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Conflict Dynamics in The Mano River Region and Cote d'Ivoire: A Contextual Analysis

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INTRODUCTION

Introduction

The Global Context and New Wars

The end of the Cold War in 1989 marked a significant transformation in the global political system. The end of the ideological superpower confrontation represented the onset of a new era of uncertainty for the future of global security. The peripheral wars fought throughout the Cold War were almost all shaped in some way by the bipolar system and "the fear that escalation could eventually reach the nuclear level inhibited any direct combat whatsoever by the superpowers themselves." Once the Cold War structure was removed "established patterns vanished" and subsequent conflicts were no longer contained or managed by superpower overseers. Wars of proxy were replaced with new forms of "nonstructured or destructured conflict" (Shawcross 2000).

Most academic commentators on post Cold War conflict recognise that the 1990s witnessed the emergence of a new form of warfare. The names they designate these new forms of conflict range from the "new wars" of Mary Kaldor, the "post-heroic warfare" of Edward Luttwak to Michael Ignatieff's "ethnic" wars (Kaldor 1999; Luttwak 1995; Ignatieff 1998). New wars were conceived as such not simply for their changed nature but also for the international reaction they provoked as organisations, such as NATO, struggled to determine their role in the post-Cold War environment. 'Humanitarianism' – in its broadest sense - became the prevailing fashion of the international community and the extremely mixed record of engagement it engendered has provoked perennial debates as to the efficacy of attempting to douse the flames of new wars raging on the periphery. Indeed, it could be argued that the humanitarian impulse has done as much to shape the character of new wars as any other factor.

It should be noted however, that the end of the Cold War alone cannot fully explain the emergence and proliferation of these new wars. A number of important processes that have fed into their development can be identified, predating 1989, which have been gradually transforming and moulding the contours of modern warfare. As Kaldor stresses, the most important of these is the process of globalisation, or as she defines it, "the intensification of global interconnectedness - political, economic, military and cultural," (Kaldor 1999) which has undoubtedly impacted upon the nature of warfare. The central paradox of globalisation is that it at once shortens the distances between peoples across the globe yet, simultaneously, can serve to intensify individualism, localism and the social isolation of those who feel excluded from its benefits. Thus, it is more correctly a process

of globalisation and fragmentation. Also, other processes closely related to globalisation continue to alter the nature of war: the increased privatisation of military affairs, the expanding market in small arms, and the rapid advances made in science and technology.

The wars witnessed in the Mano River region over the last two decades are undoubtedly best understood within the framework of these new wars. Yet, equally, we must be aware that deeply embedded historical and cultural factors, specific to the region, influence and play into the causes and development of conflict. The convergence of these two broad factors (the changing nature of modern warfare and the continued importance of history) has created wars characterised by their complexity and brutality. It has caused a cacophony of protagonists to be present in the battle-space at any one time, such as rebel warlords, child soldiers, foreign mercenaries, peacekeepers and humanitarian personnel. The distinctions between war and peace, soldier and civilian, friend and foe, war-fighting and criminality, right and wrong, have become blurred and imprecise. Civilians have become the primary victims as ethnic difference and mistrust become instruments for military leaders. Established rules or laws governing the waging of war developed over centuries (today enshrined in the Geneva Conventions) become almost meaningless where many combatants are children with little knowledge of such formalities. For some, war becomes a source of protection, profit and power, for others it brings exclusion, misery and loss. All this occurs in an environment typified by state collapse and the breakdown of law and order.

This pervasive complexity makes international involvement in the region much more difficult when the distinctions between victim and perpetrator is so hard to determine and when their very presence becomes an important, yet uncertain, element of conflict. This doesn't mean the international community should shy away from engagement, but instead compels them to understand more fully the dynamics of conflict and how their involvement can be most effectively applied. Making sense of such senseless conflict is indeed difficult, but if we are to attempt to effectively lessen the suffering inflicted on ordinary people in future wars, we must attempt to find the sense within the ostensible senselessness.

Objectives

This report is primarily intended to draw together a considerable body of literature on conflict in the Mano River region and Cote d'Ivoire into a clear and concise document to serve as a source of information on broad conflict characteristics and dynamics and historical context for Oxfam personnel operating in those countries. It is designed to

encourage further thinking and engagement with the topics. It is written by an independent researcher from outside Oxfam and as such does not offer programme-oriented recommendations for staff; rather it is intended to inform and feed into Oxfam programming in an indirect sense. Nor is the purpose of this report to present a manual for post-conflict reconstruction - such issues have been clearly documented and the basic theoretical tenets are widely known. Instead the aim is to provide a historical context of the region's conflicts whilst also drawing out key themes and issues that have fed into the conflict and contributed to the destabilisation of the region.

This, it is hoped, will enable informed regional initiatives and programmes that are sensitive to important conflict causes and dynamics. As will be shown, the region is fraught with complexities, and events in one area can impact far and wide. It is vital that Oxfam personnel conducting work in the area have at least a basic understanding of wider issues relating to conflict that may not ostensibly relate to Oxfam programmes. This imperative is summarised by Sarah Collinson, from the Overseas Development Institute (ODI), as follows:

> "Effective policies and principled approaches can only emerge from an adequate understanding of the situation that one wishes to ameliorate…humanitarian action must be about more than technical issues of logistics or good practice" (Collinson, 2003)

This report has been researched and written in the context of a potentially unstable period for the region: the first round of elections have taken place in Liberia; Cote d'Ivoire's elections have been postponed amidst political impasse; political change is on the horizon in Guinea given the ill-health of president Conte; and Sierra Leone's gradual progress depends significantly upon continued stability in neighbouring countries. It is not an overstatement to suggest that, in the coming months, the future of the region hangs in the balance, therefore informed engagement is an imperative.

Structure of the Report

This report is divided into three sections. Section One analyses the regional aspects of conflict. Section Two draws out generalisations regarding conflict dynamics based upon the modern history of the region. Section Three provides short country backgrounders, intended as accessible briefs for those new to the history of a particular country. The report has been written so that, if necessary, each section can be read separately. Of course

there is substantial overlap between individual sections and sub-sections, however, the report has been divided in such a manner to provide a clarity that would be otherwise impossible to convey in a single report of this length. It is hoped that upon reading the whole document, those relatively new to the area will have a basic grasp of both key conflict dynamics and country specific backgrounds. Recommendations for further reading have also been provided along with an extensive thematic bibliography. It must be stressed that this report deals predominantly in generalisations based upon a broad analysis of the existing literature and as such should not be treated as providing conclusive statements but rather as a pathway into further detailed research on any given topic.

SECTION ONE

REGIONAL ASPECTS OF CONFLICT

Section One – Regional Aspects of Conflict

Part One - The Regionalisation of Conflict

Whilst it is possible to distinguish broadly geographically and temporally distinct conflicts in the modern history of the region, such an approach marginalises the fundamental impact of regional determinants of conflict creation, development and resolution. Stephen Ellis states that 'Africa's wars are today often erroneously understood as internal, rather than interstate, conflicts' (Ellis 2005). These prevailing deep-seated assumptions reflect theoretical perspectives based on out-dated state-centric paradigmatic constructs for explaining conflict, reflected in Western involvement in the region which tends to target individual states (often where historical connections exist) whilst largely ignoring regional factors. Conflicts, which may appear on the surface to be intra-state, cannot be fully understood in analytical isolation; they are intertwined and interconnected in an extremely complex, multi-layered and interdependent fashion. What is more, informal regional structures, alliances and interconnections are in constant flux thus further complicating analysis.

Porous Borders

The logical place to start in understanding how conflict becomes regionalised is that of borders. A large proportion of the elements of conflict studied in this report, plus many more concerned specifically with post-conflict reconstruction, hinge upon the central issue of borders. The regionalisation of conflict has been fundamentally facilitated by the porosity of borders between neighbouring countries and the complex flows of peoples and materials across them. Whilst borders themselves do not represent a significant initial causal explanative of internal state conflict (for this we me must look instead to issue of poor governance for instance that will be dealt with in Section Two) the simple fact of border porosity is central to understanding the intensification and spread of conflict from both a regional and internal state perspective. Porous borders represent the prime facilitator of perennial conflict in the region and an analysis of border dynamics reveals in stark relief why and how conflict becomes regionalised so rapidly.

Territorial integrity is a basic element of statehood and vital to the security of any country let alone ones caught up in, or emerging from, violent conflict. Other than distinguishing between one country and the next in an abstract sense, the borders in the

region are more or less non-existent in practical terms and the capacity of state security forces to control borders (land, sea and air) is extremely low. Indeed, often the only real impediments to cross-border movements are natural features such as forests and rivers – a rather insignificant obstacle to insurgents accustomed to bush survival. The borders between Guinea, Sierra Leone, Liberia, and Côte d'Ivoire have always been so porous that the movement of people and goods from one nation to another is virtually unchecked. The unregulated flow and trafficking of small arms, mercenaries, child soldiers, women, drugs, and illicit goods represent crucial determinants of destabilisation in the region. The simple fact pertains that conflict cannot be contained in any one country and rebellions that may begin as internal problems rapidly become regionalised.

These processes are further complicated by the existence of ethnic and tribal groups straddling the borders in the region. As is the case with most African countries, state borders were arbitrarily created and rarely reflect truly national, ethnic or cultural divides – traditional communities were bifurcated in the process. This fact further undermines the meaningfulness of borders and not only facilitates, but also encourages the free flow of peoples across borders and allows rebel groups to withdraw to find sanctuary in neighbouring countries where they can regroup, recruit and resupply. For example, the Sierra Leone Kamajor (Civil Defence Fighters) largely belonged to tribes which spanned the Sierra-Leone/Liberia border, thus in 2001, as Revolutionary United Front (RUF) fighters retreated into Liberia in response to the disarmament process in Sierra Leone, Kamajor efforts to assist Liberian fighters against the RUF were facilitated by their close ties and connections with their ethnic kin over the border. Similar dynamics occur across most of the borders in the region, which helps to explain how goods, peoples and arms are able to move so freely between states in the region causing continued instability. Conflict thus takes root over borders feeding upon similar sets of resources and socially excluded peoples, yet adopts particular characteristics dependent on prevailing national politics.

Porous borders and the illicit cross-border trade routes between neighbouring states represent the arteries of the war economy enabling the smooth running of trans-border shadow economies that provide the lifeblood for sustained conflict in the region. The spread of war economies over borders represents another significant way in which conflict becomes regionalised as regional actors look beyond their own borders for alternative means of economic gain – this subject will be dealt with in Part Two of this section. Initiatives which focus on policing borders more effectively, developing border regions and encouraging legitimate cross-border trade represent an ideal starting point for preventing the vicious cycle of conflict in the region.

Case Study of Conflict Regionalisation

One could reveal the process of conflict regionalisation in the area by analysing in detail all the instances in which conflict spilled over borders, involved a broad array of regional actors or directly impacted upon the politics of a neighbouring state. However, there is not space here to document such processes. Instead, the following brief case study - which essentially takes a cross-section of the second phase of the Liberian civil war (1999-2003) – serves to instantiate key regional dynamics, highlights the importance of the region's porous borders and reveals that individual state conflict cannot be fully comprehended irrespective of the wider region.

CASE STUDY: Liberian Civil War 1999-2003

It is widely acknowledged that the Liberians United for Reconciliation and Democracy (LURD) rebellion, which began in 1999 in opposition to Taylor's presidency, had very close links with Guinea and its president, Lasana Conté. Taylor instigated Sierra Leone RUF (under the leadership of Sam Bockarie) and Liberian rebel incursions into Guinea across the Sierra Leone and Liberian borders in 1999-2000 supporting Guinean dissidents – hundreds were killed in the fighting. In response, Guinea backed LURD rebels with bases for re-supply, rest and reinforcement in Sierra Leone, Guinea and Voinjama, Lofa County, to protect its borders and provided a rear base for the LURD political wing in Conakry. Also, after 2002 an increasing number of former Sierra Leone Kamajor Civil Defence Forces fighters joined LURD and assisted arms flows to rebels through south-eastern Sierra Leone to Liberia.

The attempted Patriotic Movement of Cote d'Ivoire (MPCI) coup in September 2002, which left rebels effectively in control of the entire north of Cote d'Ivoire and foreshadowed the emergence of new anti-Gbagbo rebel groups in the West, allowed Taylor to take advantage of instability close to the Liberian border. Taylor had supported the training of, former Ivorian leader, General Guei's militias from 2000 to 2001. Following the 2002 coup (in which Guei was killed) Taylor sent former National Patriotic Front of Liberia (NPFL) and RUF rebels to support the western Ivorian rebel groups against Gbagbo in November 2002; a key motivation being his desire to secure important timber trade routes to the Ivorian port of San Pedro. According to Global Witness some 90% of the supposedly Ivorian rebel groups, the Movement for Justice and Peace (MJP) and Ivorian Popular Movement for the Great West (MPIGO), were Liberian. There is also evidence that Burkina Faso's president, Blaise Compaore, helped arm the rebels, most

probably in reaction to Gbagbo's targeting of Burkinabes in Cote d'Ivoire. Gbagbo retaliated by arming and supporting fighters linked to LURD forces in late 2002 which culminated in the creation of the Cote d'Ivoire based LURD splinter group, Movement for Democracy in Liberia (MODEL) in early 2003 which, being comprised predominantly of ethnic Krahn had strong links with Ivorian Guere across the border. Thus, western Cote d'Ivoire became another proxy battleground in the Liberian civil war and provided an opportunity for fighters across the region to descend upon the area to loot and contract out their services as mercenaries.

This brief account of the regional aspects of the 1999-2003 Liberian civil war clearly reveals that the conflict was crucially shaped and affected by regional factors, typified by: external government support for foreign rebels against internal dissent; attempts to control foreign resources to fund military operations; the ebb and flow of conflict across national borders; the widespread operations of mercenaries fighting for both government and rebel forces; and the network of cross border trade routes which fuelled the interconnected regional war economies.

The regionalisation of conflict represents the most pressing challenge for those trying to prevent its continued occurrence and recurrence in the area. Positive developments in one country can be swiftly undermined by instability in neighbouring states, sweeping away in an instant, years of steady development and progress. A regional approach to conflict prevention is thus crucial. This entails the implementation of programmes that are sensitive to the regional dynamics outlined above. Programmes targeted only on individual states may cause substantial instability in neighbouring countries by upsetting intricate cross-border social and economic balances, whilst failing to realise that security in the region depends as much on external (neighbouring states) stability as on independent internal stability.

Part Two - Region-wide Characteristics of Conflict

In addition to the process of regionalisation outlined above, conflict in the area can be considered regional in the sense that it generally displays a number of common characteristics irrespective of the country in which it is taking place. It is possible to draw out a number of central issues and themes that are pertinent explanatives across both borders and time, an understanding of which are vital for those engaged in the region.

The Character and Actions of Armed Groups

A wide variety of armed groups operate throughout the region. These groups include rebels, government armed forces, civil defence forces and private militias. Whilst there are of course significant differences between these groups regarding such aspects as organisation, ethnic composition and purpose, there also exist a number of pertinent region-wide commonalities between them. First, child soldiers have been extensively employed by both rebel and government forces. Second, civilians have been the prime targets and victims of all these groups. Third, mercenaries operate throughout the entire region and are regularly employed by rebels and government forces. An analysis of each of these areas in turn will provide an essential background regarding the ways in which the perpetrators of violence operate and their impact on civilian populations.

(i) The Use of Child Soldiers.

