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**Humanitarian Emergencies and Warlord
Economies in Liberia and Sierra Leone**

William Reno

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CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES	iv
ABSTRACT	v
I INTRODUCTION	1
II POLITICAL ECONOMY OF PATRONAGE AS PRELUDE TO CRISIS	3
2.1 Inherent internal weaknesses	3
2.1.1 Social fragmentation	3
2.1.2 The primacy of internal security	5
2.1.3 Incentives to gut state institutions	5
2.2 External variables	6
2.2.1 Aid from abroad	6
2.2.2 Ruler control over markets	7
2.2.3 Overseas donor preference for non-state channels	8
III LIBERIA — MAKING WAR AS BUSINESS	9
3.1 Creating a social basis for warlord politics	9
3.2 Activating the social basis of warlord politics	11
3.3 The economic basis of warlord rule	12
3.4 The proliferation of warlord politics	15
3.5 The dangers of negotiating peace among warlords	16
IV SIERRA LEONE — COMMERCIAL POLICY AS ANTI-INSURGENCY STRATEGY	17
4.1 The Liberian shock	17
4.2 Foreclosing the institutional state option	18
4.3 Strasser's innovation	20
4.4 The Executive Outcomes solution	21
V THE ECONOMICS OF HUMANITARIAN CRISES	23
5.1 The important presence of natural resources	23
5.2 External pressures to privatize peacemaking	26
5.3 The political role of NGO resources in private peacemaking	27
5.4 The risk of contagious humanitarian emergencies	27
REFERENCES	29

LIST OF TABLES

Table 1	'Taylorland' income	24
Table 2	Sierra Leone exports	25

ABSTRACT

This paper explains correlations between humanitarian emergencies and political economies of 'failing states' in Liberia and Sierra Leone. In both, Cold War era rulers acquired personal power through their influence over economic exchange, irrespective of conventional public/private distinctions. The political shock of the end of the Cold War, coupled with the growing independence and invigoration of clandestine markets challenges this domination. This creates opportunities for enterprising rivals and regional strongmen to assert their own control. The consequence is nearly complete institutional collapse of states and open warfare to control the alternative economic bases of political power. Communities with resources become targets of struggle amongst rival strongmen. This struggle leads to rapid, widespread impoverishment. Warfare, combined with the loss of local control over resources, creates massive refugee flows, which further destabilize neighbouring communities. Liberia, for example, lost up to 90 per cent of the civilian population of rural areas in the early 1990s, straining resources in neighbouring states and nearly destroying Liberia's economic and occupational mainstays. The two cases also point to the contagion of conflict and humanitarian emergencies. Struggle between strongmen and factions over economic resources occurs irrespective of globally recognized frontiers and incorporates local political entrepreneurs into the wider conflict.

I INTRODUCTION

Liberia and Sierra Leone are paradigmatic cases of humanitarian emergencies that are consequences of the collapse of Cold War era patron-client politics. The magnitude of humanitarian emergencies in both countries highlights the consequences of the collapse of these systems of rule. By 1996, about 200,000 of Liberia's 2.4 million people died in a civil war that began in 1989. A third, or 750,000 of Liberia's people lived outside the country as refugees. An additional 1.2 million were internally displaced (UN press release in *Inquirer* [Monrovia] 2 March 1996). Liberian official gross national product (GNP) reportedly declined from US\$ 1.1bn in 1989 to US\$ 250,000 in 1993 (Clapham, 1996, 231). Sierra Leone's official economy shrank by half between the start of a civil war in 1991 and 1995, but from a lower base than in Liberia. While only about 30,000 of Sierra Leone's four million people died in that country's civil war, 360,000 of the country's 4.4 million people sought refuge in other states in 1996. An additional 1.7 million were internally displaced (US Department of State, 1997).

In both cases, humanitarian emergencies follow the breakdown of strategies that Cold War era rulers used to control natural resources and regional markets in ways that enhanced their own power. Previously, they converted formal aspects of the state, its institutions, laws, creditworthiness and capacity to attract aid from outsiders, into patronage that they could distribute to followers to advance their own power. Rulers consciously undermined their own bureaucracies. Effective bureaucrats might acquire interests at odds with those of the ruler. Enterprising clients might use bureaucratic resources or expertise to build their own personal power bases. In this context, state spending on health services, education, or agricultural development diverted scarce political resources that could be used to bolster the ruler's personal power.

