, he asserts, "There is never full compliance right away."⁴⁷³

Throughout the rest of negotiations, the ceasefire stood in name only. The media reported "immediate violations" (*IRIN* 2003k). In a matter of hours, Liberians in Accra and Monrovia claimed the ceasefire collapsed. No matter to the negotiators. Renewed gunfire only impacted citizens, not the delegates in Accra, and peace talks continued.

Although CN belonged to the LURD's more temperate political wing, he knew the rebels were in a good position militarily. The day after the ceasefire, LURD's field commander Ansu Dulleh arrived in Accra from the battlefield, and assured CN and the other delegates that not only had rebel fighters already infiltrated Monrovia, they were ready to take over the capital as soon as they received orders (*Standard Times* 2003). "As a result, [LURD] upped the stakes during the negotiations," recalls ECOWAS diplomat, Ceesay. After years of insisting that their ambitions were limited to ensuring Taylor's departure from office, suddenly, the rebels' horizons expanded considerably and so did their ambitions. CN's personal aspirations increased concurrently.

LURD wanted to secure government positions for several key members, and CN, in particular, began to press for a full constitutional review that would reassess the relationship between the legal system and the executive authority of the president.⁴⁷⁴ The Liberian constitution provides for checks and balances between the executive, legislative and judicial branches of government, but traditionally the executive had always dominated (*Freedom House* 2012). CN believed that the relative paucity of clout in the judicial branch would persist unless formal and explicit constitutional changes were made to limit the

⁴⁷² Interview with CN.

⁴⁷³ Interview with CN.

⁴⁷⁴ Interview with CN. In addition to possessing the bulk of Liberia's fiscal resources, the executive branch "controls regional administrations, manipulates the judiciary and controls legislators who are weak and sometimes poorly educated and indigent... the executive overshadows the operation of government" (Kaydor 2014: 90).

executive's power. "People resort to the legal system to resolve conflict," CN notes. "But when the legal system is part of executive authority, there is a breakdown...As long as people don't have access to justice there will be conflict."⁴⁷⁵ CN believed it essential to formal establish balance in government, and that "The peace negotiations were the best time to do this."

Inasmuch as CN claimed to be focused on judiciary reform, few of the other participants believed this to be a prevailing or immediate concern. Perhaps more importantly, the US—which, along with the EU, was funding the talks—did not appear to consider this an essential issue. To this day, CN remains resentful that the US did not allow a platform to discuss constitutional review at the peace talks. Because the US was footing the bill, "They set the tone," he recalls. "They were supra-participants in that they were not necessarily sitting at the table as official signatories, but they were there participating."⁴⁷⁶ CN claims that when he pushed back and insisted that "this was the time" to address judicial imbalance, the US worked with the international media "to dehumanise us" by highlighting LURD's violent tactics on the ground and by making it seem like the rebels were buying time at the negotiating table.⁴⁷⁷

CN may or may not have been playing for time at the talks in his "righteous" quest for constitutional reform, but it was also apparent that both rebel groups, along with numerous politicians and stakeholders who had become more active participants after the ceasefire, wanted ministerial positions and were simultaneously jockeying for the leadership of the transitional government (Zanger 2003). By early July, up to 42 names had been floated for the transitional government leadership by the various participants (*IRIN* 2003l).⁴⁷⁸ "These people had just come in from the bush...The warring factions had troops and they had territory," says Saa Philip-Joe, a civil society activist at the Accra negotiations. "What they wanted was power. That was their main goal. It was all about which warring party should govern."⁴⁷⁹ Indeed, the issue of who should govern was the only agenda item over which the rebel groups differed during the negotiations.

⁴⁷⁵ Interview with CN. CN's preoccupation with judicial constitutional reform was (and remains) an intensely personal matter. As a member of the Mandingo community, he knew that he could never aspire to the Liberian presidency, but he continues to believe that he can better his country through the law. CN is convinced that a strong judiciary is key to Liberia's future economic development, as well the means for indigenous Liberians to access justice regardless of their background or location.

⁴⁷⁶ Interview with CN.

⁴⁷⁷ Interview with CN. Other participants claim that the media's reports of LURD's wartime tactics and atrocities were truthful accounts of what was happening on the ground.

⁴⁷⁸ The sheer number of contenders created chaos. According to one diplomat, "Every pressure group now wants to take the Presidency and this is causing confusion," (*IRIN* 2003l). Most contenders were politicians of limited visibility and civil society activists, including Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, a presidential candidate in 1997. Taylor's government negotiators nominated Vice-President Moses Blah to head the transitional government, whereas LURD suggested that CN ought to replace Taylor. Although Conneh remained the formal head of the rebels, some media reports were referring to CN as LURD's "leader" by this time (*IRIN* 2003l).

⁴⁷⁹ Interview with Saa Philip-Joe, civil society activist and participant at the 2003 peace negotiations, now President, Association of Liberian Professional Organizations & Civil Society Movement of Liberia, in Monrovia Liberia, 24 March 2012.

Throughout the peace talks, LURD and MODEL were united. “They all came with the same grievances over corruption, injustice and alienation,” recalls clergyman Lartey. At Accra, “They all felt the same way and were reading from the same sheet of paper... It was a power grab between the warring factions.”⁴⁸⁰ CN affirmed that the two rebel groups worked as one during the negotiations, “We had the same political objectives,” he notes.⁴⁸¹ The belligerents had varying opinions about the way that power ought to be shared, but were quickly and easily able to reach mutual agreement. The belligerents remember their differences as relatively minor and that the truly “contentious” areas of dispute were the ceasefire, LURD’s desire for judicial reform, and, always, Charles Taylor.

Above all, Taylor remained the real sticking point at Accra. In the days after the ceasefire unravelled, LURD announced that it would boycott the peace talks until Taylor stepped down. Meanwhile, fighting intensified. “Taylor is a fugitive from the law,” said CN to the media (‘Uzor 2003). The rebels insisted that they were fully committed to the peace process, but suggested that President’s refusal to leave office would be costly to Liberians. “Taylor and his militia groups have uncorked lethal options,” read a LURD statement (quoted in Sengupta 2003i).

Unlike Sierra Leone’s President Kabbah, LURD’s chief negotiator did not believe that his group’s fortunes hinged on a successful peace agreement. Nor were the rebels convinced that moderated discussions in an elegant venue would persuade Taylor to step down. LURD’s Best Alternative to a Negotiated Settlement (BATNA) was defecting from the peace talks and pursuing a full military victory over government forces. Consequently, CN and his team negotiated with one foot in a luxurious Accra hotel and the other in the muddy paths of the rainforest. The death toll climbed daily. In late June, two LURD rocket-propelled grenades hit the annex of the American embassy, killing numerous civilians who had sought shelter there from the fighting, and the rebels returned to their pre-negotiation rhetoric, promising that they would not stop fighting until Taylor was unseated and they controlled the capital (Sengupta 2003j). Chief mediator, General Abubakar pleaded “to all the warring factions to stop the fighting and return to the peace talks,” stating that the monitoring forces of the Joint Verification Team could not be deployed unless the fighting abated (*IRIN* 2003m).

The Nigerian mediator’s aspirations for the ceasefire were thwarted. LURD knew that the monitoring force had yet to be funded or assembled, and the rebels chose to pursue an increasing hardline. “We are going all out this time,” warned an unnamed LURD delegate at Accra (*IRIN* 2003m). Abubakar reminded belligerents that war was no substitute for dialogue and admonished the rebels that if they persisted with conflict they stood to be indicted “for showering undue hardship, pain and suffering on your people” (*IRIN* 2003m). Reprimands and pleas fell on deaf ears. MODEL and LURD delegates stayed in Accra, ostensibly committed to the peace process, while rebel troops continued to fight on the ground. For the remainder of the peace talks, no ceasefire held and negotiations took place amidst full-scale war.

⁴⁸⁰ Interview with Lartey, 2012.

⁴⁸¹ Interview with CN.

ON THE SOGGY GROUND IN LIBERIA

Suffering from a lack of resources and low morale, Taylor's government forces were ill-prepared to defend the country against the rebels' insistent advance. The army had no airplanes at its disposal and its last two helicopters had not worked for nearly four months (Itano 2003). Soldiers (and rebels) were mostly armed with AK-47s, although Taylor's troops were so young and intoxicated that they did not use their weaponry to its full capacity (Itano 2003). For the most part, LURD's troops were more disciplined, although they still committed numerous abuses (Barbazon 2003a; *HRW* 2002). Throughout Liberia's three "world wars" over the summer of 2003, all belligerents "raped and looted," recalls civil society activist Pajibo. "But past a certain point there's nothing left to loot."⁴⁸²

CN himself never admitted it, but numerous other delegates at Accra claimed that LURD used shelling to gain leverage at the negotiations. "LURD used terrorist tactics," asserts lawyer and human rights activist, Jerome Verdier. "They would threaten to shoot every time they didn't get what they wanted."⁴⁸³ As the talks progressed, the rebels were increasingly preoccupied with acquiring power in the form of ministerial positions in the transitional government. Participants and observers alike claim that whenever CN saw his aspirations blocked, he would call the military wing and direct them to shell Monrovia. "It was, 'If you don't give me ministry X, then more mortar,'" remembers Nelson, a negotiator on the Taylor side. At the outset of the talks, LURD "didn't have government representation, so more mortar. The whole thing was 'I want to be minister.' But not of any ministry; they wanted to be the minister of finance, or the head of the central bank. This from guys who couldn't even count."⁴⁸⁴

The peace negotiations devolved into a deathly playground struggle over power and resources. Throughout, it was evident that the belligerents were far more interested in personal enrichment than in catering to the people of Liberia. "If you look, you see that the desirable ministries—finance, commerce, foreign affairs, land management—were those where cash exchanged hands," says Pajibo. "No one wanted education or health."⁴⁸⁵

Although LURD still could not secure an outright victory over Monrovia, most people believed that the rebels had more artillery at their disposal and noted that they used their weapons more effectively than Taylor's child soldiers. "They were nuts; a bunch of goons. Mind you, in war, the winner takes all," recalls (admittedly biased) Taylor associate, Nelson. Neither MODEL nor the government's negotiators begrudged LURD for trying to achieve a military victory, but Nelson says, "We wondered, how did they get their hands on so many weapons?"⁴⁸⁶

When they signed the (now defunct) ceasefire agreement, the belligerents had agreed to secure a working peace agreement in 30 days. But come 17 July the most optimistic of observers could only say that negotiations were still in the "preliminary stages"—a draft document in circulation called for a new cabinet to be sworn in by 2

⁴⁸² Interview with Pajibo.

⁴⁸³ Interview with Verdier.

⁴⁸⁴ Interview with Nelson.

⁴⁸⁵ Interview with Pajibo.

⁴⁸⁶ Interview with Nelson.

August, but no provisions had yet been made for a monitoring force, or a disarmament and demobilisation process (*IRIN* 2003n). Indeed, little of consequence had been achieved in four weeks of talks and fighting. The only concession so far came from the rebels: Although they could run in future elections, neither LURD nor MODEL chairmen would be eligible for executive positions in the interim government.

The negotiators did not seem to mind the slow pace of progress. Similar to the peace talks in Lomé in 1999, the warring parties were basking in the luxury accommodations of Accra's hotels after extended time in the bush. "Abubakar gave the warring parties rooms at the best hotels and catered to their desires, otherwise they wouldn't have cooperated," says civil society activist Philip-Joe.⁴⁸⁷ The rebels' debauchery was noted by all in attendance. Clergyman Lartey remembers that several delegates—now in positions of government—"misbehaved" off-hours, engaging in an orgy of excess.⁴⁸⁸ "They were hard to deal with... The warlords were getting room service while others were picking up the tab," Lartey says.⁴⁸⁹ In hindsight, the religious leaders claim that the peace talks should have been hosted in a remote rural location far away from "temptation."

For all their dissoluteness in Accra, rebel excesses in the battlefield were far worse. "We soon realised that we were all captives," says Lartey. "The belligerents were in the driver's seat."⁴⁹⁰ Food was so scarce displaced people throughout the country resorted to eating leaves (*IRIN* 2003o). The Liberians living in Monrovia began to call each renewed attack by LURD a "world war." Those who lived through the continuous barrage say the expression was not hyperbole; with each morning, people believed that they were living their last day on earth.

Each morning, LURD delegates would arrive at the conference centre pledging their commitment to peace all while continuing their battlefield offensive on Monrovia. The chairmen of LURD and MODEL were not at in Accra during the talks and delegates used their leaders' absence as a stalling tactic. Whenever they felt their demands were being thwarted, negotiators would leave Accra and return to their headquarters in Côte d'Ivoire and Guinea. Eventually, the mediators were able to persuade Konneh and Yaya to come to Accra. Once in Accra, the chairmen did not attend the talks; negotiators would report the day's progress to them, while they played "the big kings at their hotels."⁴⁹¹

In time, LURD's tactic of amplifying violence on the citizens of Monrovia wore thin and began to tarnish the rebels' credibility. "LURD was the 300 pound gorilla in the tea shop," says Cooper. "They didn't know how to use their leverage correctly. With every shell that exploded, civilians were killed instead of the opposing military. People got sick of their constant threats."⁴⁹² Outside of its core areas of regional support, LURD had received considerable public support, not because the movement represented a particular

⁴⁸⁷ Interview with Philip-Joe.

⁴⁸⁸ Several participants recall having to repeatedly deal with warring parties not paying their bills and beating the sex workers they brought back to the hotel.

⁴⁸⁹ Interview with Lartey, 2012.

⁴⁹⁰ Interview with Lartey, 2012.

⁴⁹¹ Interview with Lartey, 2012.

⁴⁹² Interview with Cooper.

ideology, but because it sought to take down Taylor. But LURD's apparent targeting of civilians drew the people's ire. Caught up in the righteousness of their cause and their proximity to a military victory, the rebels lacked public relations awareness and did not seem recognise that they were squandering their fellow citizens' goodwill. Meanwhile, Taylor—a master of propaganda—capitalised on LURD's wasting public favour, and turned the rebels' violence into public gain for himself. Much as many of his citizens despised his leadership, Taylor retained significant clout. "Taylor had won a lot of hearts and imaginations," says his onetime confidant, Nelson. "He became an icon and he had a following." According to Nelson, Taylor saw that LURD was losing acclaim while mismanaging its military incursion and he began to use the media at every chance to ask Liberians, "Is this what you want?"⁴⁹³

The media—initially an obliging ally against Taylor—began to question the rebels' commitment to peace, noting that their ongoing blitz of the capital "does not augur well for peace and stability" (*Accra Daily Mail* 2003). Rather than acknowledging that the political winds were beginning to blow against them, the rebels dug in. LURD adamantly opposed the deployment of ECOWAS peacekeepers prior to Taylor's departure, warning that if interventionist troops set foot on Liberian soil before Taylor stepped down, they "must be prepared for a firefight" (*IRIN* 2003o). Instead of building trust, the prolonged negotiations made LURD increasingly suspicious of ECOWAS, which they alleged was backing Taylor. "Our fear is that we don't trust Taylor, neither do we trust ECOWAS leaders," a LURD delegate told the media. "We believe many of them are working for Taylor" (*IRIN* 2003o). To LURD, the mere fact that ECOWAS officials considered Taylor to be the legitimate president of Liberia was sufficient evidence of their guile. Shells continued to rain down on Monrovia even as the rebels repeatedly reiterated their pledge to peace.

After weeks of bargaining impasse, mediators distributed a first peace agreement draft in mid-July. Aside from the typical clauses pertaining to ceasefire, disarmament, and the status of refugees, the US insisted upon the inclusion of a provision that no faction representatives should hold positions in the transitional government (Hayner 2007). Unsurprisingly, civil society representatives at Accra were favourable to this suggestion, but the belligerents were livid and threatened to retaliate against the longsuffering residents of Monrovia.⁴⁹⁴ Within days, LURD began its third and heaviest assault yet on the capital, a three-week period of abject horror that residents referred to as "World War Three". The first day, the fusillade was so intense that the peace talks halted, while delegates watched the carnage on television (Hayner 2007).

In droves, Liberians had sought refuge in Monrovia since early June. Their safety grew more precarious with each LURD strike. Countless civilians died from the rebels' indiscriminate shelling. Without question, "World War Three"—LURD's last and most fierce incursion—caused the most damage and killed the greatest number of people. During this last offensive, government and rebel forces clashed over the three main bridges

⁴⁹³ Interview with Nelson.

⁴⁹⁴ Interview with Philip-Joe.

separating the city centre's peninsula from the mainland.⁴⁹⁵ Fighting raged for days, but neither LURD nor Taylor's forces gained the upper hand to take and hold the bridges. According to Itano (2003), most of the fighters were poorly trained children and adolescents, too stoned and drunk to plan and carry out military strategy. What the troops lacked in strategy they made up for in ammunition and defiant bravado. Decomposing bodies created a fetid miasma that hung over the city. On the third day alone, hospitals and clinics estimated that 90 citizens were killed and more than 360 wounded; meanwhile, anguished civilians gathered in front of the US embassy and publicly blamed the Americans for their "dithering" and indifference (Sengupta 2003l).⁴⁹⁶

Liberians continued to look to the US for deliverance.⁴⁹⁷ It is truly indicative how far removed average Liberians felt from Taylor—their democratically elected leader—and either of the rebel groups that rather than storming the Presidential palace or asking for audience at any of a number of rebel barracks, they persisted with entreaties to a superpower that had thus far been utterly unresponsive. Although the Bush administration had promised repeatedly that it would help restore stability to Liberia, the American president was ever coy about what exactly he was ready to do. American intervention in the Liberian conflict never went beyond well-timed sound bites.⁴⁹⁸

In the negotiating rooms of Accra and across the battlefields in Liberia, the situation reached gridlock. Third party observers at the peace talks believed that there was no end in sight and worried publicly that Liberia was nearing freefall into factionalism. Instead of bringing about stability, diplomats felt that if LURD were to militarily defeat Taylor, the rebels would soon after disintegrate into myriad uncontrollable armed blocs. "The country would have splintered like Somalia," says ECOWAS ambassador Ceesay. "It would have been a free-for-all. The whole state, the unitary structure of Liberia was at stake. There were multiple splits, ethnic difference. There is no structure among thieves."⁴⁹⁹

LURD stayed true to its founding goal to unseat Taylor, but cracks were showing. At Accra, CN and his delegates were keen on acquiring numerous interim government positions, while in the field armed troops were intent on securing a military victory. Ceesay's assessment of there being no "structure among thieves" was noticeable to all at the peace talks. LURD's membership was profoundly divided. Although he was visible

⁴⁹⁵ The unimaginatively named Old Bridge and New Bridge connect the peninsula's Mamba Point to Bushrod Island, the city's industrial area and site of the port, while the Stockton Creek Bridge provides access to the airport in the east part of the city.

⁴⁹⁶ The casualty estimates are inexact, with actual numbers thought to be higher; many people did not bother to seek medical attention for dying family members.

⁴⁹⁷ Like his fellow citizens, Taylor also blamed the US for his country's misery. As LURD embarked on its third assault of Monrovia, Taylor insisted he would remain in place until a "sufficient" number of peacekeepers were on the ground. "This blood is also on your hands," he accused the United States, "because you have prevented me, the president, from providing adequate assistance and adequate protection to my people" (Sengupta 2003m).

⁴⁹⁸ The US did not intervene in the Liberian conflict, but that does not mean it did not exert influence over the peace process. American representatives were present at Accra, and were essential to drafting the provision that prevented rebel negotiators from holding office in the transitional government. That this provision does not exclude Taylor's representatives indicates the level of antipathy against the rebels and their tactics.

⁴⁹⁹ Interview with Ceesay.

and influential, CN did not have the benefit of unanimous support.⁵⁰⁰ “[CN’s] guys didn’t listen to him,” Cooper recalls. “He was a late player to the leadership game. He would seek to compromise, but his colleagues would circumvent him.”⁵⁰¹ Whatever conciliation CN may have tried to project was undermined by troops on the ground in Liberia. LURD militias remained bellicose, their positions entrenched.

LIBERIA’S THREE WORLD WARS

LURD’s military advance on Monrovia during the course of peace talks can be separated into three key offensives. People residing or seeking shelter in government-held regions called these “the three world wars” (Ott 2003).

The first offensive began on 5 June, the day after Taylor was indicted for war crimes in Accra (Itano 2003). Within three days, LURD had breached the city’s limits (HRW 2003a). The government’s armed forces fought back and halted LURD’s advance by cutting the rebels’ supply lines (Hazen 2013).

Negotiating parties signed a ceasefire agreement on 17 June. It held for less than 24 hours. Days later, on 24 June, 500 LURD troops launched a second assault on the city (Brabazon 2003b). This time, LURD troops took the city’s industrial area on Bushrod Island, including the port. The rebels’ momentum only stalled when they ran out of ammunition (Hazen 2013).⁵⁰²

Once rearmed, LURD mounted a third attack on the capital on 18 July, advancing on two fronts, from the north and eastern sides of the city (Chanda 2003; *HRW* 2003a). Fighting was unrelenting for nearly three weeks, but instead of shelling, rebels forces mostly engaged with smaller, lighter weaponry. The rebels’ last offensive was the deadliest; in one seven-day period, more than 1,000 civilians were killed (*USAID* 2003).

LURD was clearly in violation of international law by shelling central Monrovia. There were at least three potential military targets in the vicinity of Mamba Point, the area where LURD’s mortars were concentrated. However, international humanitarian law prohibits indiscriminate attacks—attacks that fail to distinguish between military targets and civilians or civilian objects (*HRW* 2003a: 9). LURD troops were not necessarily experienced in working with shells and mortars—which are known to be difficult to aim even by trained personnel—and would frequently discharge their ordnance without first determining whether they were targeting a legitimate objective (*HRW* 2003a). The rebel commanders, and particularly CN (as a lawyer), would have known that combatants “must

⁵⁰⁰ Throughout the negotiations CN was unquestionably the rebel spokesperson and chief negotiator. But all was not well within LURD’s ranks in Accra. At a press conference in late July, Charles Bennie, a self-described “political advisor” for LURD interrupted proceedings and declared that that CN and his delegation had been removed because they were slowing the process and trying to “hijack power” (Otu 2003). Other participants state that CN remained at the head of the negotiating team but that relations within the rebel group were fraught.

⁵⁰¹ Interview with Cooper.

⁵⁰² According to Human Rights Watch (2003), an arms shipment arrived in Conakry, Guinea on 30 June. Weapons were hauled across the Liberian border and distributed to LURD troops, which allowed them to mount their final offensive. Meanwhile, ample evidence shows that Taylor was also able to buy and import armaments until the very end of his tenure. Days before Taylor ceded power to Blah, Nigerian peacekeepers controlling the airport searched an aircraft that had arrived in the middle of the night and was met by a Taylor government official and found a weapons shipment originating from Libya (Itano 2003).

respect the principle of proportionality” and must avoid actions which will result in civilian casualties that are “excessive in relation to the direct and concrete military advantage expected” when mounting a strike against a legitimate military target (*HRW* 2003a: 10). As a result, LURD’s ongoing shelling of a densely populated area, with munitions that untrained troops could not adequately aim, and the large number civilian deaths and injuries that resulted from their actions meant that LURD breached international humanitarian law.⁵⁰³

The fighting, the loss of life and the media reports all began to take a toll. UN Secretary General Annan warned the rebels that if they continued attacking Monrovia they stood to lose the chance to participate in the interim government altogether (Ocansey & Garblah 2003). On 30 July, representatives of Liberia’s 17 political parties, which were participating in the peace talks at Accra, called a press conference during which they urged ECOWAS, the EU, the International Contact Group on Liberia, as well as the UN Security Council to develop a war crimes tribunal for Liberia, where belligerents who had committed crimes against humanity would be tried (Ocansey & Garblah 2003). With these and numerous other public denunciations, CN and the political wing of LURD seemingly began to slowly accept that the stalemate was making their movement look poorly domestically and internationally. The clergy and civil society also were campaigning for LURD to moderate its position and “finally shamed them into making some concessions and into moving things along,” says Cooper.⁵⁰⁴

On 27 July, CN asked the international community to send in outside troops to expedite peace. “We call on ECOWAS, the African Union, the United Nations, the International Contact Group on Liberia, and particularly the United States to come to the rescue of the Liberian people by immediately deploying peacekeepers into Monrovia,” CN announced (Otu 2003: n.p.). CN also stated that LURD was willing to give full access of the port to an outside peacekeeping force to assist in the provision of humanitarian services to citizens outside of Monrovia. Once again, CN pledged commitment to the peace process. However, when asked why he would not order LURD forces to leave Monrovia for the sake of peace, CN bristled. “If we withdrew from there it will lead to the loss of lives of civilians as they would be killed by Taylor because he would see them as collaborators and traitors” CN claimed, sounding much like the president he was intent on deposing (Otu 2003: n.p.).

The Americans became more reticent about participating in (let alone leading) any kind intervention. Citing a variation on what had become its foreign policy mantra on Africa after the 1993 Somali debacle, the US insisted that Africa was best left to Africans and that ECOWAS should take the lead in Liberia.⁵⁰⁵ “It’s important that the West

⁵⁰³ Both MODEL and government troops slaughtered innocent civilians during the war. However, LURD’s deliberate targeting of civilians with weapons they did not fully master was exceptional. Combined with the resulting large numbers of casualties, LURD was thus the only belligerent to be plainly in violation of international humanitarian law.

⁵⁰⁴ Interview with Cooper.

⁵⁰⁵ On 3-4 October 1993, 18 American soldiers were killed and 73 wounded in the Battle of Mogadishu between United Nations Operation in Somalia II (UNOSOM II) forces and Somali militias. The estimated number of Somali casualties was estimated to be in the thousands, but the mission, and the Battle for Mogadishu in particular, was perceived as a major failure for the US. The sight of American soldiers being dragged through the streets of Mogadishu caused huge public furor. American soldiers left the region without

Africans are moving forward to try to help Liberia,” said a State Department spokesperson, adding that the US would “help support” ECOWAS in its endeavours (Barringer 2003: n.p.). Behind the scenes, UN secretary general Kofi Annan was leaning hard on the belligerents to accept an ECOWAS-driven, predominantly Nigerian, peacekeeping force. On 23 July, ECOWAS declared that if mandated, it could send up to 1,300 troops to Liberia with two weeks’ notice. The next day, the US State Department announced that it had signed a \$10 million contract with PAE Government Services—a California-based defence contractor, whose services include training military in developing countries and operating embassies abroad—to contribute logistical support to the ECOWAS mission (Barringer 2003; Censer 2012).⁵⁰⁶

Although CN claims he was intent on coming to a formal peace agreement, LURD troops in Liberia did not back down. On 27 July, the US Ambassador to Liberia, John Blaney, implored the rebels to “show that they have regard for the people of Liberia, that it is not indifferent to the great human suffering that is taking place here,” and encouraged troops to withdraw to the natural boundary of the Po River, just over nine kilometres from the city centre (*AP* 2003). Far away from the capital, LURD chairman Conneh tried to deflect responsibility for the carnage by asserting that Taylor’s forces had moved positions to shell residential neighbourhoods to “give us a bad image” (*HRW* 2003a). Conneh claimed that LURD was not averse to retreating, but would only do so when peacekeepers were in place. “We agree to fall back, but we want the peacekeepers to come,” Conneh said. “We don’t want to hand over the port to Charles Taylor” (*AP* 2003).