The use of children (boys and girls) in armed groups has been a distressing feature of conflict in the region from its earliest days. It is a phenomenon that has accelerated and become a defining feature of the wars – indeed, the image of gun wielding youths, some wearing masks and wigs, has often been used for the covers of books on conflict in the region. The growth in the number of child soldiers throughout the globe is a process characteristic of new wars. This is not a process confined to West Africa's conflicts. There are perhaps several hundred thousand child soldiers active in the world today. The following brief analysis of this worrying characteristic of new wars, as witnessed in the Mano River region, reveals some of the factors that have contributed to this trend.

The recruitment of child soldiers has been facilitated by a number of factors apparent in the region. First, there are those factors that have made children valuable assets for armed groups. Due to the fact that civilians have become the main targets and victims of these wars, the social dislocation and upheaval this has caused meant that huge populations of orphans and displaced children became easy recruits for armed groups. Many children joined armed groups when their parents were killed or they were separated from them. In this sense, supply was not an obstacle and given the high death toll of fighters during the conflicts, the ready supply of children was required to replenish ranks. Sometimes children were actively pushed into joining armed groups by family members who either demanded or persuaded them to play a part in toppling the regime, pushing back rebels (protective duties) or bringing back money to the family gained in the course of fighting.

Also, because modern weapons are increasingly easy to understand and handle they can be put in the hands of young children who only require basic training and familiarisation with their operation. What is more, children are extremely easy for commanders to manipulate and will follow orders when compelled. These factors have contributed to the widespread forced conscription (often at gunpoint) of children into armed groups of both governments and rebels.

This is only half of the picture however, and ignores the fact that children often, for a number of reasons, voluntarily join the ranks of armed groups or feel they have no other choice, despite not being forced. Joining an armed group can offer displaced youths with the prospect of access to cash and material benefits, the prospect of excitement and adventure, and even the prospect of improved security. In many cases young people made the calculation that they would be better protected as part of an armed group than remaining prey to them – ironically war became a survival mechanism. Also, revenge played an important motivational factor in prompting voluntary recruitment – children who had seen awful abuses committed against their families wished to exact revenge against the perpetrators.

We also must remember that these conflicts took place in a context in which youth had been starved of opportunities and held back by societies dominated by tribal elders – for many, conflict was an escape: a way of turning the tables on those they felt were responsible for their social exclusion and powerlessness. Also, a number of reports point to the fact that family cohesion had broken down during conflict and children felt unloved and uncared for – for some, joining an armed group was a means of becoming part of a new 'family' in which they have a purpose and in which their commanders become father-like figures (however, this is not to suggest they were always cared for – abuses, torture and beatings by commanders was common). Michael Ignatieff has also pointed towards the sexual dimension of war; the idea that the wild testosterone fuelled sexuality of adolescent males finds its release through the phallic symbol of the gun. Linked to this is the notion that wielding a firearm signifies having reached maturity (Ignatieff, 1998). These factors may have also helped fuel recruitment as well as contributing to the savagery shown towards their victims.

Once recruited the children are provided with very basic training and then they would be required to perform all sorts of tasks additional to actual fighting. Many undertook military support tasks such as manning checkpoints, spying, cooking, stealing, foraging for food, and other forms of manual labour. Apart from these tasks children were frequently complicit in abuses against civilians such as murder, rape, burning houses, kidnapping and looting. In actual battles children were often sent to the front line, whilst

elder fighters took up more strategic positions – the children were essentially used as human shields with the intention that opposing combatants might hesitate in killing a child. Children often had access to weapons although this did not mean they had access to firearms at all times. Often they were provided weapons for specific purposes when the situation warranted it, such as when repelling an attack.

A number of other features relating to the experiences of children in these conflicts have been reported by various sources. A number of methods were used to induce extra courage, shamelessness and fearlessness in children. Drug and alcohol abuse was widespread. Child soldiers would be fuelled with lethal concoctions of cocaine, gunpowder and alcohol by commanders and sent to perform specific tasks such as providing 'bait' for attacks. In this sense, supplying drugs to children was a strategic calculation on the part of commanders in that it provided them with fighters who would have no hesitation in committing abuses. In some cases, drugs were forcibly injected. Thus, many of the worst atrocities committed during conflict were by children with little or no idea of right or wrong, mercy or sympathy.

(ii) The Targeting of Civilians

A defining feature of the actions of armed groups in the region is that their violence has overwhelmingly been directed towards civilians. This is a phenomenon present in many of the new wars throughout the world – the ratio of military to civilian casualties currently stands at around 1:8. However, these shockingly high casualty figures reveal only part of the picture. Civilians have also suffered horrific human rights abuses such as rape, forced labour, torture, mutilations and beatings – these abuses have been clearly and systematically documented by human rights organisations such as Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch. Perhaps the most notorious of armed groups responsible for such atrocities in the region was the RUF in Sierra Leone who made a habit of amputating victims arms. Also, many thousands have been displaced by conflict, either fleeing to other parts of their country or to refugee camps abroad. No single report, book or article can even begin to portray the horror experienced by hundreds of thousands of civilians in the region. Faced with such evidence, it becomes tempting to conclude that the armed groups committing such atrocities are nothing more than gangs of mindless and remorseless killers. That civilians become the main victims of armed groups undoubtedly seems to defy traditional logic. For example, if the stated aim of insurgents is to overthrow a corrupt government in the name of 'the people,' why do those same insurgents resort to massacring the very people in whose name they are supposedly fighting? Explanations of

mindlessness are convenient but insufficient if we are to truly understand why armed groups commit such acts of barbarity. There are a number of observable reasons for the targeting of civilians during conflict in the region which can help us begin to explain (although not necessarily justify or excuse) this awful phenomenon.

A number of psychological factors concerning the state of mind of the fighters are of undoubted importance in explaining the violence against civilians. For many, violence is an assertion of power and for those who have been in a situation of almost complete powerlessness we can expect the urge to assert power to be strong. David Keen also stresses the importance of shame and describes how fighters may try to eliminate the sources of their shame by attacking those who reawaken such feelings or attempt to transfer shame on those being abused through humiliating acts such as sexual violence, amputations and public ridicule. Further to this point, fighters may also feel violence is a way of achieving respect and recognition – the gun demands respect. The atmosphere of impunity in many of the conflicts in the region, whereby fighters would not be punished for crimes, fed into violent behaviour – indeed, violence towards civilians was actively encouraged and refusal to take part could result in punishment, thus normal notions of right and wrong became strangely inversed. Of course the widespread use of drugs by fighters only served to further destabilise the minds of fighters. The essential point here is that we must consider violence committed against civilians from the point of view of the fighter – this brief summary reveals just some of the ways certain acts become justified and indeed, necessary, for those involved in such abuses.

Further to these psychological factors, the targeting of civilians is closely related to a number of economic factors. Many killings and abuses are committed during the looting of villages and towns – often those who had nothing to give would be killed and violence was used to force civilians to flee so goods could be looted with greater ease. Many civilians were used as forced labour for such tasks as farming, mining and carrying equipment for fighting forces. Also, we should not discount the importance of political and ethnic factors. For example, civilians that are seen as supportive of the 'enemy' or those belonging to particular ethnic groups were particularly susceptible to systematic executions and appalling abuses. (Keen, 2005; Ellis, 1999)

Explaining the phenomenon of large-scale violence against civilians in the region is a complex and uncertain task – as has been shown, the reasons are diverse and range from the mindset of an individual fighter to the economic imperatives of the armed group. The purpose of this brief account has been to illustrate that, for a number of identifiable reasons, when conflict breaks out in the region it is reasonably safe to assume – based on the lessons of history – that civilians will become the prime targets of armed groups. The

humanitarian and human rights implications of this are massive. The fact that some credible explanations have been proffered to explain this reality suggests solutions are achievable – we are not simply faced with mindless barbarism. Certain key issues must be faced and efforts implemented to address them, for example: judicial institutions capable of holding perpetrators of such crimes to account will help to undermine the culture of impunity that persists in the region; education is vital for teaching basic notions of morality and acceptable behaviour; efforts to promote community cohesion and equality of opportunity can encourage proper notions of responsibility and respect whilst undermining the urge in some potential combatants to 'turn the tables' and exact revenge against those they feel are responsible for their powerlessness; and initiatives that target the flow of drugs and arms into the region can help remove two of the most important ingredients for widespread atrocities.

In the modern history of the region the majority of the populations of countries in the region have suffered enormously at the hands of a brutal minority. Too many lives have been ended or utterly destroyed by the actions of that minority. The international community has not done enough to prevent atrocities in the past. In the future, given the high potential for renewed conflict in the region, international actors must be prepared to act with the necessary resolve to protect innocent civilians caught up in conflict. Whilst humanitarian emergency responses are crucial (such as establishing and managing refugee and IDP camps to cater for displaced civilians) and the introduction of peacekeepers can help deter some of the worst atrocities, unfortunately the record tells us that this has not been enough to prevent suffering on an unimaginable scale. In this respect, greater consideration should be accorded to the notion of 'humanitarian intervention' – that is, the threat or use of force by states to prevent or put an end to serious violations of human rights – as a potential means of saving civilians from the consequences of conflict in the region. The debate over humanitarian intervention is ongoing and hotly contested. . What is more, even if all states were to unanimously agree that humanitarian intervention was the right or 'just' course of action, there is no certainty that it would necessarily take place, particularly in a region where the potential for western casualties would be high. This is not the place to expand on these arguments, suffice to say that alternatives need to be considered if we are serious about preventing another generation of innocent West African's being blighted with the horrific consequences of violent conflict.

(iii) The Hiring of Mercenaries

In the recent history of the region armed groups have made extensive use of regional mercenaries, or 'floating warriors,' to fill their ranks. These mercenaries capitalise on the region's porous borders to travel to whereever they can ply their trade. The mercenaries are usually veterans of earlier civil wars who were forcibly recruited by rebel groups when children. They are primarily motivated by prospects of economic gain after finding themselves unemployed and existing in dire poverty following the cessation of hostilities. In many respects, this reveals the inadequacy of previous Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reintegration (DDR) processes initiated in the region (Liberia 1997, Sierra Leone 1999-2003, Liberia 2002-2005 and Cote d'Ivoire). As a result of years of war in the region a large pool of ex-combatants exist as potential recruits for armed groups operating in the region. Recruiters are able to lure fighters with the opportunity of payment and a share in the spoils of war. Thus, the 'push' and 'pull' factors are strong for those fighters contemplating hiring themselves out as regional mercenaries, plus the context of regional instability means this process can continue more of less without hindrance. They are able to float in and out of wars in the region, operating where and when they wish – from one perspective they can be viewed as entrepreneurs making the most of a skill they have acquired and where the demand for that skill is high.

During Liberia's second civil war between 1999 and 2003 it estimated that well over one thousand regional warriors took part, with the majority fighting for the LURD rebel group. More recently, in 2005 a number of reports have expressed concern over the Ivorian recruitment of recently demobilised children to fight with pro-government militias there. The easily manipulated children were being lured with the prospect of financial compensation and the opportunity of paying themselves through looting. The children ended up in armed groups comprised mainly of former Liberian MODEL fighters recruited for service in Cote d'Ivoire. A similar process has been witnessed with regard to Guinea – Liberian ex-combatants have been recruited into pro and anti Guinean forces. These examples again reveal the extent to which the conflicts in the region have become deeply intertwined (HRW, March 2005, ICG June 2005 - Guinea).

Perhaps the most distressing consequence of the existence of regional warriors is the brutality and lack of respect for human rights which they export to other parts of the region. As Human Rights Watch reveals, most of the fighters have fought with the two armed groups (RUF and NPFL) in the region notorious for their appalling abuses against civilians (HRW, April 2005). These abuses have been outlined above. The introduction of foreign fighters into an internal conflict has often led to a dramatic increase in violence

against civilians. This occurred, for example, when the Liberian backed rebel groups (MJP and MPIGO) became involved in the Ivorian conflict in 2002. The indiscipline and scale of abuses committed by the foreign fighters were sufficiently high to compel the MPCI (predominantly composed of Ivorians) commanders to purge the Forces Nouvelles (after the three rebel groups had merged) of Liberian and Sierra Leonean elements (Small Arms Survey, 2005).

International Involvement and Aid

The emergence of new wars, as outlined in the introduction, prompted a change in the security emphasis within the international community from Cold War threats of interstate conflict to the notion that regional conflicts, with their roots in underdevelopment, represented the prime threats to international peace and stability. Whilst these conflicts were primarily rooted in internal communal tensions they became crises that inevitably involved other states, threatened international peace and security, and demanded outside intervention. This process led to a variety of interventions to deal with these so-called 'complex emergencies' from a multitude of international actors. These interventions have had differing aims ranging from attempts to simply separate the warring parties through the imposition of peacekeeping forces, through efforts designed to limit human suffering by delivering humanitarian aid, to the radical social transformation of target states to promote development and security. All these forms of intervention have been present, to differing extents, in the Mano River region and Cote d'Ivoire and they have had both deleterious and beneficial consequences. This section maps out two principal ways in which foreign involvement in the region has impacted on and in many ways shaped the nature of conflict in the region.

(i) Western State Intervention

Foreign state intervention in the region has been characterised by certain Western states assuming responsibility for traditional spheres of influence (Britain in Sierra Leone, America in Liberia, and France in Guinea and Cote d'Ivoire) based upon long standing historical ties. This parochial bilateral approach has led to a lack of international cooperation and coordination in tackling problems that are in fact regional in nature (as outlined above) and has also been reflected in the UN's engagement which has done little to foster great power regional cooperation, preferring instead to institutionalise the continued dominance of traditional lead states in individual countries of the region. The

largely uncoordinated and uneven nature of the disarmament and demobilisation plans are a clear reflection of this problem – the payout for the Ivorian disarmament program being $900 which is three times what the Liberian program paid out (ICG, June 2005 - Guinea). This has the effect of encouraging fighters to move across borders to take advantage of such inequities, thus further destabilising the region.

It is not enough, for example, for Britain to focus solely upon peacebuilding in Sierra Leone and hope that sound internal policies will ensure stability. It must realise that Sierra Leone's future fundamentally depends on developments and events in the region. Although, it may lack the historical connections with Liberia and has no embassy there, all efforts must be made to ensure coordination with the US led reconstruction process in the full knowledge that renewed conflict in Liberia will almost certainly have devastating consequences in Sierra Leone. The same logic applies in relation to Cote d'Ivoire and the need for Britain and France to coordinate their West African strategies. The need for strategies (these may take the form of coordinated land and air border patrols or regulated sanctions regimes for instance) that take into account regional dynamics and that require integrated Western state cooperation is something that is belatedly coming to be seen as critical for long-term conflict resolution and prevention in the area (the ICG has been particularly vocal in advocating such regional engagement).

(ii) Aid

The massive humanitarian emergencies created by conflict in the region prompted involvement from a variety of aid agencies, donor states and international financial institutions. International aid has been crucial in terms of mitigating some of the appalling suffering caused by war but there is another side of the coin that warrants analysis here. The record of these actors in the region over the years has been extremely mixed and indeed, there has been considerable debate as to the efficacy of aid provision in such complex conflicts. This debate is vital because, given the complex nature of conflict in the region, there is a very real possibility that the actions of well-meaning aid agencies can unwittingly contribute to processes and dynamics that end up exacerbating or contributing to conflict. These debates have focused on a number of central problems that will be briefly outlined below. (It should be noted that the following outlines are those issues highlighted in the literature and are only intended as simplified introductions to what are extremely complicated matters).

A central and well-known criticism is that of aid being diverted to support the war effort of armed groups thus strengthening and sustaining them. This has occurred in a number of

ways: rebel groups have demanded custom duties, protection money or taxation from humanitarian relief convoys; relief convoys have also been ambushed, looted and in some cases, vehicles and radios commandeered; civilians who have been the beneficiaries of aid have subsequently been looted by armed groups; or those civilians have traded relief on the black market with armed groups. The issue of diversion is clearly evinced by the massive looting of the INGO base in Gbarnga, Liberia in 1994 which amounted to $10m in losses, with many of the stolen trucks and vehicles subsequently used on the front line by the responsible armed factions.