The end of the Cold War brought declining aid from abroad and the imposition of World Bank mandated economic reform. These pressures exposed the vulnerabilities of African states like Liberia and Sierra Leone. Rulers suddenly either lost, or were forced to share the economic tools that they used to exercise power through patronage. Having abjured building long-term legitimacy through meeting the needs of their people, rulers could not draw upon popular support when enterprising strongmen began to build their own power bases. Pressure from outsiders to promote economic and political liberalization further undermined the stability and coherence of

these states when rulers no longer had privileged access to resources which they used to impose their power.

The collapse of states based upon patronage systems of rule also exposes the hollowness of claims that rulers acted for people on whose behalf they claimed sovereignty. Sovereignty was a pretext for extracting resources from outsiders in exchange for diplomatic support. Incumbent regimes and insurgents now openly contest state sovereignty, but not in terms of liberation for a particular people. War in both of these cases is an outgrowth of the struggle between once dominant regimes and increasingly enterprising strongmen to control markets, both internally and externally, and convert that control into political authority.

Several lessons come out of my analysis of this dynamic in Liberia and Sierra Leone. They could be applied equally well to humanitarian emergencies following the collapse of centralized patronage systems in places like Zaire, Angola, and Somalia. One can foresee similar circumstances in Nigeria, for example. This analysis parallels those of Väyrynen (1996) and Riley (1996) in identifying a general process of a group reaping new economic and political benefits in ways that increase the vulnerability of marginalized populations.

First, contenders who seek to control elements of the once centralized patronage networks treat outsiders as though they were private traders. They use connections with outsiders to accumulate more resources. Insurgencies can be regarded much like rival entrepreneurs, exploiting opportunities that shifts in external factors and their opponents' failures create.

Second, this political economy of the breakdown of patronage systems highlights the importance of the distribution of natural resources in driving warfare. Concentrated, portable natural resources attract outside partners, whose marketing connections, access to foreign exchange, and possession of private armies can be used to follow up on military advantages and deny resources to rivals. The political context of this partnership undermines the arguments of some observers that effective private militaries can be relied upon to restore failing states, not just incumbent rulers, in lieu of capacity or political will on the part of the United Nations or its member states (Rubin, 1997, Toffler, 1993, 229-30).

Third, the Liberian and Sierra Leone experiences demonstrate the lack of reciprocal relations between rulers and the bulk of local populations. Cold

War era patronage networks provided some support for significant segments of the population. Now, communities struggle to cope with this loss. Some hitch their fortunes to strongman entrepreneurs. Others try to opt out of political deals altogether. This situation points to the importance of decentralizing control over natural resources, so that potential rulers are forced to bargain with local populations, protecting community interests as a way to advance their own.

The analysis that follows focuses on the changing relationship between politics and markets, the essence of patron-client politics, and the key to understanding its breakdown and subsequent struggles to redefine its terms.

II POLITICAL ECONOMY OF PATRONAGE AS PRELUDE TO CRISIS

The increasing importance of insurgencies and state collapse in Liberia and Sierra Leone in the 1990s reflect fundamental changes in how these states and others like them operate. The causes of state failure predated these changes. Even prior to this decade, many of them would have been incapable of maintaining their sovereignty against external challenges. Most are riven by internal divisions and economic decay. Recent external and internal shocks exacerbated these inherent weaknesses. These internal weaknesses set the stage for understanding the impact of seemingly logical external demands that governments in these states adopt reforms designed to restore the role of markets and rework relationships between government and citizens. Rather than enhancing prospects for state survival and public order, the seemingly rational and accountable structures that outsiders demand even more radically weakens states than during the pre-reform era.

2.1 Inherent internal weaknesses

2.1.1 Social fragmentation

Colonial rule, whether Britain's 'thin white line' in Sierra Leone or the scant efforts of the financially pressed Liberian government to administer its hinterland, relied heavily on collaborations with powerful societal authorities who exercised authority on the state's behalf (Kirk-Greene, 1980). In Sierra Leone, as late as the 1920s five district commissioners exercised British authority over one million subjects (Kilson, 1966, 17).