The destruction of the capital and the suffering of Liberians ultimately impacted the mediators more than the belligerents. Seeing the antagonistic reception of its first draft, the ECOWAS team amended the peace agreement to heavily favour the belligerents. Instead of being kept out of the transitional government, the three warring factions were given the majority of ministerial positions.⁵⁰⁷ These positions did not require any collective review, or any vetting on the basis of competence (Hayner 2007). As the revised (but non-ratified) version of the agreement circulated among the participants, LURD announced that it was withdrawing from its frontline positions on Johnson Street and Stockton Creek bridge and was adhering to a 10-day unilateral ceasefire (Ocansey & Garblah 2003). However, LURD noted, the port would not be relinquished until peacekeeping forces arrived.

ALL KNIVES OUT FOR A SLICE AT THE CARCASS

On 31 July, for the first time in two weeks, LURD’s mortar attacks on Monrovia decreased—although fighting remained ferocious on the front lines—and residents began to leave their homes and hideouts in search of food and water. For several days of relative

completing their humanitarian and security objectives. In the two decades since, the US has gone to great lengths to avoid deploying its armed forces on the African continent.

⁵⁰⁶ To this day, the US *modus operandi* in Liberia is to grant large sums of money in lieu of troops. The US continues to be the largest donor nation to Liberia; in 2013, USAID alone disbursed more than \$130 million to various projects in the country, or nearly 23% of the annual budget (*USAID* 2013; Daygbor 2013).

⁵⁰⁷ Because of its reticence to intervene more directly, the US lost much of its own negotiating leverage to ECOWAS—which had put its troops in harms way for years. The provision to keep rebel negotiators out of government was overturned, and the majority of government positions were allocated to the three fighting parties.

peace, citizens foraged, but there was virtually no fuel or food to be had in the city core, which was under Taylor's control. Across the bridge on Bushrod Island, things were marginally better. On 19 July, LURD had taken control of the capital's port. Amidst widespread reports of looting, the rebels also distributed rice warehoused at the port to residents in rebel-controlled territory (*IRIN* 2003f). Meanwhile, food became so scarce in the city centre that some residents resorted to eating stray dogs, while those foolhardy enough to brave stray bullets and crocodiles took to swimming through a large swamp to reach the food-laden markets in LURD territory (Itano 2003; Sengupta 2003n).⁵⁰⁸ "Dignity is the rarest commodity, rarer even than phones, electricity and running water," wrote *New York Times* reporter Somini Sengupta. "It is impossible to measure misery here: Liberia does not register on the United Nations Human Development Index, as if it has fallen off the map" (Sengupta 2003f). Outside the city, refugee camps and rural areas were beyond the reach of the few aid groups that remained in the country. No one knew how many people remained alive in the camps or what they were eating.

Desperate as Liberians were, hundreds of people stood out in the driving rain and wept for joy as they welcomed the first Nigerian peacekeepers—detached from the peacekeeping mission in neighbouring Sierra Leone—to land at Robertsport Airport on 4 August (*Vanguard* 2003).⁵⁰⁹ Even as the peacekeepers stepped off the helicopters, LURD accused Taylor of printing t-shirts inscribed with the LURD logo for his forces, who were, according to the rebels, intending to mount an attack against the peacekeepers (*DPA* 2003). Although he had stated that he would step down by 11 August, days before the peacekeepers arrived, Taylor's troops also made a last, bloody, but ultimately failed attempt to capture the port.

True to its word—at least this time—LURD began to provide free access to the port to the peacekeepers. However, in Accra, MODEL forces threatened to walk away from the negotiations if Taylor continued to attack their key positions, near Buchanan (*DPA* 2003). On 7 August, Taylor confirmed to parliament (and CNN) that he intended to leave office, handing over power to his vice-president Moses Blah, on Monday 11 August, but he did not state when he would leave Liberia (*IRIN* 2003p).⁵¹⁰ This reticence made the rebels question Taylor's sincerity; after all, he had already rescheduled his departure date too many times to count. LURD was also quick to note that it would never accept Blah as the head of the interim government because of his affiliation with Taylor. "If Moses Blah takes over we will fight him," said LURD's deputy secretary, Sekou Fofana. "We need a neutral civilian to lead the transition" (*Vanguard* 2003). Ultimately, LURD had no choice but to temporarily accept Blah's ascension. LURD may have loathed the vice-president, but it wanted Taylor gone even more than it resented his patsy in the presidency.

⁵⁰⁸ Foreign reporters did not gain access to rebel-controlled parts of the city until 5 August, when the first peacekeepers arrived. Although LURD assisted residents with the distribution of rice and fuel, Itano (2003) claims that the humanitarian situation on Bushrod Island was less severe than in the government-held city centre because there were fewer people.

⁵⁰⁹ Robertsport International Airport is located approximately 50 kilometers outside Monrovia. A vanguard force of 1,500 ECOWAS troops arrived in the first two weeks of August. A remaining 2,500 soldiers were due by September.

⁵¹⁰ The Liberian parliament supported Taylor's resignation by 46 to one (*Vanguard* 2003).

On 11 August, Taylor finally delivered on his promise to leave office. Instead of lingering amidst the ruins of Monrovia, he left the country the same day. Having at last received what it had long fought for, LURD pledged to fully retreat from the capital within 48 hours.⁵¹¹

“The players at Accra had used Taylor as a sticking point because they never thought that he would leave,” says documentary filmmaker Cooper. “When Taylor left, he kicked the chair out from under the rebels. They had to revise their strategy.” The rebels could have made political gains the day Taylor left by pledging peace to the people of Liberia. Instead, LURD clung to its aspirations for power. “We are responsible for the downfall of Charles Taylor,” a LURD official crowed. “We want to serve in the highest capacity. That means we can be president of the interim government” (Sengupta 2003g). LURD had surely contributed to the havoc in the country, but some observers felt the rebels oversold themselves. “Taylor was truly on his way out come Accra,” says ECOWAS ambassador Ceesay. “I think that the peace negotiations would have succeeded either way. The real success at Accra was that Taylor decided that his time was up.”⁵¹² All the same, with Taylor’s departure, civil society and political party representatives at the peace talks all saw that LURD wanted to lead the transitional government and they vowed to do anything to prevent a warlord in their ranks from heading the state. The rebels “believed that with Charles Taylor gone, they would be next in line for power,” says Wessah, a civil society activist who himself went on to be a leader elected to the transitional government. “They felt that they didn’t need to negotiate, that they could own the pie and disappear with it.”⁵¹³

Taylor might have gone, but the three warring factions and the other participants at Accra had yet to decide on Liberia’s interim president. As of 13 August, 10 candidates remained in the running, including Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, the presidential hopeful who was runner up to Taylor in 1997, as well as Marcus Jones, president of the Liberia Bar Association, and clergyman Bishop Marweh (*IRIN* 2003q). Mediators gave the authority to civil society groups, who had since become more visible and authoritative at the talks, to whittle the list down to three names, of which, Johnson Sirleaf received the highest number of votes. According to clergyman Lartey, “The factions were not sure that Sirleaf would not talk about prosecutions, so they didn’t trust her.”⁵¹⁴ Ultimately, the warring parties—who had veto in the matter—chose the person with the least votes. Previously unknown businessman, Gyude Bryant, was entrusted to lead Liberia out of the war. Bryant’s one asset was his neutrality. Aside from this, the most that could be said of him as that he was a moderately successful businessman, active in his church, and a political lightweight (*BBC*

⁵¹¹ The day before Taylor stepped down, there were reports that some LURD fighters joined hungry civilians in looting parts of the city and the port (*IRIN* 2003q). ECOWAS military commanders had already expressed concern that they lacked sufficient troops to control Monrovia fully. Despite occasional rogue gunfire and robbery, LURD kept its word and stopped fighting as soon as Taylor left office.

⁵¹² Interview with Ceesay.

⁵¹³ Interview with Conmany Wesseh, civil society representative-elect to the National Transitional Assembly of Liberia (NTAL) in 2003, subsequently Liberia’s Minister of State, Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary to the European Union, 20 March 2012, in Monrovia, Liberia.

⁵¹⁴ Interview with Lartey, 2012.

2003g). Both Lartey and Wessah concur that the belligerents chose Bryant because “they thought that they would be able to control him.”⁵¹⁵

On 18 August 2003, the belligerents finally signed the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA). Liberia’s peace accord is a standard power-sharing settlement, calling for a transitional government that allots power among belligerents, as well as political parties and civil society for two years. By this time, LURD had lost any of the goodwill it might once have had with the ECOWAS mediators, who threatened to cancel the talks outright unless LURD conceded its last demand for the transitional government vice-presidency (*BBC* 2003f). Following LURD’s shelling of the American embassy compound, the US also made clear its displeasure in a meeting with CN, stating that if the rebels carried out another such incident, they would be tried by an international war crimes tribunal (Hayner 2013).⁵¹⁶ Perhaps the most important rebuff of the rebels came from the EU. Having watched the belligerents “living large” for more than 70 days and dissatisfied with the slow rate of progress, the EU, who along with the US, was funding the peace talks, declared that their purse would close 18 August. Unsurprisingly, “the Liberian talks ended when the money stopped” (Hayner 2007: 28).

The various parties were close enough to agreement on the main issues that the EU’s deadline was but “a necessary forced end” (Hayner 2007: 29). The structure and leadership of the transitional government remained undecided, but demonstrating that much of the real power at peace negotiations is the purse, the parties were able to create a system for choosing the interim president and decided on the final candidate—all in 48 hours. The talks’ other contentious issue, amnesty, had been settled shortly before the final deadline was announced.

For the most part, the Accra agreement is a “classic fill-in-the-blanks” document following a template favoured by the international community.⁵¹⁷ “Peace negotiation [accords] are what Westerners want to see, not what we necessarily want. You get some of what you want,” says CN. Recalling his desire for a constitutional review and LURD’s aspiration for the transitional government leadership, CN bitterly claims, “We didn’t even get 40 per cent of what we wanted.”⁵¹⁸ One negotiator likens LURD’s affected scorn to that of a child. “In the village, the boys fight, and then when the big guys come to separate them, they always say, ‘I could have whipped you,’” recounts Wessah.⁵¹⁹ Observers say this is exactly how it was between the belligerents. The non-armed participants at the peace talks believe the belligerents were not fighting about their grievances—legitimate as these might have been. They were at war over power and resources. As Wessah notes, it was about the “candy.”

For all of CN’s sour grapes, the generic nature of the accord meant that most clauses were relatively easily drafted and agreed to by the belligerents. With the exception of the

⁵¹⁵ Interviews with Lartey and Wessah.

⁵¹⁶ Hayner notes, “The exact nature of such a threatened tribunal was not clear, but the message was, and there was no further shelling of US property” (Hayner 2013: 3).

⁵¹⁷ Interview with Ambien.

⁵¹⁸ Interview with CN.

⁵¹⁹ Interview with Wessah.

presidency, the division of ministries was straightforward: There were 21 ministries, of which each belligerent was given five, with the political parties and civil society receiving a total of six. “The ministries that were [really] up for grabs were finance, commerce, maritime authority, forestry, security and defence,” says Lartey. “No one fought over health and education.”⁵²⁰ Of the sought-after ministries, the two rebel organisations availed themselves best; LURD received the Ministries of Finance, Justice, Labour, Transport, and State, while MODEL garnered Agriculture and Forestry, Commerce, Public Works, Foreign Affairs, as well as Land, Mines and Energy (CPA 2003: Annex 4). The government of Liberia was allocated Post and Telecommunication, Health and Social Welfare, Planning and Economic Affairs, Internal Affairs, and National Defence (CPA 2003: Annex 4). “The top jobs all went to the belligerents, including [Taylor’s] soldiers,” Lartey remembers. “Politicians and civil society were dropped in here and there, with the permission of the belligerents.”⁵²¹ Some ministries were certainly more coveted than others, but no one at the negotiation table left hungry. “All had a cut of the carcass,” wryly notes an UNMIL official. “No one said, ‘I wasn’t given a thigh, but instead received a neck.’ They knew they’d be back in a couple of years, as heroes at the next elections. And so, skilfully, they sliced the kill amongst themselves.”⁵²²

Accountability and amnesty had been the source of considerable disagreement since the ceasefire agreement was signed in mid-June. It was then that civil society representatives became more present at the negotiations, and they had first proposed a war crimes tribunal as a means to ensure some accountability for the violence meted out on the country for more than a decade. The rebels also wanted to see the Taylor government brought to justice, but their ardour cooled when chief mediator Abubakar reminded them that they could be prosecuted for the same crimes (Hayner 2007). Liberian fighters were open about their wartime actions, believing that they fought for a just cause, but while they did not want to face prosecution, they never appeared to push very hard for blanket amnesty. Of all the combatants interviewed, none perceived themselves as having committed any crimes; unbecoming as their conduct may have been, these were “necessary” and justifiable acts of “vengeance” and “victory.”⁵²³ That said, the belligerents still wanted some kind of assurance that they would not become subjected to a post-war witch hunt, which they received in Article 34. “Article 34, regarding amnesty, was a priority for three-quarters of the signatories,” recalls a senior UN Mission in Liberia (UNMIL) official.⁵²⁴ The amnesty clause of the CPA determines that any person or party who was “engaged or involved in military activities”—essentially anyone affiliated with either of the rebel groups or the Taylor’s forces—during the war could receive “consideration to a recommendation for general amnesty” (CPA 2003: Article 34). The clause is fuzzy at best, but was enough to lull the warring parties.

⁵²⁰ Interview with Lartey, 2012.

⁵²¹ Civil society and the political parties received more than their share of the “lesser” ministries, including, Education, Gender and Development, Information, Rural Development, Youth and Sports (CPA, 2003: Annex 4). Their one financial score was the Ministry of National Security.

⁵²² Interview with a senior transitional justice advisor to UNMIL, in Monrovia, Liberia, 18 February 2011.

⁵²³ Interviews with various combatants and belligerent participants at Accra.

⁵²⁴ Interview with advisor to UNMIL.

Relinquishing the proposed war crimes tribunal, civil society representatives suggested a truth and reconciliation commission (TRC). The TRC met with far greater endorsement than the notion of a war crimes tribunal. The warring parties saw the TRC as ‘justice-light,’ where accusations might be aired, but no one would be indicted (Raddatz 2012). In an indication of where the real power lay at the negotiating table, “With the exception of civil society, all the parties, feuding or otherwise, gelled into one” in support of a TRC and Article 34, says the UNMIL official.⁵²⁵ The other Accra participants believed accountability was an important aspect of healing and long-term reconciliation and maintained high hopes for Article 13, which mandated a TRC to “address issues of impunity, as well as an opportunity for both the victims and perpetrators of human rights violations to share their experiences” (CPA 2003). After four years, the TRC tabled its final report in 2009, which only peripherally acknowledged the causes of the Liberian war and did nearly nothing to make amends to the thousands of victims of human rights violations—the two elements the commission was charged to attend to. In retrospect, the non-armed participants of the negotiations believe Liberians were denied an opportunity for justice. “When we sat there in Accra, our heads were in the lion’s mouth,” says Rev. Lartey. “The warlords would not have signed if they felt that the accord was setting up a body that would prosecute them.”⁵²⁶ Not one of the warlords thought they would ever see the inside of a courtroom. And to date, no one has.

GREAT MIGHT HAVE BEEN THE LURD

Although it was widely thought to have the military advantage, LURD never succeeded in crushing Taylor’s troops in Monrovia. Consequently, the peace talks were the rebels’ last hope to secure the victory they believed they fully deserved, but which had eluded them in battle. With more than a dozen failed agreements littering the road to Accra, mediators and facilitators had had ample opportunity to refine their tactics. ECOWAS and the religious leaders were determined not to repeat the same mistakes that had caused so many other Liberian peace agreements to fizzle. The contents of the CPA are not especially original, but the fact that the agreement was deliberated over and signed by all the warring factions, in addition to political party representatives and large numbers of civil society players, makes it uniquely inclusive. That said, considering its leverage at the outset of the negotiations, it seems rather astonishing that LURD fared no better than any of the other signatories at the peace talks.

For LURD, negotiation was a zero-sum game, in which CN perceived every concession as a commercial or political loss instead of a compromise and future opportunity. CN and his fellow delegates embarked in negotiations from an extreme position—Taylor had to first resign and only then would the rebels stop fighting—and they steadfastly held this position throughout. Once at Accra, LURD adopted a second, equally unbending, position: The rebels wanted the leadership of the transitional government. The chief negotiator was clear about LURD’s wants and needs, but remained ignorant of his group’s limitations. The rebels were strong militarily and *potentially* could have won the war, but they had not yet done so when the negotiations began. In fact, at Monrovia’s city

⁵²⁵ Interview with advisor to UNMIL.

⁵²⁶ Interview with Lartey, 2011.

limits its battlefield advances stalled and came to a bloody halt. Even so, the chief negotiator persisted in his tactic of endorsing the continuous shelling of the capital, putting the group at risk of being indicted for war crimes, while disallowing even the slightest concession.

“If they had sent seasoned negotiators to Accra, LURD could have got the candy, the candy store, and the factory,” says Cooper. “But with the violence and some unintelligent leadership they sabotaged themselves, both as potential leaders of government and as a political force.”⁵²⁷ CN was not necessarily unintelligent, but he admits that he was ill-prepared for the rigours of negotiations. “Taylor was weakened, unable to fight back, and we were just outside of Monrovia,” CN recalls. On the battlefield the rebels claimed to be invincible, but at Accra, “There were things that just didn’t work.”⁵²⁸ In addition to being prevented from addressing the causes of the war, CN believes that he and his delegates were insufficiently primed for the structure of negotiations and the pressure they would receive from outside or non-armed participants. In hindsight, CN believes the supra-participants, particularly the US and the EU, commandeered the Liberian negotiation process. “People interested in peace should interact with those of us who will be at the negotiating table,” CN counsels. “At the end of the day, the real participants need to be reassured that this is their country. This was not the case in Liberia.”⁵²⁹ It is evident that for CN, the only ‘real’ participants at the peace negotiations were the belligerents. No others were welcome on the voyage.

LURD’s primary goal of unseating Taylor was its *raison d’être* and it never abandoned this aim. However, at the Accra peace talks, the rebels had their first heady taste of national political power and they decided they like flavour. CN and the other LURD delegates believed that the leadership of the transitional government was the political power to which they should aspire and they determined that indiscriminate shelling of the capital was the means through which they could achieve this aim. Observers were quick to spot the weaknesses that LURD seemed blind to. “LURD wasn’t thinking long-term, says Cooper. “They weren’t in the habit of thinking that way. They didn’t think like leaders. They weren’t leaders.”⁵³⁰ LURD’s limited aims indicate that it had invested little foresight into the future—they appeared to have given no thought to their longevity or that of the country. Throughout the negotiations, numerous analysts predicted that a LURD-led transitional government would be unstable and short-lived. There is nothing to dispute their assessments; in addition to a lack of policy or platform, the rebels were beleaguered by endless infighting. Just as LURD had never quite been able to achieve a military edge over Taylor, CN was never able to unify and strengthen the organisation he represented. LURD’s internal divisions undermined CN’s negotiation strategies and he lacked the ability to generate the unanimous support of the groups’ constituents.

With the benefit of hindsight, it is glaringly obvious that LURD’s decision to subject Monrovia to shelling for the duration of the peace negotiations was a poor strategy. As a terror tactic, this only served LURD well for a short time. As time passed, the talks

⁵²⁷ Interview with Cooper.

⁵²⁸ Interview with CN.

⁵²⁹ Interview with CN.

⁵³⁰ Interview with Cooper.

continued, and the rebels continued to torment and kill innocent civilians, the mediation team and the religious leaders ran out of patience and resorted to threats. “LURD was told that for each shell, they were getting closer to committing war crimes,” says Wessah.⁵³¹ Several participants also note that the US was very concerned that LURD would advance past Bushrod Island, “They didn’t want to see full-scale war and man-to-man fighting within the city,” says lawyer Verdier. CN and the rest of the LURD delegates “at the negotiations wanted to distance themselves from the battlefield, but they didn’t have [military] control.”⁵³² CN had to consult with LURD’s military leaders in Guinea and on the battlefield throughout Liberia before making any concessions, which inevitably slowed the rate of progress. The fact that CN could not generate unanimity within his own party—if anything, internal dissent only deepened during the negotiations—meant that most participants held LURD with deep distrust and lessened his credibility during the peace talks.

LURD could very likely have come away from Accra with more than the five ministries it was allotted. However, the rebels squandered much of their leverage with their hyper-competitive tactics. All the same, inasmuch as CN claims that LURD was prodded, pushed and browbeaten to make the necessary concessions for an agreement, the rebels ultimately came away from the war far better off than they were at the outset of the war. The same cannot be said for the rebels’ fellow citizens. “The people of Liberia surrendered,” says Wessah. “We said, just give them what they want. We surrendered to their violence and paid the ransom.”⁵³³

In time, the people of Liberia retaliated the best way they could—at the ballot box. “MODEL and LURD only got a year and a half of power,” says Cooper. “Then they got kicked to the curb *en masse*.” The 2005 elections, which ushered in Ellen Johnson Sirleaf as the first democratically elected woman president in Africa, eviscerated the rebels as collective political players of import. But like so many times before, the rebels may have been down, but they were not out. As late as 2013, I counted at least seven former Liberian warlords or close affiliates in elected government positions. CN claims he is in no way a warlord, nor is he an elected public servant; he is a Supreme Court judge. CN continues to push for judicial reform with varying degrees of success.

This chapter has explored how CN did well enough personally by the Accra negotiations, but neither he nor his companions emerged from the peace talks holding the mother lode that Sankoh was able to secure in Lomé. Although many former supporters of Taylor had since turned against him, CN did not position himself or his organization as a desirable or legitimate alternative to the sitting Liberian president. Hindered by a lack of organizational unity and lacking sage advisors, CN proved an artless negotiator who remained oblivious to tactics other than the hardline. LURD’s tactics were not only intractable and bloody, they also violated international humanitarian law, and after initial success, they ultimately proved ineffective at helping the rebels achieve their goals. Limited as he was by LURD’s structural problems and lack of unified leadership, CN did not rise to the occasion at Accra and missed out on numerous opportunities to assert the

⁵³¹ Interview with Wessah.

⁵³² Interview with Verdier.

⁵³³ Interview with Wessah.

advantage he possessed when he began negotiations. CN did not build trusting relations with ECOWAS mediators, or recognize the underlying influence of the US, and he squandered initial rapport with the media. The rebels may have seen their returns diminished, but LURD still received several key lucrative ministries. With a peace agreement that favoured the rebels far more than the people of Liberia, there is no doubt that CN's motivations and actions had some influence over the outcome at Accra.

TAYLOR-MADE: CUSTOMISED CARNAGE AND CHAOS

CHARLES TAYLOR

**Leader of the National Patriotic Front of Liberia (NPFL) from late 1980s-1997;
President of Liberia, August 1997-August 2003**

According to a Liberian folk tale, in Monrovia there lived a woman who gave birth to a baby who spoke English from the womb. Minutes old, the baby told its mother that a rain of death would fall over the country on Christmas Day. Declaring that it had no desire to live in a world of violence, the baby drew its last breath and died.⁵³⁴ In the driving rain of 25 December 1989, news reached Monrovia of Charles Taylor's attack on Butlo, Nimba County. Just as the baby foretold, a deathly rain soon soaked all of Liberia, seeping into the entire region. The rain would last 14 years (Polgreen 2006b).

Some people become criminals out of circumstance or accident. Winter is coming, your child is cold, you see a coat on a neighbour's line and you take it, or perhaps you take a legal right turn while driving your car only to hit and kill a pedestrian crossing against the light. Charles Taylor became a mass killer and practiced thief neither by circumstance nor by accident, but out of considered design. A self-made man, Taylors' "wickedness", as the Liberians say, was intentionally cultivated and perfected over time.

This chapter shows that Charles Taylor embodied certain narcissistic, psychopathic and Machiavellian traits—known as the Dark Triad of Personality—through his fight for presidential power, during his years in government, and at numerous peace negotiations. Intelligent, ruthless, and masterfully manipulative, Taylor perfected a negotiating pattern over the course of multiple peace talks. Never committed to anything but his own gain, he assuaged mediators and belligerents alike that he sought nothing but peace for his country. Commanding the war from Monrovia, Taylor dominated the peace talks at Accra, and used his full arsenal of hardball tactics—stalling, lying and bullying—against the rebels, particularly LURD's chief negotiator. For all his potency as a negotiator and warlord, Taylor was limited by his fear of being deposed, the depleting ranks of his disloyal troops, and the rejection of the international community. Even so, the Accra negotiations would have been no different than Liberia's 17 previous peace talks but for Taylor's surprise indictment for war crimes by the Special Court of Sierra Leone. Although his tactics remained the same thereafter, this event forced Taylor to reevaluate his motivations and aims. Ultimately, Taylor came to lose his power, but he did not lose his life.

A year into the Liberian war, victory was within a hair's breadth of Taylor's grasp. From being an aspiring warlord backed by a motley crew of not more than a hundred men, Taylor came to command thousands of troops, with dozens more voluntarily signing up daily. Taylor's incursion began in a remote area of Nimba County, but within a year's time he controlled up to 90 per cent of the country's territory—the capital city of Monrovia

⁵³⁴ Tale recounted by Stephen Ellis in "The Mask of Anarchy" (1999: 75).

being one of the last holdouts (Sesay 1996). And yet, Taylor's near-assured conquest passed him by. ECOMOG's arrival slowed his rapid takeover, and emergent factions took back a large part of the territory he once held.⁵³⁵

Liberia's war generated a host of peace talks, which produced 17 peace accords. Taylor endorsed all of them. However, Taylor's commitment to peace lasted as long as his freshly inked signature stayed wet. Throughout the war, he participated in negotiations under military or diplomatic duress, agreeing to attend peace talks when his troops were most tired and in need of a recess. Although his pledges were always short-lived, Taylor drove a hard bargain, and negotiated as though he were truly engaged in the outcome. His support of peace was always conditional to terms that would not interfere with his presidential aspirations.⁵³⁶

During the war, Taylor successfully manipulated Liberia's political, social and cultural values and in so doing smashed traditional structures of cooperation and respect. Where people once venerated the elders, Taylor took their place, "enthraling and enslaving" the armies of children he coerced to fight for him while crushing his citizens into silent passivity through fear (Polgreen 2006b). Tapping into the language and tradition of Liberia's many secret societies gave Taylor an allure of mysticism and invincibility. Taylor's espousal of traditional beliefs and secret societies was at least somewhat genuine; he was profoundly superstitious and preoccupied to the point of being paranoid about his personal safety. To counter his enemies' hostility, he surrounded himself with talismans for protection, including numerous amulets for invisibility and a swagger stick carved from a sacred tree (Anderson 1998).