Another criticism of international aid efforts has been that it encouraged government abuses and impeded relief efforts due to the reluctance of donors to make aid conditional on human rights observance. The general point here is that emergency aid was essentially used a substitute or smokescreen for effective diplomatic action to address humanitarian crises and prevent abuses. Thus, government forces involved in widespread abuses of civilians (as outlined above) were often being supplied and funded through loans that were supposedly earmarked for development. This was particularly noticeable in Sierra Leone in the early 1990s where aid to the National Provisional Revolutionary Council government proceeded in an atmosphere of 'institutional optimism' amongst donors as regards the character of the regime thus obscuring the reality of large-scale violence committed against civilians by government troops. This not only constituted a form of tacit support for government abuses but also deepened rebel intransigence with, and mistrust of, international organisations thus hampering negotiations and endangering relief operations because of a perceived lack of neutrality and even-handedness. Similar processes have been noted in respect to the civil war in Liberia.

Aid can also cause problems through the way it affects those who are excluded from its benefits. Often relief failed to make its way to the poorest or most needy sections of society for various reasons such as the siphoning off of aid through corrupt practices (also often the most needy were those with the least political muscle to claim relief). Indeed, rebel held areas were often the least well supplied. This had the effect of increasing recruitment to rebel groups in such areas as a means of survival, encouraging attacks on relief convoys and aid workers, and generally making rebel groups sceptical of aid neutrality (thus increasing the risk of attacks to humanitarian personnel). Also, the lack of relief reaching rebel held territory could help speed up the depopulation of those areas, as people would be drawn by the prospect of humanitarian relief at camps.

Another common criticism of relief operations, linked to the last point, is that it can destroy local capacity and foster dependency by flooding areas with resources thus reducing incentives for local producers and causing beneficiaries to become dependent on

aid provision. This is however a very basic assumption that ignores some key dynamics in the region. The idea that populations might develop a 'dependency syndrome' has been used by some aid agencies (notably UN agencies) to reduce relief supplies in favour of development, whilst lauding peoples' coping strategies. This approach conveniently ignores the negative aspects of coping strategies that may in some cases amount to prostitution, begging, stealing or occupying other peoples' homes – practices that should not be encouraged by drawing down relief. Whilst the dependency argument may be strong, it should not be used as an excuse for speedily drawing down relief in a context of massive displacement, uncertainty and fear. The relief-dependency debate is extremely complex when considered in the context of violent conflict. The purpose here has been merely to raise it as an issue warranting further careful and considered analysis.

The War Economy

Another primary factor playing into the development of conflict in the region is that of war economies. The precise character and workings of war economies are extremely hard to pin down due to their unregulated nature and because their tentacles reach far beyond the confines of state boundaries. Indeed, the impact of war economies on the regionalisation of conflict facilitated by porous borders and chronic regional instability, as discussed above, should not be understated. The specific war economies of the countries studied in this report must all be understood as individual nodes within a complex web of non-formal transnational trade networks. However, it is more appropriate to discuss this phenomenon separately here because its central springs are to be found in the internal collapse of established economic structures and the subsequent emergence of new licit and illicit mechanisms at both micro and macro levels. These internal transformations then become locked into regional and transnational structures that perpetuate and deepen its operation. Whilst there is not room here to delve into the intricacies of the mechanisms involved in war economies, there are a number of central aspects that we can expect to observe during conflict and that continue to hamper post-conflict reconstruction in the region.

(i) War economies as social transformation

As Professor Mark Duffield has made clear, violent conflict should not simply be seen as breakdown and collapse but rather as involving forms of social reordering and transformation (Duffield, 2001). In this sense, the war economies that emerge need to be conceived as a form of actual development based on adaptation, some level of rational

calculus and the creation of alternative systems of profit and power. Whilst the development of war economies may appear morally offensive to the international community due to their criminalized, exclusionary, inequitable and violent nature based on the pursuit of private gain, we should also be aware they involve innovation, adaptation and deep social transformation at all levels. This has important policy implications that will be discussed below. The war economies of the new wars in the region are largely the result of a quest for self-sufficiency (in the absence of any superpower patronage) by armed factions to develop ways of mobilising resources to maintain war-fighting capabilities and power structures. The informal economies that emerge have far reaching implications for entire societies; as much for those directly implicated in new transnational trading networks as for the ordinary civilian entirely excluded from its inequitable distributive mechanisms.

Some, such as Paul Collier at the World Bank, have claimed that 'greed', economic exploitation and loot-seeking represent key causes and drivers of conflict themselves (Collier 1999; Collier and Hoeffler 2001). Whilst this thesis may contain some truth and it is an undoubted fact that some rebels aim to directly profit from conflict, the argument ignores other important factors, not least the fact that some rebels are motivated more by a sheer need to survive, while others have been forced into joining the rebellion. Also, the 'greed' thesis crucially ignores the predatory role of the state in perpetuating conflict through pecuniary practices, organised violent exploitation, and the fact that it is often the very kleptocratic and corrupt nature of the state that compels rebels to fight in order to get at a piece of the pie. The cause of conflict in the region is not reducible to greed, nor is the working of war economy. When analysing the economic complexities of conflict we are not dealing simply with rebels bent on personal profit. Instead we are dealing with an array of actors including, for example, government personnel, warlords, aid agencies and civilians who interact in various ways and operate according to a multiplicity of motivations, whether it be the ordinary civilian who engages in cross-border smuggling in order to survive, the rank and file rebel who loots an air-conditioning unit and sells it over the border to government officials in exchange for cash, or the warlord extracting diamonds to fund arms purchases.

(ii) Basic characteristics of war economies

War economies involve the destruction or circumvention of the formal economy and the growth of informal markets of production and distribution based largely upon pillage, extortion and violence against civilians, and are highly decentralised and privatised.

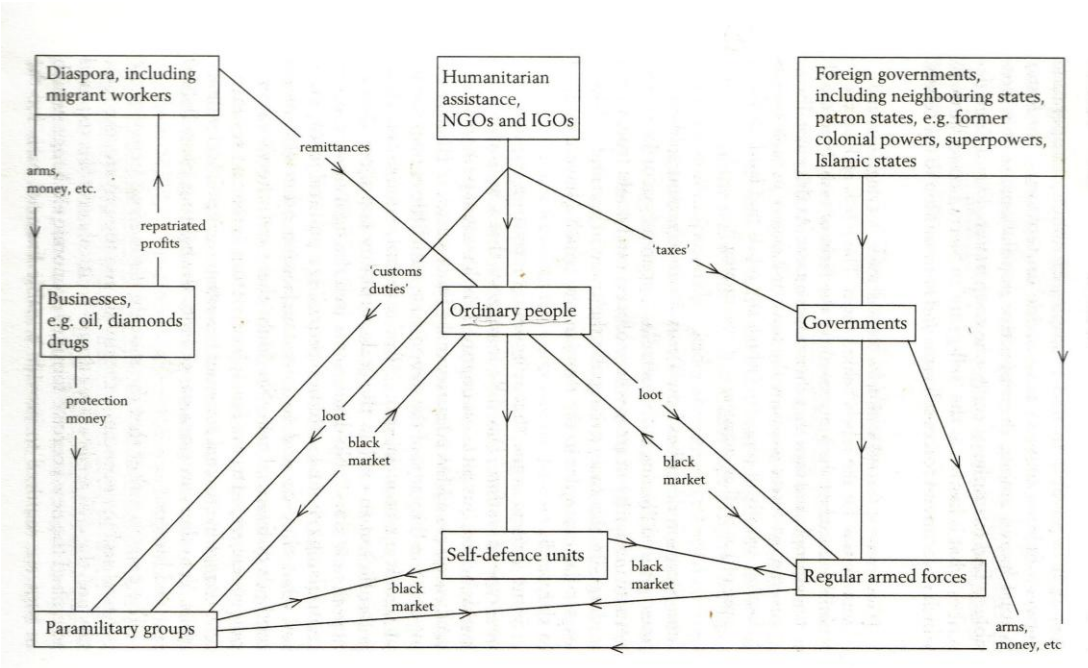
Combatants come to rely primarily on the exploitation of, and cross-border trade in, natural resources and other lootable commodities involving complex regional and transnational trading networks. Civilians have to learn ways to adapt their behaviour and livelihoods in order to survive or to capitalise on any available opportunities that present themselves. It must also be stated that war economies are not usefully separated into illicit and licit economies - the distinction is rarely clear-cut because of the manner in which conflict trade is integrated into the global economic system (Taylor, 2003). A large 'grey area' exists between the two during conflict because it can be extremely difficult to determine when specific laws apply or where certain activities represent non-threatening survival strategies at a local level.

The functional aspects of war economies have been usefully categorised into 'combat', 'shadow' and 'coping' economies. Combat economies are based upon interactions that directly sustain combat through predatory taxation, extortion, exploitation of resources, the imposition of 'customs' in border regions, and capturing foreign aid. Shadow economies encompass informal economic relationships outside state-regulated frameworks involving criminal elements smuggling various commodities and resources. The shadow economy can easily be hijacked by combatants and thus becomes the base for the combat economy. Coping economies involve poor and vulnerable people struggling to survive during conflict who engage in small-scale cross-border smuggling, subsistence farming and petty trade (Ballentine and Nitzschke, 2005).

The war economy operates at both the macro and the micro level with important interconnections and overlap between the two at, what is termed, the meso level. Macro level economic activities relate primarily to the large-scale extraction and export of resources involving governments, rebel leaders, foreign companies and powerful individuals. Political elites and warlords compete for control of resources using military strategies supported by international commercial ties. This can sometimes entail the warlord strategy of large-scale cross-border offensives in order to secure resource rich areas or key trading routes (Taylor's support of the initial RUF incursion into Sierra Leone in 1991 was largely based on his desire to integrate Sierra Leone's diamond reserves into his expansive commercial network). Given the collapse of traditional revenue collecting systems, governments seek alternative funding to sustain their violent activities such as diverting existing resources towards fighting units. Also, corrupt government regulatory and taxation practices divert resources for personal profit and factional gain. At this level we should also include the support given from external states in the form of money, arms and equipment.

At the micro level we can observe the activities of local populations and fighters who adopt a range of survival strategies in a context of the collapse of government distributive mechanisms. Subsistence farming is the basic means of survival for local populations, however some civilians attempt to continue pre-war production of cash crops which they may attempt to trade through the illegal war economy or through interactions with fighters in some cases. Humanitarian assistance and diaspora remittances may also be recycled through the war economy via black market transactions at the micro level. The economic activities of fighters at the micro level includes small scale extraction of resources, smuggling, checkpoint extortion, looting and 'taxation' of humanitarian assistance. Also, the very act of enlisting in a militia may represent a micro economic coping strategy for ordinary civilians.

The macro and the micro aspects of the war economy overlap at the meso level where we can expect to see, for example, direct deals between local faction leaders and foreign companies, plantations and mining facilities run by local commanders and illegal relationships between government officials and armed factions. Thus, while we can distinguish between the central aspects of these different layers of the war economy, it is important to be aware that they overlap and impact upon each other directly. The following chart from Mary Kaldor's book clearly highlights some of the most important resource flows observable in the war economies that have emerged in the region (Kaldor, 1999).



(iii) Implications

The complexity of the war economies presents a number of difficult problems for those engaged in the region. The distinctions between those who are involved in the war economy for profit and power, and those who are forced to participate in order to survive are hard to determine. The interconnected nature and ingrained nature of the war economy means that changes in one area can importantly impact upon others: changes at the macro level can impact upon micro processes or shocks to the combat economy can massively affect those involved in the coping economy. As stated earlier, the development of war economies entails a fundamental transformation of existing social relations and economic interactions. The adaptations and strategies adopted as a result of the realities of conflict become deeply embedded in society leading to a vicious cycle that perpetuates conflict and makes its resolution all the more difficult. Also, the cross-border and transnational nature of the war economies means that attempts to dismantle them have to be aware of processes occurring far beyond the confines of any one state.

Initiatives must be carefully targeted towards replacing illegitimate mechanisms with legitimate ones; a complex surgical task, whereby, in attempting to remove a cancerous organ associated with the combat economy, one might also be depriving ordinary civilians of their means of survival due to the deeply interconnected nature of economic relations developed during conflict. The transition from illicit war economies to licit peace economies requires a social transformation as deep and far reaching as the initial transformations that led to the war economy in the first instance. Just as winners and losers are created through the mechanisms of new power structures associated with the war economy, this is also the case when attempting to terminate them. 'Spoilers' of peace processes can emerge who feel the potential benefits of peace are not outweighed by those of war. Thus, the central task facing those attempting to transform war economies essentially comes down to making peace more profitable than war.

SECTION TWO

CONFLICT DYNAMICS OVERVIEW

Section Two – Conflict Dynamics Overview

Introduction

This section presents an overview, based on historical observation and analysis, of the causes of conflict, the way in which conflict develops, spreads and intensifies and the subsequent feedback mechanisms which engender renewed conflict and undermine attempts at peaceful resolution. These dynamics will be presented in the broadest possible sense and are intended to simply provide the reader with a preliminary feel for the way the various elements of conflict interact and connect. It will also serve as an analytical framework for understanding more clearly the country backgrounders presented in Section Three. Some of the issues have been dealt with in greater detail in the previous section relating to regional aspects of conflict. Yet, this overview changes the perspective somewhat, to view conflict as it emerges from within an individual state.

The following analysis is best understood if used in conjunction with the flow chart presented in Annex IV at the end of the report. The chart reveals some of the most important processes taking place during conflict in the region. It is not exhaustive and does not purport to show every possible factor or relationship between factors – such a chart would be so complex that it would be rendered incomprehsible. The chart aims to provide a basic diagrammatical representation of key factors and relationships, and, in general, to simply provide a sense of the complexity of conflict. It must be stressed that the chart and the following analysis are based upon broad generalisations to facilitate analytical clarity. The factors presented do not necessarily relate to every country or every instance of civil strife, however, we can expect any particular country in the region at any particular time to display some of the following elements.

Primary Causes and Beginnings

Key Points:

- **Poor governance**
- **Social Exclusion**
- **Poverty**

The central origin of conflict in the region is that of poor governance characterised primarily by endemic corruption and exclusionary politics. The prevalence of weak

governance itself can largely be explained by a number of factors: colonial history and decolonisation processes; the record of post-colonial African rule which institutionalised nefarious kleptocratic government practices such as one-party rule and authoritarianism; the existence of vast natural resources; a fundamental lack of governmental accountability and transparency; and the drying up of aid and the end of patron-client politics after the end of the Cold War. Therefore, it is not so much a problem of power collapsing, but rather that proper notions of responsible power have never existed in the region.

Poor governance in turn creates 'haves' and 'have-nots': the later being the majority of the population. The key term here is *exclusion*. Widespread poverty, unemployment, lack of education and the inability of the state to provide basic functions incenses large swathes of the excluded society whose grievances are compounded by such patent inequality: wealth generated by abundant resources does not trickle down to ordinary citizens. Suppression of political opposition and civil society by the state (using state security forces whose primary role should in fact be to protect citizens) fuels further acrimony and plugs possible release-valves for pent up vexations. Political oppression may not always play out along distinctly ethnic lines (although in some countries such as Cote d'Ivoire the ethnic causal element is strong) but, in most cases, an early ethnic element can be identified – leaders often choose to surround themselves with members of their tribe or ethnic group.