Administrators had to make deals with local strongmen who exercised power in their own right. Thus clientelist relationships developed under colonial rule. Chiefs in Sierra Leone, for example, used their colonial appointments as tax collectors to gather tribute, ending the clear connection between a dependent's payment of tribute in exchange for a chief's protection. Chiefs used their new official powers to requisition labour for personal advantage on their private commercial farms. While such practices concerned colonial rulers, their anxiety to garner revenues from increased trade prevented them from taking ameliorative action (Government of Sierra Leone, 1921). Warlord politics in the 1990s mimics this private use of social power of strongmen based in exploitation of local labour and natural resources.

Liberian history has abundant parallels. Liberian government authorities hastily concluded agreements with local chiefs under pressure to demonstrate effective occupation in the face of European colonial expansion. In 1913, President Edwin James Barclay recruited indigenous chiefs, offering them ten per cent commissions on taxes that they collected to give them a personal incentive to extract resources for the government (Sawyer, 1992:199). There too, chiefs used government backing for their authority to recruit forced labour, leading to exports of indentured labour and forced labour in Liberia (League of Nations, 1930).

In Sierra Leone, indigenous elites who led the country to independence in 1961 and reformers in Liberia in mid century were strongly committed to maintaining these arrangements. They sought to avoid the social disruption of having to create new government organizations. Existing bureaucracies and local strongmen had strong personal stakes in continuing the system of rule through intermediaries. These political/commercial elite families and factions, the more enterprising of which translate their privileged positions into bases from which to sustain warlord organizations in the 1990s.

The amount of resources over which rulers in both countries exercised actual control was quite small. As Jackson (1990:139) points out, many small African states 'were more comparable to rural county governments in Europe than to modern independent States.' Lacking income with which to launch large-scale development projects, Sierra Leone Prime Minister Sir Milton Margai (1961-66) used his power of appointment to gain a measure of leverage over his own state officials. 'Such prizes, competed for between local factions,' wrote Clapham (1982:86) 'inevitably divided the area and inhibited the emergence of any ethic of local solidarity.' Liberia's President

William Tubman (1944-71) adopted a similar strategy of creating a political alliance of strongmen with himself personally distributing access to state office that clients could convert into private gain in return for loyalty (Liebenow, 1987).

2.1.2 The primacy of internal security

But even with the ability to eliminate some strongmen and coopt others, rulers found their range of action extremely limited. Serious attempts to divert scarce resources to build effective state institutional capability risked alienating strongmen. Thus while strongmen became ever more dependent upon state resources to exercise local power, rulers became even more dependent upon these strongmen to rule, even though these clients used state resources in ways that violated the state's own laws and undermined concerted efforts to address popular demands.

Rulers thus focused more exclusively on their own political (and physical) survival amidst these potential rivals (Ayoob, 1995, Buzan, 1983). They feared that unruly strongmen could use their offices to organize a power base or seize resources without the ruler's consent. They might use institutions to engage in their own business deals or sell protection to operators who would otherwise owe allegiance to the ruler. Likewise, an army imbued with an independent organizational interest in this context presents more immediate danger to a ruler than an ineffective one staffed with confidants or close family members.

2.1.3 Incentives to gut state institutions

Migdal (1988) observes that rulers of weak, fragmented states are forced to choose between satisfying popular needs of a diverse population (and acquiring popular legitimacy) and the more immediate threat of managing threatening strongmen. Rulers in Liberia and Sierra Leone found that the more immediate threat to their regimes lay in the actions of strongmen. Sierra Leone's president Siaka Stevens (1967-85) took power only after a restorative coup reversed an earlier army coup against him. The threat of a coup became a constant theme of state politics thereafter. Underlining the danger of institutional reform, army sergeant Samuel Doe (1980-90), trained as part of a plan to professionalize the army officer corps, overthrew Liberia's reformist president William Tolbert (1971-80). Rulers thus rationally gutted their own instruments of rule in favour of short-term interests in managing internal security threats.

This is why war in Liberia and Sierra Leone is not a conventional affair in which opposing sides compete to take over an existing institutional state framework in a home region or the country as a whole. Instead, war is an intensification of competition for the resources of patronage systems, a subject that engages us in the next section. This scramble for commercial opportunity and resources rather than institutions helps explain why formal state boundaries have been relatively less important in containing these wars. Private markets, especially clandestine ones, do not respect frontiers, particularly when rulers used access to them as patronage as an alternative to building strong state institutions in the first place. Thus when old arrangements break down, competitors face incentives to reach beyond state frontiers to gain advantage over rivals. Given the fact that Guinea, Liberia's and Sierra Leone's northern neighbour, hosted 650,000 refugees from wars in these countries (equal to eight per cent of Guinea's own population), the threat of spreading instability is real.