Seven years into the war, Taylor was down but he was far from out. Although the NPFL had lost much of its territory, it retained a strong enclave through the east and centre of the country. Taylor controlled the police, the Ministry of Justice, and numerous ministries of note in the transitional government (Armon & Carl 1996). NPFL adherents had ballooned to about 25,000 combatants—many forcibly recruited, including countless children—who were responsible for a veritable encyclopaedia of human rights abuses, whose one possible extenuatory quality was being the most ethnically heterogeneous of the country's rebel factions (Armon & Carl 1996), although no less homicidal.⁵³⁷

TAYLOR AND THE DARK TRIAD

Liberia was already well on its way to ruin before Taylor ascended to power. Amidst the charred remains of a place that was once an African holiday destination in the

⁵³⁵ ECOMOG's deployment, however controversial and fraught, assuredly prevented Taylor from an outright win.

⁵³⁶ Taylor's presidential ambitions were present from the start of the war. The first peace talks in 1990-91 were foiled because Taylor refused to acknowledge the Interim Government of National Unity (IGNU) and instead established his own shadow government in Gbarnga. The four Yamoussoukro accords of 1991 also failed in large part because they did not give Taylor the Liberian presidency. Taylor's frustrated aspirations caused him to launch Operation Octopus in October 1992, which completely stymied the peace process and marked the beginning of Taylor's deep enmity with ECOMOG (Sesay 1996).

⁵³⁷ The rank and file of Taylor's troops were indeed the most ethnically diverse in the country, but the NPFL's leadership was predominantly Americo-Liberian (Armon & Carl 1996).

1970s, it is important to remember that when Taylor first mounted his revolution, he was seen as liberator by many of his fellow citizens. At the outset, his exuberant and charismatic personality garnered widespread support.

Brash and enticing, even as a student in the US, Taylor harboured grand ambition. "Taylor is a man with brazen audacity," said Liberian writer Gabriel Williams. "He's charismatic, charming, and extravagant. He's an influence peddler who knows what it takes to build a close net of loyalty and a solid support base around himself" (Williams in Lovgren 2003: n.p.). Taylor may have initially built strength and allegiance among his supporters, but he also learned to benefit from the chaos he begat to scheme and cultivate international contacts, including Libya's leader, Colonel Muammar Qaddafi. Taylor also helped his friend Blaise Compaoré overthrow the president of Burkina Faso in 1987.⁵³⁸ Compaoré returned the favour by allowing Taylor to use Burkina Faso as a base of operations at the start of the Liberian war.

As warlord and President, Taylor demonstrated a narcissistic leadership style, in which his primary preoccupation was his own self-actualisation and enrichment. Taylor's self-absorption is hardly a unique in leaders. A remarkable number of selfish, arrogant and entitled rulers and managers are also described as charismatic and charming. Indeed, when it comes to leadership, at least one study indicates that a moderate amount of narcissism may be a positive trait (Grijalva *et al* 2015). All the same, narcissism, according to criminal justice scholar Thomas O'Connor (2013), is a real, albeit less severe, form of psychopathic disorder. Although narcissists may demonstrate aggressive, paranoid, and borderline characteristics, more commonly, their behaviour manifests through envy, greed, a hunger for power, a well-rationalised sense of entitlement, insistence on admiration, an exaggerated sense of self-importance, and a noticeable lack of empathy for others (DSM-V 2013; Mayo Clinic; O'Connor 2013).

There is considerable overlap in the characterizing traits of narcissists and psychopaths; indeed, "The latter may simply be a less inhibited and less grandiose form of the former" (Vaknin 2001: 335). Narcissists differ from psychopaths in that they are able to experience feelings of loyalty and guilt. Likewise, they also can control their impulses and delay gratification; but like psychopaths, narcissists lack empathy and often perceive people in a utilitarian capacity, as beings to be used (O'Connor 2013; Vaknin 2001). Perhaps most significantly, narcissists require—are even addicted to—the admiration and attention of others. Narcissists require that other people satisfy their insatiable, selfish desires and will systematically devalue and vilify those who do not (O'Connor 2013). The outwardly charming veneer of the narcissist only masks an inherent belief that they have a right to control, manipulate and exploit others. Conversely, psychopaths are mercenaries who do not need attention or validation for their emotional wellbeing; they cultivate and use the admiration and respect of others to get what they want without necessarily resorting to coercion. Boundless charms, combined with a lack of remorse or empathy, in addition to a flagrant disregard for societal norms, are the hallmarks of psychopathy (Hare 1994). Psychopaths perceive themselves as superior to others, and consider themselves to be the

⁵³⁸ Campaoré went on to become one of Africa's longest serving leaders, but was swept from power after 27 years in 2014 by violent popular uprising.

centre of the universe, which justifies their behaving outside of usual social conventions (Millon & Davis 2000). Fundamentally, the difference between narcissists and psychopaths is motivation: Narcissists are driven by their need to have others appreciate and notice their exceptional qualities, they demand recognition and validation; Psychopaths are predators without conscience, they feel no need to rationalize that people are but objects to be used for personal gratification (Becker 2008).

A savvy publicist might say that narcissists should try to keep their friends close and their enemies closer, while for the psychopath, the ends always justify the means. However *à propos*, neither of these adages is original, in fact, they are so commonly used as to be clichés. Both sayings can be traced to 16th century political strategist Niccolò Machiavelli whose name has since become synonymous with duplicitous interpersonal relations and manipulative leadership tactics in the practice of statecraft (Jones *et al* 2009). Written in 1513, *The Prince* remains an effective self-help manual for those to seek to gain and keep power.⁵³⁹ Machiavelli's "effectual truth," as he describes his particular philosophy, is there are no friends in politics (Machiavelli 2010: xi). Political allies, at home and abroad, are not friends to a leader, unless it is in his interest that they are. A Machiavellian leader is concerned with maintaining power, rigid management techniques, and displays manipulative behaviour (Kessler *et al* 2010). Machiavelli's theories are criticized for lacking in virtue, but he never aspired to virtue; instead he saw the benefits of calculated authority. A ruler's aim is to maintain his state and his position, even if this sometimes requires cruelty, deception and force. Machiavelli's theories are as popular today as ever for business and political leaders. A recent study reveals that a majority of self-made millionaires claim that "being Machiavellian is essential to becoming wealthy" (Schiff 2013b: n.p.).⁵⁴⁰ If success is being wealthy and powerful—which for many, it is—then a key difference between those who have achieved such success in their lifetimes and those who have not is that successful people are very adept at looking after their self-interest (Schiff 2013a).

Narcissistic, psychopathic and Machiavellian personality traits are moderately correlated, giving rise to the term *Dark Triad of Personality* (Campbell & Miller 2011; Paulhus & Williams 2002; Rigoli *et al* 2001) and are known to share certain characteristics, including impulsivity, low conscientiousness (Paulhus & Williams 2002), as well as an insensitive and calculating interpersonal style (Jones & Paulhus 2010). The Dark Triad personality traits are empirically associated to numerous negative outcomes. When narcissists feel their egos are exposed, they can frequently be contentious and belligerent (Miller *et al* 2010). Machiavellians are known to be dishonest with their friends (Kashy & DePaulo 1996) and to take revenge when they feel slighted (Nathanson 2008). Psychopathy is linked to a variety of criminal behaviours including sexual assault and murder (Megargee 2009).

For all of the negative outcomes of the Dark Triad, there are certain traits that appear to be beneficial to leadership. Narcissism, in particular, has a positive correlation

⁵³⁹ Machiavelli's treatise was first distributed in 1513, but the printed version was only published in 1532, five years after the authors' death.

⁵⁴⁰ Fully 78% of Schiff's millionaire respondents espouse this Machiavellian notion, compared to a meagre 17% of those in the middle class (Schiff 2013b).

with some aspects of leadership. Because they are driven by a need for achievement and approbation, narcissists are successful at self-goal setting, self-observation and self-regulation, especially as these relate to the pursuit of personal goals (O'Boyle & Forsyth 2012). For all their destructive traits, many of psychopaths' defining qualities—charm, assertiveness, non-emotive decision-making, the ability to assess and manipulate peoples' vulnerabilities, and preparedness to take risks—are commonly mistaken for leadership skills (Morse 2004). According to Babiak & Hare (2007), psychopaths are increasingly present in business and rise into leadership roles because they are attracted to and thrive in stressful, volatile and competitive environments. Similarly, Machiavellian traits of deceit, manipulation, pragmatism and exploitation of others are seen as worthy skills for those seeking to achieve power.

There is no doubt that Taylor embodied many narcissistic, psychopathic, and Machiavellian traits. Whether he could be diagnosed as either having a narcissistic personality disorder or being a psychopath (traditionally defined as personality disorder) is debatable. Nonetheless, certain traits of the Dark Triad did help Taylor to get ahead (Hogan 2007). His narcissistic traits possibly led him to aspire to leadership (Raskin & Novacek 1991), which in turn may have led him to self-select and achieve his goal (Hogan *et al* 1990) as the leader of the NPFL. As warlord, then President, Taylor's psychopathic traits also served him well. His charisma served to gain him many followers, but he never allowed empathy to distract him from his goals (DePaulo 2010), even if this meant the widespread slaughter and exploitation of his people. Taylor portrayed himself as cultured, engaging, and intelligent and was able to curry political favour with numerous allies, indicating his Machiavellianism (Kessler *et al* 2010). The Dark Traits were also manifest throughout Taylor's leadership as he manipulated and coerced his subordinates, and were very much in evidence in his negotiating behaviour. Taylor frequently employed competitive hardball techniques, including bullying, like many Machiavellians and psychopaths, but he was not averse to employing the softer tactics of narcissists and Machiavellians, such as flattery and promising concessions (Jonason *et al* 2012).

LEGITIMATE LEADERSHIP VIA BALLOT BOX

Taylor may have lost ground in the long years of Liberia's civil war, but he retained his boundless ambition and ruthless drive. His personal quest for power was arguably the fulcrum of the ongoing conflict. The 1995 and 1996 Abuja Accords made way for elections, as well as the disarmament and demobilisation of all armed fighters. However, even prior to the vote, Taylor blocked numerous provisions, most significantly the restructuring of the Armed Forces of Liberia (AFL). Taylor could afford to be defiant; despite the number of rebel groups that emerged to restrain him from securing a full military victory, he maintained the balance of power through the war. In the time between the first Abuja accord in August 1995 and the elections in July 1997, the NPFL eased its violent onslaught as Taylor consolidated his political influence (see chapter 3). Meanwhile, Liberians resigned themselves to the inevitable: Taylor would be elected president, otherwise he would continue to set the country ablaze.

Taylor did not leave the vote to chance. He campaigned using the tools he knew best: Fear and bribery. Accompanied by scores of acolytes, Taylor travelled the country

distributing free food and lobbing stacks of Liberian currency into jostling crowds of impoverished citizens, intimating that their fortunes would improve once he became president (Kamara 2000c). For those who resisted overt blackmail, Taylor did not hesitate to suggest a return to war, which only inspired dread in a population crippled by conflict. The combined tactics of inducement and intimidation created an environment of menace that hovered over the campaign and later came to define Taylor's government.

Organising the Liberian election was a logistical nightmare. Many questioned whether elections were being foisted on the country before first ensuring basic conditions to make the results credible (Dellios 1997). The hurried push to a vote was propelled by Nigeria. Seeking to deflect attention from his poor domestic record, President Sani Abacha appeared to cast himself as the man who brokered successful democratic elections in Liberia. Although many called to postpone the scheduled July elections until October, Abacha's chairmanship of ECOMOG was slated to end in August, and to garner the credit he sought, the vote needed to take place sooner. For once, Taylor concurred with his old enemy; knowing he was likely to win, he too wanted the elections to proceed as expediently as possible. Amidst such intrigue, it was a surprise to many when the day came that 85 per cent of registered voters cast their ballots without a hitch, leading ECOWAS and the United Nations Observer Mission in Liberia (UNOMIL) to jointly declare the electoral process "free, fair and credible" (Lyons 1998: n.p.).

Prior to the 1997 elections, US diplomat John Bauman was quoted as saying, "There are more good people than bad people in Liberia. The one million good people will win, and the bad people will lose" (SCSL 2009: 27895).⁵⁴¹ In the aftermath of Taylor's victory, cleric Sheik Konneh recounts that peace activists ironically asked, "Is Charles Taylor good then, and are those who lost bad?"⁵⁴² Liberians did not vote for Taylor out of unquestioning fealty or due to his innate goodness. Instead they cast their ballots with three primary aims in mind. First and foremost, Liberian citizens voted for peace. Although Taylor had done more than any other belligerent to contradict and undermine every peace agreement signed since 1990, people believed that if they gave him the capstone of his aspirations, in turn he would give them peace. Second, Liberians cast their votes for Taylor out of fear. Liberians knew Taylor had the necessary resources and international connections to wage war and they feared that if he did not win the election he would gather his troops, return to the bush and recommence fighting. Finally, with typical forbearance, citizens cast their votes for the man who had turned their country upside down, rationalising that if he had the capacity to destroy, he could also rebuild. That these were

⁵⁴¹ According to Taylor defense lawyer, Courtenay Griffiths, Bauman's statement was based on "erroneous" intelligence at the State Department; from a total population of 2.5 million, more than 1.5 million were thought to be displaced, living outside Liberia's borders, and only 1 million people were living in Liberia at the time of the election. "It was speculated that hardly anyone, except Taylor and his NPFL fighters, lived in Greater Liberia... [This] gave rise to the conclusion that Taylor would lose in the ensuing election" (SCSL 27 August 2009: 27895). Although Taylor won the election, the State Department's numbers were not far off; in fact, there were just over 751,000 registered voters in Liberia at the time of the 1997 election, of which 621,880 (or almost 83%) cast ballots (Africa Elections Database 1997).

⁵⁴² Interview with Konneh, 2012.

hardly the most inspiring of reasons upon which to cast a vote mattered little to Taylor.⁵⁴³ He got the result he wanted, and set about governing.

One of Taylor's first aims was to rid Liberia of ECOMOG. Taylor had been openly hostile towards ECOMOG (harbouring particular antipathy towards Nigeria) since its arrival in Liberia in 1990, but his relations with Nigeria had eased significantly prior to the 1997 elections. It was widely thought that Abacha had personally persuaded Taylor to adhere to the terms of the Abuja accords, both in maintaining a ceasefire as well as participating in elections (Anderson 1998; see also chapter 3). All the same, ECOMOG remained a thorn in Taylor's side; he saw its ongoing presence as undermining his personal leadership as well as his country's sovereignty. As specified in the Abuja accords, ECOMOG troops were due to drawdown part of their Liberian forces, but Taylor sought to hasten their departure.⁵⁴⁴ "Taylor wanted ECOMOG out rapidly because he thought that they were spying on him," says Zubin Cooper, a Liberian media executive who worked as a documentary filmmaker during the war.⁵⁴⁵ Taylor was also vehemently opposed to ECOMOG's latest mandate to restructure the country's armed forces (*IRIN* 1997) and claimed that ECOMOG had lost its authority with his inauguration on 2 August 1997 (Sannah 1998a).

Taylor's recalcitrance greatly impeded any ECOMOG momentum, to the extent that in January 1998, Major-General Malu stated that he was "concerned" that ECOMOG was scheduled to withdraw from Liberia without having delivered on its mandate to restructure Liberia's army (*IRBC* 1998). Officially, ECOMOG's mandate ended 2 February 1998, but the force had not received orders from ECOWAS to depart, and remained in position (Sannah 1998b). Taylor, by this time, was well known for stalling negotiations, and he did not hesitate to use the same tactic to thwart ECOMOGs' endeavours. Stalling can be a means to genuinely assess alternatives, but it can also be a backhanded way of indicating unwillingness to work together (Katz 2008). Delaying tactics are frequently used to create a time crunch, which may result in concessions, but at other times they simply reflect the decision-making pace in a particular place. Typically, in Liberia negotiations—political or business—are slow and protracted affairs. A generous interpretation of Taylor's invariable delaying behaviour might suggest that he was simply acting according to cultural norms, but it is more likely that he had no desire whatsoever to have ECOMOG deliver on its mandate, and intended to hamstring ECOMOG's progress until its departure date. In any case, in addition to being hindered from restructuring the armed forces, ECOMOG also noted that "eight factions in Liberia were disarmed [but] had not disappeared" (Sannah 1998a), and that there were indications conflict could arise due to the "reenlistment of soldiers who have been identified with the seven-year fratricidal war" (*Xinhua News Agency* 1998). Instead of pulling out, ECOMOG and Taylor agreed to allow between four and five thousand troops to remain in Liberia for up to a year, with a revised mandate to

⁵⁴³ Taylor used these reasons again to his benefit when war erupted anew. While Liberians continued to desire peace, they also still had good reason to fear Taylor, and they believed that he had the capacity to rebuild the country. Ultimately, Liberians preferred the devil they knew to a stranger.

⁵⁴⁴ Mid-1997, approximately 11,000 ECOMOG troops were stationed throughout Liberia, of which more than 6,000 were Nigerian (*IRIN* 1997).

⁵⁴⁵ Interview with Zubin Cooper, then self-described "bird dogger" and documentary filmmaker, now media executive and Lead Consultant at MultiSolutions Inc., 21 March 2012, in Monrovia, Liberia.

“provide protection for President Charles Taylor”, as well as to help train a restructured army and strengthen security (*BBC* 1998a). This detachment was comprised primarily of Ghanaian soldiers, who focused on disarming former belligerents and destroying collected weapons. The final contingent of ECOMOG troops withdrew from Liberia late October 1999.

Within months, occasional scattered sorties across the Guinean border into Lofa County by a new rebel group called Liberians United for Reconciliation and Democracy (LURD) had escalated into full-scale war.⁵⁴⁶

A MOMENTARY LAPSE OF CONFLICT

At his inauguration, Taylor swore, “I will not be a wicked president” (*French* 1998a). He lied. He became one of the most wicked at a time and in a region that already possessed more than its share. Taylor appropriated his country’s natural resources to satisfy his personal greed. Any citizen or visitor could affirm that repairing infrastructure and restoring safety was not a priority. Writing on Monrovia, reporter Peter Beaumont mused, “There is something of the Duvalier-era Port-au-Prince about. It reeks of paranoia, random violence and superstition. Except... it is a poorer and more dangerous place” (*Beaumont* 2001: n.p.). Freedom of the local press was non-existent, civil society activists were killed or forced into exile. Political dissidents had “a nasty habit of dying in ‘accidents’ or disappearing” (*Beaumont* 2001: n.p.). The prevalent violence and sense of danger did not come from new rebel factions, but from Taylor’s myriad police and soldiers encountered at every city intersection and rural checkpoint.⁵⁴⁷

After the elections, the various factions retreated. Taylor tried to present himself as a credible political leader, but was often thwarted by the extremists in his party. “As soon as he took office, there were efforts to unseat him,” says Blamoh Nelson, Taylor’s former chief of cabinet.⁵⁴⁸ Inasmuch as Taylor was right to fear for his safety—after all, his two immediate predecessors had been murdered while in office—Taylor began to demonstrate real signs of paranoia. Already notoriously security conscious, Taylor made his personal safety one of the country’s few areas of commercial growth. By all accounts, Taylor was an indiscriminate employer. Taylor did not limit his recruits to well-disciplined troops, he “took anybody,” says Cooper. “He was an equal opportunity employer, and would take on former fighters who had committed atrocities.”⁵⁴⁹ In addition to integrating many of his former troops into the AFL, Taylor poached numerous officers from his former opponents and welcomed numerous belligerents from ULIMO-K. Taylor’s various forces were

⁵⁴⁶ Either Taylor did not realize, or more likely, refused to acknowledge that ECOMOG’s presence in Liberia helped to stabilise his government. Taylor wanted to believe that his election meant that he had won the war. However, it is evident once ECOMOG was gone that Taylor was again vulnerable to attack.

⁵⁴⁷ Liberia had few employment opportunities but security and defense related jobs were plentiful—if not always paid. Taylor’s security forces alone comprised a veritable industry, including policemen of the Special Task Force, clad in all-black; the ubiquitous State Security Service (SSS), created as Taylor’s own protective corps; and, the universally feared Anti-Terrorist Unit (ATU) overseen by Taylor’s son Charles “Chuckie Taylor” Emmanuel, now serving a 97-year prison sentence in the US for torture.

⁵⁴⁸ Interview with Blamoh Nelson, former Director of Cabinet (1997-2003) and negotiator at Accra, now Senator in the Liberian Legislature, in Monrovia, Liberia, 23 March 2012.

⁵⁴⁹ Interview with Cooper.

already battled-hardened, but regardless of the branch they served in, all troops received ongoing training in advanced military techniques. Taylor's recruitment techniques reveal a man that valued brawn over brains. He did not seem to value ambitious or critical thinkers, as they might eventually eye his position; Taylor wanted his followers to be unquestioning in their loyalty. By surrounding himself with nothing but yes men, Taylor also indicates a narcissist's overinflated sense of his own strategic capacities (Foster *et al* 2003).

The culture of paranoia and fear that Taylor perpetuated was evidently contagious. He had a great fear of being deposed (like all his recent predecessors) that only accrued after his inauguration. "One of Taylor's key motivations was that he didn't want to die like Doe," says Cooper. "He wanted to be alive by the time he became ex-President."⁵⁵⁰ By mid-1998, Taylor was rarely seen in public, leaving his residence but once a day, traveling at high speed in a convoy of two dozen luxury SUVs filled with armed bodyguards to the Executive Mansion on a road only he was allowed to use (Anderson 1998). Self-described as deeply devout, Taylor's beliefs took on an esoteric flavour, as he increasingly dabbled in numerology, seven being his lucky number (Anderson 1998).⁵⁵¹ Taylor's paranoia and superstition only grew over time, particularly as he began to lose some of the control that he had fought so hard to achieve. According to Whitson and Galinsky (2008), people seeking control find and impose a sense of order by embracing superstitions and practicing rituals. Although Taylor never overtly admitted to feeling threatened or losing control, his paranoid pursuit of conspiracies indicates that he felt increasingly under siege.

At first, Liberians were happy that the elections brought about a respite from the fighting, at least in and near the capital. "We believed in the elections because the primary causes of the war were rampant corruption, misuse of power and lack of democratic process," says Konneh. "We felt if a government was put in place for and by the people it could address these problems."⁵⁵² Although change was slow enough to be imperceptible, the clergy and members of civil society remained cautiously optimistic. "We knew that elections and the changing of wrong to right is not an event but a process," continues Konneh, so the clergy and civil society bided their time in hope that Taylor would live up to his promise to address human rights by creating an independent human rights commission. Their aspirations were sorely tried, particularly, "When we saw activists being targeted and having to flee or leave the country," says Konneh. Still the clergy maintained that for the sake of peace, the people had to grant the democratically elected government time and room to function.⁵⁵³ However, Taylor's political alliances rested almost exclusively around

⁵⁵⁰ Interview with Cooper

⁵⁵¹ Since Tubman and Doe had been murdered inside its walls, Taylor and his entourage believed evil spirits haunted the Executive Mansion, which contained the president's offices. Accordingly, Taylor brought in a group of 70 church elders whom he separated into seven groups to spend seven days systematically entering each room of the building, while fasting, praying and casting out evil spirits (Anderson 1998). There is no indication that the elders' incantations worked; Taylor remained as suspicious as ever about his personal safety.

⁵⁵² Interview with Konneh, 2012.

⁵⁵³ Interview with Konneh, 2012. From the moment he was elected, Taylor targeted anyone who spoke out against his leadership. By 1998, most members of Liberia's opposition political parties or civil society had either been murdered or arrested, and those who had been able to escape could only find safe haven in exile (Nilsson 2009). That the Liberian clergy continued to give Taylor multiple (failed) chances to embrace democracy shows over-optimism bordering on naivety.

economic opportunism, and not surprisingly, his hustler associates were ready to shift allegiances at the smallest indication that another alliance might prove more fortuitous. As noted by Reno (1995: 117) well before the elections, “Taylor’s brand of intense patrimonialism, imperfectly enforced, may prove especially vulnerable to further fragmentation.” Like many strong men with an over-abundance of self-worth, Taylor never seemed to find any of his followers to be sufficiently evolved to groom for leadership, and he never planned for his succession. This ensured that power within the government never grew diffuse, and Taylor’s opponents never had the ability to negotiate with any other real decision-maker save himself.

For the numerous belligerents active in the first part of the war, countless more now lurked around every corner hoping to overthrow Taylor. Or at least that is what the President believed. Taylor’s paranoia was Stalinesque; perceived enemies were everywhere. At a rare public engagement in 2000 for the opening of a dormitory at the University of Liberia, Taylor announced to all present that his security forces had detained a Channel 4 documentary crew who had come to the country to assassinate him with a “sophisticated camera” that would have given him a fast-acting cancer (Kamara 2000c).⁵⁵⁴ Taylor would frequently leave his home and stay the night in various dilapidated hideouts to avoid attacks, claiming the British, the Americans, and some of his own cabinet ministers were all plotting to kill him (Kamara 2000c).

Despite his credentials as a duplicitous warlord and an unhealthy obsession with personal safety, Taylor still looked and acted presidential; when he chose to, he could be both charismatic and eloquent (Harris 1999). “Taylor comes across as an intelligent man, suave and urbane, articulate and smooth as butter,” recounts journalist Bill Berkeley. “He speaks in a silken baritone, in measured cadenced sentences that convey a thoughtful temperament. The words tumble out of him in a rolling, reassuring, sermonlike delivery” (Berkeley 2001: 26). Amidst the apparent madness of some of his accusations, Taylor could speak astutely about his plans for industrial development, developing regional economic partnerships, and placing computers in every public school. Six months after Taylor took office, a Western diplomat said aloud what numerous others had only whispered, “You can look at the man as a struggle between good and evil... There is a Manichean struggle going on here, and you never know which Charles Taylor is going to surface” (French 1998a). As time passed, Taylor’s internal struggle produced a victor, but it was not the one most Liberians were rooting for.