CASE STUDY: Sierra Leone under Siaka Stevens, 1970s and early 1980s

Perhaps the clearest example of this process occurred in Sierra Leone under the rule of Siaka Stevens who used a system of patronage to reward insiders and close allies whilst building up a personal fortune. The political elite was adept at manipulating economic decline for private gain. Stevens used the ethnicised political atmosphere to legitimate a one party rule, using his Special Security Division to intimidate outsiders who expressed dissatisfaction. For the ordinary people, the state did not really exist – it was a 'shadow state' that did not provide services, particularly in rural areas, or inspire loyalty. The country remained one of the poorest in the world despite its fertility and large mineral reserves.

Also, violence and intimidation used at elections (such as in 1982) set a bad example and encouraged the notion that 'violence pays' and is the shortest route to success – a precedent which became a defining feature of the civil war. The suppression of civil society meant there was no outlet for pent up grievances. When the economy began to completely collapse in the 1980s, the dilapidated state of the country's agricultural sector,

massive poverty and low levels of education meant grievances against the state were high. This provided the general background and context within which conflict was to take root. (Keen, 2005)

Nascent opposition elements tend to form broad ethnic alliances tied together by common grievances. However, as we shall see, these alliances often break down as the prospect of achieving power nears and conflict subsequently assumes an increased ethnic nature. So, small groups of insurgents begin to form around charismatic and wealthy leaders (such as Charles Taylor in Liberia and Foday Sankoh in Sierra Leone). These groups seek support from both potential foreign government allies with old scores to settle (e.g Houphet-Boigny's support for Taylor) or an interest in provoking instability (e.g Libyan support for Taylor) and, also, with other disaffected civilians in sympathy with their cause. At this stage, rebel ideology can be expected to be overwhelmingly political in nature in the respect that it is focused on regime change fuelled by grievances against the state. However, it is appertain at this point to draw a distinction between the motivations of the rank and file of the rebellion and rebel leaders. For the rank and file we can expect various grievances to represent primary motivational factors whereas for rebel leaders the prospect of power, the desire to settle old scores or the prospect of economic gain may be more important factors. Both are crucially dependent on each other. Conflict emerges from a combination of rebel leaders manipulating and using grievances within certain elements of the population to pursue personal agendas.

Early Conflict Development

Key Points:

- **Initial rebel successes despite small numbers**
- **Foreign engagement insufficient to prevent conflict development**
- **Rebel advance contained – stalemate and small scale fighting**
- **Development of war economy**
- **Massive population movements – humanitarian emergency**

Despite their small numbers, initial rebel incursions or attempted coups often see relatively considerable succeses (e.g RUF, NPFL, MPCI) for a number of reasons: (i) The clear ideology of the rebel groups at this time strikes a chord with many disaffected civilians thus facilitating voluntary recruitment to their ranks, general support such as provision of food and shelter, or acquiescence. (ii) Foreign government support (e.g Guinea's support

of LURD or Taylor's support for western Ivorian rebel groups) ensures a continued supply of arms, munitions and equipment, as well as potential sanctuary for rest and regrouping – this prevents quick and easy government victories against the insurgency. (iii) The central state security sector (due primarily to rampant corruption and inefficiency) is largely incapable of responding effectively to the rebel threat. The armed forces are generally characterised by poor pay, low morale and corrupt commanders. The subsequent (inevitable) rushed recruitment drive in the face of rebel advances only serves to heighten these problems.

Foreign engagement at this stage generally may take a number of forms. (i) Regional peacekeepers may be sent to separate the belligerents, however, there will normally be an institutional bias against rebel groups which fuels discontent still further and undermines future peacekeeping missions whilst doing little to target the cause of conflict. (ii) Western states will tend to engage somewhat belatedly and with little knowledge of the causes of the conflict or the ideology of the rebel groups thus provoking a response characterised generally by incoherence and hesitation. (iii) Ineffectual peace-accords aimed at political reconciliation through instituting governments of national unity or such like may be brokered. However, again, these accords do little to tackle the underlying causes of the conflict, as grievances will still be high, corruption still rampant and rebel groups still active. For example, it took some six years before an acceptable accord was reached in Liberia in 1995 and these problems are currently being played out in Cote d'Ivoire as it struggles to reach a durable agreement.

The early days of the conflict are thus characterised by initial rebel advances (that may come very close to toppling the regime or taking the capital) yet containment is usually ensured by a combination of government forces and the intervention of peacekeepers (for example, the attempted coup in Cote d'Ivoire in 2002 was only prevented by intervention French troops stationed in Abidjan). Subsequently, prolonged periods of stalemate hold, punctuated by small scale fighting. Rebel groups at this stage will tend to remain broadly committed to the initial ideological objective but a combination of impatience, the drying up of supplies, the recruitment of disparate volunteers and the gradual inclusion of foreign mercenaries into their ranks serve to dissipate ideological clarity and provoke attacks against civilians in order to pillage food and property. Also, rebel groups will attempt to take control of resource rich areas in order to ensure continued funding for arms, equipment and general supplies.

The later development is facilitated by the gradual emergence of the war economy, as established trading mechanisms are replaced by illicit networks operating across borders (by land, sea and air) and involving international criminal groups and companies dealing in

the illegal trading of weapons. Also, rebel held areas might develop their own forms of governance and self-sustaining economies.

These early stages of conflict will have massive humanitarian consequences typified by large flows of peoples - within the state's borders as internally displaced people or as refugees fleeing to neighbouring countries. The sudden presence of large numbers of refugees in neighbouring countries places a great strain on regional stability.

Also, in some instances conflict in countries may display a character, akin to the point reached here, from the outset. Although, generally, initial causes may relate back to poor governance, poverty, grievances etc, the conflict may quickly assume a reasonably developed nature due to the presence of reconstituted rebel groups and mercenaries from other countries comprising the bulk of the fighters (e.g many Ivorian rebels in the west were former Taylor militia members thus issues of recruitment and development are not so relevant). International community responses in such cases may be somewhat more coherent given high levels of preparedness if conflict was expected.

Conflict Intensification

Key Points:

- **Increased targeting of civilians**
- **Atmosphere of impunity**
- **Splintering of armed groups**
- **Collusion between opposing belligerents possible**
- **Battlefield complexity**
- **War economy development and spread**

At this point, after the initial development and growth of rebel movements, the process becomes increasingly complex and can take various directions depending on specific country factors. However, we can still discern some of the key developments that we would expect to see at this point.

Most distressingly, civilians increasingly tend to become the primary targets of both rebel groups and government forces as widespread human rights abuses, looting, rape, summary killings, and massacres become a common feature of armed group tactics (reasons for this are explored in Section One). Consequently, rebels significantly lose legitimacy in the eyes of ordinary civilians. Faced with brutality from both rebel and government soldiers, civilians may be forced to form vigilante groups (the most notable example being the civil defence forces, or *kamajors*, of the Sierra Leone civil war). Such

developments often serve to increase violence against civilians still further due to heightened levels of mistrust – for example, rebels or government forces will accuse civilians of being enemy collaborators leading to a situation in which even neutrality is taken to be evidence of opposition warranting punishment or execution.

These developments take place in an atmosphere of impunity where continued conflict, for the perpetrators of these crimes, serves to postpone the date when they may be held accountable and the killing of civilians attains a modicum of rationality in the sense that they believe they are destroying the only credible evidence that may one day be used against them. International humanitarian law thus loses its applicability in such a chaotic battlefield and an environment where most combatants are children with little knowledge of right and wrong, let alone the finer points of the Geneva conventions.

As conflict intensifies, identity and ethnic tensions increase and this often leads to substantial rifts within rebel groups. Such divisions often emerge as the prospect of obtaining power nears. Minority factions within the broad rebel alliance fear exclusion by the leading ethnic group upon successful overthrow of the government and thus form break away groups intended to seize power for themselves (an excellent example of this being the formation of the LURD splinter group, MODEL, in early 2003 due primarily to fears of ethnic Mandingo domination at the expense of the Krahn). This makes conflict resolution more difficult as peace deals have to be negotiated with a variety of belligerents, with a variety of interests.

As the conflict intensifies we may well observe an increase in collaboration between soldiers and rebels thus further complicating the battlefield and blurring traditional distinctions during war. This collusion may occur for a number of reasons: both groups have an economic interest in conflict prolongation which allows continued looting of civilians and exploitation of resources (peace is seen as a threat in this respect); contact between the two groups increases as trading in the spoils of war and defections occur more often; both groups often have a very similar social base and as such they share similar goals of 'turning the tables' on their former masters; and finally they share the same underlying goal of simply trying to survive, thus both find attacking civilians less costly. For example, in the early 1990s in Sierra Leone there was an increasing trend towards government forces and rebel collusion and co-operation. This took the form of government forces actively supplying rebels with arms and ammunitions (known as 'sell game'), disaffected unpaid soldiers joining the RUF, and the facilitation of rebel attacks in order to depopulate resource rich areas. The growing complicity of government forces in abuses of civilians led to the growing use of the term 'sobels' – soldiers by day, rebel by night (Keen, 2005).

Fighting at this stage is typified by hit and run tactics and attacks against civilians rather than direct confrontation between belligerents (such confrontations are typically confined to battles over resource rich areas or the control of strategic centres). Often the country will be divided between rebel held and government areas, although the front line may be very fluid as occasional big pushes may be attempted but these often run out of steam and strategic positions change hands regularly because defenders will tend to yield positions if outnumbered. This may not be the case where peacekeepers have intervened to separate the warring sides, however hit and run tactics will still be common.

The war economy becomes deeply entrenched. Any sanctions placed on arms sales and conflict fuelling resources are largely ineffective in preventing the continued supply of weapons to fighters bought in exchange for resources under rebel control such as diamonds, timber or cocoa brokered through scrupulous corporate entities operating behind the cover of front companies. Control of resources by the rebels is initially carried out in order to continue the rebellion by buying arms, but increasingly, greed begins to take on a much greater casual significance for continued conflict – war becomes a means of personal gain and the distinction between criminality and insurgency becomes significantly blurred. In addition to that, it is also serves as a vehicle for empowerment – the process of throwing off social chains and exacting revenge. War develops its own new logic whereby belligerents (both rebel and state elements) see a vested interest in maintaining a simmering conflict for economic exploitation – war becomes self-financing. The initial motivations may still exist and are still used as recruiting propaganda, but at this point objectives are much more diffuse.

Intimately linked to the above, the importance of borders becomes pronounced as trade in arms and illegal goods increases, mercenaries move freely over borders to carry out there trade wherever conflict emerges, large population movements cause disruption in neighbouring countries and fighting spreads over borders into neighbouring states. Porous borders allow the dynamics of conflict to develop and intensify.

International involvement will tend to increase as the fighting intensifies (particularly within the humanitarian community) yet concerted efforts to end the conflict only tend to emerge when the situation becomes extremely desperate or Western national interest is seen to be in direct danger. An interesting development that may be observed at this stage is the hiring of professional foreign mercenaries, otherwise known as Private Military Companies, by the government to drive back insurgents and recapture strategic locations. For example, in 1995 the Sierra Leone government contracted the South African firm 'Executive Outcomes' to drive rebels from the capital and recapture diamond mines (Singer, 2004). This comes at great expense to the government and whilst it may provide

temporary respite and a short-term cash injection due to renewed control of resource rich areas, it is by no means a lasting solution as rebels will often recapture those areas once government funds dry up and the mercenaries leave. Also, ordinary civilians will rarely benefit, as mercenary operations will be focused on key strategic areas which causes rebels to be pushed out into civilian areas.

Conflict Perpetuation and Renewal – 'The Conflict Trap'

Key Points:

- **Certain factors serve to perpetuate conflict**
- **Complex processes of feedback and renewal**
- **Example of war economy in conflict perpetuation**

Once the key elements, and the regionalisation, of the conflict have become entrenched we can expect to see a number of possible developments. As the red boxes in the conflict chart reveal, many factors serve to reinforce, and feedback into, each other resulting in a significant perpetuation and renewal of conflict. It is not necessary to go over all the key factors again but to illustrate the point, let us consider the issue of the war economy and reveal how this one aspect of war feeds into and perpetuates cycles of conflict.

As stated above, the war economy largely supplants legitimate economic transfers and processes. The economic exploitation of natural resources by the government, warlords, rebel groups, the armed forces, foreign companies and even Civil Defence Forces affects many other conflict renewal factors. The widely reported trade in conflict diamonds for example, that is prevalent throughout the region, is a prime source of rebel strength (although it must be stated that the wealth created by this trade rarely finds its way down to rank and file rebels). Importantly, government involvement in economic exploitation perpetuates poor governance through continued corrupt practices and lack of investment in much needed social services. This, combined with increased widespread poverty resultant from the workings of the war economy, feeds back into the grievances that generated conflict in the first instance. Also, exiled warlords can, given the lack of effective controls, continue to influence the course of the conflict by supplying arms to militias through proxies embedded in illicit trade networks.

The prospect of personal enrichment fuels further recruitment into rebel forces and provides a strong incentive for armed groups to prolong the conflict so they can continue accumulating wealth with relative impunity. Looting becomes widespread and leads to random attacks against civilians which again feeds into widespread grievances.

Simultaneously, the discipline, cohesion and war fighting effectiveness of rebel groups is undermined by individual or small group economic motive thus making a final rebel victory less achievable whilst hampering peace negotiations because of command and control issues in both rebel and government forces. The cross border illicit trade, upon which the war economy largely depends, causes massive disruptions to the livelihoods of those living in the border regions and many civilians may be forced into becoming involved in micro economic illicit trading with rebels in order to survive. This serves to deepen and widen the extent and reach of the war economy.

Foreign aid can unwittingly play into the workings of the war economy and help sustain conflict. In many respects aid can reinforce issues of exclusion and exploitation. Aid to prop up governments who are known to have committed gross human rights abuses and been involved in violent extortion not only represented a form of silent approval of such practices, thus compounding cultures of impunity, but also allows those governments to divert resources to purchase arms for soldiers committing the crimes. Also, the prospect of continued aid flowing into the country can serve as another incentive for perpetuating conflict, as rebels will steal relief provided to civilians and demand protection money from convoys. The fact that aid often does not reach the most needy may exacerbate grievances of exclusion – rebels are often neglected in this respect, which can prompt further attacks against food stores, civilians and relief convoys.

This, along with the spread of fighting over borders (often caused by militias in search of further resources to exploit), can constitute significant factors in causing or contributing to region-wide insecurity, destabilisation and conflict, and, in turn, makes successful resolution of the conflict less probable. These are just some of the ways in which various factors serve to feed into and perpetuate conflict.

Conflict Resolution and Potential for Relapse

Key Points:

- **The fragility of 'final' resolutions**
- **High potential for renewal of violence**
- **Rebel Groups not entirely demobilised**
- **Continuing impact of war economy**
- **Spill over of violence**

The modern history of the region warns us to be sceptical of apparent 'final' resolutions to any given conflict, and in fact, the elusiveness of stable and accountable governments has

been a prime cause for further grievances and desperation amongst the population. The history of the region is littered with dashed hopes. Countless would-be leaders have claimed they alone hold the formula for peace, yet upon assuming power, prove no better, or are indeed far worse, than their predecessors.

Concerted and resolute international engagement can only be expected when: civilian casualties have reached levels that provoke frequent media attention and widespread international concern; the humanitarian situation has become so dire as to endanger international peace and security and aid supply for displaced persons and refugees is unsustainable; and the conflict has reached a level of intensity that cannot be ignored. Upon the cessation of hostilities the international community bus will come rolling into town driven by the United Nations and packed full with peacekeepers, technocrats, and post-conflict specialists. The now almost standard blueprint for post-conflict reconstruction will be implemented consisting of such elements as security establishment, the establishment of a transitional government, judicial reform and much more. The culmination of this mammoth effort is usually the holding of free and fair elections to vote in a new democratically elected government, after which engagement can wind down leading to eventual withdrawal.