However perilous, for Taylor, the career move to warlord was highly lucrative: Between 1990 and 1991, the President negotiated access to an iron ore project on the Guinea-Liberian border with several European companies in exchange for a hefty fee. The African Mining Consortium, based in the UK, paid Taylor US\$10 million a month to ship iron ore on a railway that passed through territory under his control and, in 1991, NPFL-

⁵⁵⁴ Four members of a documentary crew for UK’s Channel 4 were indeed arrested, imprisoned and interrogated for weeks on charges of espionage by Liberian authorities in July-August 2000. Despite receiving official permission to enter the country to shoot a documentary, the crew was detained by members of the Special Task Force, and was only released after huge public outcry and international pressure—including efforts from South African president Nelson Mandela, US Special Envoy Jesse Jackson, and Nigerian President Olusegun Obasanjo (Sweeney 2000).

controlled Liberia became France's third largest supplier of tropical hardwood (Tiepoh 1997).⁵⁵⁵ The number of warring parties exacerbated the economic dimension of the war, with each warlord stabbing at a piece of Liberia's natural wealth to carve up and sell to the highest bidder. Taylor alone is estimated to have netted over US\$400 million each year between 1992 and 1996 (Berdal & Malone 2000: n.p.).

The war made Taylor a very wealthy man. From 1990 to 1996, the NPFL had controlled a significant amount of territory laden with timber and rubber. This, along with the diamond revenue coming in through his conduits to Sierra Leone, generated approximately US\$100 million a year in revenue (Polgreen 2006). The proliferation of warring parties and the lack of a categorical "winner" meant that ethnic division was no longer a motivating factor in the war. Rhetoric highlighting ethnic differences petered out after a couple of years, but the plunder of Liberia lasted the duration of the war, into the peace negotiations, and beyond. In this, the warlords revealed their true intentions—financial gain through the control of natural resources.

The pattern of "pillage and plunder" (Anderson 1998: np) Taylor first developed and implemented during the war, he perfected during his time in office.⁵⁵⁶ He established a dual economy—one private, the other official—and financed both with profits from the extraction and trade of diamonds, timber, rubber and gold. The diamonds Taylor traded on behalf of the rebels in Sierra Leone were particularly profitable. Under Taylor's presidency, Liberia became known as "Charles Taylor Inc" (*The Economist* 2000). Foreign diplomats speculated that Taylor's personal revenue rivalled the official budget (Anderson 1998). In 2001, when the UN imposed sanctions on Liberian diamonds in an attempt to bolster the peace process in Sierra Leone, Taylor shifted his interests towards timber and continued to bypass official institutions by redirecting timber revenues to his private bank accounts rather than the state treasury (*New Democrat* 2013). Taylor's most successful heist came from his exploitation of the Liberian maritime registry. The US created the registry in 1948 to allow American shipping companies to hire crews without adhering to US wage and labour laws.⁵⁵⁷ By the mid-1990s, Liberia's maritime registry included more than 1,700 vessels, or a full third of the world's shipping tonnage, generating approximately US\$18 million a year (*All Africa* 2003). In 1999, Taylor dismissed the US company that had successfully managed the registry for a half century and set up a new one in its stead. Within weeks, Taylor was using the registry's revenue to buy weapons (*All Africa* 2003).

⁵⁵⁵ Warlords within the other major factions also profited handsomely from the war. In Lofa County, one breakaway group, the Lofa Defense Force (LDF) stayed small but soon controlled the county's entire gold and diamond resources (Adebajo 2002). In 1993, the Liberia Peace Council (LPC) started to fight NPFL in Liberia's southeast and soon took over commercial operations in timber and rubber; estimated rubber exports from LPC-controlled plantations generated approximately \$1.5 million in 1994 alone (Dème 2005). That same year, ULIMO-K took control over sizable parts of western Liberia, thereby cutting off Taylor from Sierra Leone's diamonds, and seizing these for itself (Lidow 2011).

⁵⁵⁶ In the 1980s, under Doe, Taylor worked as a senior government procurement officer, where his sticky fingers earned him the moniker "Superglue". Taylor was accused of stealing approximately US\$1 million, but fled the country to the US when he was indicted for embezzlement.

⁵⁵⁷ Liberia's Bureau of Maritime Affairs also allows ships to be reflagged and made available to the US military in wartime.

BLOODSHED AND BOMBING

Taylor may have been democratically elected to the Liberian presidency, but he wasted the opportunities that came with legitimate power by choosing an undemocratic course. To Taylor, an electoral win was evidence that he had won the war. His way of governing “was about grabbing,” says clergyman Benjamin Lartey. Similar to Libya’s Qadaffi, “he had a vision of regional control extending over West Africa, when he should have consolidated his power in Liberia. He was playing Godfather to West Africa.”⁵⁵⁸ Instead of making amends with former foes, Taylor “took to pathological levels the anomalies, viles and vices, which caused the war” (Jaye 2003: 644). In a country that had experienced more than its share of lamentable leaders, Taylor’s government ushered in a new level of pronounced corruption and economic mismanagement, increasing political and social repression, utter disregard for average citizens and unrivalled personal rule.

Unsurprisingly, with such a track record, Liberia gave way to increasing insecurity. Prior to the elections, Taylor’s NPFL rebel troops were not paid. Their incentive to fight was the opportunity to loot vanquished territories (Reno 1995). With many former rebels now fighting for the state army, Taylor saw little reason to change a winning formula, and continued to remunerate his soldiers poorly, if at all. Soldiers paid themselves by looting from the civilian population. After so many years of pillage, already impoverished Liberians had nothing left for whichever armed force happened upon them. “That’s when people became reluctant about fighting,” says Morlee Gugu Zawoo, a former NPFL combatant. “Fighters were tired. We were thinking, why should I go fight, and what is my benefit when I’m not getting anything.”⁵⁵⁹ Throughout the war, Taylor had treated his troops as disposable commodities. If they died or were incapacitated, he assumed he could always recruit more, either voluntarily or by force. However, just as Liberians had nothing left to pillage, after years of war, there were few young men left to draft into service. Of these, only the most desperate would fight for Taylor. By 2003, Taylor had not paid the Liberian army for more than two years (Junger 2003).

Once ECOMOG troops were off Liberian soil, the rest of the world lost the little interest it had managed to sustain after the 1997 elections. Without any international oversight, Taylor was left to his own devices. “The minute ECOMOG left, I knew there would be full-on war,” says lawyer, Jerome Verdier, who remained in Monrovia through the war. “After 2000, law and order completely broke down. There was no law to keep.”⁵⁶⁰ As dominant warlord cum elected president, Taylor earnestly claimed to be in control of the deteriorating security situation. Instead, two rebel forces cropped up to challenge his claims. First, in 1999, Guinea-based Liberians United for Reconciliation and Democracy (LURD) began to engage government troops in central Liberia, and then captured swathes of territory to the south and West. Soon after LURD began to fight, Verdier went to Taylor and warned him, “The population is not supporting you anymore. Your government is

⁵⁵⁸ Interview with Lartey, 2012.

⁵⁵⁹ Interview with Morlee Gugu Zawoo, former child soldier with NPFL, now Administrator, Network for Empowerment and Progressive Initiative, in Monrovia, Liberia, 7 March 2011.

⁵⁶⁰ Interview with Jerome Verdier, lawyer and human rights activist, former Chairperson, Truth and Reconciliation Commission for Liberia, in Monrovia, Liberia, 5 March 2013.

weak.”⁵⁶¹ Verdier advised Taylor that if war began anew, then he would be hit on multiple fronts. Instead, Taylor resolutely denied that war was imminent, “He said to me, ‘let’s bet’,” says Verdier, “and we shook hands.” Not long after, like many rebel groups that preceded them, in 2003, a faction of fighters broke away from LURD to form the Movement for Democracy in Liberia (MODEL). Coming into the country through Côte d’Ivoire, MODEL soon gained ground through parts of the south and east, and Taylor found himself fighting a civil war on two fronts.

Until then, Taylor’s narcissism, evidenced by his grandiose self-regard, devaluation of subordinates and his single-minded refusal to consider anyone else’s critiques or judgements (Lubit 2002) had not hindered his rise from warlord to president, and he saw no reason why he should veer course. Once elected, Liberia’s political and economic instability provided a welcoming environment for its psychopathic president. “The psychopath has no difficulty dealing with the consequences of rapid change; in fact, he or she thrives on it,” asserts industrial psychologist Paul Babiak. “Organizational chaos provides both the necessary stimulation for psychopathic thrill seeking and sufficient cover for psychopathic manipulation and abusive behaviour” (Babiak in Deutschman 2005: n.p.). Taylor could not have been oblivious to his country’s turmoil, but seeing as disorder aided the fulfillment his primary needs—profiteering and debauchery—that his country should also suffer was unfortunate but unavoidable.

Come March 2003, Liberia was in freefall and LURD was nearing the capital. Faced with the possibility of hand combat throughout a city filled with hundreds of thousands of refugees, members of the Liberian clergy who had been pleading with ECOWAS to mediate a peace conference, finally made headway and talks were scheduled for early June. As participants began to arrive in Accra, few believed that Taylor had the slightest inclination to voluntarily leave office. Most expected that Taylor would behave as he had in previous peace negotiations: He would talk tough, while resting his tired troops and recruiting new ones. Meanwhile, although representatives from MODEL and LURD claimed to be ready to negotiate, they remained intransigent about Taylor’s departure. Neither rebel force would fathom a country in which Taylor had any political role whatsoever. The non-belligerent participants at Accra were more pragmatic, surmising that Taylor would attempt to negotiate peace at Accra, while clinging to the presidency until he could vie for election later that year.⁵⁶²

AMBUSHED: TAYLOR’S SURPRISE INDICTMENT

It is ironic that Taylor’s leadership was ultimately cut short by the end of the civil war in neighbouring Sierra Leone, and that country’s subsequent pursuit of peace and justice. After all, Taylor had never once sojourned to Sierra Leone during its long and brutal conflict (Pflanz 2012). All the same, his influence seeped through the country’s coastal sands and permeated the darkest recesses of the rainforest. Even as he mounted a ruthless crusade at home, Taylor avariciously sought to gain from the conflict next door and exchanged weapons for diamonds with the RUF, which he subsequently sold to finance his

⁵⁶¹ Interview with Verdier.

⁵⁶² Interviews with several civil society and political party participants at the Accra negotiations, in Monrovia, Liberia, February-March 2012.

domestic activities. Although Taylor had diversified his income-generating activities into timber, rubber and gold before Sierra Leone's war ended, his activities as leading dealer of blood diamonds were not forgotten. Soon after the Lomé accord was signed, the United Nations—following a request from President Kabbah—adopted a resolution to create a Special Court to try those responsible for war crimes.⁵⁶³ From the start, the primary culprits the Special Court sought to bring to justice were Foday Sankoh, leader of the Revolutionary United Front (RUF), and Charles Taylor.

On the morning of 4 June 2003, mere hours before the peace talks were scheduled to begin in Accra, the chief prosecutor of the Special Court for Sierra Leone (SCSL), David Crane, delivered and unsealed a 17-count formal indictment of Charles Taylor in front of several Ghanaian government officials. Taylor was charged with “bearing the greatest responsibility for war crimes, crimes against humanity and serious violation of international humanitarian law in Sierra Leone until November 13, 1996” (MacJohnson 2003). Although the document had been approved in March, Crane had kept the indictment secret for fear that African officials would forewarn Taylor, who would have cancelled his trip to Accra.⁵⁶⁴ Taken by surprise, Ghanaian officials were angry and embarrassed, and claimed that the indictment infringed on their ability to ensure the security and freedom of those attending the peace conference (Hayner 2007).⁵⁶⁵ For once, the Liberian leaders' concerns over his personal safety seemed justified; Taylor was as stunned by the news of the indictment as the Ghanaian government.⁵⁶⁶ There is no doubt that Taylor would have called off his trip to Ghana had he known what Crane intended.⁵⁶⁷ Overall, the indictment caused widespread consternation and confusion. In fact, many observers believed that the peace talks would be doomed before they even started.

Taylor was scheduled to speak at the opening plenary, but once the indictment was opened, all programs halted. Rev. Lartey recalls the upheaval as Ghanaian security troops entered the conference centre, “The duplicity of the international community took us completely by surprise,” he recalls. “We knew that if Taylor was arrested, there would be no peace conference. But Ghana was under a lot of pressure from the international community, particularly the US. We had to scramble and sit down with President Kufuor for an hour and a half, pleading with him not to give up Taylor.”⁵⁶⁸ The clergy told Kufuor that arresting Taylor at the conference would lead to a bloodbath against all Ghanaians

⁵⁶³ The United Nations Security Council unanimously adopted resolution 1315, on 14 August 2000, in which the Council outlined its intent to establish the Special Court for Sierra Leone to deal with violations of human rights and war crimes committed in the country during the civil war.

⁵⁶⁴ According to several participants, Taylor had kept his travel plans under wraps in the weeks ahead of the peace talks. Until he arrived in Accra, few knew for certain whether he would attend the negotiations.

⁵⁶⁵ The Ghanaian government felt cornered by Crane. Ghana's then foreign minister, Addo Akufo-Addo, said he had not personally received the indictment, which had been drawn up fully three months earlier, and claimed, “The timing is unfortunate. It is an embarrassment for us and could destabilise the talks,” (*Ghana Web* 2003).

⁵⁶⁶ Taylor attended the peace talks with the intent of employing his usual tactic of buying time for himself and his forces. “His troops were tired of fighting,” says Zubin Cooper. “Even if Crane hadn't come in, Taylor would have bought breathing space” at the negotiations. Even so, the Liberian president did not expect to be indicted at Accra, and was forced to adjust his strategy accordingly.

⁵⁶⁷ Interview with Nelson.

⁵⁶⁸ Interview with Lartey, 2012.

living in Liberia.⁵⁶⁹ Taylor was also in Ghana as an invited official guest; his capture would have been an unheard of breach of African hospitality (Hayner 2007). In retrospect, few believe that Ghana truly intended to arrest Taylor and deliver him to the Court. Even so, at the time, the Ghanaian government was in an unenviable position. In the meeting with the clergy, other African dignitaries weighed in, pressuring Kofu not to betray “our brother,” and Kufuor backed down. Subsequently, while Ghanaian ministers claimed that they had not been “officially asked” to arrest Taylor, UN officials alleged that Ghana’s failure to detain Taylor was both unexpected and “disappointing” (*BBC News* 2003b).

After a delay of four hours, the opening ceremony at Accra finally began. Numerous African leaders spoke, of which Taylor was the last. “You could hear a pin drop,” says Lartey, as Taylor calmly walked to the platform and began to speak of his abiding love for Liberia.⁵⁷⁰ Bowing to the pressure of the African leaders in attendance, Taylor said announced that he would step down by the end of the year (Barringer & Sengupta 2003), and said he was ready to form a national unity government immediately, without necessarily taking part (*BBC News* 2003a). Never one to squander an opportunity for drama, to the surprise of nearly all in attendance, Taylor also suggested that he might not stand for re-election in the new year. “If I am the problem and seem to stand in the way for Liberia to achieve peace, I will remove myself from the process to allow peace to come to our country,” he promised (Quist-Acton 2003a). As was often his habit, Taylor spoke of himself in the third person while he reaffirmed his willingness to sacrifice all for peace, “If President Taylor removes himself for the Liberians, will that bring peace? If so, I will remove myself,” he claimed (*BBC News* 2003a).

Acknowledging Taylor’s fondness for the theatrical, Cooper asserts that Taylor’s grand gesture at Accra, while planned in haste, was nonetheless genuine. “Taylor was serious,” Cooper recalls. “Going back to the bush wasn’t viable. Taylor’s supply lines were cut at this time, and many of his commanders no longer wanted to fight.”⁵⁷¹ In the hours between the opening of the indictment and the inaugural plenary, Taylor chose a track he had not previously pursued—flight over a fight. Taylor’s speech at Accra was relatively short, and he declined to stay for the evening’s reception. Within minutes, Taylor and his 52-member entourage were on a Ghana Airways flight back to Monrovia (*Ghana Web* 2003).⁵⁷²

With Taylor’s departure from the talks, the ground shifted. Although the organisers claimed the peace conference would continue as planned, many participants now questioned where the centre of power lay, and whether negotiations were possible. “Taylor’s indictment complicated Accra,” recalls the chief negotiator for LURD. “It took is three or four days to determine whether we could even negotiate with the NPFL, without

⁵⁶⁹ There was a sizeable population of Ghanaians living in the outskirts of Monrovia at the time.

⁵⁷⁰ Interview with Lartey, 2012.

⁵⁷¹ Interview with Cooper.

⁵⁷² According to conference organisers, Taylor had planned to stay in Accra for the first few days of the peace talks. Subsequently, he had committed to fly in regularly to consult with his negotiating team. As it turned out, Taylor never returned to Accra.

knowing if Taylor was or would be President.”⁵⁷³ However mercurial and untrustworthy, Taylor’s personality traits were at least known to the other participants. In Taylor’s absence, belligerents cum negotiators struggled to determine who was actually making decisions on behalf of the Liberian government at Accra, as well as where (and with whom) the locus of control lay.

The day after Taylor left Accra, his Minister of Defense, Daniel Chea flew in to lead the government’s negotiating team. Locus of control refers to the extent that people believe they can control events that affect them (Rotter 1966). People with a high locus of control believe their individual behaviour and actions determine the course of life-shaping events, whereas those with high external locus of control feel external factors—such as fate, luck or other people—control events (Volkema & Fleck 2012). People with a high internal locus of control typically are usually assertive, more in control of their actions, demonstrate more political behaviour (or Machiavellianism), and will frequently attempt to influence those around them (Cooley & Nowicki 1974; Hartwig *et al* 1980). Negotiation research suggests a link between locus of control and the outset of the bargaining process, where individuals with a high locus of control are more likely to be competitive (Ford 1983), demand more in their initial offers (Bigoness 1976), overturn the anchoring effects of an initial unfavourable bid (Shalvi *et al* 2010), and generally reach better agreements (Stolte 1983). Accordingly, if the negotiator representing Taylor were to be someone with a high internal locus of control, he would be a formidable opponent who could well influence, if not control, the outcome of the peace talks. Such concerns were justifiable considering that LURD’s chief negotiator was himself an individual with a high internal locus of control (see chapter 8). Meanwhile, the other rebel group vying for power, MODEL, had still not yet agreed to attend the talks (*BBC News* 2003b). Even the usually optimistic members of the clergy remember that after the “betrayal” of Crane’s indictment, it took participants several days to regain any kind of momentum. LURD should have had the foresight to acknowledge that no one in the government’s administration had as high a locus of control as Taylor himself. For all the rebels’ disquiet, and the last-minute addition of Chea, negotiation oversight remained firmly with Taylor, who directed his team from a distance. Chea never evolved beyond being a Taylor mouthpiece.

Although he was not detained in Accra, the indictment formally “delegitimised” Taylor (Hayner 2007: 9), particularly in the eyes of the international community. After years of overtly and tacitly supporting the Liberian President, the US publicly withdrew from any dealings with Taylor. Had the US been a formal participant at the Accra negotiations, Taylor’s loss of credibility would have mattered because all parties must be perceived as “a legitimate negotiating partner by the other negotiators, otherwise negotiations cannot proceed” (Docherty & Campbell 2006: 501). Even so, legitimacy also applies to agents representing principals at negotiations. While Taylor was no longer the government’s lead negotiator at Accra, the other parties had to accept Daniel Chea, Taylor’s Minister of Defence, as his replacement. Although Chea was loyal to Taylor, government soldiers were not necessarily devoted to Chea, blaming him for their ongoing lack of remuneration (IRIN 2003i). Chea’s precarious position seemed to suit LURD as it

⁵⁷³ Interview with with then chief negotiator (CN) for LURD, and Minister of Justice in the 2003 transitional government, in Monrovia, Liberia, 4 March 2010.

did not object to his appointment. Back in Monrovia, Taylor's position went from bad to worse. The government held only three of Liberia's 15 counties (*BBC News* 2003b), and rebel forces were gaining fast. Within 24 hours of the indictment, following weeks of threats, LURD began to shell the capital. It seemed like a matter of time before the rebels overthrew Taylor.

Instead of developing military strategy, Taylor moved to consolidate his political power. Within 48 hours of his return to Monrovia, Taylor arrested his Vice-President, Moses Blah, along with 30 other government officials, accusing them of orchestrating a coup while he was in Ghana. According to Liberian military sources, while Taylor was in Accra, the US Embassy had contacted Blah and "told him to take over, because Taylor would not be returning from Ghana" (Oni & Oghifo 2003). Summoning the media to the presidential mansion, Taylor came out swinging, "Some succumbed," he said ominously, but the coup ended in failure. "We have accepted the resignation of the vice-president. And I'm sure he will have an apology for the Liberian people" (Quist-Acton 2003a).⁵⁷⁴ Blah was not seen or heard from again in public for months.

With Blah in custody, Taylor reverted to the style of command he knew best, that of belligerent warlord. "He was a psychopath consumed by power and grandeur," says Conmany Wesseh, "And we knew that if he wasn't removed, we would never have peace."⁵⁷⁵ Taylor deliberately employed "singular psychopathic events" such as mass murder and mass rape to impel ongoing warfare (Riedel 2014: 257), but few, if anyone, could claim to know what his true aims were at this time.⁵⁷⁶ Maintaining their pleas for peace, members of the clergy became increasingly concerned over Taylor's erratic behaviour and violent rhetoric. "Taylor was fighting two armies," says Lartey, and would not acknowledge that he was losing. "He vowed that if either force entered Monrovia, that there would be fighting house to house. We knew the consequences would be disastrous."⁵⁷⁷ As always, it was innocent civilians that suffered most. Amidst the shelling, residents ventured outside only for food and water, but even these basics were scarce, and many citizens were on the verge of starvation.

Back in Accra, conference participants—including the rebels—agreed to make the best of an awkward situation and talk peace. While LURD focused its artillery against Taylor in Monrovia, in Accra, the first two weeks of negotiations revolved around working

⁵⁷⁴ Testifying at Liberia's Truth and Reconciliation Commission in 2009, Blah said that he was detained and tortured by Taylor's forces, and that Taylor himself had ordered his execution (*TRC Liberia* 2009). Blah claimed that Taylor had orchestrated his arrest because he did not want to fulfil an earlier promise to pay Blah US\$1 million in exchange for his resignation. Blah claimed that Taylor wanted then House Speaker Nyundueh Monokomna to replace Blah as vice-president and later ascend to the presidency upon Taylor's departure, "But I think he decided to put me in jail because he did not want to give me the money" (*TRC Liberia* 2009: n.p.).

⁵⁷⁵ Interview with Wesseh.

⁵⁷⁶ As experts in exploiting the psychological dynamics of conflict, leaders or warlords with psychopathic character traits will trigger "singular psychopathic events" deliberately to incite their traumatised citizens to commit acts of terror which, in turn, can "propagate new cycles of trauma" (Riedel 2014: 262). The collective trauma suffered by the citizens of a country at war, Riedel notes, insulates them from traditional culture and rituals that could restore their wellbeing. The result is wholesale community breakdown, economic collapse and the disintegration of cultural traditions.

⁵⁷⁷ Interview with Lartey, 2012.

out the terms of a ceasefire. “Our goal was to get Taylor to dismantle his military machine,” says the chief LURD negotiator. “We insisted that unless the agreement led to Taylor’s departure, we were not going to sign.”⁵⁷⁸ Strong in the knowledge that their forces were within sight of a military victory, the rebels were in no mood to compromise. Taylor’s indictment “supported our position,” the LURD chief negotiator claimed, and both rebel groups were united in their demand that Taylor step down within 30 days, as a condition of any settlement (*BBC News* 2003c). “The paragraph dealing with Taylor’s departure, that took all of the time,” recalls the LURD negotiator. “It took us 13 days, but once assurance was given... that Taylor would leave, we signed.”⁵⁷⁹

On 17 June 2003 both rebel factions and the Liberian government ratified a ceasefire agreement. Article 8 on Political Reconciliations clearly states that all signatories would seek a comprehensive peace agreement within thirty days, which would cover the “Formation of a transitional government, which will not include the current President in accordance with his June 4th 2003 declaration in Accra, made at the inauguration of the ‘ECOWAS Peace Talks’” (*Ceasefire Agreement* 17 June 2003). In Monrovia, where tens of thousands of people were thought to be sleeping rough, too afraid to return to their homes, news of the ceasefire made way for an informal celebratory parade of honking cars and dancing market-goers (*BBC News* 2003c).

The ceasefire held for less than 12 hours. No sooner had the sound of celebratory honking quieted in the streets of Monrovia, gunshots again erupted. MODEL accused Taylor’s soldiers of attacking their positions in Nimba County, warning, “rebel forces would retaliate if they came under attack” (*AFP* 2003b). Although the ceasefire made provisions for enforcement, peace monitors were not expected in Liberia for another three days, and no timeline had been laid out for the arrival of peacekeeping troops (*BBC News* 2003d).⁵⁸⁰ The rebels apparently overrated the government’s goodwill in the previous 13 days of negotiations. Although LURD and MODEL were personally negotiating with Chea, Taylor was certainly pulling his defence minister’s strings behind the scenes.⁵⁸¹ Throughout the Accra negotiations, Chea did not make a single decision without first consulting his president. The disconnect between rhetorical reassurance and deception during ceasefire discussions should have signalled the government’s bad faith to the other participants.

WILL HE OR WON’T HE? TAYLOR CLINGS TO POWER DURING TALKS

Despite the immediate breach of the ceasefire agreement, peace talks continued in Accra. For all his smooth talk at the Accra opening session, Taylor had no real intention of stepping down. As he had done before, he intended to use peace talks to buy time. In Accra, LURD and MODEL were negotiating terms for a ceasefire, while in Monrovia,

⁵⁷⁸ Interview with CN.

⁵⁷⁹ Interview with CN.

⁵⁸⁰ The rebels’ insistence on formalising Taylor’s departure made them blind to other eventualities. In the friction over one clause, in 13 days none of the negotiators had foreseen the need to ensure that peacekeeping troops were on the ground prior to signing the ceasefire. Without any means of enforcement, the signed document had little weight.

⁵⁸¹ Even after he was exiled in Nigeria, Taylor continued to meddle—or “offer advice”—in government affairs.

NPFL Chairman Cyril Allen, speaking on behalf of Taylor, was in fighting form, “We are not about to discuss anything further... until they lift the indictment” he postured (Dukulé 2003). Taylor was prepared to adhere to the terms of the ceasefire, Allen said, but “As far as the transitional government is concerned, there will be no deal” (Dukulé 2003). Taylor was not going to give up political power so easily. Instead of bowing to the inevitable and planning a dignified exit, Taylor chose to fight.

A fighting front was Taylor’s public tactic for most of the rest of the negotiations. In media appearances, he claimed that the indictment was “mostly politics” and meant little (BBC 2003h). While he blustered in the open, behind the scenes, Taylor appears to have weighed his options thoroughly over the first two months of the negotiations. Monrovia saw countless fully loaded transport trucks go from Taylor’s compound to the port.⁵⁸² Taylor also met with various regional leaders to discuss asylum possibilities. The president’s actions during this time indicate at least some awareness of his declining fortunes and show evidence that the indictment heralded a significant change in Taylor’s negotiating goals. Where he had first planned to stay in the presidency until such a time as he could win the war, Taylor began to negotiate to protect his personal interests. Nonetheless, in public, Taylor acted as though the charges against him could be dismissed as easily as they had been laid, and retracted his pledge to stand down.

Furious at Taylor’s *volte-face*, LURD launched a renewed offensive across the frontlines. Thousands more refugees poured into Monrovia, seeking shelter in long-defunct school buildings and public halls, while long-term residents holed up in terror. Monrovia was one of Taylor’s last stands and the city was certainly his most strategically significant locale. Taylor took to the radio in an attempt to buoy his dwindling supporters. “There have been rumours that I have left the city,” Taylor announced, “Fellow citizens, I have said to you that my life is no more important than yours. I am right here. This blatant act of terror will be fought all the way” (Butcher 2003a). Ironically, the greatest source of terror for those in the capital city came from Taylor’s own government troops, who raped and stole from residents and refugees alike. Soldiers and security forces hijacked the few vehicles that risked driving the city streets and plundered businesses at will (Butcher 2003a).

Under constant shelling, Monrovia went from bad to worse. In late June, Taylor changed his negotiation rhetoric from demanding that the indictment be lifted to saying that he would not relinquish power until international troops arrived in Liberia to guarantee the peace. Taylor’s pleas were primarily directed at the US, whom he begged “to do everything in its power to help Liberia and Liberians out of this mess” (Sengupta 2003d). Instead of stepping down in 30 days, Taylor now said that he would finish his term, which extended to the end of the year. Here we see another fighting tactic in these negotiations: moving the goalposts. This tactic is often used as a reframing tool to help participants modify their perspective and create a win-win situation in which they can achieve some of their objectives. However, Taylor turned the tactic inside out. Whenever it would appear that his original demands might be met, Taylor would adjust his goals and claim something more outlandish or improbable.

⁵⁸² Interview with Cooper.

Meanwhile, the Liberian president portrayed himself as the champion and protector of blameless citizens, “I share your desire for peace,” Taylor claimed. “What I am not prepared to do is leave you in the hands of these kinds of murderers” (Sengupta 2003d). To Taylor, LURD were “these murderers.” Although the rebels had been battling for the capital for weeks, they had been unable to fully overpower Taylor’s armed forces. Meanwhile, casualties soared; in Monrovia, the Minister of Health claimed up to 300 civilians had been killed in two days of fighting alone (*AP* 2003a).

Throughout his tenure, Taylor may have resisted any advice, but this did not stop him from trying to secure outside assistance. Taylor’s ploy of reaching out to the international community in hopes of a humanitarian mission of mercy was no doubt precipitated by his declining military fortunes. Ongoing international sanctions finally seemed to be hindering Taylor’s access to unlimited weapons and ammunition. In Monrovia and across the regional frontlines, Taylor’s troops were at a disadvantage. “I remember thinking, the way Taylor’s government is behaving, it won’t last long,” says Verdier. “I spoke to many of Taylor’s fighters. They were tired, running out of ammunition, and didn’t know why they were fighting anymore.”⁵⁸³ Taylor had promised to start paying his soldiers (Sengupta 2003d), but so far, no remuneration had been forthcoming.

Liberians had maintained exceptional goodwill towards the Americans and welcomed—even urged—intervention from the US only to feel betrayed by its ongoing indifference. The US never formally refused to send troops to Liberia—indeed, it regularly intimated that this possibility was being considered. However, behind the scenes, the administration was steadfast that no American soldiers would be risking their lives in Liberia. American troops were already in Iraq, and other—more strategic—hotspots were emerging in the Middle East and the India-Pakistan border. As the fighting intensified in 2003, President Bush indicated that he might consider military intervention, but over the following months his government put forth an ever-evolving list of prerequisites that could never quite be met. Indeed, the American position shifted as frequently as Taylor’s own list of conditions for departure. In late June, Bush administration officials claimed to be pondering “a number of options on Liberia, including financial support for an international peacekeeping force” (Sengupta 2003d). Three days later, when asked whether the government might send troops into Liberia, White House spokesman, Ari Fleisher said, “I’m not ruling it out” (Stout 2003).⁵⁸⁴

Taylor became increasingly volatile. When, a week after his first entreaty for American intervention, no aid had been forthcoming, the president accused the US of supporting the rebels (Sengupta 2003p). Savvy to the prevailing political winds, Taylor was quick to paint LURD as “Islamic extremists who should be a source of worry to the Bush administration” (Sengupta 2003p). Accordingly, the US could only prove its righteous intent towards Liberia by deploying peacekeepers. Taylor was clever enough to try to play to western preoccupations with Islamic terrorism, but he so self-absorbed that he

⁵⁸³ Interview with Verdier.

⁵⁸⁴ Generally, the UN was unenthusiastic about the prospect of becoming involved in Liberia, but Secretary General Kofi Annan actively campaigned for an international force to bring an end to the hostilities (Stout 2003).

apparently could not perceive his diminishing stature on the international stage. Instead, he retained a narrow view of himself and negotiations in which only one party could win. This polarised and competitive view is also termed “narcissistic negotiation” (Kofman 2010) and describes Taylor well. Driven by a need to defeat his opponents—or win—Taylor could never concede to collaborate with the rebels to end the war.

Taylor again amended his promise to step away from the presidency, saying that he would have a brief “cooling off period” before again returning to the political stage (Sengupta 2003p). “I think it’s expedient at this time for Charles Taylor to sacrifice,” he said of his exit. Such claims were easy enough to make. For all of the chaos, Taylor still retained a following. “Taylor had won a lot of hearts and imaginations. He became an icon,” Taylor’s former Director of Cabinet, Nelson noted. “If he came back he [knew] he would win an election.”⁵⁸⁵ Taylor assured citizens that his legacy wish was to bring peace to Liberia, and claimed he would be willing to leave Liberia “in the shortest possible time” as soon as international peacekeepers arrived. But inside the velvet glove, an iron fist: Without international forces, Taylor promised, there would be chaos (Sengupta 2003p). “I cannot be held responsible for the anger of my people,” he threatened. “Here is my projection, I can see the people being very violent” (Berkeley 2001: 26).

While the negotiations in Accra proceeded without Taylor, he remained the linchpin upon which all resolutions were made. “Taylor was weakened, unable to fight back, and we were just outside Monrovia,” says the chief LURD negotiator. “He did not have the option to stay. For us, it was clear that Taylor could not be part of any future government.”⁵⁸⁶ On the front line, while the two main rebel groups continued to fight Taylor—and each other—at the conference table, they remained united that Taylor had to leave before there would be peace.

In early July, Taylor began to indicate a greater awareness of his increasingly perilous position. Between trying to antagonise prospective allies and directing battlefield manoeuvres, with the assistance of the Liberian clergy, Taylor started discussing his future plans with the Nigerian government. According to Sheikh Konneh, religious leaders “wanted [Taylor] to leave the country immediately, but we also wanted him to have a place of refuge.”⁵⁸⁷ Taylor was still resisting the inevitable, and vowed to “fight until the last soldier dies,” recalls Konneh. “But before the last soldier died, we believed that civilians would suffer greatly.”⁵⁸⁸ The clergy thought that Nigeria might allow Taylor to seek haven there, and eased the way for talks with government officials. On 5 July, the embattled Liberian president announced that President Obasanjo had “extended an invitation” and he had accepted an offer of asylum in Nigeria (‘Uzor 2003).⁵⁸⁹ True to form, Taylor did not specify a timetable for his departure, although he was clear that, “Before I transit, I think it is important that peacekeepers be present” (CNN 2003; see also ‘Uzor 2003).

⁵⁸⁵ Interview with Nelson.

⁵⁸⁶ Interview with CN.

⁵⁸⁷ Interview with Konneh, 2012.

⁵⁸⁸ Interview with Konneh, 2012.

⁵⁸⁹ Taylor avoided calling Obasanjo’s offer asylum, instead describing his destination as a “soft landing” (‘Uzor 2003).

As soon as Taylor announced that he would leave for Nigeria, the US stated that pursuing Taylor for war crimes was “on the back burner” and that American focus was on ensuring Taylor’s departure from Liberia (CNN 2003). As an American-led team of a dozen military civil affairs specialists, backed by an equal number of marines, were deployed to Liberia to assess needs for a possible humanitarian mission, President Bush again played up “special ties” with Liberia (CNN 2003).⁵⁹⁰ Meanwhile, Taylor remained contemptuous of the SCSL’s indictment, calling it groundless and “politically motivated,” and insisted he had no intention of appearing before a court in a foreign country (Sengupta 2003p). However bellicose, Taylor’s bravado betrayed a growing sense of uncertainty. Whereas he had once discounted the indictment altogether, he now acted as though he was cornered. And when Taylor was cornered, he invariably fought back.

Negotiations progressed as warring parties continued to fight as though there was no ceasefire in place. Claiming self-defense in the face of daily attacks by Taylor’s forces, LURD made further battlefield advances, but was still not able to capture Monrovia. For all the shelling, the war was at a stalemate. In Guinea, LURD chairman Sekou Konneh claimed, “We are not going to hijack any government, but we have to keep the pressure on for Taylor to leave” (Quist-Arcton 2003b). From the Executive Mansion, Taylor retaliated by calling for further violence, promising “We will fight street to street, house to house, and we will defeat them” (Quist-Arcton 2003b). The belligerents’ bloodlust only grew with Taylor’s rallying cry. In late July LURD was again within sight of Monrovia, with only one strategic bridge holding troops from flooding into the capital.

Taylor might have been publically grandiloquent, but according to associates and observers, he knew that his time was up. Some say Taylor had started to plan for his departure months earlier, “Before the negotiations, Taylor was ahead, and he saw the writing on the wall,” says Cooper. “He was slowly shipping stuff to Nigeria, preparing to sail into the sunset. We used to see his containers going through Congo Town to the port.”⁵⁹¹ Many speculate that Taylor was acting to protect his many assets, which would assure his material comfort in exile. In time, Taylor’s public persona and private plans coalesced. On 22 July, he offered the most specific timeline for his often-delayed departure, stating that he would stand down “within 10 days”—by 1 August (Sengupta & Goodstein 2003).⁵⁹² Although he had already accepted an offer of asylum in Nigeria, Taylor now indicated that he was also negotiating with Ghana and Chad. Acknowledging that he had made multiple announcements about his exit strategy, Taylor said that this time he could be trusted because he had made a commitment to “my religious leader” Rev. Kilari Paul (Sengupta & Goodstein 2003).⁵⁹³

⁵⁹⁰ This small mission was the largest contingent of American citizens the US government allowed in Liberia during the war.

⁵⁹¹ Interview with Cooper. Although he rarely slept there, Taylor’s primary residence was the *White Flower*, located in Congo Town. For those who cared to look, large shipments to the port would have been carried along Tubman Blvd. in public view.

⁵⁹² With Vice-President Moses Blah still in custody, Taylor said that he would transfer power to his close confidant, Yundueh Monorkomna, Speaker of the House of Representatives (Sengupta & Goodstein 23 July 2003).

⁵⁹³ Rev. Kilari Arnaud Paul was a popular Christian evangelist, originally from India, then based in the US. Taylor and Paul’s relationship dated back mere months; they met after Taylor saw Paul preaching on

The American-led fact-finding mission to Liberia returned with a unanimous recommendation for intervention, but still the US delayed taking action. Not unlike the man they sought to banish, the US continued to shift its position while becoming more quarrelsome. In late July, President Bush insisted that Taylor step down, repeating that he would “not take no for an answer” (Mwaura 2003: n.p.). However, the US also insisted that before it would countenance sending any American troops, an effective ceasefire had to be in place, West African peacekeepers had to be on the ground, and Taylor had to be gone (NYT 2003). At least one of these preconditions was met when ECOWAS announced on 23 July that it would send up to 1,300 peacekeeping troops to Liberia within two weeks (NYT 2003). A small, but effective, contingent of US soldiers would have greatly boosted the forces’ credibility, but the US demurred.⁵⁹⁴

At the end of July, Liberians’ hopes again soared when they heard that the US had sent three war ships manned by 2,000 marines to the coast. With the ships at anchor just beyond the horizon, the government stalled, claiming troops could not be deployed without the input of their advance team of advisors (Itano 2003).⁵⁹⁵ Lartey and the other clergy were skeptical, noting that the US had tried a similar tactic in the 1990s. “Then we were convinced that the Americans would come to our rescue,” Lartey recalls. “This time we knew better. You can’t fool people a second time. We knew that they would not commit any troops.”⁵⁹⁶ Despite the clergy’s cynicism, the warships cast a shadow of perceived threat, which—although the US had little intention on deploying—provided at least a few Liberians with some comfort.

Taylor continued to play cat and mouse, stating that he was planning to leave the capital for Nigeria, but not committing to resign from the presidency. It was not lost on Liberians or the international community that “someone with a cellphone in Nigeria can still manipulate things abroad” (Mwaura 2003: n.p.). For LURD’s chief negotiator, however necessary it was to remove Taylor from Liberia, he also needed to tender his resignation. Nonetheless, the international community’s priority was Taylor’s departure. On Saturday 1 August (the day he had given 10 days earlier for his departure), a contingent of ECOWAS officials arrived in Monrovia to set out a plan for Taylor’s safe passage to Nigeria. Ostensibly, Taylor had agreed that he would leave Liberia within three days of the

television (Finnegan 2003). Paul founded an international televangelism empire, Gospel to Unreached Millions and the Global Peace Initiative, whose work was best known for its charter airplane “Global Peace One” which delivered aid to disaster areas (Malisow 2006). Although backed by numerous well-to-do donors, Paul’s philanthropic endeavours were plagued with charges of financial mismanagement, including fraud (Malisow 2006). In 2012, Paul was arrested in Andhra Pradesh, India for the murder of his brother over a land dispute (Rao 2012). He was released on bail shortly thereafter, and the case remains open (Rao 2012). Ironically, Paul is now politically active in the fight to end corruption in Indian government politics.

⁵⁹⁴ Over the course of the Accra negotiations, reluctantly, ECOWAS agreed to lead a peacekeeping effort, but only after the UN promised to reinforce West African troops and the US granted substantial monetary (the amount is unknown) and logistical support (Itano 2003). By mid-August, when Taylor eventually left the country, approximately 1,400 West African troops (again, mostly Nigerian) were in Liberia, operating under the name ECOWAS Mission in Liberia (ECOMIL).

⁵⁹⁵ The *Los Angeles Times* later revealed that the advance team had actually reported back a week prior to the warships’ arrival that an intervention was both feasible and justified, to avoid humanitarian disaster (Farley *et al* 2003).

⁵⁹⁶ Interview with Lartey, 2012.

arrival of regional peacekeepers; the troops were due to land on Monday (Sengupta 2003e). Instead of a receiving a formal welcome on their arrival, officials were left cooling their heels. Hours after their meeting time, they were told that Taylor was far away “directing the war effort” in the port city of Buchanan (Sengupta 2003e). Although all conventions had been adhered to prior to the visit, Taylor claimed to be annoyed that correct protocol had not been followed. Officials waited and 24 hours later, Taylor finally appeared. Again, the wind rose to cover previously visible tracks. After their meeting with Taylor, ECOWAS announced that peacekeepers would arrive on Monday, but they made no mention of the previous three-day ultimatum. “We will cross each bridge as we come to them,” said Ghanaian foreign minister, Nana Akufo-Addo (Sengupta 2003e). Taylor was hardly more forthcoming, noting cryptically, “The most important thing is everything we’ve said about resigning and leaving will happen” (Sengupta 2003e). Taylor’s words did little to assuage the enmity of the rebels, and LURD renewed its shelling of Monrovia that night.

For all Taylor’s prevarication, ever so slowly, negotiators inched their way towards an agreement. Talks had been going on for more than two months, and the international community—namely the EU, which was funding the talks, and ECOWAS, which was mediating—was running out of patience. Participants agree that Taylor’s lack of precision and commitment to a firm departure date slowed the talks and increased LURD’s antipathy. “Taylor did not want to see his government overthrown,” says Nelson. “But he was finally convinced that he could hold the line no longer.”⁵⁹⁷ In cabinet sessions, Taylor may have been persuaded that the end was near, but publically he still deferred his departure. On Monday 3 August, as planned, ECOWAS peacekeeping troops drove into Monrovia where thousands of residents welcomed their arrival, shouting, “We want peace, no more war” (Aliyu & Ogedengbe 2003). Meanwhile, Taylor cancelled his plans to announce his resignation to parliament, leaving House Speaker to announce that he had yet to receive official notification that Taylor was leaving.

ECOWAS troops found Monrovia starved and desperate for food, particularly in the government-held areas of the city.⁵⁹⁸ After weeks of relentless fighting, LURD combatants were similarly desperate, not for food, but for Taylor to leave. From his garrison in Guinea, LURD Chairman Conneh said that his soldiers would concede to having the international indictment against Taylor dropped if that is what it would take to have him leave the country (Aliyu & Ogedengbe 2003). Of course, Conneh’s words carried no weight whatsoever with the Special Court, but the statement allowed the rebels to appear compliant and anxious for peace.

DEFIANT, BITTER BUT GONE: THE WHITE FLAG

Taylor held out for a full week of indescribable, escalating tension before finally making his move. The Liberian president wanted fanfare and ceremony before ceding power, and if the international community would not grant his wish he would make it come

⁵⁹⁷ Interview with Nelson.

⁵⁹⁸ In Taylor strongholds, rice cost 20 times more than in the port area, which was controlled by LURD (Aliyu & Ogedengbe 2003). The humanitarian situation was less dire in rebel-held neighbourhoods, where LURD had been distributing food and fuel from the port’s warehouses.

true himself. Taylor carefully calculated his timing and delivery for maximum effect.⁵⁹⁹ Ever the media-conscious showman, on Monday afternoon 11 August 2003, Taylor appeared at the Executive Mansion sitting on a gold painted throne with red velvet cushioning, wearing a pristine white safari suit holding his trademark staff (Faris 2003). In a vintage performance, Taylor rambled, mostly eloquently, for 17 minutes without the aid of a script, summoning a full emotional range, at once defiant, bitter, gracious, dismissive—always charismatic.

Taylor's reluctance to exit was unmistakably clear. In words biting and caustic, he claimed his forced departure to be "a rape of democracy" (*The Vanguard* 2003). Head high, he maintained his actions to have been honourable, "I may have stepped on a few toes, but I don't care, because history must show the facts" (Quist-Arcton 2003b: n.p.). Indeed, Taylor insisted history would forgive his transgressions. "History will be kind to me. I have fulfilled my duties" (Quist-Arcton 2003b: n.p.).

Never one to take responsibility for the destruction he left in his wake, Taylor blamed international forces, and most particularly, the Americans for his eviction, "I did not want to leave this country. I can say I am being forced into exile by the world superpower," he said. "This is an American war against the republic. They can call off their dogs now" (Sengupta 2003f: n.p.). Although rebel troops had sheared away his legitimacy and captured most of his territory, Taylor did not acknowledge LURD or MODEL save to call them a "surrogate force" of the US (Sengupta 2003f).

Of the death and devastation he orchestrated, Taylor was characteristically cagey, "It's so easy to say 'because of Taylor,'" he observed. "There will be no Taylor after a few minutes" (*CNN* 2003: n.p.).

Taylor made a point of recognising the African leaders that had chosen to attend the event. Of UN Secretary Annan, Taylor was hardly effusive, calling him "well-meaning" and of ECOWAS Chairman and Ghanaian President Kufuor, Taylor said, "he's trying." Taylor reserved his praise for "my good friend and brother" Thabo Mbeki, President of South Africa and the Nigerians, namely chief mediator General Abubakar for his "patience" and President Obasanjo for "all his contributions", as well as for making Africa strong (Quist-Arcton 2003b: n.p.).

Invoking the rhetoric of American slaves burnished with prophetic nuance, Taylor professed, "I have accepted this role... I am the whipping boy" (Quist-Arcton 2003b: n.p.). As he had often done in past public performances, Taylor likened himself to Christ, claiming that just as Jesus was prepared to make the ultimate sacrifice and die so humankind could be saved from sin, so he was also prepared to be "the sacrificial lamb" (Quist-Arcton 2003b: n.p.). Attempting penitence and piety, Taylor spoke of the prayer

⁵⁹⁹ Taylor's actions may have been calculated, but his government was undeniably in dire straits. Even Taylor's own radio station (KISS-FM) had to search for sufficient fuel to turn on its generators and broadcast his final farewell (Sengupta 2003f). True to form, Taylor began his final speech as President two and a half hours after the time he had set—claiming he was delayed while greeting the various dignitaries who had come to town to witness the occasion. The resignation ceremony had to be scheduled during daylight hours because the Executive Mansion had no electricity (Butcher August 2003b).

time he had shared with his spiritual confidant, Dr. Paul. Taylor claimed Paul had asked him repeatedly if he was going to keep his word, and chided him that it was important that he do so. “I got tired of listening,” Taylor admitted, then commended him, “Dr. Paul, I’m out of here” (Quist-Arcton 2003b: n.p.).

Canny to the end, Taylor dangled a final plea—some would call it a threat—to beleaguered Liberians, “I leave you with these parting words. I say, God willing, I will be back” (Vick 2003: n.p.).⁶⁰⁰

Flanked by fellow African Presidents Mbeki, Kufuor, Obasanjo, and Chissano, Taylor relinquished power to his vice-president Moses Blah.⁶⁰¹ “The war in Liberia has ended,” Kufuor announced (Sengupta 2003g: n.p.). Less than three hours later, Taylor stood on the hot tarmac at Roberts Airport waving a white handkerchief to a small crowd of weeping and waving supporters. Before nightfall, he was airborne, bound for Abuja.⁶⁰²

Taylor had hardly settled into his Mercedes for the drive to the airport when the three American warships that had been offshore at anchor for almost three weeks briefly sailed within view of Monrovia. While the American’s action was symbolic at best, from Accra, the rebels actually delivered on their promise to make peace. One week after Taylor flew to Nigeria, on 18 August 2003, defense minister Chea signed the Accra Comprehensive Peace Agreement together with LURD’s chief negotiator and MODEL chief negotiator, Tiah Slinger.

TERMINATING TAYLOR

To most of the world, Taylor’s resignation and departure from Liberia was abrupt and unforeseen. However, to the participants at Accra and nearly all Liberians, Taylor’s demise could not come soon enough. For months, while peace was discussed in Accra, rebels advanced on Monrovia. Taylor’s forces mostly kept LURD out of the city core, but could do little more; his government and hold on power was crumbling. Nonetheless, the army and rebels remained effective in their brutality. By the time Taylor was forced from power, millions were displaced and more than 300,000 people had been killed in the wars he set fire to (Polgreen 2006b). In less than six years as president, Taylor also stole over US\$100 million from Liberia’s treasury (Polgreen 2006b).

⁶⁰⁰ Taylor and his villainous son, Chuckie, were known to be fans of American action films. Taylor’s final words were ironically reminiscent of Arnold Schwarzenegger’s most famous line in *The Terminator* (1984).

⁶⁰¹ President Joaquim Chissano was then President of Mozambique. After having arrested and stripped his vice-president of his office for allegedly attempting a coup at the outset of the negotiations, Taylor had since pardoned Blah’s transgressions, and he was in the president’s inner circle once more. In less than 60 days, Blah turned over the presidency to businessman Gyude Bryant, the person who was most palatable to the belligerents, to head the new national transitional government.

⁶⁰² Many Nigerians, including several human rights organisations, had condemned Obasanjo’s asylum offer to the Liberian president. Taylor (accompanied by his wife Jewel, their four daughters, and a retinue of up to four dozen close supporters) settled in Calabar, a small coastal city in the southeastern part of the country. Nigerian officials had chosen the site deliberately, noting Taylor’s presence would not pose a “security risk” there (Onah 2003).

There is no doubt that Liberia was a fragile state before Taylor commenced his rebel uprising. However, in the subsequent decade, Taylor carefully scored and then conducted a symphony of utter devastation that played over his fellow citizens. First as warlord, he narcissistically perpetuated conflict and reneged on numerous negotiations in his pursuit of power. He embraced democracy once he knew he was guaranteed to win elections, only to crush all civil freedoms through psychopathic use of menace and coercion. Throughout, Taylor's motivations never seemed to evolve beyond the reflexive pursuit of wealth and power. He did, however, appear to want to savour these pleasures while alive, and so honed his survival skills.

Taylor lived in relative comfort for three years in Nigeria. However, as a guest he eventually wore out his welcome. While he continued meddle in Liberian government affairs, Taylor appears to have been insensitive to the changing political tides in his host country.⁶⁰³ Under increasing international pressure, President Obasanjo turfed his longtime guest. The day after the Nigerian government agreed to Liberia's request to extradite the former president to face trial in Sierra Leone, Taylor went missing from his comfortable villa (Polgreen 2006aa). For three days, Nigerian troops searched the country for a missing Land Rover with diplomatic plates.

Recalling the folk tale of the English-speaking baby who foretold a coming downpour, Taylor's reign of death only stopped falling altogether on 29 March 2006. The former Liberian president was captured at a remote border outpost, while trying to cross into Cameroon, after being spotted by a vigilant immigration official (Timberg 2006). Surrounded by security, Taylor was read his rights and placed in handcuffs. Once again he was wearing white; this time, his suit was rumpled, his tunic bunched up under a bulletproof vest. True to his word, Taylor did return to Liberia, only to be handed over to UN soldiers, who promptly flew him to Freetown where he was placed in a jail cell to face charges of crimes against humanity (Timberg 2006; Polgreen 2006a). Following a lengthy trial in The Hague, Taylor was convicted and sentenced to 50 years in prison. He no longer revels in the pleasures of power and wealth, but Taylor—now 67 years old—is still alive, slowly serving out his time in a remote northern UK prison (*BBC News* 2014a).