There is a prevailing, and worrying, tendency to see elections as the end of the process of conflict resolution and a final cure for conflict. This optimism is misplaced. History has shown that elections themselves by no means guarantee good governance, even if conducted under international scrutiny (for instance, Taylor was democratically elected in 1997 in elections declared free and fair by international observers). Corruption, extortion and a proclivity towards authoritarianism are deeply ingrained in the history of the states considered in this report and civilians are highly sceptical of government in general following years of misrule and destitution. Good governance is not something that can be instituted over night – it must be developed and fostered over many years and it will only come to be trusted after a proven record in delivering basic services.

The danger remains that when the UN withdraws the most likely outcome will be a resumption of 'politics-as-plunder', particularly when many government officials have murky pasts and ties to former militias. For example, in Sierra Leone, although much progress has been made, worryingly little has been done to tackle poor education and unemployment, as Ellis states, many former fighters would not hesitate to take up arms again at the first opportunity (Ellis, 2005). The development of stable governmental structures is made significantly more difficult given the vast amount of problems facing states emerging from brutal conflict. Even western governments, based upon established constitutions created centuries ago, occasionally teeter on the brink of collapse despite

enjoying long periods of peace. The significant problems facing post-conflict states, considered below, make failure all the more possible – compounding the already tortuously difficult transition to sustainable peace.

(i) Rebel groups not entirely demobilised.

Even following substantial efforts at DDR of rebel groups, should fighting resume, former rebel groups may re-emerge in a slightly altered fashion, perhaps operating under a different pseudonym, but comprising familiar elements (for example, the Liberian rebel group, LURD, was largely comprised of reconstituted ULIMO forces which fought in Liberia's first civil war). This clearly reveals the inadequacy of previous attempts at DDR (which were often under-funded) and shows that even after the stated 'successful completion' of disarmament and demobilisation, many fighters remain unemployed and not fully reintegrated into normal society. For many young people the only trade they know is killing; if peace does not adequately provide them with an alternative, what is to prevent them from returning to war. As mentioned, for many young men, war provides more opportunities than peace. Rapid remobilisation of rebel forces, should the situation deteriorate, is highly probable given that the basic loose structures of rebel groups remain, potential fighters are in abundance and weapons still circulate illegally throughout the region.

(ii) Continuing impact of war economy.

The complex structures and mechanisms that constitute war economies will not, unfortunately, disappear once a peace agreement has been signed. War economies must be dismantled carefully with regard to all the stakeholders in violence. This process will be significantly impeded by 'spoilers' of peace processes who see no economic benefits in peace, and so wish to foster the conditions that sustain conflict. Alternatively, peace processes may be hijacked by former faction leaders who demand positions in the transitional government, recognising the potential for personal aggrandisement and exploitation through influence. Also, aspects of the peace process may in fact serve to stimulate illicit trading and create a cycle of demand for weapons as a result of insufficient planning. A curious process noted in the region has been that of ex-combatants buying arms in one country, moving across borders to hand weapons in as part of UN disarmament initiatives, in return for which they receive a cash reward which is over and above the original cost of the weapon, the resultant profit from which is used to purchase more arms.

Also, natural resources continue to pose substantial problems in post-conflict states; all efforts must be made to ensure their protection, regulation and management. This is particularly important where rebels retain control of key resource areas further fuelling illicit cross-border trading.

(iii) Spill-over of violence.

Another potential for renewed violence, even after supposedly comprehensive peace settlements, is the possibility of insecurity in neighbouring countries spilling over and causing significant destabilisation. Massive influxes of refugees can potentially place too great a strain on host countries attempting to resolve their own serious problems. Also, perhaps more destabilising is the impact of spill over of actual violence, which has frequently occurred in the history of the region.

Prospects for the Region

Based on the findings of this report, the prospects for the future are mixed. Currently in the region there is a tentative calm. Although small-scale violence persists, the large United Nations peacekeeping presence in the region (albeit unevenly distributed, with troops rapidly drawing down in Sierra Leone, some 15,000 troops present in Liberia, around 10,000 – French and UN – in Cote d'Ivoire and none in Guinea) ensures full-scale conflict is contained. Under such tutelage the transition to peace is making slow but real progress. Whilst the international presence in the region remains at such high levels there is little reason to expect a return to full-scale violence. There is optimism and hope that the fighting is over and normal life can gradually resume. However, enormous challenges remain. The UN presence creates a false perception of security that clouds the serious and pervasive underlying problems which remain unresolved.

Unfortunately, the UN does not have unlimited resources and undoubtedly new conflicts will emerge that shift its emphasis elsewhere. Thus, their missions are always shadowed by timetables for withdrawal and exit strategies. Gradually, the various missions will wind down and move on. Thus, from a broad perspective – given that some of these countries have experienced decades of exploitation and war - the international community's efforts represent only short-term palliatives for what are deeply entrenched problems. Thus, we must distinguish between short-term prospects and medium to long-term prospects.

The analysis of conflict causes and dynamics outlined in this report reveals the primary ways in which conflict can emerge and develop. Thus, while the realities of progress are currently obscured by the international presence, in order to determine prospects for the region one has to assess how far the underlying causes and facilitating factors have been resolved. Many of the conditions for conflict can be identified throughout the region. The causes and facilitators still exist and thus the potential for conflict in the medium to long-term remains a real possibility. History has shown that when a lethal combination of factors converges conflict can easily ignite. Essentially, conflict may emerge when the following factors are present: primary cause and underlying grievance (for example, continued corruption, poverty, high levels of unemployment, youth alienation); conflict facilitating factors (warlords, porous borders, arms supplies, regional instability, foreign support); a lack of international attention (as concern turns elsewhere and resources dry up); and usually some form of spark (e.g, an initial rebel incursion or political assassination).

It is not simply pessimistic or fatalistic, but *realistic*, to suggest that the potential for renewed conflict is high in the medium to long term. It is not sufficient to argue that the people of the region are tired of conflict and thus the likelihood of its recurrence is diminished. No doubt the sentiment is true for the vast majority but, as this report has shown, it takes only a small minority to upset tentative balances and spread disorder. This report has also revealed that when conflict does emerge, it assumes a character that defies traditional interpretations of war. Conflict becomes locked in cycles of perpetuation and renewal. The humanitarian consequences of the outbreak and development of conflict in the region are massive and are typified by large loss of life, population displacement, gross violations of human rights and also, almost incomprehensible psychological trauma.

Ultimately, for international actors engaged in the region, a sound understanding of conflict dynamics is essential for three central reasons. Firstly, it will encourage initiatives and programmes that effectively target the primary causes and facilitators of conflict thus minimising the potential for its occurrence. Secondly, it will allow more effective preparation for possible humanitarian emergencies based on an understanding of when and how they might emerge. Third, in the event of renewed conflict, it will allow engagement that is sensitive to the complexity of the context in which operations take place.

SECTION THREE

COUNTRY SPECIFIC BACKGROUNDERS

Section Three – Country Specific Backgrounders

Liberia

Capital: Monrovia

Population: 3.6 million.

Key resources: timber, rubber, iron ore, gold, diamonds.

Area: 99,067 sq km (38,250 sq miles)

Languages: English, 29 African languages belonging to the Mande, Kwa or Mel linguistic groups

Major religions: Christianity, Islam, indigenous beliefs

Life expectancy: 41 years (men), 43 years (women)

Monetary unit: 1 Liberian dollar (L$) = 100 cents

GNI per capita: US $110

Overview:

A bloody coup mounted by Samuel Doe in 1980 marked the end of dominance by the minority Americo-Liberians, who had ruled since independence in 1847, but heralded a period of instability.

By the late 1980s, arbitrary rule and economic collapse culminated in civil war when Charles Taylor's National Patriotic Front of Liberia (NPFL) militia entered northern Liberia from Cote d'Ivoire in December 1989, overran much of the countryside and entered the capital in June 1990. In August the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) sent a peacekeeping force, ECOMOG, to protect Monrovia, but the Doe dictatorship collapsed and he was murdered by a rebel faction in September.

Fighting intensified as the rebels splintered and battled each other, the Liberian army and West African peacekeepers. The state went into freefall and collapsed. In 1995 a peace agreement was signed, leading to a disarmament programme and the election of Mr Taylor as president in 1997.

The respite was brief, with anti-government fighting breaking out in the north in 1999 led by the LURD rebel group. Mr Taylor accused Guinea of supporting the rebellion. Meanwhile Ghana, Nigeria and others accused Mr Taylor of backing rebels in Sierra

Leone. Another anti-Taylor rebel group, MODEL, emerged in the east of Liberia in spring 2003.

After bitter fighting throughout the summer, matters came to a head in August 2003 when Mr Taylor - under international pressure to quit and hemmed in by rebels - stepped down and went into exile in Nigeria. The National Transitional Government of Liberia (NTGL) was sworn in later that year under the leadership of the businessman, Gyude Bryant, to steer the country towards elections. However, the NTGL proved to be extensively corrupt and largely ineffective.

Around 250,000 people were killed in Liberia's civil war and many thousands more fled the fighting. The conflict left the country in economic ruin and overrun with weapons. Corruption is rife and unemployment and illiteracy are endemic.

The UN maintains some 15,000 soldiers in Liberia. It is the organisation's most expensive peacekeeping operation. Elections were held peacefully in October 2005. The second round of the presidential election is due to be held on 8 November and will be contested between George Weah and Ellen Johnson Sirleaf.

(Source: BBC, FCO)

Liberia Chronology

Early days

1847 - Constitution modelled on that of the USA drawn up.

1847 - July - Liberia becomes independent.

1917 - Liberia declares war on Germany, giving the Allies a base in West Africa.

1926 - Firestone Tire and Rubber Company opens rubber plantation on land granted by government. Rubber production becomes backbone of economy.

1936 - Forced-labour practices abolished.

1943 - William Tubman elected president.

1944 - Government declares war on the Axis powers.

1951 - May - Women and indigenous property owners vote in the presidential election for the first time.

1958 - Racial discrimination outlawed.

1971 - Tubman dies and is succeeded by William Tolbert Jr.

1974 - Government accepts aid from the Soviet Union for the first time.

1978 - Liberia signs trade agreement with the European Economic Community.

1979 - More than 40 people are killed in riots following a proposed increase in the price of rice.

Instability

1980 - Master Sergeant Samuel Doe stages military coup. Tolbert is murdered and 13 of his aides are publicly executed. A People's Redemption Council headed by Doe suspends constitution and assumes full powers.

1984 - Doe's regime allows return of political parties following pressure from the United States and other creditors.

1985 - Doe wins presidential election.

Taylor 's uprising

1989 - National Patriotic Front of Liberia (NPFL) led by Charles Taylor begins an uprising against the government.

1990 - Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) sends peacekeeping force. Doe is executed by a splinter group of the NPFL.

1991 - ECOWAS and the NPFL agree to disarm and set up an Interim Government of National Unity.

1992 - The NPFL launches an all-out assault on West African peacekeepers in Monrovia, the latter respond by bombing NPFL positions outside the capital and pushing the NPFL back into the countryside.

Tentative cease-fire

1993 - The warring factions draw up a plan for a National Transitional Government and a cease-fire, but this fails to materialise and fighting resumes.

1994 - The warring factions agree on a timetable for disarmament and the setting up of a joint Council of State.

1995 - Peace agreement signed.

1996 April - Factional fighting resumes and spreads to Monrovia.

1996 August - West African peacekeepers initiate disarmament programme, clear landmines and reopen roads, allowing refugees to return.

1997 July - Presidential and legislative elections held. Charles Taylor wins a landslide and his National Patriotic Party wins a majority of seats in the National Assembly. International observers declare the elections free and fair.

Border fighting

1999 January - Ghana and Nigeria accuse Liberia of supporting Revolutionary United Front rebels in Sierra Leone. Britain and the US threaten to suspend aid to Liberia.

1999 April - Rebel forces thought to have come from Guinea attack town of Voinjama. Fighting displaces more than 25,000 people.

1999 September - Guinea accuses Liberian forces of entering its territory and attacking border villages.

2000 September - Liberian forces launch “massive offensive” against rebels in the north. Liberia accuses Guinean troops of shelling border villages.

2001 February - Liberian government says Sierra Leonean rebel leader Sam Bockarie, also known as Mosquito, has left the country.

2001 May - UN Security Council re-imposes arms embargo to punish Taylor for trading weapons for diamonds from rebels in Sierra Leone.

2002 January - More than 50,000 Liberians and Sierra Leonean refugees flee fighting. In February Taylor declares a state of emergency.

2002 September - President Taylor lifts an eight-month state of emergency and a ban on political rallies, citing a reduced threat from rebels.

Rebel offensives

2003 March - Rebels open several battlefronts and advance to within 10km of Monrovia. Tens of thousands of people displaced by fighting.

2003 June - Talks in Ghana aimed at ending rebellion overshadowed by indictment accusing President Taylor of war crimes over his alleged backing of rebels in Sierra Leone.

2003 July - Fighting intensifies; rebels battle for control of Monrovia. Several hundred people are killed. West African regional group ECOWAS agrees to provide peacekeepers.

2003 August - Nigerian peacekeepers arrive. Charles Taylor leaves Liberia after handing power to his deputy Moses Blah. US troops arrive. Interim government, rebels sign peace accord in Ghana. Gyude Bryant chosen to head interim administration from October.

2003 Sept/Oct - US forces pull out. UN launches major peacekeeping mission (UNMIL), deploying thousands of troops.

2003 October - Gyude Bryant sworn in as head of state.

2003 December - UN peacekeepers begin to disarm former combatants, deploy in rebel territory outside Monrovia.

2004 February - International donors pledge more than USD500m in reconstruction aid.

2004 March - UN Security Council votes to freeze assets of Charles Taylor.

2004 October - Riots in Monrovia leave 16 people dead; UN says former combatants were behind violence.

2004 November – UN announces successful disarmament of over 100,000 former combatants and the disarmament and demobilisation phase of DDR comes to a close.