This chapter has demonstrated how Taylor's embodied certain narcissistic, psychopathic and Machiavellian traits—known as the Dark Triad of Personality—and how these characteristics served him well as warlord, president and negotiator. With 17 peace talks under his belt, Taylor had become a highly successful negotiator, in that he usually emerged from peace talks having achieved what he was after: He got the respite he sought for his troops and prepared for his next offensive all while earning public esteem for being committed to the peace process. He was so credible that mediators took him at his word repeatedly only to be deceived time and again. Taylor's person(ality) was so great that as

⁶⁰³ Allegedly, Taylor helped incite deadly riots in October 2004, had led an assassination attempt on Guinea's president Lansana Conté in January 2005, and was financially supporting 36 political groups across the region, including a rapid-action military force (Shulman 2005). Prior to the 2007 elections, Taylor was controlling or influencing almost half of Liberia's 22 presidential candidates. "He is like a vampire," said former UN special envoy to Liberia. "Until you drive a stake in his heart, he won't die" (Shulman 2005: n.p.).

long as he was present and leading peace talks, negotiations would never have resulted in lasting peace for Liberia.

The Accra peace talks would likely have failed were it not for Taylor's surprise indictment for war crimes by the chief prosecutor of the Special Court of Sierra Leone. Although Taylor behaved in these negotiations as he had previously, infuriating the rebels and justifying their increasing violence during the talks, the indictment marked a critical juncture for the Liberian president. For all his previous potency as negotiator and warlord, Taylor was increasingly limited by the dwindling ranks of his disloyal troops, his fears over his personal security, and the rejection of the international community. As he publicly fought to retain power, Taylor privately began to make preparations to leave the presidency and the country. Taylor did not go quickly, nor did he go quietly, but he did finally leave. In so doing, he kept his life along with much of his wealth, and Liberia finally found peace.

CONCLUSION: STATE OF EXTREME AGENCY

States do not fight wars. Individual people, on behalf of groups or states, fight and die in war. Likewise, individual people negotiate peace agreements to end war. Peace processes are political events. Current political research around peace negotiations is fundamentally incomplete because it lacks the capacity to explain individual intent, choices, and actions.

This dissertation has sought to answer the following questions: Who are the individuals who influence and determine the course of peace negotiations? How do individual personalities, biases, and approaches towards negotiations impact the process? What tactics do these individuals use in peace talks and to which ends? What impact do these individuals have on peace talks and their outcomes?

Individuals—be they representatives of rebels groups, non-governmental organisations, or states—negotiate peace agreements. Consequently, an understanding of who these individuals are, as well as their individual motives and actions in negotiations, yields important knowledge. In the first comparative study of peace negotiations to end the wars in Sierra Leone and Liberia, I provide a fuller understanding of negotiators and their tactics in Sierra Leone and Liberia through a multidisciplinary consideration of psychology, law, and management studies literature that considers individual motivations, biases, and behaviours. Additionally, my research results yield a broader understanding of peace negotiations beyond the geographic confines of West Africa.

This concluding chapter presents the empirical findings of my research. I assess how my research aligns with existing political science literature and highlight key concepts from other social science literatures that provide nuance to our understanding of individual motives and actions.

To fill in gaps and balance underlying assumptions in political science literature, I sought out supporting research on negotiations in other social sciences. To compensate for the lack of historical accounts of the 1999 Lomé and 2003 Accra peace processes that put an end to the Sierra Leone and Liberian civil wars, I sought out and met with a number of decision-makers. Qualitative original data, obtained through field research and in-depth semi-structured personal interviews with key players in Sierra Leone and Liberia, form the core of my research findings. The lengthy and destructive civil wars in Sierra Leone and Liberia destroyed much of the little infrastructure and documentation that pre-dated these events. Media presence and reporting was limited during the wars and peace negotiations. Since then, several key individuals have died or fallen ill, making this research especially timely. The people who shared their experiences and assessments of this time underpin my argument that certain individuals, along with their specific approaches and tactics influenced and altered the course of these two peace processes and their outcomes. This knowledge benefits scholars and political negotiators alike.

Evaluating the Sierra Leonean case study, I reiterate Jesse Jackson's influence, Foday Sankoh's impact, and the role of Ahmed Tejan Kabbah at the Lomé negotiations. Analysing the Liberian case study, the importance of religious leaders, Sheikh Konneh and Benjamin Lartey is evident, as are the actions and consequences of LURD's unnamed chief negotiator, while the weight of Charles Taylor's personality reverberates throughout the Accra peace talks.

Subsequently, I remark on the broader implications and generalizability of the research, while highlighting its limitations. My research clearly makes a case for the value of interdisciplinary research in political studies, as well as for the need to account for individual agency in political events. This approach adds value to the discipline, while providing useful guidance for contemporary peace negotiators seeking peaceable outcomes. Finally, I draw attention to several areas requiring future research, including the role of individuals' cultural and religious contexts in negotiations, and assessing the value of post-conflict justice and accountability.

RESEARCH FINDINGS

My research supports aspects of pre-existing political science research. However, I note a lack of scholarship addressing the role and influence of individuals in peace negotiations. In an attempt to fill this gap, I sought out results from negotiations research undertaken in other social sciences and discovered that these provide a worthwhile groundwork from which I could better understand the results of my own fieldwork. Since past behaviour is a reliable indicator of future behaviour, a historical review of the wars, and their primary perpetrators, up until the peace agreements provides valuable foundational insight into the peace processes that followed. The Sierra Leonean case study, comprised of character profiles of Jesse Jackson, Foday Sankoh, and Ahmad Tejan Kabbah, demonstrates how Jackson came to advocate on Sankoh's behalf against Kabbah and win him the lion's share of concessions during the Lomé peace process. Liberia's case study includes religious leaders Sheikh Konneh and Benjamin Lartey, as well as the LURD chief negotiator and Charles Taylor. It reveals that the trust and respect religious leaders earned through the war allowed them to bring the warring parties together at Accra, but could not prevent LURD's chief negotiator from making numerous tactical mistakes or hurry Taylor's departure.

The research in context with the literature

As explained in chapter 2, confined by a structural approach, existing political science literature typically presumes the rationality of players—when they are considered at all. Because political science generally deems individuals to be rational actors whose behaviour can be predicted, the literature often cannot account for participants' motives and behaviours during negotiations. Nonetheless, people who negotiate peace agreements frequently behave in erratic and illogical ways, which makes their decisions and actions appear inexplicable and difficult to forecast. This dissertation supports certain findings in the existing literature that consider resource and power sharing, as well as international intervention. I touch on these in the following sections. However, the results of my fieldwork are best understood through findings in other disciplines that consider negotiator

personality, decision frames, the psychology of value, bounded awareness, and decision-making biases. The subsequent sections review these findings.

Power and resource sharing

Belligerents will agree to participate in peace talks when they are offered the chance to get that which they have not yet achieved through war. In the case of Liberia and Sierra Leone, the warring parties sought power and resources.⁶⁰⁴ Peace negotiations yield agreements that distribute political power and resource wealth to those who are part of the formal bargaining process. All my sources indicated that access to government positions and natural resources were the determining lures that enticed non-state belligerents to participate at the Lomé and Accra peace talks.

Scholars of political science suggest that power and resource sharing are necessary means to achieve short-term peace and make way for democracy (Hartzell & Hoddie 2003; Ottaway 1995; Roeder & Rothchild 2005; Spears 2000; Walter 1996; 1999). The negotiators who drafted the Lomé and Accra peace agreements clearly endorsed these precepts. Both agreements grant political legitimacy and decision-making authority in government to rebel forces in exchange for their pledge to stop fighting (Levitt 2006). Even belligerents who deliberately disrupted attempts at peace through threats and violence (Höglund & Zartman 2006), such as LURD, were still included in the peace process, and ultimately gained a place in government.

There are numerous reasons that counter-indicate the benefits of resource and powersharing, not least of which is that the purchase of peace with money and power rewards violence (Le Billon & Nicholls 2007). Moreover, despite the inclusion of wealth sharing components to end what were largely resource conflicts (Binningsbrø & Rustad 2012), there was prior indication that both peace agreements might still fail because some participants were negotiating in bad faith.⁶⁰⁵ Nonetheless, according to every person I interviewed who was part of the peace processes, the prospect of resource and power were not merely two of many enticements made to secure belligerents' participation at peace talks; these were the *primary* and *essential* lures that persuaded combatants to come together and negotiate an end to conflict. My results align with this research: In Accra and Lomé, placating belligerents with government power and material wealth was a deeply distasteful, but nonetheless necessary, trade-off to achieve peace.

International intervention

Negotiations experts and novices alike invoke international intervention to help belligerents hold to the terms of the agreements that they sign. Typically, third parties will first monitor a ceasefire, then disarm and mobilise the warring parties, and finally lead the organization or managing of national elections. The effectiveness of foreign intervention depends on how it addresses dilemmas of sovereignty, neutrality and democracy (Betram

⁶⁰⁴ As discussed in the Liberian case study, LURD's primary aim was to rid the country of Charles Taylor, but at negotiations, the Chief Negotiator (CN) was also clear that the group sought positions in government as well as access to some of the country's resources.

⁶⁰⁵ Bad faith as a negotiating tactic is discussed again later in this chapter.

1995; Fortna 2008). Albeit indirectly, my research touches on all three of these considerations.

Some scholars claim a failed state no longer preserves its right to sovereignty and foreign intervention is warranted to save it from self-annihilation (Helman & Ratner 1992: 12). Other researchers hold that if a state is not defined as failed, national sovereignty is preserved when the government in power asks the international community to step in or grants it permission to act (Bertram 1995). In Sierra Leone, Kabbah's armed forces were one of the warring parties, which meant that government authority was contested. Nonetheless, Kabbah had been freely and fairly elected by his fellow citizens. As a result, ECOWAS did not consider their involvement to be a violation of sovereignty and acceded when the president requested assistance. Conversely, at the start of the war, when ECOWAS intervened in Liberia at the request of President Doe, Taylor was incensed, believing it to be a partisan force that was biased against his NPFL (Alao *et al* 1999). Once Taylor won the elections in 1997, his first priority was to usher ECOWAS forces out of the country, not realizing that their presence served to stabilize his presidency.⁶⁰⁶ Once ECOWAS forces were gone, Taylor was vulnerable to attack from upstart rebel factions, including LURD.

Intervening forces often claim that their missions are neutral, but Bertram (1995) asserts that their presence results in the redistribution of political power. In Sierra Leone and Liberia, ECOMOG intervening forces repeatedly betrayed the neutrality that was supposed to be the hallmark of their involvement (Hoffman 2004; Nowat & Schbacker 1998). This was certainly the case in Sierra Leone in 1998 when ECOMOG marshalled its forces with Kabbah's loyalists and beat back the RUF to return Kabbah to the presidency following a coup the year before. In becoming another fighting party and engaging in combat on behalf of the elected president, ECOMOG demonstrated that it was anything but neutral. Once Kabbah was reinstated, he knew that his hold on power depended entirely on the goodwill of this outside force. As its membership grew tired of sustaining Sierra Leone, Kabbah believed a peace agreement was the only way to end the conflict and formally legitimize his democratically elected government with the rebels. This inflexible outlook led Kabbah to make numerous misguided decisions in the course of the Lomé talks.

In the years following the Lomé and Accra peace agreements, both Sierra Leone and Liberia became the site of massive UN missions, in which the international community took on widespread post-conflict authority. In these two cases, the international community was charged with espousing and establishing democracy in conflict zones using means that were frequently undemocratic (Chesterman 2004). Third party intervenors face myriad challenges in providing security, developing civil society, providing humanitarian relief, and countering the rentierism of natural resource extraction that helped finance both wars, all while converting armed combatants into human-rights-respecting advocates of

⁶⁰⁶ Under pressure from the RUF (and the UN), Sierra Leone's President Kabbah agreed to end the government's contract with mercenary outfit, Executive Outcomes, as part of the 1996 Abidjan Agreement. Kabbah had limited control over his feckless soldiers and the mercenaries were the only force sustaining him in power. Within six months, Kabbah was forced into exile in a coup mounted by the Armed Forces Revolutionary Council (AFRC), which soon initiated a partnership with the RUF.

democracy (Collier *et al* 2003). Both Sierra Leone and Liberia offer numerous illustrations of these dilemmas.

A significant criticism against ECOWAS and the UN is the reluctance and slowness with which they responded to the unfolding crisis in both countries. Many of the Liberians and Sierra Leoneans I interviewed claim that their respective conflicts would have ended much sooner if the international community (particularly the UN or the US) had displayed a modicum of interest in their affairs. Instead, regional organization ECOWAS reluctantly became embroiled in both countries, to very mixed results. For example, as Liberian belligerents argued for three weeks in Accra over the wording of a single paragraph in its ceasefire agreement, no one—including ECOWAS, which was brokering the talks—thought to ensure that foreign troops were deployed to the country to uphold the terms of the ceasefire. Many scholars contend that foreign intervention is essential to maintain ceasefire agreements (see, among others, Fortna 2004; Walter & Synder 1999). Unsurprisingly Liberia's June 2003 ceasefire held for less than 24 hours and the remaining two months of negotiations took place amidst full-scale war. All the same, my research indicates that, the presence of ECOWAS and the UN was a harbinger of lasting peace to both Sierra Leone and Liberia, however problematic aspects of their involvement might have been. In Sierra Leone, my sources unconditionally supports scholarly claims that the UK's unilateral intervention in 2000 was the lynchpin that upheld the quickly unravelling 1999 Lomé peace accord (Davies 2000; Williams 2001).

Intelligible intelligence

Renewed conflict is less likely when war ends with a decisive military victory (Collier & Sambanis 2002; Walter 2002; 2004), whereas fully half of conflicts that end through negotiated settlement relapse into war (Licklider 1995). Whether a settlement disintegrates depends on the quality of information that combatants gain about each other during conflict (Doyle & Sambanis 2002; Dubrey 2004; Fortna 2004; Hartzell *et al* 2001), and belligerents can best collect information about each other in long-lasting wars, which makes them more able to settle their differences (Walter 2009).

In wars lasting nearly a decade, belligerents in Sierra Leone and Liberia had ample time to learn about their opponents. Still, the warring parties could not settle their differences. Protracted conflict can yield information about the various parties' military strength and commitment, but in Sierra Leone, at least, such information was itself contested. We now know that Kabbah (and ECOWAS) held as much territory as the RUF at the outset of the Lomé negotiations, but the RUF perceived it had more leverage, while Kabbah believed that his troops had far less. Each side's perception of its military advantage, or lack thereof, greatly influenced its negotiating behaviour at Lomé.

By claiming that information about warring parties is gained during conflict, the aforementioned scholars imply that adversaries cannot learn from and about each other outside of active combat. This is a limited assumption and forms the springboard from which I launch my research into other disciplines. I contend that combatants can (and do) learn much about each other away from the blood-soaked battlefield. Throughout the negotiation process, over repeated encounters lasting weeks and months, warring parties get to know each other very well indeed. Negotiations reveal opponents' personalities,

motivations, intents, decision frames and biases. And yet, the political science literature tells us nothing of this. My research indicates that key individuals exercise significant influence over the process and outcome of peace negotiations. However, current political research does not acknowledge that personal biases and framing motivate individuals to wield certain tactics and that these, in turn, impact other parties to the negotiations and affect the outcome. The information we possess is incomplete.

Negotiator personality, decision frames, bounded awareness, and bias

An individual negotiator's rationality is limited by the information at his disposal, his cognitive approaches and biases, and the time he has to take decisions. The results of my research, outlined in chapters 4 through 9, reveal the importance of acknowledging individual capacities and limitations in the negotiating process.

Social psychologists note that there are three cognitive structures that impact negotiations and their outcomes: win-lose orientation, facing saving and trust (Boven & Thompson 2003; Goffman 1967; Larrick & Blount; Lituch 1997). When a person sees negotiation as a process in which one side gains at the expense of another, he negotiates from a win-lose orientation. My research indicates that in Sierra Leone's Lomé talks, both Jesse Jackson and Foday Sankoh negotiated according to a win-lose orientation. In Liberia, Charles Taylor and LURD's CN were also locked into this approach. Research claims that parties do not attain optimal outcomes when they have a win-lose approach to negotiations (Larrick & Blunt 1997). Nonetheless, at Lomé and Accra this was not the case; the aforementioned negotiators all emerged with significant gains.⁶⁰⁷

A negotiator will focus on face saving when his behaviour undermines his identity with his opponents. When a negotiator feels targeted, derided or otherwise attacked, he perceives these as assaults to his "face" and may seek retaliation (Brown 1968). In Liberia, Taylor's public behaviour during the Accra negotiations indicates that he was concerned with appearing weak in the aftermath of the Special Court of Sierra Leone indictment. He repeatedly threatened the rebels and his own citizens in public appearances, went back on previous promises, and did his utmost to control the Accra peace process even as his hold on power diminished.

When a negotiator believes in his opponents' honesty and dependability, he trusts them and is willing to cooperate with them, particularly if they appear to be cooperative and unselfish (Pruitt 1981). Trust facilitates communication and information sharing, which promotes collaboration and the collective desire to work towards outcomes that benefit all parties (Ma 2008). Negotiations at Lomé and Accra featured little trust among participants, and consequently, the processes were not collaborative, nor were the outcomes mutually advantageous. In Sierra Leone, against his better judgment, Kabbah trusted Sankoh to disastrous consequences (for Kabbah). Subsequently, in Liberia, religious leaders Lartey and Konneh engendered trust between themselves and the various belligerents but could never create trust and collaboration among the warring parties, and fighting continued throughout the entire negotiating process.

⁶⁰⁷ Although LURD's CN lost leverage and Taylor lost the presidency, I assert that they still came out far ahead of the citizens of Liberia. Taylor and CN's losses and gains are addressed later in this chapter.

In addition to the cognitive structures that shape negotiations and impact their outcomes, participants will consider their own interests or others', depending on whether they engage in the process from a competitive, cooperative or collaborative mindset (Thomas & Kilman 1974). Kabbah clearly fits the profile of a cooperative negotiator who compromised his own aspirations to accommodate his opponents' needs. As shown in Kabbah's encounters with Sankoh, cooperative negotiators who do not adjust to become more competitive stand to be exploited. Like Sankoh, competitive negotiators are typically self-interested and see other participants as adversaries to be subjugated. Although evidence suggests that competitive negotiators are not the most effective (Saunders *et al* 2010), without exception, all the belligerents at the Accra and Lomé peace talks, as well as Jesse Jackson, an informal participant at Lomé, negotiated using a competitive approach, which saw them use corresponding tactics, including coercion, intimidation, and threats. Competitive negotiators aim to achieve an agreement that yields the most benefits for their side and, because the sum of gains is limited, they expect their win to come at the expense of their opponents' loss. Unsurprisingly then, the belligerents of Sierra Leone and Liberia had no desire to align their outlooks with collaborative negotiators who sought to satisfy the preferences of all parties to a negotiation. Conversely, Liberia's religious leaders demonstrated a collaborative approach by respecting the other parties as worthy participants, which also allowed them to exchange truthful information. Because collaborative negotiators seek to change perceptions and augment the available resources to be shared, this approach yields greater economic benefits and higher levels of satisfaction for all sides. However, my research indicates that the collaborative approach requires that all participants engage in negotiations with the same mindset. True to form, competitive negotiators at Lomé and Accra could not or would not yield in this regard. Years later, participants at the Accra peace talks still perceive great disparity in the outcomes of the process.

Regardless of a negotiator's competitive, cooperative, or collaborative mindset, peace processes feature collective decision-making. However, individual assessments of the conflict and differences between the players impact the process (Bazerman 1983). Negotiators' perceptions and actions in peace talks depend on their frame, or the way in which they perceive the actions and outcomes that result from their choices (Tversky & Kahneman 1981). For example, individual negotiators will change the way they act according to how an issue is framed by other negotiators and participants (Larrick & Blount 1997). At Lomé, instead of giving Kabbah the option to accept or reject his requests, Sankoh framed his demands as claims. Kabbah perceived himself as weak and incorrectly assumed that Sankoh's claims were warranted; because of his inaccurate assessment of his own standing in the Lomé negotiations, Kabbah gave in to Sankoh. Demonstrating a shared belief in one frame, the belligerents at Lomé and Accra entered into negotiations assuming that their interests were in direct conflict with the interests of the other participants, and they sustained this frame although their interests were actually the same (Thompson & Hastie 1990). Noting that the wars in Liberia and Sierra Leone were not ideologically based (as explained in chapter 3) and recalling that all belligerents were competitive negotiators, the warring parties' true interests were neither in peace or war, but power and wealth. Accordingly, fighting parties actually shared the exact same interests. They also shared the same frame that resources were finite. As a result, the belligerents believed their differences to be insurmountable.

In addition to being influenced by decision frames, negotiators often fall prey to bounded awareness when they do not discern, seek, use or share valuable knowledge that should otherwise be apparent to them (Chugh & Bazerman 2007). In an example of focalism—where a person focuses their attention on one thing at the expense of other events or knowledge—at Lomé, Kabbah's need for a peace agreement overshadowed his inherent suspicion of his opponent and allowed him to overlook evidence that Sankoh was actually negotiating in bad faith and never had any intention to fulfill his promises. Similarly, negotiators are also susceptible to unintentional blindness, meaning that they cannot see something directly in their line of sight when their attention is focused elsewhere (Mack & Rock 1998 in Chugh & Bazerman 2005). At once directing LURD's negotiations in Accra, with mixed messages from the group's leadership, and troops waging war on Monrovia, CN was blind to evidence of Taylor's shifting priorities after his indictment by the SCSL. Instead of adjusting his tactics accordingly, CN continued to authorise attacks on Monrovia, resulting in many civilian casualties, which, in turn, cost the rebels their bargaining edge.

A negotiator's biases and bounded awareness have additional ramifications, especially when he fails to focus on the rules of the process and on the decisions of his opponents (Chugh & Bazerman 2007). As revealed in chapter 8, at the Accra negotiations, the rebels were uninformed as to the rules of the negotiation process and the mediators' expectations of participants. Repeatedly, because participants were partial to a particular outcome, they did not seek out relevant information that might have contradicted their own interests. For example, because Sierra Leonean President Kabbah believed that the only route to peace was to sign an agreement with the Revolutionary United Front (RUF), he was unwilling to acknowledge any indication that his opponent might be negotiating in bad faith, which would have jeopardised the agreement. The actions of most key individuals during the wars and in preceding negotiations foretold their behaviour at Lomé and Accra. Consequently, a history of the wars is relevant information for my case studies.

The past forecasts the future

Many key participants at the Lomé and Accra peace negotiations had previously discussed peace formally and informally during the wars. In chapter 3, I argued that to better understand the individual negotiators at Lomé and Accra, we must first gain awareness of the similarities and disparities between the Sierra Leonean and Liberian civil conflicts. Each country's civil war was mitigated and dragged out by the conflict and turmoil in the other. Understanding the political and historical contexts of the wars, as well as these individuals' past motives and actions, provides us with a barometer of the conflicts up until these cumulative negotiations and tells us a great deal why peace remained elusive.

Both Sierra Leone and Liberia were colonised by former American slaves, who perpetuated the socio-economic divides inherent to the southern US in the 19th century throughout their new homelands. The minority colonists imported their religion, culture, and economic structures and applied them to their own benefit, while the majority indigenous population struggled for decades to achieve legal status, let alone economic prestige. Indeed, social and economic disparity was a significant motivator behind the rebel movements that spawned the two wars. So too was the lack of opportunity for a large

youth population. But these factors alone do not account for the widespread sadism and venality that tainted these lengthy conflicts.

Liberia's war started before and lasted longer than the conflict in neighbouring Sierra Leone. Liberia's war—and peace—ultimately rested on the shoulders of one man, Charles Taylor. Liberia's warlord-cum-president was also a primary perpetrator of the war in Sierra Leone. An exceptional manipulator, Taylor thrived on the chaos of war, but cultivated the appearance of man utterly committed to peace. Having only begun its uprising in 1999, Liberians United for Reconciliation and Democracy (LURD) was a relative latecomer to the conflict. The rebels' Chief Negotiator (CN) would not have known that Taylor's tactics during the Accra negotiations had been honed over more than a dozen previous peace talks. Had CN chosen to seek insight, he would have found it with two people in the same room at Accra. During years of peace activism, religious leaders Benjamin Lartey and Sheikh Konneh had had numerous opportunities to witness Taylor's negotiating tactics in war and at peace talks. Had they been asked, Lartey and Konneh might have told CN that Liberia's leader had previously signed 17 peace agreements that had come to naught for the people of Liberia and there was little at the outset of the Accra talks that indicated that this time would be any different.

The belligerents from Sierra Leone had only formally negotiated twice before, but both times their leader, Foday Sankoh, had signed a peace agreement, making vows to peace that he had no intention to keep. Having met Sankoh throughout the war, and negotiated peace with him at Abijan in 1996 and Conakry in 1997, Sierra Leonean president Kabbah should have recalled that just as a leopard cannot change its spots, Sankoh could not become an honourable man at Lomé. If he lacked the cunning and memory he could have garnered from multiple past encounters, Sankoh had an advocate that Kabbah lacked, and this man would have soon discovered that Kabbah was far too accommodating for his own good.

If a person's past actions are a frequent indicator of their future behaviour, the 1999 Lomé peace talks and the 2003 Accra negotiations did not bode well. Indeed, cues from the first weeks of both negotiations signaled that these events were unlikely to herald a peaceable solution to the war in either country. A caveat here, before moving into the results of my fieldwork: The individuals that I have featured in my case studies do not form a comprehensive group accounting for all actions and decisions of import taken up to and during the Lomé negotiations and the subsequent peace talks at Accra. Nonetheless, a study of the wars and the behaviours of certain individuals throughout reveals how they became integral to making and breaking peace. Each of these individuals' previous behaviour foreshadows their motives, tactics and actions during Lomé and Accra. What we lack is proof that their actions impacted the outcomes; the subsequent case studies provide that evidence.

Jesse Jackson, the puppetmaster

As outlined in chapter 4, when Jesse Jackson met with President Kabbah as part of a one-day conference to improve relations between Liberia, Sierra Leone and the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) in mid-1998, few could have predicted that

Jackson would help to propel warlord Foday Sankoh to being the most powerful politician in Sierra Leone, second only to the president.⁶⁰⁸ Amidst the proceedings, Jackson asked Kabbah to help secure Sankoh's release from prison in Nigeria. Within weeks, Sankoh was back in Freetown, where Kabbah was adamant that he answer for his crimes. Sankoh was found guilty of treason, imprisoned and sentenced to death, but with more arm-twisting from Jackson, miraculously, Sankoh was allowed to go free and travel to Togo, so he could consult with his generals in preparation for the peace process in Lomé.

Sankoh's release arguably cost Kabbah (and the ECOMOG forces that were propping up his government) a key military victory. In the weeks before Jackson interceded to have Sankoh released from death row, ECOMOG had meticulously planned a massive strike on the RUF. Not wishing to jeopardise his own role in bringing peace to Sierra Leone, Jackson interceded and the attack was aborted, thereby derailing what might have been a seminal military victory for Sierra Leone's democratically elected government.