2005 October – Presidential and Parliamentary elections held – Presidential Candidate George Weah leading after first round. The second round will be held on 8 November.
(Source for Chronology: Wiess, 2005)


SIERRA LEONE
GUINEA
CÔTE D'IVOIRE
Voinjama
Mount Wuteve
Yekepa
Gbarnga
Tubmanburg
Robertsport
MONROVIA
Harbel
Zwedru
Buchanan
NORTH ATLANTIC OCEAN
Greenville
Harper
0 30 60 km
0 30 60 mi


SIERRA LEONE
GUINEA
CÔTE D'IVOIRE
LIBERIA
Sefadu
Guéckédou
Macenta
Beyla
Voinjama
Kailahun
Kolahun
Panguma
Kenema
Joru
Potoru
Kongo (Mano River Mine)
Zimmi
Sulima
Robertsport
Tubmanburg
Klay
Bo
Bopolu
Bong Town
Totota
Gbarnga
Palala
Gbatala
Sagleipie
Ganta (Gahnpa)
Zorzor
Nzérékoré
Lola
Yomou
Gorlu
Belle Yella
Diecke
New Yekepa
Sanniquellie
Danané
Man
Touba
Bako
Borotou
Blankouma
Bangolo
Duékoué
Guiglo
Toulepleu
Tapita
Toe Town
Zwedru
Tai
Pyne Town
Fish Town
Nyaake
Barclayville
Sasstown
Grand Cess
Fleebo
Harper
Tabou
Cape Palmas
Greenville
River Cess
Buchanan
Paynesville
Harbel
Gardnersville
Monrovia
Kakata
LOFA
GBARPOLU
GRAND CAPE MOUNT
BOMI
BONG
NIMBA
MARGIBI
MONTSERRADO
GRAND BASSA
RIVER CESS
GRAND GEDEH
SINOE
RIVER GEE
GRAND KRU
MARYLAND
NORTH ATLANTIC OCEAN
Liberia
International boundary
County boundary
National capital
County seat
Railroad*
Road
*Railroads may not be operable.
0 25 50 Kilometers
0 25 50 Miles
Lambert Conformal Conic Projection, SP 9 40 N / 4 20 N
Base 803017AI (C00709) 2-04

Sierra Leone

Capital: Freetown

Population: 5.3 million

Key resources: Diamonds, rutile, cocoa, coffee, fish

Area: 71,740 sq km (27,699 sq miles)

Major languages: English, Krio (Creole language derived from English) and a range of African languages

Major religions: Islam, indigenous beliefs, Christianity

Life expectancy: 39 years (men), 42 years (women)

Monetary unit: 1 Leone = 100 cents

GNI per capita: US $200

Overview:

The civil war in Sierra Leone began in March 1991 when a small number of fighters called the revolutionary United Front (RUF) attacked Sierra leone from Liberia. An Armed Forces Revolutionary Council (AFRC) comprising mutinous members of the Sierra Leone Army overthrew the government in May 1997. The RUF accepted the AFRC's invitation to join the new junta, but the international community overwhelmingly supported the exiled government of Ahmad Tejan Kabbah. Kabbah was reinstalled with the aid of West African Monitoring Group (ECOMOG) troops in 1998.

The AFRC and RUF conducted a siege of Freetown in January 1999 that resulted in more than 5,000 deaths and in May 2000 some 500 UN peacekeepers were taken hostage who later rescued by British soldiers. Undermined by the UN's ban on diamond exports, the RUF began disarming in May 2001 after the deployment of UN peacekeepers (UNAMSIL) but the civil war did not officially end until February 2002. Kabbah was eventually re-elected in May 2002.

A lasting feature of the conflict, which left some 50,000 dead, was the atrocities committed by the rebels, whose trademark was to hack off the hands of their victims.

A UN-backed war crimes court has been set up to try those, from both sides, who bear the "greatest responsibility" for the wartime brutalities.

Sierra Leone also faces the challenge of reconstruction. The problems of poverty, tribal rivalry and official corruption that caused the war are far from over.

The 70,000 former combatants who were disarmed and rehabilitated after the war have swollen the ranks of the many young people seeking employment.

Sierra Leone is rich in diamonds. The trade in illicit gems, known as "blood diamonds" for their role in funding conflicts, perpetuated the civil war. The government has attempted to crack down on cross-border diamond trafficking.

(Source: BBC, International Alert, FCO)

Sierra Leone Chronology

Early Days

1787 - British abolitionists and philanthropists establish a settlement in Freetown for repatriated and rescued slaves.

1808 - Freetown settlement becomes a crown colony.

1896 - Britain sets up a protectorate over the Freetown hinterland.

1954 - Sir Milton Margai, leader of the Sierra Leone People's Party, is appointed chief minister.

One-party rule

1961 - Sierra Leone becomes independent.

1967 - Military coup deposes Premier Siaka Stevens's government.

1968 - Siaka Stevens returns to power at the head of a civilian government following another military coup.

1971 - Sierra Leone is declared a republic and Stevens becomes executive president.

1978 - New constitution proclaims Sierra Leone a one-party state with the All People's Congress as the sole legal party.

1985 - Major-General Joseph Saidu Momoh becomes president following Stevens's retirement.

1987 - Momoh declares state of economic emergency.

War and coups

1991 - Start of civil war. Former army corporal Foday Sankoh and his Revolutionary United Front (RUF) rebels begin campaign against President Momoh, capturing towns on border with Liberia and taking control of Kailahun.

1991 September - New constitution providing for a multiparty system adopted.

1992 - President Joseph Momoh ousted in military coup led by Captain Valentine Strasser and the NPRC. Under international pressure, Strasser announces plans for the first multiparty elections since 1967.

1996 January - Strasser ousted in military coup led by his defence minister, Brigadier Julius Maada Bio.

1996 - Ahmad Tejan Kabbah elected president in February, signs peace accord with Sankoh's rebels in November.

1997 Peace deal unravels. President Kabbah deposed in May by coalition of army officers led by Major-General Paul Koroma and members of the RUF; Koroma suspends the constitution, bans demonstrations and abolishes political parties; Kabbah flees to Guinea to mobilise international support.

1997 July - The Commonwealth suspends Sierra Leone.

1997 October - The United Nations Security Council imposes sanctions against Sierra Leone, barring the supply of arms and petroleum products. A British mercenary company, Sandline, nonetheless supplies "logistical support", including rifles, to Kabbah allies.

1998 February - The Nigerian-led West African intervention force ECOMOG storms Freetown and drives rebels out.

1998 March - Kabbah makes a triumphant return to Freetown amid scenes of public rejoicing.

1999 January - Rebels backing RUF leader Foday Sankoh seize parts of Freetown from ECOMOG. After weeks of bitter fighting they are driven out, leaving behind 5,000 dead and a devastated city.

UN intervention

1999 May - A ceasefire is greeted with cautious optimism in Freetown. In hospitals and amputee camps, victims of rebel atrocities express hope that eight years of civil war may soon be over.

1999 July - Six weeks of talks in the Togolese capital, Lomé, result in a peace agreement, under which the rebels receive posts in government and assurances they will not be prosecuted for war crimes.

1999 November/December - UN troops arrive to police the peace agreement - but one rebel leader, Sam Bokarie, says they are not welcome. Meanwhile, ECOMOG troops are attacked outside Freetown.

2000 April/May - UN forces come under attack in the east of the country. First 50, then several hundred UN troops are abducted.

2000 May - Rebels close in on Freetown; 800 British paratroopers sent to Freetown to evacuate British citizens and to help secure the airport for UN peacekeepers; rebel leader Foday Sankoh captured.

2000 August - Eleven British soldiers taken hostage by a renegade militia group called the West Side Boys.

Disarmament, demobilisation, and reintegration

2000 September - British forces mount successful operation to rescue remaining UK hostages.

2001 January - Government postpones presidential and parliamentary elections - set for February and March - for six months because of continuing insecurity, which it said made it impossible to conduct free and fair elections nationwide.

2001 March - UN troops for the first time begin to deploy peacefully in rebel-held territory.

2001 May - Disarmament of rebels begins, and British-trained Sierra Leone army starts deploying in rebel-held areas.

2002 January - War declared over. UN mission says disarmament of 45,000 fighters complete. The UN and the Government of Sierra Leone sign the agreement that establishes a Special Court to try war crimes.

2002 May - Kabbah wins a landslide victory in elections. His Sierra Leone People's Party (SLPP) secures a majority in parliament.

2002 July - British troops leave Sierra Leone after their two-year mission to help end the civil war.

2003 July - Rebel leader Foday Sankoh dies of natural causes in prison while waiting to be tried for war crimes.

2003 August - President Kabbah tells the Truth and Reconciliation Commission that he had no say over operations of pro-government militias during the war.

2004 February - Disarmament and rehabilitation of more than 70,000 civil war combatants officially completed.

War crimes trials

2004 March - UN-backed war crimes tribunal (Special Court for Sierra Leone) opens courthouse to try those people "who bear the greatest responsibility for war crimes" committed after 30 November 1996.

2004 May - First local elections in more than three decades.

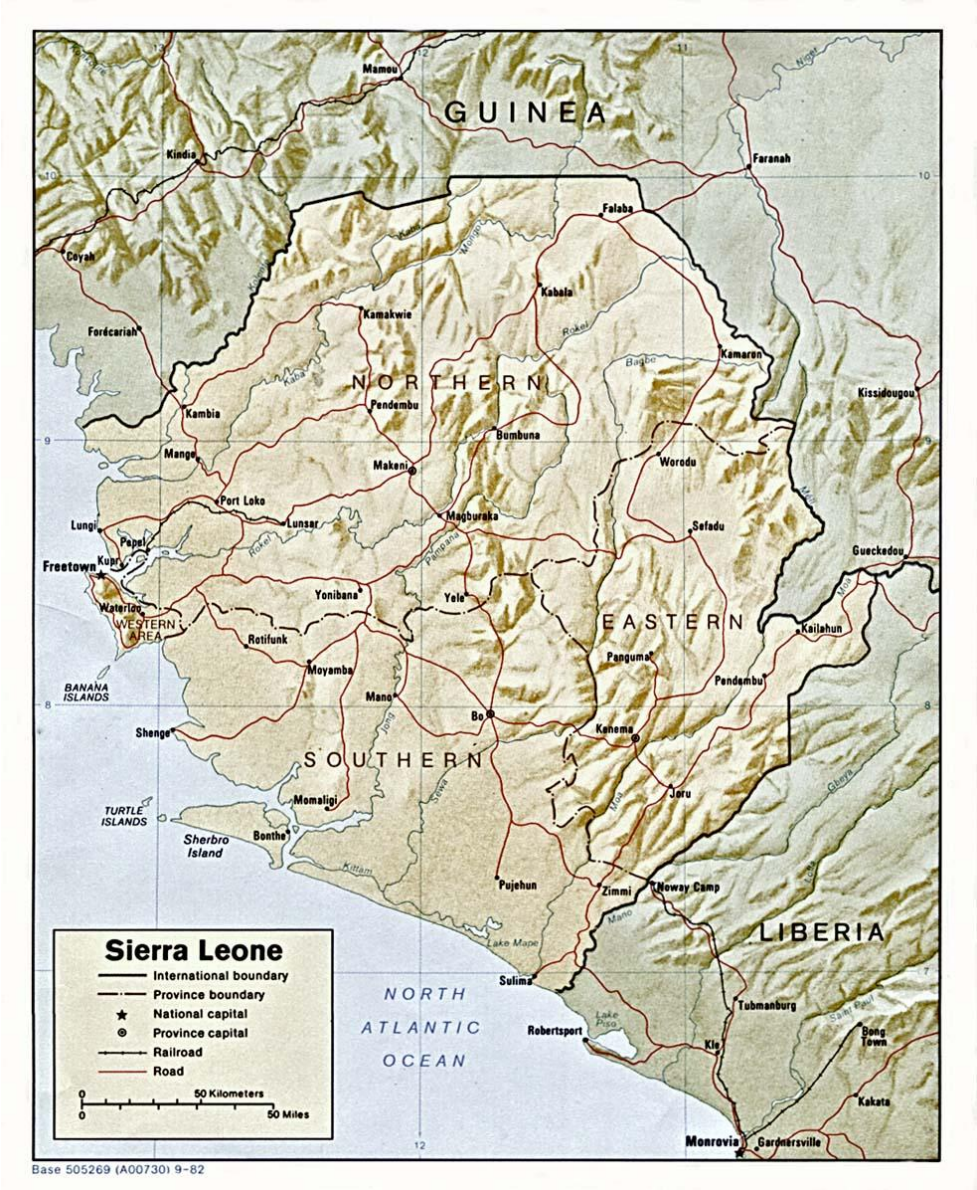
2004 June - War crimes trials begin.

2004 September - UN hands over control of security in capital to local forces.

2005 August – UN Security Council authorises opening of a UN assistance mission in 2006, to follow expected departure of peacekeepers in December 2005.

(Source for Chronology: Wiess, 2005)


GUINEA
Kabala
Loma Mansa
Kambia
Makeni
Lungi
Lunsar
Koidu
Pepel
FREETOWN
Kailahun
BANANA ISLANDS
Bo
Kenema
Shenge
TURTLE ISLANDS
Momaligi
Bonthe
Sherbro Island
LIBERIA
NORTH ATLANTIC OCEAN
Sulima
0 50 km
0 50 mi


GUINEA
LIBERIA
NORTHERN
EASTERN
WESTERN AREA
SOUTHERN
NORTH ATLANTIC OCEAN
Mamou
Kindia
Coyah
Forécariah
Faranah
Falaba
Kabala
Kamakwie
Kamaran
Kissidougou
Kambia
Pendembu
Bumbuna
Mange
Makeni
Worodu
Port Loko
Lungi
Lunsar
Magburaka
Sefadu
Gueckedou
Papel
Kuru
Freetown
Yonibana
Yele
Waterloo
Kailahun
Rotifunk
Panguma
Moyamba
Pendembu
BANANA ISLANDS
Mano
Bo
Kenema
Shenge
Momaligi
Joru
TURTLE ISLANDS
Sherbro Island
Bonthe
Pujehun
Zimmi
Noway Camp
Lake Mape
Sulima
Tubmanburg
Robertsport
Lake Piso
Kle
Sinoe
Kakata
Monrovia
Gardnersville
Sierra Leone
International boundary
Province boundary
National capital
Province capital
Railroad
Road
50 Kilometers
50 Miles
Base 505269 (A00730) 9-82

Guinea

Capital: Conakry

Population: 8.8 million

Key resources: Bauxite, alumina, gold, diamonds, coffee, fish, agricultural products

Area: 245,857 sq km (94,926 sq miles)

Major languages: French, various tribal languages

Major religions: Islam, Christianity, indigenous beliefs

Life expectancy: 53 years (men), 54 years (women)

Monetary unit: 1 Guinean franc = 100 centimes

GNI per capita: US $460

Overview:

After independence in 1958 Guinea severed ties with France and turned to the Soviet Union. The first president, Ahmed Sekou Toure, pursued a revolutionary socialist agenda and crushed political opposition. Tens of thousands of people disappeared, or were tortured and executed, during his 26-year regime.

Economic mismanagement and repression culminated in riots in 1977. These led to some relaxation of state control of the economy.

But it was only after the death in 1984 of Ahmed Sekou Toure, and the seizure of power by Lansana Conte and other officers, that the socialist experiment was abandoned - without reversing poverty. Conte essentially turned the state into a machine for pillage and self-enrichment.

In 2000 Guinea became home to up to half a million refugees fleeing fighting in Sierra Leone and Liberia. This increased the strain on its economy and generated suspicion and ethnic tension, amid mutual accusations of attempts at destabilisation and border attacks.

Acute economic problems, the inability of the government to provide services, instability among its neighbours and uncertainty over a successor (a military coup is a strong possibility) to its ailing authoritarian president have prompted the International Crisis Group, to warn that Guinea risks becoming “West Africa’s next failed state".

The municipal elections scheduled for December 2005 will be a good test of Guinean democratic reform. Failure to hold credible and fair elections could make the presidential succession disastrous.

(Sources: BBC, ICG, FCO)

Guinea Chronology

Early days

1891 - France declares Guinea to be a colony, separate from Senegal.

1898 - Defeat of resistance to French occupation led by Samory Toure, great-grandfather of future President Ahmed Sekou Toure.

1906 - Guinea becomes part of French West African Federation.

1952 - Ahmed Sekou Toure becomes secretary-general of the Democratic Party of Guinea.

Independence

1958 October - Guinea becomes independent, with Ahmed Sekou Toure as president.

1965 - Sekou Toure breaks off relations with France after accusing it of plotting to oust him.

1984 March - Sekou Toure dies.

1984 April - Lansana Conté and Diarra Traore seize power in bloodless coup. Conté becomes president while Traore is installed as prime minister.

1985 - Attempted coup organised by Traore following his demotion to education minister.

1990 - Constitution paving the way for civilian government is adopted.

Democracy without peace

1993 - First multiparty elections are held; Conté confirmed in office.

1995 - Conté's Party of Unity and Progress wins 71 of the National Assembly's 114 seats.