Less than a month later, Jackson essentially ambushed and abducted Kabbah at the African-American summit in Accra, and flew him to Lomé, separating him from two of his chief advisors and pushing him into a meeting with Sankoh, where within an hour he was given a pre-drafted (and pre-approved, at least by the other signatories) ceasefire agreement to sign.

Jackson operated with stealth and speed in negotiations. Certainly, his tactics caught Kabbah off-guard. The momentum with which Jackson moved and his competitive negotiating style were bolstered by his American cultural reference point, which views speed as efficient and values assertiveness. Contrarily, as a career technocrat used to order and predictability, Kabbah felt steamrolled and bullied by Jackson.

Jackson did not consider Sankoh to be consistent or trustworthy, but he believed Sankoh was essential to peace in Sierra Leone. Jackson never advocated American military intervention in Sierra Leone. Even so, he appeared to arbitrarily and routinely redefine and enlarge the scope of his instructions from the US Department of State, pursuing a competitive approach to negotiations, seeking to soothe and satisfy Sankoh and the RUF, in hopes of benefitting himself.

Jackson's bullish methods were justified by limited and inaccurate intelligence. Jackson (and the Americans) assumed that the RUF was winning the war, that most citizens supported the rebels, and that their troops held the majority of territory. Kabbah believed that the government and the rebels were more closely matched, with each controlling about a third of the country's territory. Kabbah's assessment has since been proven right, but at the time, the government was fighting a losing public relations battle against the RUF, and most people (including some of Kabbah's own ministers) believed that the rebels were dominant and could not be beaten by the government and ECOWAS forces.

⁶⁰⁸ Some might argue that Sankoh was actually the most powerful politician in Sierra Leone. After all, Kabbah never came close to seizing the same concessions and capturing the same rewards that Sankoh did during the peace talks.

Securing Sankoh's freedom was a significant win for Jackson, but his campaigning on behalf of the Sierra Leonean warlord did not cease with this victory. If anything, Jackson increased his intervention and aimed to exact more concessions for Sankoh. During the Lomé negotiations, Jackson proposed that Sankoh should receive a full pardon, as well as be in charge of the Commission for the Management of Strategic Resources. That this rebel leader had perpetuated a host of human rights violations never seemed to give Jackson room for pause; if granting Sankoh control over the government body created to oversee the country's diamond mines would result in peace, then for Jackson—if not the people of Sierra Leone—the ends justified the means.

From the start, Jackson possessed the exclusive self-interest of a competitive negotiator and his focus on this one outcome meant that his cognitive frames were biased. Jackson saw how siding with Sankoh would fulfill his chief aim and no longer thought to seek out any further alternatives. The concessions of a blanket amnesty for the belligerents and the exorbitant payout to Sankoh were regrettable but necessary fallout; what mattered most was winning.

At the height of the Sierra Leonean war, Jesse Jackson was the most visible US representative in Africa and, for want of a formal mission, Jackson appeared intent to carve out a legacy as the man who brought peace to Sierra Leone. Jackson aspired to peace in the service of his personal ambition and he pursued this aim with fierce intent. Overlooking the rebels' horrific abuses, he was sympathetic to the RUF's cause, and sought to portray its leader, Foday Sankoh, as a credible warrior-activist. Jackson's solution to halt the carnage in Sierra Leone was to grant political authority to Sankoh and the RUF. Although he was not an official party to the Lomé peace talks, Jackson proved himself to be a cutthroat competitive negotiator when it came to securing deals for Sankoh and the RUF. As a result of Jackson's arbitration, Sankoh was released from prison, and flown to Togo where he could consult with his field commanders prior to the Lomé peace process. Jackson also interfered with military operations and halted an ECOMOG counterattack on the RUF that might have won Kabbah the war. At the outset of the talks, Jackson acted to deliberately isolate President Kabbah from his key advisors, and pressured him to sign a ceasefire agreement that he had not weighed in on. Research indicates that Jackson undeniably influenced the Lomé peace process as a self-centred and competitive negotiator, with biased judgments and skewed cognitive frames, who pursued his aim of peace at any cost, even if a deal meant paying off the war's primary perpetrator.

The prevaricator, Foday Sankoh

As described in chapter 5, Sankoh's tale is one of unlikely—and undeserved—escape and acquittal. In less than a year, he went from condemned death row inmate to a full pardon and vice-presidential mansion. Were he even slightly genuine, Sankoh's redemption would have rivalled the most imaginative of Hollywood offerings. A convicted criminal, Sankoh spent seven years in prison, but his crime—not reporting a coup ahead of time—was perhaps not as lurid as he would have liked, so upon his release, he refashioned himself into a quasi-revolutionary, associating with the students and intellectuals of the time, while doing little more than attending occasional meetings. Sankoh's academic limitations did not appear to hinder his ambitions; proximity to dissent was enough to get

him funding to travel to Libya where he received guerrilla training and emerged as integral member of an itinerant militia bent on overthrowing the government.

Rarely seen or heard in public, and frequently incarcerated for long periods, Sankoh still managed to retain relative control over his forces, who despite regular drubbings, were never fully beaten by their battlefield opponents. Many remarked on Sankoh's gaucheness in formal environments and social situations but, in the bush, he was a formidable leader, or at least an effective enough bully to ensure the deference of his troops. Although he lacked the polish of Kabbah and the brash confidence of Jackson, Sankoh did possess some charm. However, Sankoh's allure was overshadowed by duplicity; he lied, expertly and often. Each of his promises—especially those committing to peace—were well-told fabrications. In fact, the ease with which Sankoh lied and undertook horrific violence led many to claim that he was an undiagnosed psychopath.

Notable fighters are necessarily competitive and Sankoh was a seasoned warrior. The traits that made Sankoh a brutal and fearsome warlord made him a combative, volatile and treacherous negotiator. As established in chapter 5, a successful negotiator needs to be able to mislead his opponent while avoiding becoming disoriented himself. Sankoh deceived Kabbah at every junction and never let something as insignificant as personal morality get in his way.

In addition to his continuous deceptions, Sankoh used negotiations as an opportunity to gain legitimacy as a sentinel of peace, as well as to rest and relieve his battlefield worn troops, while preparing for his next assault. Taylor had used this tactic repeatedly in Liberia and Sankoh saw no reason to spoil the perfectly good recipe his neighbour had developed. Sankoh also extracted concessions from Kabbah by having his spokesman Omrie Golley paint the president in a bad light to the media.

Sankoh negotiated at Lomé in bad faith. With infuriating regularity, Sankoh would publicly disavow concessions he had made earlier in negotiations, forcing participants to revisit issues they previously thought had been resolved. In using surface bargaining techniques such as this, the rebels were negotiating without any real intent on a settlement, which indicates that they were acting in bad faith. Sankoh and the RUF never had any real intention of keeping to the terms of the Lomé agreement.

The Lomé talks were less about peace and more about how much the rebels would get. As a competitive negotiator, Sankoh saw Lomé as a zero-sum game with only one winner. He did anything to win and saw no need to make the slightest compromise. Sankoh would slow the talks to ensure more concessions by balking at the most basic of compromises. He would issue ultimatums and threaten to withdraw from the process. Sankoh badgered, coerced and tyrannized any opponent who would not accede to his demands.

Sankoh negotiated from a winning vantage and with every concession he obtained, his temerity and effrontery grew. Sankoh even received bounty he had not bargained for. In addition to blanket amnesty for his troops and himself, he was made chairman of the Commission for Strategic Resources—a role specially designed to give Sankoh the political

power he craved (not to mention untold wealth) without having to submit to elections he could never have won. When Sankoh quibbled over the meagre two ministerial positions the government proffered, Kabbah quickly capitulated and showered him with four ministries, three deputy ministers, and a host of parastatal positions. Still Sankoh demurred, conceding only after the Commission for Strategic Resources was enlarged to include national reconstruction and development, and elevated above all other ministries.

Even after signing the Lomé peace agreement, Sankoh continued to prevaricate. Almost a year after Lomé was endorsed, the agreement appeared to be completely unravelling. Peace was restored to Sierra Leone only after the UK mounted a unilateral intervention, and once Sankoh was captured.

Sankoh's initial goals from the Lomé peace process did not extend beyond a survivalist need to dodge a looming death sentence. Supported by Jackson, Sankoh soon realized that he controlled the balance of power at the talks and he began to exploit his leverage ruthlessly against a depleted opponent. Sankoh's tactics yielded splendid dividends. Sankoh was a fiercely competitive negotiator, as well as being unreliable and dishonest. While negotiating in bad faith, he won countless concessions. Although the RUF emerged from Lomé with the lion's share of the country's pickings, Sankoh did not fulfil his terms of the agreement, and within months the agreement looked sure to fail.

The no-backup-plan man, Tejan Kabbah

Tejan Kabbah was utterly committed to ensuring lasting peace for his fellow citizens. However, as explained in chapter 6, because his state was so weak as to be failed, the president's aspirations were repeatedly hindered. In negotiations, Kabbah's extreme need for peace made him blind to the duplicity and bad faith of his opponent. Throughout his interrupted term, the president lacked a monopoly on the legitimate use of force. In fact, at the outset of his term, Kabbah so distrusted his national army that he purchased security from mercenaries outside of his country's borders. The mercenaries proved a worthwhile investment by beating back the rebels in a few short months, but instead of strategizing with the only force that was keeping him in power and fighting for a military victory, the risk- and conflict-adverse Kabbah met with Sankoh to talk peace. This first negotiation set the tone and pace for all future discussions.

Despite Sankoh being an inherent liar, Kabbah chose to trust him. By agreeing to end the mercenaries' contract, Kabbah made a huge and fateful concession to the rebels. Like Jackson, Kabbah also fixated on the pursuit of peace by means of a settlement, and in so doing he forgot that his hold on power hinged on the very mercenaries whose contracts he terminated. In six short months, the rebels had regained all the territories they had lost to the mercenaries and Kabbah was ousted in a coup.

Over the next 10 months while exiled in Guinea, Kabbah looked to his Liberian neighbor, President Taylor, to help intercede. But Taylor was as deceitful as Sankoh himself and far more cunning. Kabbah's presidency threatened Taylor's unlimited access to Sierra Leone's diamonds, and it was only after the international community had

politically exiled Liberia with sweeping sanctions and tarred its president with the brush of disrepute that Taylor agreed to assist in Kabbah's quest for peace.

Where no one else ventured, ECOWAS stepped into the void and ultimately restored Kabbah to power. But in time, the regional organization, and particularly West Africa's hegemon Nigeria, grew tired of the costs of intervention. Kabbah's government was ever conscious of its dependence on the waning charity of its neighbours for its armed forces. After the January 1999 Freetown rebel invasion, ECOWAS began to scale back its troops and the threat of a full withdrawal from Sierra Leone forced Kabbah into peace negotiations.

Although the rebel and ECOWAS/government forces were close enough to be at a virtual deadlock on the battlefield, Kabbah and his cabinet acted as though their side was losing the war. Believing his administration to be at a sore disadvantage, Kabbah rushed into peace talks. The president ignored the sage recommendation of his key foreign advisor to build his government's capacity prior to starting negotiations so it could move ahead from a position of strength. Instead, Kabbah fixated on the imminent need for a peace agreement and an interventionist force to support his administration. Kabbah's ongoing perception of his government as underdog was a biased and incomplete cognitive frame that, combined with the claims of outside advisors and the media who also perceived him to be feeble and lacking, became so entrenched as to be frozen.

Kabbah's frozen frame prevented him from adequately preparing for peace negotiations. Most notably, the president did not consider the possibility that negotiations might fail and did not move to identify his best alternative to a negotiated agreement (BATNA). This oversight meant that at the talks Kabbah could not adequately determine which offers should be disregarded and which were worth further consideration. The president's defeatist mindset influenced all his subsequent decisions.

Even before talks began, Kabbah publicly indicated that the price of peace would be steep. The first charge—and point of no return—was freeing Sankoh and granting him permission to travel to Togo to consult with his officers. From that moment onward, Kabbah was so fully immersed in the peace process that he failed to manage his escalation of commitment and could not consider any other course of action. Kabbah also was unable to see that he was far more invested in a peaceable outcome than was his opponent and this sustained a power imbalance between the president and the rebels at Lomé.

Kabbah was never able to reach the equilibrium between finding common ground with Sankoh and pursuing his government's interests. Instead, the two parties only became more rooted in their initial positions. Ever competitive, Sankoh never gave in and only escalated his demands, whereas Kabbah's inclination to cooperation saw him become more acquiescent and less assertive, which resulted in fewer gains for the government's side.

Kabbah's cooperate-and-comply approach to negotiations was set once the government freely offered blanket amnesty to the RUF without angling for any trade-offs on its part. Even though the citizens of Sierra Leone were clear that this was a most unwanted outcome, Kabbah had not thought to revisit the issue because blanket amnesty had previously been discussed and conceded to at the 1996 Abidjan Agreement. Anchoring

bias shows that the side that makes the first offer in negotiations has leverage, but the government's decision to give away such a significant concession only made Sankoh's rebels more acquisitive. As noted, in his haste to resolve the war by means of a peace agreement, Kabbah had not established his BATNA. Because he felt locked into this one outcome, Kabbah did not see that there might have been alternatives to a blanket amnesty, nor did he perceive any reason why he ought to pursue other recourses. Seeing that Kabbah was willing to grant such a large bounty at the outset, the rebels suspected that he could be made to concede other treasures and consequently inflated the value of their additional demands.

Sankoh obtained the chairmanship of the Mineral Resources Commission, which gave him authority over all the country's minerals, including its diamonds. Encouraged by Jackson, who was backed by the Togolese and Nigerians, the rebels also demanded numerous government ministerial positions. The people of Sierra Leone were indignant, but Kabbah nonetheless acceded to the RUF's call for power sharing and allotted four (of 18) ministerial positions to the rebels, as well as numerous other lucrative public service postings.

Research reveals that the ever-conciliatory president was quick to pursue peace talks with an untrustworthy opponent. Ultimately, Kabbah did sign the Lomé agreement, which eventually brought peace to his ravaged country—but not before he gave away a cornucopia of power and wealth to Foday Sankoh. Despite all evidence to the contrary, Kabbah believed that his counterpart also sought peace and could be depended upon to keep his word. Because he was blind to Sankoh's true self, Kabbah escalated his commitment to peace talks at a time when he also perceived himself as losing the war. As a result, Kabbah came away from Lomé the biggest loser.

Benjamin Lartey and Sheikh Konneh, all talk but little action

Faith is the belief in something hoped for that is yet unseen. Chapter 7 shows that through the long years of civil war, Liberia's religious leaders had an abundance of faith; they hoped that Liberia's fighting forces would end the bloodshed but they never saw evidence of anything other than prevarication, larceny, and death.

Reverend Benjamin Lartey and Imam Sheikh Konneh were collaborative negotiators who used an integrative approach. They believed that negotiations were a means for belligerents to come together, discover their shared interests and satisfy those interests in mutually beneficial ways. The clergymen first sought to understand the belligerents better and ascertain what they valued, with the hope that they would find the value in peace. The belligerents respected the clergy enough to share their perspectives with them, but they never could be converted to their gospel.

As Liberia's war spread, Lartey and Konneh emerged as vocal advocates of peace and inter-faith cooperation. Christian leaders stepped away from preaching ethnic dissent when they saw Taylor's horrific battlefield tactics and began to issue formal statements denouncing the violence and calling on the belligerents to settle their differences. Both

groups determined to keep the conflict from taking on a religious bent. However, intent on winning a military victory, neither Taylor nor Doe saw the benefit of making peace.

Religious leaders drafted a peace plan calling for a ceasefire to be monitored by an outside force, a peace conference and other recommendations, which Lartey and Konneh took to ECOWAS and then to Doe and Taylor. The clergy's suggestions were well received and ECOWAS and the belligerents met for peace talks with the religious leaders mediating the process. Believing himself to be within sight of a military victory, Taylor was a reluctant participant; he withstood making any concessions and ultimately defected. Fighting forces could only agree on one thing at this first failed conference, that Liberia's religious leaders were trustworthy and impartial peace brokers with whom they could talk.

During the war, the country's churches and mosques became a meeting place for peace activists and a haven for political dissidents. Lartey and Konneh never lost the hope that they could persuade the war's belligerents to come together to talk peace. In this, the men's prayers were partially answered; through the years, the Inter-Religious Council of Liberia (IRCL) would convince warring parties to give peace a chance by agreeing to meet for peace talks. Time and again, belligerents would gather at an elegant hotel somewhere in West Africa, at the behest of the clergy they respected. Once there, the fighting forces would talk, and even sign peace agreements. None held, but still Lartey and Konneh did not despair.

Even when Doe was killed, the number of factions increased, Taylor created his own rival government, and ECOWAS' troops became yet another party to the war it was supposed to end, Konneh and Lartey continued invest in their peacemaking enterprise. For years, there was no profit at all; peace was a lost cause. ECOWAS took over as Liberia's formal peace mediators, and achieved the same degree of success as its predecessors. Behind the scenes, members of the IRCL remained universally respected as they gathered and shared information, sought solutions, and focused on the belligerents' shared interests. The enmity and violence between the various factions grew, but the IRCL could still bring them together.

Apart from hosting peace talks, which played out like a dysfunctional family's annual reunion—replete with requisite make-ups and break-ups—the religious leaders had no tactic other than talk. Their inclusive, integrative approach allowed them to seek the perspectives of all parties, which can motivate egotistical and competitive negotiators to look for solutions that are mutually beneficial. Repeatedly, over years, the clergy engaged in discourse with rebel forces and the government alike, up until the 2003 negotiations, but the war's many factions could not see what they would gain in peacetime that they had not already taken in combat. At Accra, Lartey and Konneh's integrative approach cracked when it hit the impregnable walls of LURD and Taylor's competitive spirit and hardball tactics. It is one thing to understand where a negotiator is coming from, and another altogether to get him to collaborate. LURD and Taylor refused to partake in integrative talks; their approach was purely competitive. The religious leaders had one choice: espouse a competitive stance of their own, or back down. To embrace a competitive stance would have been anathema to Konneh and Lartey and, besides, the religious leaders' goal of peace was not something they could demand or manipulate for—only peace that was agreed to

had any chance of lasting. In the face of the belligerents' intransigence, Lartey and Konneh could only push so hard before they gave in and allowed the negotiations to be carried by other interests.

Liberia's religious leaders proved indomitable peace activists. Their commitment to their agenda of human rights, humanitarianism, and conflict resolution was beyond reproach. But while they were adept at bringing humanitarian relief to their fellow citizens and keeping human rights on the international agenda, Konneh and Lartey proved only partially successful in their attempts to summon an end to the war. As they had many times before, the clergy were able to build trusting relations with LURD, and they had ongoing communication with Taylor for years. With time and patient persuasion, Lartey and Konneh were able to bring all Liberia's warring parties together at Accra. Throughout the negotiations, they were invaluable allies to the ECOWAS mediators and kept communications channels open between the belligerents. As much as the warring parties were entrenched in their respective zero-sum game understanding of negotiations, no one defected from the talks, and the belligerents eventually consented to a deal.

For all their qualities, Konneh and Lartey had limited influence over the process and the belligerents once the talks began. The very attributes that made religious leaders so skilled at establishing discourse were the same ones that prevented them from being able to make their resistant charges embrace peace. Taylor and LURD could freely speak with Lartey and Konneh because they were non-partisan listeners. However the cost of their neutrality was clout. Once the Accra negotiations were underway, Lartey and Konneh's impartiality was ineffective. The religious leaders would have been able to help warring parties better if they had adopted the role of "insider-partial" mediators whose deep knowledge of the issues and the individual belligerents gave them the capacity to be meaningful advocates, share their unique wisdom and guide warring parties towards mutually beneficial solutions.

Unscrupulous and self-serving characters abound in this research project. There are few protagonists to be found. Though flawed and weak, former Sierra Leonean President Tejan Kabbah endeavoured to adhere to the principles of democracy in his quest for peace. But Liberia's religious leaders stand out for never losing sight of the fact that it was only through peace that the suffering of their country's citizens would cease. By all accounts, their reputation remains untainted, their work invaluable.

The never-quite-there contender, Chief Negotiator (CN), LURD

As established in chapter 8, LURD was widely thought to have a military advantage at the start of negotiations in Accra. Certainly, the rebels themselves believed their own promotional material. However, LURD had not managed to vanquish Taylor's troops in Monrovia. Although they had to be cajoled to the table, the peace talks offered a real chance for the rebels to achieve the victory they believed they richly deserved, but which had so far eluded them in combat.

CN belonged to the relatively restrained political side of LURD, but he was by no means a pacifist and he fully believed in the righteousness of the rebels' cause. At the start,

CN claimed only to attend the Accra peace talks as a means to put his dormant legal skills to use for the benefit of the movement. However, as LURD's ambitions grew in negotiations, so too did CN's personal aspirations. The rebels' wants expanded to include several ministerial positions, while CN personally sought nothing short of full constitutional reform. But Charles Taylor remained the real sticking point throughout. LURD was never certain that Taylor could be convinced to step down in peace talks, so it was always a moment away from defecting from the process and making full use of that which it knew best: physical intimidation and indiscriminate violence.

Prior to Accra, CN might have studied the law, but he had never practiced, and he arrived in Accra with no real negotiation experience. Consequently, LURD's only negotiation tactic was what CN and his fellow delegates knew best: battle to the death. For LURD, the peace talks were a zero-sum game. Every concession was deemed a financial or political loss instead of a mutually beneficial trade-off and future opportunity.

LURD was so confident of the virtue of its cause and cocksure about its military prowess that it was unable to assess its weaknesses. Friction between the military and political wings was ongoing and the rebels lacked organisational unity. Hardened by years in the field, LURD's military members were more numerous; they possessed weaponry and will, and they were not restrained by international reproof. Conversely, members of the political wing were more present in diplomatic spheres, and they became the negotiation leaders at Accra. Perched between the two sat LURD's ineffectual chairman, Sekou Conneh, who was neither keen on seeing action in the field nor on participating at the peace talks, and he remained in Guinea for most of the process. That CN, head of LURD's political wing, represented the rebels at the Accra negotiations indicates that Conneh and the hawks held limited sway within the movement, but they still posed a real threat, and LURD's armed forces often circumvented CN's words in deed. With members scattered across three countries, divided by near impenetrable rainforest, communication was difficult, which also exacerbated pre-existing distrust. LURD's internal division and logistical difficulties made cohesion impossible, and CN was often at odds with LURD's troops and leadership.

None of the warring parties at Accra trusted the other, and unsurprisingly, none of the political and civil participants could trust the belligerents either. Distrust inhibits the sharing of relevant information and increases the likelihood that negotiations will be competitive. Although many (even most) of the participants in the Accra negotiations had prior personal or professional knowledge of one another, they were no more inclined to trust one another than those who were strangers. Prior knowledge without the benefit of shared information leads to unfounded speculation, which combined with a person's framing limitations and biases, engenders further distrust. CN ought to have acknowledged ECOWAS' leadership role of in the region and perceived how a more congenial relationship might have benefitted both LURD and him personally. But instead of building trustworthy relations with the mediators, CN became increasingly suspicious of the regional organisation, overtly accusing its members of being biased in favour of Taylor and consequently lost a promising ally and potential source of gain.

It is not clear whether CN himself called on LURD troops to open fire on civilians throughout the negotiations, but there is no question that LURD's battlefield tactics during the peace talks violated international human rights law. Along with ECOWAS, US government representatives urged LURD to refrain from targeting civilians in their attacks on Monrovia, but the rebels were deaf to their entreaties. LURD's military wing cared little about international convention, and saw only that such tactics brought recognition and concessions. However, in time, LURD's tactics and the misery of Liberians made the rebels appear indifferent to the plight of the very citizens it claimed to want to emancipate. In a clear example of focalism, CN and the hawks in LURD were so fixated on the possibility of a battlefield victory that they did not perceive that they were losing the affinity of the rest of the world, particularly the powerful supra-participants in attendance at Accra, and with them the opportunity to maximise gain. Instead, the rebels continued to attack the citizens of Monrovia. By mid-July 2003, LURD had lost any credibility, and with this, considerable negotiating leverage.

CN and the rebels may not have been interested in listening to American government admonitions, but they certainly revelled in US and other international media coverage and used it to leverage their demands, particularly for government positions. However, unlike Sankoh's spokesperson Omrie Golley, CN did not have a media savvy advisor. Meanwhile, CN also overlooked the power and influence that the US exerted over the process and did not seek to build any personal relations with any of the American representatives present at Accra. Unlike Sankoh who had the full support of Jesse Jackson throughout Lomé, CN neglected to make friends in high places. Consequently, there was no one to champion CN's cause when the US insisted that no faction representatives could hold personal positions in the transitional government. While this provision was later overturned, American representatives maintained a lasting enmity towards CN and LURD, and the rebels lost another potential partner that could have yielded untold benefits.

Like his opponent, LURD's chief opponent negotiated using competitive tactics. However, being well versed in the process, having participated in more than a dozen such talks, Taylor was far more slippery and scheming than CN could hope to be. Neither side was prepared to compromise, and most observers had low expectations. Even the religious leaders who had fought so hard to bring the belligerents to the table were dubious about the prospects of success and were initially satisfied to simply keep all parties in the same room.

LURD's internal rivalries and lack of strong command sabotaged whatever beneficial negotiation strategies CN might have sought to implement. For all its bluster, LURD was never able to achieve a military victory over Taylor, and CN was never able to unite and lead the organisation he represented. In the end, CN continued to be manipulated and outfoxed by the very man he sought to overthrow.

Years later, CN still insists that LURD did not get even half of what it wanted at Accra. Notwithstanding the structural challenges, he is either unaware or not prepared to admit that had he performed differently at Accra, LURD may well have dined on the whole pie instead of having to share it. The rebels' share was significant nonetheless. They were allotted several key lucrative ministries, thus achieving one of their key wants. No one from LURD has been charged with war crimes and several leaders—including CN

himself—have since worked in high-level government positions. Few would disagree that the final peace agreement enriched LURD far more than the people of Liberia.

The double dealer, Charles Taylor

Charles Taylor was at once an intelligent, charming, and deeply manipulative leader who possessed a combination of certain narcissistic, psychopathic and Machiavellian personality traits known as the Dark Triad of Personality. Chapter 9 evaluates how, as warlord then president, Taylor embodied a narcissistic leadership style, evidenced in part by his preoccupation with self-aggrandisement and personal avarice. Taylor also had a psychopath's charm, lack of empathy, fearlessness, and saw most people as means to his ends. Consumed by gaining then maintaining power, Taylor was a manipulative and exacting commander, all trademarks of Machiavellian leadership. Whether he could be diagnosed with narcissistic personality disorder, or as a psychopath, is debatable, but there is no doubt that Taylor exhibited many traits of the Dark Triad and used these to aspire to leadership, achieve his goals regardless of the human cost, and using clever manipulation, engender the support of many allies.

Taylor attended every one of the 17 peace negotiations prior to the Accra talks. During this time he refined a strategy that came to serve him remarkably well. He would consent to attend peace talks when his troops were wearied from the duress of bush fighting. Once in attendance, he fought hard, negotiating as though he was committed to the outcome. But Taylor had no real desire to bring peace to his suffering countrymen. He was far more concerned with personal power and enrichment, and disorder and combat were his tools of choice.

By the time the belligerents came together at Accra, Taylor had been sowing chaos and destruction in Liberia as warlord and president for more than 13 years. In this time, he had achieved his primary aims of financial gain and political legitimacy. At the Accra negotiations, Taylor's initial goal was to cling to that which he already possessed while conceiving of ways to militarily gut the rebel forces that plagued him.

For all the religious leaders' mediation ahead of time, the Accra negotiations did not augur well for peace. All warring parties believed they could defeat their opponents in battle and none saw the value in a peaceable end to the war. Few assumed that these peace talks would prove any different than any of the others that had come before. However, everything changed on the morning the talks were to begin when, in a bombshell move, the chief prosecutor for the Special Court for Sierra Leone unsealed a 17-count formal indictment of Taylor, charging him for violating international law and for war crimes. The indictment caused immediate confusion and many thought that the peace talks would fail before they even began.

For all the panicked handwringing, Taylor's indictment did not dissolve the Accra talks, nor did it change the locus of power. Albeit from a distance, the government's negotiating team remained firmly led by Taylor himself. What did change as a result of the indictment were Taylor's motivations and goals. Initially, Taylor intended to use the Accra peace talks to play for the status quo. His immediate aims were what they always

were at these events: a chance to rest his troops, allow them to recover the strength, and regroup for the next offensive. Thereafter, Taylor wanted to retain the presidency until his term ended, and while he did not indicate whether he planned to run again, it was evident that he did not intend to step away from politics altogether. In the months after the indictment, Taylor's actions behind the scenes demonstrate that he was aware of his declining fortunes, and he began to quietly prepare for his inevitable demise.

Even so, during the Accra talks, Taylor's Dark Triad characteristics remained in evidence in his negotiating behaviour. Like many psychopaths, he favoured competitive negotiations, with hardball tactics such as bullying, extreme demands, and lying. But Taylor particularly excelled at some of the softer tactics of narcissists and Machiavellians, appearing sincere, contrite, and regularly promising concessions. Indeed, Taylor was so skilled at appearing both credible and presidential that, during negotiations, perceptive mediators and fierce opponents alike repeatedly fell for his lines, when in fact, he was only ever negotiating in bad faith. In this respect, Taylor acted much like Foday Sankoh had during the Lomé negotiations. Neither man had any intention of adhering to the promises they made during peace negotiations. The Lomé and Accra agreements held only because both men were removed from the political process. Peace only came to Sierra Leone once Sankoh was captured, and the rebels only stopped their assault on Monrovia when Taylor was forced into exile.

As long as Taylor was in power, he would have continued to perpetuate chaos; he thrived in it and grew rich because of it. In addition to his Machiavellian desire to maintain power, Taylor was motivated by personal greed. In this, he was no different from LURD. In fact, the one thing all belligerents could agree on at Accra was that they were respectively competing for the fixed-sized pie that was Liberia. Because the belligerents drove the negotiations, and came to the talks from a distributive approach, they fought at the conference table about the same thing they were killing each other for in the rainforest—who would get a bigger slice.

Taylor was always profoundly security conscious and his fixation with his personal safety only grew once he became president. Indeed, Taylor's security apparatus was one of Liberia's only growth industries at the time. Taylor's security awareness evolved into genuine paranoia; he recruited countless security people but eschewed any meaningful relationships with colleagues of any depth, whom he surmised might supplant him. Taylor's centralised leadership and lack of a successor gave him a false sense of security, when in fact they served to isolate him, channelling him to make unsound decisions, which also made him vulnerable.

Taylor feared being deposed, detected enemies everywhere, and consequently distrusted everyone, which meant that he had little commitment or loyalty, including to his own armed forces and even his cabinet ministers. The Liberian president's distrust was repaid in kind; few of Taylor's allies maintained an abiding commitment to him. Most of his political relationships were based on expedient greed and, in times of drought, once faithful friends would decamp to greener pastures. This was most evident among Liberia's armed forces, which grew restive after not receiving any kind of formal remuneration for more than two years. By the time the Accra negotiations began, Taylor's troops were

deserting him like rats on a sinking ship. The loss of troops at a critical time in the war made him militarily vulnerable.

The fact that the rebels could not gain a wartime victory over Taylor during the negotiations was not because Taylor exhibited particular battlefield genius, but because the two rebel forces were more inept than their shared adversary. At the start of the peace talks, LURD was at a strong military advantage, and MODEL was making significant inroads in the southeast. By all accounts, at Accra, the two factions worked as one, with LURD taking the lead. Even so, their collaboration ended at the walls of the Accra hotel where they were housed. However much the two groups claimed to be after the same objective—to rid Liberia of Taylor—they could not overcome their petty differences enough to fight as one without turning on each other. This was another important opportunity that CN lost. Had he been able to unite MODEL and LURD forces against Taylor to take the capital collectively, the rebels would have decisively won the war. The rebels' inability to transport their collaborative efforts in Accra back to the battlefield withheld them from their objective and allowed Taylor to stay in power longer. This in turn gave Taylor just enough time to secure what he wanted even more: his life.

When Taylor was indicted for war crimes, he was forced to reconsider his strategy and goals from the Accra peace talks. Taylor was not strong enough militarily to win the war and establish himself as dictator, and he lacked sufficient support to win the next elections. Throughout the peace talks, Taylor fought hard enough to unnerve both his rebel opponents and the mediators. The talks at Accra lasted 75 days, but it was an eternity for the Monroviaans who lived and died in what they described in chapter 9 as the three “world wars.” This was the time it took for Taylor to realise that, sooner or later, he was going down. Taylor confronted the reality of his diminishing power and prestige and adjusted his hopes and expectations accordingly. Where he once hoped to preserve his presidential power, Taylor eventually had no choice but to accept Nigeria's offer of asylum in exchange for life, liberty, and capital.

All the same, Taylor was not going to take flight without first putting up a very good fight. Taylor never stopped fighting to the very moment he boarded the airplane to take asylum in Nigeria. But for all his bravado and competitiveness, he still lost his presidential seat as well as his ability to live in his homeland.

Some might argue that because Taylor inevitably lost presidential power, he lost at Accra. However, Taylor's avarice was always as great as his lust for power. The president had already pillaged his impoverished countrymen and the land's resources for years. In the dying days of the negotiations, Taylor knew that he would lose the presidency, but that did not mean he intended to be destitute. In the weeks before the Accra agreement was signed, Taylor systematically moved much of his accumulated wealth outside the country. Although the Special Court for Sierra Leone has been able to freeze US\$700 million of Taylor's funds, the rest of his fortune—estimated to be in the hundreds of millions of dollars—remains untraced (*AP* 2012). Taylor may have lost power, and he has since lost his freedom, but he is unlikely to lose all of his money.

As Taylor serves a 50-year prison sentence, many believe that justice has been served, and Taylor's comeuppance is complete. However, Taylor never indicated that he valued his freedom over his wealth or his life. Taylor is a survivor. His enduring paranoia over his personal security stemmed from his deep fear of being deposed and killed while in office. Considering that his immediate predecessor had come to such an end, this was not an irrational consideration. To the dismay of Liberians, including the rebels, Taylor fought hard to retain his presidency, but when faced with indictment, he chose to forego his presidency to enjoy his wealth and freedom in Nigeria. Later, when Nigeria extradited him to face charges in Liberia, Taylor chose to flee but, once caught, he surrendered peacefully and thereby lost his freedom. Taylor claimed he wanted to be a living ex-president, and this goal he fulfilled. The Liberian president may have valued power, but he ultimately valued his life even more.

THEORETICAL AND POLICY IMPLICATIONS

Contributions to political science

This is the first comparative study of peace negotiations on Sierra Leone and Liberia. As such, it contributes to the scholarship of the region, but its merits extend beyond West Africa. While these countries' experiences with civil war and peace talks were particular in many ways, this assessment of the motives, tactics and actions of key players throughout the drafting of peace agreements yields useful insight that benefits scholars in political science and provides a case for the value of interdisciplinary research and data from other social sciences.

Peace negotiations are political events that are undertaken by individuals to end conflict. The role and impact of individuals is typically overlooked within political science, which seeks to understand events through broader structures including power, political economy, and institutions. Consequently, the literature reveals a great deal about the structures that precipitate conflict and lead to its recurrence, but much less is known about the individuals behind transformative events, such as negotiations. Existing research is not erroneous; it is incomplete because it does not consider individual motivations and behaviour during negotiations. In seeking out research in other social sciences, including psychology, law and management studies, this research has demonstrated that our understanding of negotiations as political events is enhanced through the complementary study of other disciplines that consider individual motivations, biases, and behaviours. I do not claim that my interdisciplinary approach yields a panacea to the limitations within political science writ large. However, the evidence does reveal a much more full and nuanced understanding of these particular events. Current political understanding of peace negotiations in Sierra Leone and Liberia has been supplemented by historical accounts, which also provide insight into the mindsets and actions of the decision-makers who steered these events. This approach can be used to further our understanding of other past peace negotiations, particularly those where there are little or limited written records.

I cannot and do not claim that individual agency trumps other potential explanations. Nonetheless, the most basic fact about conflict negotiations is that they are undertaken by individual people. As a result, my research makes the case for extreme agency in political

science. Deliberately or unwittingly, one person's individual characteristics can effect tremendous influence on an event—in this case, negotiations—and even alter its outcomes. Even so, for all the impact a single individual can have, negotiations are fundamentally a collective endeavour. Conflicts are neither perpetuated nor sustained by a single person; nor are peace agreements the product of negotiations in which only one person participates. These simple, and somewhat self-evident, facts provide a foundation, if not a framework, upon which political researchers can build additional knowledge, and possibly predict whether the terms of a peace agreement will germinate. My research shows that at least one negotiator at each of the Lomé and Accra peace talks engaged in talks without any real intent to work with their opponents, which when assessed with their previous behaviour in past negotiations, suggests that they planned to renege on any resulting peace agreements. The Lomé and Accra agreements only took root when these two negotiators were removed from the process.

Regardless of the animosity and discord that separate them, participants at peace talks must be willing to collaborate within the limits and confines of the negotiation process. If a participant embarks on negotiations without any intent to work with his fellow negotiators, the process is doomed. This is not to say that negotiators must necessarily work together with the same aim—or share a collaborative approach—just that they should be willing to negotiate with the other participants, whatever their approach may be. Here again, knowledge of the individual within a collective context provides researchers with insight into a significant reason why negotiations fail, and why so many peace agreements fail to hold.

Policy lessons for practitioners

While filling a gap in the discipline, the key findings of my research also yield useful insights for practitioners of peace negotiations in general. Of particular note are the potential negative consequences for peace agreements that are crafted by duplicitous participants.

Lesson 1: Negotiation facilitators must learn about individual participants prior to peace talk and share that knowledge. Mediators and other peaceable participants are influential, but insufficient to generate a peaceable end to war. Belligerents drive the peace process and have the greatest influence over the outcomes. My research has demonstrated the benefits of acquiring in-depth knowledge about the individuals who drive peace negotiations and their situational context. In terms of developing trust, and getting participants to undertake the process in good faith (see also Lesson 4), facilitators of peace talks would be well served to take the time to learn about the individuals who make a difference prior to negotiations. In Liberia, the religious leaders worked over years to develop strong and credible relationships with the various warring parties. This kind of trust and prior knowledge is invaluable, but it does not come easily or freely. Nonetheless, my research proves that prior behaviour is a marked indicator of future behaviour. Consequently, assessing past encounters between individual participants will provide facilitators and negotiators alike with the ability to predict with some accuracy whether negotiators are negotiating in good faith. Similarly, facilitators and negotiators should pursue a genuine understanding of one another's aims throughout the process. The tactics

and relative influence of various players shifted over the course of the Lomé and Accra peace talks. Recognising their personal biases and frames, in the interest of a peaceable conclusion to war, facilitators should take the time to regularly assess fluctuations in individual motives and actions. This commitment to in-depth and ongoing communication is time and labour intensive and provides no guarantee that participants will come to a mutually beneficial outcome. However, the process stands a much greater chance of ensuring genuine participation without defections.

Lesson 2: Negotiators need to receive orientation prior to engaging in the process. Most participants at peace talks are not seasoned negotiators. Wartime belligerents are far more skilled at discharging weapons than they are with the intricacies of negotiation table manners. Liberia's civil war belligerents were, for the most part, young, untravelled and not particularly sophisticated. CN was no different. He came to negotiations with plenty of expectations of personal and group gain, but he did not know the rules of this new game, and arrived in Accra without knowing what was expected of him. CN claims that ECOWAS and the religious leaders who brought the fighting forces together told the rebels that they should stop their offensive, but gave them no real reasons why this was a good strategic decision, especially since they were winning. CN's insight demonstrates how a shared understanding of the aims of the process and guiding principles for working collaboratively are essential. Negotiations are fundamentally a collaborative process, in that participants are working together, but in wartime the participants at peace talks are fresh from the battlefield where they have been killing one another. As a result, belligerents can rarely look beyond their mutual antipathy and competitive aims and acknowledge how a collaborative process might help them maximize their goals better than single-minded competitiveness. Negotiators should be apprised of what awaits them and what is expected of them during the process. A concerted group process and structure at Accra would have helped the rebels, including CN, to self-evaluate, problem-solve, and make better strategic decisions.

Lesson 3: Negotiations are doomed to fail if negotiators do not consent to participate with honest intent. Belligerents are enticed to attend negotiations for a variety of reasons; only one of these is the desire to see a peaceable end to war. Participants at peace negotiations believe their aims are not the same as their opponents', when in Liberia and Sierra Leone, the belligerents all shared a desire for political control and resource wealth. They also shared the view that there was insufficient political power and material riches to go around. Whether or not participants share the same aims or the same approach, every negotiator in attendance at peace talks needs to be genuinely committed to the negotiation process as a collaborative undertaking. This is not to suggest that belligerents suddenly become honest upright citizens, simply that they should possess an essential readiness to hold to the terms of any agreement they might make. The peace processes of Sierra Leone and Liberia were both jeopardized because at least one participant negotiated in bad faith. However much certain participants may want or need peace, facilitators of peace talks should question the value and use of negotiations that yield peace agreements drafted and endorsed with ill intent. Reflecting on Liberia's 17 ill-conceived agreements, all signed by the duplicitous Charles Taylor, facilitators' time and money and innocent civilians' expectations are better saved for negotiations undertaken by sincere participants.

Lesson 4: The right choice of venue is an effective lure. Existing literature posits how facilitators use the lures of resource and power sharing to attract belligerents to negotiate. In cases of long-term guerilla wars where belligerents have long fought in the bush, the Lomé and Accra peace talks demonstrate how the lure of a good venue is an enticement to bring fighters to peace talks. Like Sankoh and the RUF at Lomé, LURD troops coming in from the bush revelled in their luxurious Accra accommodations. Even for CN, living through the privations in bleak Monrovia, Ghanaian hospitality was welcome respite. The sites of both the Lomé and Accra peace negotiations were costly, and not just in terms of money. Lush lodgings are evidently a lure to attract belligerents to peace talks, and arguably, these help to keep participants on site. However, such locations (and their ancillary services) include plentiful distractions, which diverted some participants' focus and slowed the pace of the talks. All the same, LURD was a reluctant participant at Accra. The rebels' battlefield leverage and Taylor's indictment meant that they could have reneged from the process at any time. Financiers and mediators were intent to keep CN and his team in place and offered what they felt was needed to retain their attendance. Ultimately, that the rebels were motivated to attend the talks, then showed up and remained involved, means that attractive accommodations were necessary (albeit insufficient) conditions for the endorsement of the Accra peace agreement.⁶⁰⁹

AREAS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

Inasmuch as my research makes a substantive contribution to political science, there are numerous areas of inquiry that remain uncharted. In the course of my analysis, I was challenged by two questions in particular that warrant further investigation.

How are individual negotiators' motivations, assessments, and decisions influenced by their cultural and religious contexts?

My research reveals that the tactics and choices pursued by individual African negotiators are often anchored in and influenced by their cultural and religious norms. Conflict negotiations are examples of micro-politics, in that they are carried out by individuals (and small groups) using power-related strategies to achieve their goals (Blase 1991). Paradoxically, a negotiator's cultural and religious frameworks are macro-structures through which he assesses conflict, makes choices, and pursues action. Individuals operating in a micro-political arena are nonetheless products of macro-structures, such as culture and religion. There is no research that links the cultural and religious contexts of individual negotiators to their perceptions and subsequent actions in peace talks. The research theories in negotiating behaviour found in psychology and law can be enhanced further still if we consider the cultural and religious structures in which individuals operate. This is an area of research overlooked by political science, but recognized in socio-cultural anthropology and management studies.

How necessary or important are post-conflict accountability and the reconciliation of human rights violators and their victims for lasting peace?

⁶⁰⁹ It is clear that the parties that funded the Accra negotiations still maintained tremendous control over the process—at least in terms of the duration. When the EU and the US stated that their munificence would end within a week, belligerents agreed to the terms of a final agreement before the deadline passed.

Both Liberia and Sierra Leone have been the sites of lengthy and very costly investigations into war crimes and human rights violations committed during their respective civil wars. The work of the Special Court for Sierra Leone resulted in 14 indictments and nine convictions, including that of Charles Taylor. Meant to last for three years, the court closed after 11, at a cost of US\$300 million (Gberie 2014). In Liberia, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission operated for four years, after which time it named 50 leading Liberians to be publicly sanctioned for associating with the perpetrators of war crimes, including sitting President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf (*IRIN* 2009; see also Raddatz 2012). No one has been formally charged. In both countries, numerous perpetrators can be found in positions of economic and political influence. All the same, both countries have remained at peace for more than a decade. How important is it then to establish truth commissions and international criminal tribunals when their findings gather dust unread, let alone applied, while the money might have been put to more effective use generating youth employment opportunities, reducing poverty, while building post-war infrastructure and institutions?

CONCLUSION

Peace talks do not stop war, nor do they make peace. Individuals at peace talks, negotiating with honest intent, make way for real and lasting peace. My research has demonstrated how specific individuals shape peace negotiations and impact their outcomes. In Sierra Leone, Jesse Jackson was influential in securing outcomes and President Kabbah was deeply committed to finding peace for his country, while in Liberia, Benjamin Lartey and Sheikh Konneh were respected facilitators. Their motivations and tactics may have been different, but each of these individuals was truly pledged to the process and their impact is undeniable. Even so, however important and necessary, their engagement was insufficient for peace. It is the individuals who perpetuated the war—the belligerents—who controlled the peace process. If the belligerents do not unanimously consent to participate in negotiations with honest intent, lasting peace is much less likely. Sierra Leonean rebel leader Foday Sankoh and Liberian president Charles Taylor agreed to take part in negotiations, but they did so with duplicitous intent. At Lomé, while securing the lion's share of the dividends on offer, Sankoh nonetheless negotiated in bad faith. In Accra, LURD actually agreed to stop fighting if Charles Taylor first resigned as president. However, Taylor repeatedly went back on his word and provided no public indication that he truly sought peace. The war in Liberia was ongoing with no end in sight. In Sierra Leone, within months of a peace agreement, the country was back at war. The proof that these two individuals held their respective countries in the stranglehold of war is revealed through their absence. It is only when Sankoh was captured and Taylor incarcerated that the peace agreements made in Lomé and Accra actually took root.

Peace negotiations are undertaken and dictated by a few individuals. The frames, biases, and personalities of these individuals determine their level of commitment to the process at the outset. Mindsets and cognitive structures shape the ways that individuals approach negotiations, the tactics they use to achieve their goals, and whether they are genuinely interested in a peaceable outcome to war. A fuller understanding of negotiations to attain war's end requires due consideration of the undeniable role and influence of individuals. As such, this research stands to enhance scholars' capacity to better assess contemporary peace processes around the globe – and potentially to ease the path to peace.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A - CITED INTERVIEWS

SIERRA LEONE

Name/Label	Description	Location	Date
Fofana, Sorie	<i>Global Times</i> editor and personal confidant to President Tejan Kabbah	Freetown, Sierra Leone	18, 19 Oct 2012
Journalist/Analyst	Former <i>New York Times</i> bureau chief	Nairobi, Kenya	22 Aug 2014
Gberie, Lansana	Journalist in Sierra Leone during the war; now Coordinator and Finance Expert at UN Security Council Panel of Experts on Liberia	New York, US Freetown, Sierra Leone	18 May 2012 15 Oct 2012
Kabbah, Ahmad Tejan	Former President of Sierra Leone (1996-1997; 1998-2007)	Pretoria, Liberia Freetown, Sierra Leone	25 Oct 2011 17 Oct 2012
Mansary, Sheka	National Security Advisor (1998-2000) to President Tejan Kabbah	Freetown, Sierra Leone	16 Oct 2012
Penfold, Peter	Former British High Commissioner to Sierra Leone (1997-2000)	London, UK	13 Feb 2013
Sesay, Shekou	Former Minister of Presidential Affairs	Pretoria, South Africa	25 Oct 2011
Spencer, Julius	Former Minister of Information (1998-2001) to President Tejan Kabbah	Freetown, Sierra Leone	16 Oct 2012

LIBERIA

Name/Label	Description	Location	Date
Ceesay, Ambassador Ansumana	Special Representative of the President of the ECOWAS Commission in Liberia	Monrovia, Liberia	3 Mar 2010
CN	Former chief negotiator for LURD; Minister of Justice in the 2003 transitional government; now Associate Justice at the Supreme Court of Liberia	Monrovia, Liberia	4 Mar 2010
Cooper, Zubin	Then self-described “bird dogger” and documentary filmmaker; now media executive and Lead Consultant at MultiSolutions Inc.	Monrovia, Liberia	20 Mar 2012

Joe, Saa Phillip	Civil society representative at the Accra negotiations; now President of the Association of Liberian Professional Organizations & Civil Society Movement of Liberia	Monrovia, Liberia	24 Mar 2012
Journalist/Analyst	Former <i>New York Times</i> bureau chief	Nairobi, Kenya	22 Aug 2014
Konneh, Sheikh Kafumba	Founding member of the National Muslim Council of Liberia (NMCL); subsequent dissenting member of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Liberia	Monrovia, Liberia	17 Feb 2011 19 Mar 2012
Lartey, Benjamin	Secretary General, Liberian Council of Churches (LCC)	Monrovia, Liberia	23 Feb 2011 19 Mar 2012
Blamoh, Nelson	Former Director of Cabinet (1997-2003) to President Charles Taylor and negotiator at Accra; now Senator in the Liberian Legislature	Monrovia, Liberia	20 Mar 2012
Pajibo, Ezekiel	Student activist sentenced to death under President Doe; Former policy analyst with Africa Faith and Justice Network, now Project Director, Trust Africa-Liberia	Monrovia, Liberia	13 Mar 2012
Senior Transitional Justice Advisor	Transitional Justice Advisor, UNMIL	Monrovia, Liberia	18 Feb 2011 12 Mar 2012
Torh, James	Commissioner, Independent Commission on Human Rights (INCHR)	Monrovia, Liberia	23 Feb 2011
Verdier, Jerome	Former Chairperson, Truth and Reconciliation Commission for Liberia; Lawyer and human rights activist	Monrovia, Liberia	05 Mar 2010
Weah, Aaron	Civil society activist and policy specialist in transitional justice; now Program Manager, Search for Common Ground Liberia and policy analyst for the Governance Commission	Monrovia, Liberia	23 Feb 2011
Wessah, Conmany	Civil society representative-elect to the 2003 National Transitional Assembly of Liberia; later Liberia's Minister of State, Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary to the European Union	Monrovia, Liberia	20 Mar 2011
Zawoo, Morlee Gugu	Former child soldier with NPFL; now Administrator, Network for Empowerment and Progressive Initiative	Monrovia, Liberia	07 Mar 2011

APPENDIX B - FIGHTING FORCES IN LIBERIA

Acronym	Leader, Key Ethnic Affiliation, Number of Troops, Strategic Interests	Est.
FIRST WAR (1989-1997)		
AFL	Armed Forces of Liberia <i>Liberia's official military, at war outset apx. 7,000 troops, mainly Krahn, sympathetic to Doe</i>	1908
NPFL	National Patriotic Front of Liberia <i>Charles Taylor, Gio and Mano, less than 300 troops at start</i>	1989
INPFL	Independent National Patriotic Front of Liberia <i>Prince Johnson, formerly of NPFL, predominantly Gio, 500 troops, disbanded late 1992</i>	1990
ULIMO	United Liberation Movement <i>Raleigh Seekie, Doe supporters incl. Krahn refugees & AFL, broke in 1994</i>	1991
LDF	Lofa Defense Force <i>Francois Massaquoi, Loma, 400-750 troops, controlled gold and diamond mineral resources in Lofa County</i>	1993
LPC	Liberia Peace Council <i>George Boley, Krahn, proxy force for AFL & supported by ECOMOG, 2,500 troops, controlled commercial operations in timber and rubber</i>	1993
ULIMO-K	United Liberation Movement, Kromah faction <i>Alhaji Kromah, Mandingo, up to 12,000 united troops, sought control over Mandingo trading links with Sierra Leone</i>	1994
ULIMO-J	United Liberation Movement, Johnson Faction <i>Gen. Roosevelt Johnson, Krahn, up to 8,000 fractious troops, involved in diamond mining in Bomi County</i>	1994
NPFL-CRC	National Patriotic Front of Liberia-Central Revolutionary Council <i>Sam Dokie, formerly of NPFL, bit regional player</i>	1994
SECOND WAR (1999-2003)		
LURD	Liberians United for Reconciliation and Democracy <i>Sekou Konneh, mostly Muslim from Mandingo & Krahn, some Lorma, many formerly from ULIMO-K, supported by Guinea, controlled Lofa and Bomi County along with their gold and diamond mineral resources</i>	1999
MODEL	Movement for Democracy in Liberia <i>Thomas Nimley, LURD splinter group thought to have been created by Côte d'Ivoire gov't, territorially strong in SE counties of Grand Sedeh, Sinoe & Grand Kru, controlled exported timber from the region</i>	2003

Sources: Adebajo 2002: 47; Stedman et al 2002: 602

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