1996 - Some 30 people are killed and presidential palace set on fire as 25 percent of Guinea's armed forces mutiny over low pay and poor conditions.

2000 September - Alpha Conde, leader of opposition Guinean People's Rally, is sentenced to five years in prison for endangering state security and recruiting foreign mercenaries. He is pardoned in May 2001.

2000 September - incursions by rebels in border regions with Liberia and Sierra Leone which claim more than 1,000 lives and cause massive population displacement. The government accuses Liberia, the Sierra Leonean United Revolutionary Front (RUF) rebel group, Burkina Faso and former Guinean army mutineers of trying to destabilise Guinea.

2001 February - Government deploys attack helicopters to the front-line in its fight with rebels.

Referendum

2001 November - Official results show constitutional referendum, boycotted by opposition, endorses President Conté's proposal to extend presidential term from five to seven years. Critics accuse Conté of trying to stay in power for life.

2002 March - Guinea, Sierra Leone, and Liberia agree on measures to secure mutual borders and to tackle insurgency.

2003 November - Opposition leader Jean-Marie Dore detained, subsequently released, after saying President Conté is too ill to contest December's presidential election.

2003 December - President Conté wins a third term in elections boycotted by the opposition.

2004 April - Prime Minister Lounseny Fall resigns while visiting the US.

2005 January - President Conté survives what security officials say is an assassination attempt. Shots were fired as his motorcade passed through the capital.

2005 December – municipal elections to be held.
(Source for Chronology: Wiess, 2005)


0 50 100 km
0 50 100 mi
SENEGAL
THE GAMBIA
MALI
GUINEA-BISSAU
Labé
Siguiri
Boké
Niger
Kamsar
Fria
Kindia
Kankan
CONAKRY
SIERRA LEONE
Macenta
Nzérékoré
Mont Nimba
CÔTE D'IVOIRE
NORTH ATLANTIC OCEAN
LIBERIA
8
12


Guinea
International boundary
Préfecture boundary
National capital
Préfecture capital
Railroad
Road
Track
Préfectures have the same names as their capitals. The Capitale d'État - Zone Spéciale de Conakry has status equal to that of a préfecture.
0 50 100 Kilometers
0 50 100 Miles
Lambert Conformal Conic Projection, SP 7 N / 13 N
SENEGAL
GUINEA-BISSAU
MALI
SIERRA LEONE
LIBERIA
CÔTE D'IVOIRE
NORTH ATLANTIC OCEAN
Conakry
Freetown
Monrovia
Bamako
Base 802845AI (C00295) 2-02

Côte d'Ivoire

Capital: Yamoussoukro

Population: 17.1m

Key resources: Cocoa, coffee, tropical woods, petroleum, cotton, bananas, pineapples, palm oil

Area: 322,462 sq km (124,503 sq miles)

Major languages: French, indigenous languages

Major religions: Islam, Christianity, indigenous beliefs

Life expectancy: 45 years (men), 47 years (women) (UN)

Monetary unit: 1 CFA (Communaute Financiere Africaine) franc = 100 centimes

GNI per capita: US $770

Overview:

For more than three decades after independence under the leadership of its first president, Felix Houphouet-Boigny, Ivory Coast was conspicuous for its religious and ethnic harmony. Its economy was among the most developed on the continent.

All this ended when the late Robert Guei led a coup which toppled Felix Houphouet-Boigny's successor, Henri Bedie, in 1999.

Mr Bedie fled, but not before planting the seeds of ethnic discord by trying to stir up xenophobia against Muslim northerners, including his main rival, Alassane Ouattara.

This theme was also adopted by Mr Guei, who had Alassane Ouattara banned from the presidential election in 2000 because of his foreign parentage, and by the only serious contender allowed to run against Mr Guei, Laurent Gbagbo.

When Mr Gbagbo replaced Robert Guei after he was deposed in a popular uprising in 2000, violence replaced xenophobia. Scores of Mr Ouattara's supporters were killed after their leader called for new elections.

In September 2002 a troop mutiny, during which Guei was killed, escalated into a full-scale rebellion led by the Patriotic Movement of Cote d'Ivoire (MPCI). After failing to take Abidjan the rebels retreated to the city of Bouake. The group declared a ceasefire on 17 October 2002, however, in November two other rebel groups emerged and seized cities

in the western region. Finally, in January 2003 the Lome ceasefire agreement was signed and was followed by the Linas-Marcoussis accord which agreed upon the creation of a power sharing government to include representatives of the rebels who were by now united under the umbrella name 'Force Nouvelles'.

There has been occasional violence along the cease-fire line and confidence in the peace process has been low on all sides. Peacekeepers patrol the buffer zone which separates the rebel-held north and the government-controlled south. Political efforts to reunite the nation have so far failed.

Elections planned for 30 October were postponed after Gbagbo invoked a law which he said allowed him to stay in office and the UN confirmed free and fair elections would not be possible. The African Union and UN have recommended that Gbagbo should only remain in office for a maximum of one year and that he appoints a new Prime Minister acceptable to all parties. The Forces Nouvelles want their leader, Guillaume Soro, to be named as Prime Minister. Gbagbo insists elections will be held before the end of the 12-month deadline.

(Source: BBC, FCO, ICG)

Cote d'Ivoire Chronology

Early days

1842 - France imposes protectorate over coastal zone.

1893 - Côte d'Ivoire made into a colony.

1904 - Côte d'Ivoire becomes part of the French Federation of West Africa.

1944 - Felix Houphouët-Boigny, later to become the first president, founds a union of African farmers, which develops into the inter-territorial African Democratic Rally and its Ivorian section, the Côte d'Ivoire Democratic Party.

1958 - Côte d'Ivoire becomes a republic within the French Community.

Independence

1960 - France grants independence under President Felix Houphouët-Boigny. He holds power until he dies in 1993.

1990 - Opposition parties legalised; Houphouët-Boigny wins Côte d'Ivoire 's first multiparty presidential election, beating Laurent Gbagbo of the Ivorian Popular Front (FPI).

1993 - Henri Konan Bédié becomes president following the death of Houphouët-Boigny.

1995 October - Bédié re-elected in a ballot that is boycotted by opposition parties in protest at restrictions imposed on their candidates.

1999 - July - Alassane Ouattara, a Muslim, leaves job at International Monetary Fund and returns to run for president in 2000; his plan to challenge Bédié splits country along ethnic and religious lines. Opponents say he is national of Burkina Faso, not Côte d'Ivoire.

Coup

1999 - Bédié overthrown in military coup led by Robert Guei. Bédié flees to France.

2000 October - Guei proclaims himself president after announcing he has won presidential elections, but is forced to flee in the wake of a popular uprising against his perceived rigging of the poll.

2000 October - Laurent Gbagbo, believe d to be the real winner in the presidential election, is proclaimed president. Opposition leader Alassane Outtara, excluded from running in the poll, calls for a fresh election.

2000 October - Fighting erupts between Gbagbo's mainly southern Christian supporters and followers of Outtara, who are mostly Muslims from the north.

2000 December - President Gbagbo's Ivorian Popular Front (FPI) emerges as the biggest single party in parliamentary elections.

2001 January - Attempted coup fails.

2001 March - President Gbagbo and opposition leader Ouattara meet for the first time since violence erupted between their supporters in October 2000 and agree to work towards reconciliation.

2001 - Reports of a child slave ship off Africa 's west coast spark allegations of child slavery in cocoa plantations, straining international relations. Government moves to tackle the issue.

2001 March - Calls for fresh presidential and legislative elections after Alassane Ouattara's party gains majority at local polls.

2001 June - Amnesty International criticises government's human rights record over alleged extra-judicial killings of 57 northerners during presidential election campaign in October 2000. Eight gendarmes accused of the killings are cleared in August.

2001 October - President Gbagbo sets up National Reconciliation Forum. General Guei refuses to attend in protest against the arrest of his close aide Captain Fabien Coulibaly.

2001 November - Opposition leader Alassane Ouattara returns, ending year-long exile in France and Gabon.

2002 August - Ouattara's RDR opposition party is given four ministerial posts in new government.

Rebellion

2002 19 September - Mutiny in Abidjan by soldiers unhappy at being demobilised grows into full-scale rebellion, with Côte d'Ivoire Patriotic Movement rebels seizing control of the north.

2002 October-December - Short-lived ceasefire in October gives way to further clashes and battle for key cocoa-industry town of Daloa. Previously unknown rebel groups seize towns in west.

2003 January - President Gbagbo accepts peace deal at talks in Paris. Deal proposes power-sharing government.

Power-sharing

2003 March - Political parties, rebels agree on new government to include nine members from rebel ranks. "Consensus" prime minister, Seydou Diarra, tasked with forming cabinet.

2003 May - Armed forces sign "full" ceasefire with rebel groups to end almost eight months of rebellion.

2003 July - At presidential palace ceremony military chiefs and rebels declare war is over.

2003 August - Group of suspected mercenaries and their backers detained in France; they are said to have planned to assassinate President Gbagbo.

2003 September - Rebels accuse President Gbagbo of failing to honour peace agreement and pull out of unity government.

2003 December - 19 killed in armed attack on state TV building in Abidjan. Rebels rejoin government of national unity.

Hostilities and the road to peace

2004 March - Deadly clashes during crackdown on opposition rally against President Gbagbo in Abidjan. The former ruling party, the Côte d'Ivoire Democratic Party (PDCI), pulls out of the government, accusing President Gbagbo of "destabilising the peace process". First contingent of UN peacekeeping force deployed.

2004 May - UN report says March's opposition rally was used as a pretext for a planned operation by security forces. Report says more than 120 people were killed and alleges summary executions and torture.

2004 November - Outbreak of hostilities: Ivorian air force attacks rebels. French forces enter the fray after nine of their soldiers are killed in an air strike, destroying the Ivorian air force fleet. Violent anti-French protests ensue. The UN imposes an arms embargo.

2004 December - Parliament passes key reforms envisaged under 2003 peace accord, including abolishing need for president to have Ivorian mother and father (which would allow Ouattara to enter his candidacy in an election).

2005 April - Government, rebels declare an "immediate and final end" to hostilities. The move follows talks in South Africa. Gbagbo invokes Article 48 of the Constitution to allow Ouattara to contest an election, a controversial move since it opens the door to other uses of the Article's executive power.

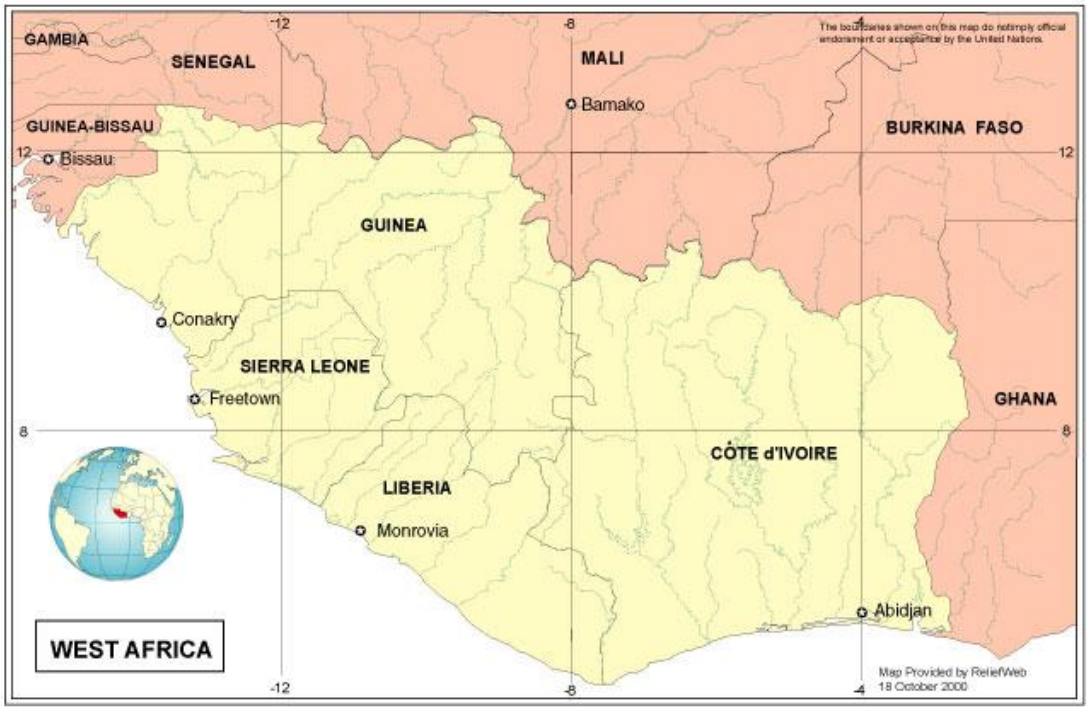
2005 – Nationwide elections due to be held on 30 October were postponed. Protests took place in Abidjan on that day in opposition to Gbagbo's continued presidency beyond his mandated five year term. The African Union has granted Gbagbo one year from 31 October to remain as head of state and have urged him to appoint a prime minister acceptable to all parties.

(Source for Chronology: Wiess, 2005; BBC)


MALI
BURKINA FASO
GUI.
LIBERIA
GHANA
Odienné
Korhogo
Touba
Séguéla
Katiola
Bondoukou
Bouaké
Man
Monts Nimba
Lac de Kossou
Daloa
YAMOUSSOUKRO
Abengourou
Lac de Buyo
Sinfra
Dimbokro
Gagnoa
Adzopé
Agboville
Divo
Aboisso
Dabou
Abidjan
San-Pédro
Gulf of Guinea
Black Volta
Komoé
Bandama
Sassandra
0 50 100 km
0 50 100 mi


MALI
BURKINA
GUINEA
LIBERIA
GHANA
Kolondiéba
Kadiana
Mandiana
Manankoro
Tingréla
Niélé
Orodara
Bobo-Dioulasso
Diébougou
Léo
Hamale
Banfora
Gaoua
Wa
Batié
Samatigila
Kouto
Wangolodougou
Ferkessédougou
Varalé
Odienné
Boundiali
Korhogo
Bouna
Sawla
Soukourala
Tafiré
Bole
Morondo
Beyla
Borotou
Niakaramandougou
Koutouba
Kani
Touba
Dabakala
Mankono
Tiénigbé
Katiola
Bondoukou
Sampa
Séguéla
Nzérékoré
Biankouma
Bouaké
Tanda
Yekepa
Bagoumi
Zuénoula
Mbahiakro
Berekum
Man
Vavoua
Sakasso
Sunyani
Gehnpa
Danané
Daoukro
Agnibilékrou
Bangolo
Lac de Kossou
dam
Bouaflé
Yamoussoukro
Duékoué
Daloa
Abengourou
Gawso
Tapeta
Guiglo
Sinfra
Dimbokro
Bongouanou
Issia
Oumé
Toumodi
Wiawso
Awaso
Lac de Buyo
dam
Akoupé
Zwedru
Gagnoa
Adzopé
Taï
Tiassalé
Agboville
Enchi
Soubré
Lakota
Divo
Pyne Town
Sikinssi
Aboisso
dams
Dabou
Bingerville
Abidjan
Grand-Bassam
Newtown
Half Assini
Axim
Grand-Lahou
ferry
Nyaake
Sassandra
Gulf of Guinea
San-Pédro
ferry
Harper
Cape Palmas
Tabou
NORTH ATLANTIC OCEAN
Ivory Coast
International boundary
National capital
Département boundary
Département capital
Road
Railroad
Départements have the same names as their capitals.
0 50 100 Kilometers
0 50 100 Miles
Base 801086 (B00473) 2-88

Annex I – Map of the Region



Annex II - Thematic Bibliography

Please note: the following bibliography is intended to provide pointers for further reading on some of the issues that have been raised in the report. It is by no means exhaustive. Rather it recommends some key texts, consulted in the course of researching the report, which can provide a useful gateway into further research on a given topic. Some publications are included in more than one section where there is overlap.

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Annex III - Liberia Field Visit Report

Introduction

Throughout my one-week field visit to Liberia I conducted a number of interviews with international actors engaged in the reconstruction process in Liberia. In one respect, the interviews were geared towards understanding key conflict dynamics from a historical perspective – to draw out those factors that they believed had, and continued to, feed into conflict in Liberia. In another respect, I wanted to try to get a feeling for the longer term prospects for Liberia – what dynamics might contribute to renewed conflict in the country.

It must be noted that the purpose of the interviews was not specifically concerned with the short term situation in Liberia – I was not concerned so much with the intricacies of the United Nations led reconstruction process or the immediate political situation – as my focus was somewhat broader. However, issues regarding the elections and progress regarding reconstruction were raised and discussed as, of course, they crucially impact upon Liberia's longer-term future. For those who wish to learn more regarding the immediate reconstruction problems (and recommended solutions) then they should refer to recent International Crisis Group reports which detail such issues.

During the week, I interviewed personnel from: the US embassy, the United Nations Department of Safety and Security, the United Nations Joint Mission Analysis Centre, the International Rescue Committee, Mercy Corps, Save the Children, DynCorp, and a number of UN peacekeepers.

Key Findings

There were a number of key areas that were raised by the majority of interviewees – many of which serve to reinforce the key findings of my report:

- **'Given' Factors**: from my discussions it was evident that a number of factors are simply assumed to be crucial to sustained peace in the country. These issues are those key areas that are being targeted by the international presence led by the United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL). These issues boil down to: corruption, security, good governance, judicial reform, and economic and social development. These issues will not be expanded on here because (as stated above) the key points can be found in

recent ICG reports which document and explore them in great detail. The point here is to note that they were assumed by all the respondents to be of crucial importance.

- **Rebel Groups**: a number of interviewees with considerable knowledge of the security situation throughout the country stated that the command and control of rebel groups had been largely dismantled following the UN's DDR process and that there exists little or no joint structure between commanders and fighters at present. However, despite this positive development, there was a strong feeling that it would not be at all difficult for rebel groups to regroup should the situation deteriorate and that this could occur very quickly. They agreed that the 'big heads' are still around and should they decide their interests are not served through legitimate political processes (most former senior rebel commanders took up jobs in the transitional government) then they may well attempt to incite violence in one form or another. Linked to this point, some respondents pointed to the fact that: a large number of weapons are still circulating in the area which rebels would have easy access to; many ex-combatants feel the war is not fully over; and the inadequacy of the reintegration process meant that supposedly disarmed and demobilised fighters may well take up arms again in the future if they do not see their situations improve in the medium term.

- **Urban Youth**: most respondents felt the key threat to stability came from the large numbers of disgruntled urban youths, many of whom are ex-combatants traumatised from years of war. They pointed to the fact that most young people living in Monrovia and urban centres were unemployed and uneducated (around 85% illiteracy), with many waiting to see how the political situation developed before possibly resorting to violence in the future. Many blamed the inadequate reintegration process (due primarily to a lack of funding) and the fact the international community was not doing enough to address the problem. This they felt was leading to a culture of mob violence. Also, some felt that this phenomenon meant that young people were being excluded from any sense of community or family affiliation, which in itself was hampering the effectiveness of programmes targeting such youths (an effective environment for programmes is required which is simply not present in the urban slums). Employment in agriculture and education were cited as the key ways of channelling the energies of these young people. However, a sense of pessimism was apparent regarding the potential for success of such initiatives given the massive levels of unemployment and the lack of funding available. This, they felt, represented the biggest challenge for the international community, because the future of country will depend upon the

generation that is just coming to adulthood – an uneducated generation brought up in a atmosphere of violence and crime. In conclusion, many people felt that if violence were to emerge from anywhere, it would come from the large concentrations of youths to be found primarily in Monrovia. The threat was seen as more medium to long term than immediate.

- **Volatility**: a common theme was the extremely volatile situation that exists in Liberia. This centred on the notion that things can happen in a flash and it doesn't take much for violence to take hold and spread – arguments that might have a local or personal origin can quickly become problems on a larger, perhaps, national scale. The violence which occurred in Oct/Nov 2004 was cited as evidence of this. This issue was frequently attached to the idea that the only factor preventing the spread of such violence still further is the UNMIL presence.

- **Borders**: almost all respondents felt that insecure borders represented a prime threat to the stability of Liberia due to the flow of arms, mercenaries and illegal goods. The prevailing mood on this subject was that it was indeed a massive problem but that it is just 'a fact' of the region and something about which little can be done. Although, some felt more effective border controls and developing legitimate cross border trade would be positive developments, they doubted whether these were realistic hopes.

- **Ethnic/Class divisions**: most interviewees stated that resentment towards two key groups, the Americo-Liberians (viewed as exclusive elites who have traditionally had exclusive access to power, government and education – the fact that many are candidates in the election reveals their continued influence) and the Mandingos (the Muslim trading class who are often seen as 'foreigners' who monopolise trade, remain in tight-knit impenetrable social groups and who 'want it all') represented potential sources of instability, particularly with regard to the elections and their outcome. Most interviewees agreed that these resentments were not enough to incite conflict but they believed that if violence broke out these ethnic/class divisions would perhaps gain more importance.

- **Regional Instability**: a number of interviewees stressed the importance of the potential that regional conflict may well derail the peaceful reconstruction of Liberia. The feeling was that, on top of Liberia's own problems, the renewal of conflict in neighbouring countries would almost undoubtedly destabilise Liberia. Many fear that

if the situation in Cote d'Ivoire deteriorates, the consequences for Liberia could be devastating. Although, direct reasons for this were vague, interviewees referred to the destabilising impact of huge flows of refugees, fighters using Liberia for sanctuary and the prospect of many Liberians going to fight across the border (who will constitute a source of trouble upon their return to Liberia).

- **Elections**: most people felt that the elections would take place peacefully (with some people believing small scale violence might occur in places but the UN could contain it). A significant worry relates to the urban youths who support George Weah; as noted above, many people felt the urban youths represented the most likely group who could instigate violence and thus the fear persists that, should George Weah lose the elections, his supporters may well react violently (interviewees disagreed over the capacity of the UN to contain such violence). However, most interviewees feel the real cause for concern will come a number of months down the line when people have a clearer idea of how the political situation will affect them (a 'wait and see' mentality) – if large numbers feel they remain excluded from the state then the potential for violent reaction against the new government is high. Respondents could not place any specific time frame on this (as it is of course just speculation) but stated that it is something that should be monitored closely because, as the history of the region has shown, poor governance has been a primary cause of conflict; if the new government fails to deliver basic services and noticeable progress then this might provide the motivation for large numbers to resort to violence.

- **False sense of security**: Linked to a number of the points above, a common feeling among those interviewed was that the UN presence, combined with the 'wait and see' mentality surrounding the elections, is creating a false sense of security in Liberia. The prevailing view was that conflict in the short term is very unlikely because of these two factors. When asked about the potential for conflict in the future, answers were usually preceded by a despondent look and a shrug of the shoulders. The basis for such pessimism lay in the fact that interviewees generally believed that unless substantial progress is made in key areas (governance, corruption, etc) before the UN pulls out then the prospects for peace in the long term are grim.

Prospects for the future – 'the flames of war'

As has been shown in the main body of the report, conflict emerges when a number of key factors converge. In order to explain and simplify the potential for conflict in Liberia it is helpful to use the analogy of a fire. In this analogy fire represents conflict. Logs represent the underlying causes of conflict which form the basis for the fire. The kindling represents the factors that facilitate conflict. The match represents the sparks that can cause the kindling to ignite. Petrol represents conflict intensification factors which when added to the fire cause it to ignite much quicker and subsequently burn with greater intensity. Fire depends upon oxygen to burn, even if all the above elements of conflict are present, if one can keep them in a vacuum then conflict will not ignite – this represents those factors which prevent conflict.

- **Logs (causal factors)**: without doubt, many of the primary factors which have caused conflict in the region in the past are still present in Liberia: corruption is endemic from the local level through to government; extreme poverty and unemployment are widespread; the transitional government has not been able to ensure the effective control of the country's natural resources; and large sections of society continue to feel alienated, not only from the state but from community and family structures, not least young people who not only still remain crucially excluded from society but, also, have known little other than war during their lives. All these factors combine to create an underlying base of resentment, exclusion and tension. Such grievances established the foundations for conflict in the past and it is fair to assume those same grievances exist today. It remains to be seen whether a new government will effectively address all these deep-seated causal factors. However, it is safe to assume that in the short to medium term at least, these crucial issues will remain largely unresolved.

- **Kindling (facilitating factors)**: there are a number of factors that are required to facilitate the onset of conflict. Any insurgency or rebel group requires a social base from which the ranks of the force are drawn. As stated above, in Liberia there are many disgruntled and disaffected youths and former ex-combatants, many of whom would hardly hesitate to take up arms again. For many, the war may offer the prospect of escape from the desperate situations in which they find themselves. It is likely that many such potential raw recruits for rebellion will be present in Liberia for some time to come. Even if the raw recruits exist, insurgencies require leaders with charisma, access to wealth and the ability to command respect. As mentioned above, it would

take very little for former rebel commanders to reorganise former fighting forces or rebel groups (this is most likely to occur if they feel excluded from political power or influence). One must remember that LURD was essentially a reformulation of the ULIMO rebel group which had supposedly formally ceased to exist following the 1997 disarmament programme, the members of which felt excluded from the Taylor government. The history of the region has shown that there has been a plentiful supply of would-be commanders spurred on by the prospect of both economic gain and political power. Another facilitating factor is that of porous borders which allows the flow of arms through illicit cross-border trading. Rebellions need weapons with which to fight. The cross-border shadow economies that continue to function in the region, due largely to uncontrolled borders, means that potential rebels will have access to weapons should they require. Also, porous borders allows the influx of regional mercenaries who, as we have seen in the main report, depend upon conflict to survive. All these factors exist which could perceivably facilitate conflict in Liberia.

- **The match (sparks)**: a number of potential sparks for conflict exist in Liberia that could potentially ignite the kindling and logs outlined above. As was made clear to me during my field visit, it does not take much for violence to spread rapidly. Small incidents can trigger disproportionately large reactions amongst populations when angers, resentments and grievances are strained. Also, the history of the region has shown that it only takes small numbers of rebels to instigate conflicts that lasted for years. Taylor's initial incursion into northern Liberia in 1989 consisted of only around 150 rebels. So, conflict could emerge from a similar small-scale rebel incursion. The elections of course represent a primary potential spark for violence, however, as made clear above, this is more likely to come in the aftermath of elections rather than during them. Ethnically or politically inspired killings or political assassinations may also provide the spark for conflict. Another spark could come from regional instability such as the sudden influx of refugees as a result of conflict in a neighbouring country. Essentially, the point here is that many potential sparks for renewed violence and conflict exist in Liberia due primarily to continued internal and external instability.

- **Petrol (conflict intensification factors)**: there are a number of factors that exist which serve to make conflict more likely and which would ensure its spread if the fire were to ignite. Perhaps the most important of these is that of ethnic and class divisions such as the Americo-Liberian/indigenous Liberian divide and the widespread animosity shown towards Mandingo Liberians. Whilst these factors may not be sufficient to cause

conflict alone, as has been shown in the past, these differences can serve as rationales for those trying to explain their exclusion. Petrol may also be supplied by regional states or exiled warlords (the obvious example being Charles Taylor) with an interest in promoting instability in Liberia – such regional actors may for example supply arms to rebel groups or provide them with sanctuary.

- **Oxygen supply (factors preventing conflict)**: whilst it has been shown that many of the elements required to build the fire are present (or potentially present) in Liberia, there are a number of factors preventing the flames of war from igniting; those factors that are keeping Liberia in a vacuum, deprived of oxygen for the time being. First and foremost, is the provision of security, which is currently being overseen by the massive United Nations presence – with 15,000 peacekeepers on the ground there is little possibility violence will be allowed to spread out of control. However, the UN will soon begin to withdraw and the Liberian government will have to be able to ensure that the security sector is sufficiently equipped to ensure security can be maintained. Second, currently there exists an atmosphere of 'wait and see' – people are waiting to see whether the new government will prove any better than what has gone before.

Conclusion

To stay with the analogy, conflict may emerge when all the elements required to make the fire burn are present. If one or more of these elements is not present then we can assume that conflict will not occur. I would argue that in the short-term the potential for conflict is low because the oxygen supply has been effectively cut off by the massive international presence and people are either waiting to see the final outcome of the elections or are willing to wait and judge the new government's performance after it is formed. Thus, even though the fire is laid and the logs and kindling are undoubtedly present, in the short-term, the most we can expect is for the odd spark to cause brief and small-scale conflagrations but which are soon starved of oxygen and extinguished.

In the medium-term to long-term the potential for conflict is much greater. The key question here is whether enough can be done to remove the logs (the underlying causes of conflict) before the oxygen is allowed back in (when the UN begins to withdraw and people increasingly demand results from the new government). Efforts to remove the logs

are underway and what needs to be done in this respect has been clearly documented by the ICG: for example, wiping out corruption, developing the capacity of civil society to ensure governmental transparency, strengthening the rule of law through judicial reform, promoting community level economic development, strengthening infrastructure etc. All the efforts of the international community are vital in this respect. Tackling the underlying cause of conflict is, in the long term, the most important factor that will ensure conflict does not break out again. If the logs can be removed, the kindling might still ignite but it will burn down quickly and be containable.

Additionally, during this crucial transition period, initiatives must also be targeted at the kindling (facilitating factors) such as effective reintegration programmes for ex-combatants and attempts to secure Liberia's borders

Removing the logs and kindling are unfortunately processes that take much time. Therefore every effort has to be made to ensure security can be maintained whilst these processes take place. It is a simple fact that the UN will one day withdraw its peacekeepers entirely. It simply does not have the resources or political will to remain in Liberia indefinitely. After the elections, an exit strategy will be implemented that will culminate with its eventual complete withdrawal. Thus, the responsibility for security must gradually be handed over to indigenous forces. However, the slow pace of Liberia's security sector reform suggests that Liberia's new police force and army will not be able to effectively prevent the flow of oxygen for some time to come. This represents the window in which conflict may emerge – a period when the key elements necessary for conflict still exist whilst the capacity to contain violence is weak.

Of course, it is extremely difficult to predict how the situation will develop in the long-term. From a pessimistic viewpoint, it is reasonable to suggest that the underlying causes and facilitating factors of conflict, outlined above, will still be present to some extent after the UN peacekeepers have withdrawn. In such a context we might well reach the conclusion that the potential for conflict will be high. Those elements of conflict that make up the fire may well come together, fuelled by enough oxygen, which will allow the flames to spread. If substantial and meaningful progress has not been made before the UN peacekeepers draw down then the international community must be prepared for renewed conflict and the humanitarian consequences that entails. In this sense, very close and careful monitoring of the transition period will be required, particularly with respect to the effectiveness of the new government. The key point here is that the current period of relative calm should not be allowed to breed complacency: the potential for conflict remains very real, even if we do not reach the fatalistic conclusion that there *will be* renewed conflict. In this sense, the coming months and years are crucial for Liberia's

future development and stability. Rapid progress needs to be made in a number of key areas to ensure that renewed conflict does not wash away all hope for Liberia. All efforts must be directed towards supporting the new government in this task so that sufficient and noticeable progress is made before the peacekeepers leave. It is a very fine balance, but success is possible.

Annex IV – Conflict Chart