2.2 External variables

2.2.1 Aid from abroad

Superpowers and former colonial rulers provided resources without regard to domestic economic or political performance in return for diplomatic and strategic support during the Cold War (David, 1991). African government purchases of major weapons systems topped US\$ 1.5 billion annually through most of the 1980s, falling to US\$ 350 per year from 1989 to 1994 (Singh & Wezeman, 1996). This transfer of wealth and coercive power to rulers led some to suppose that their own ambitions could ignore the needs of local populations, and could permit them to marginalize vulnerable, but demanding clients.

Liberia's President Doe received a half billion dollars of economic and military aid from the United States government from 1980 to 1986. In return, Liberia hosted a US satellite tracking station, a submarine listening post, and an embassy that was reputed to manage intelligence gathering for the West Africa region (Berkeley, 1986:24). Prior to a national election in November 1985, Doe promised his United States allies that he would sponsor political reform. Instead, his security forces killed up to 3,000 people after the election. In response, the US Congress cut Doe's military aid to zero by 1987. Even though he now lacked money to buy new weapons, Doe faced a well armed army and paramilitaries. These men later formed the

nucleus of private armies in the 1990s after their presidential patron looked less attractive when his command over resources declined.

2.2.2 Ruler control over markets

Sierra Leone's situation was different. Not a pivotal ally of any superpower, Sierra Leone's government received little military aid and maintained a largely ceremonial army of 3,000 through the 1980s. Foreign development assistance accounted for about a quarter of government receipts during the 1970s and actually rose during the 1980s and exceeded domestic revenues through much of the 1990s (Bank of Sierra Leone, 1996).

But this comparison shows that when we examine the collapse of centralized patronage politics, one should not look exclusively at overall levels of external aid. As with Liberia, the most politically salient resources were those that the president could control directly to personally distribute as patronage, not just whether his state attracts aid or not. Especially as more conditions came with loans and aid in the 1980s, the relatively high levels of expenditure on Sierra Leone's behalf did not directly contribute to the president's control over a patronage network. Some military officers, for example, complained that foreigners paid to build a hydroelectric plant (Italians), a stadium and bridges (Chinese) and a new telephone system (European Union). The president could take some credit before a grateful population. But these resources could not efficiently be turned into patronage, since they are not fungible, whereas US aid to Doe was very much so.

Instead, patronage in Sierra Leone came from exploitation of natural resources. In the early 1970s, Sierra Leone's official taxable diamond exports, valued at about US\$ 150 million, provided 70 per cent of overall exports and financed close to half of government spending. In 1989, at the eve of civil war, official exports plunged to just US\$ 2 million (Ministry of Mines, 1989). Officials estimated that by the mid-1980s, 70 per cent of all exports left the country through clandestine channels (Feardon, 1989:30). This led to an 82 per cent decline in internal state revenues from 1977/78 to 1985/86 (IMF, 1990). Public services declined, foreign debt rose, and the government almost completely dominated domestic private credit markets as it tried to borrow to cover revenue shortfalls and carry out vital state functions. By the late 1980s, Sierra Leone's government absorbed close to 90 per cent of local private credit (Bank of Sierra Leone, 1989). This weakened autonomous businesses not attached to a patronage network,

shifting even further the political balance in favour of enterprising strongmen who still had access to state procured credit and could use it to finance expanded clandestine trade, further undermining state revenue collection, and so on.

The actual demise of a state as a centralized political entity and the appearance of armed struggle does not come directly from bureaucratic collapse, which was quite well advanced in Sierra Leone by 1980. Sierra Leone's period of political fragmentation began in the late 1980s when Joseph Momoh (1985-92), Stevens' successor, discovered that he could not prevent Stevens' associates from taking personal benefit of clandestine economic opportunities. When Momoh lost relevance as a patron, individual strongmen took control of resources for themselves. Even increasing levels of foreign aid, rising from 30 per cent in 1980 to exceed domestic revenues by the early 1990s, had little impact on the president's efforts to manage wayward inherited clients, especially when this money went to help meet the needs of Sierra Leone's people instead of meeting his political objectives.

2.2.3 Overseas donor preference for non-state channels

The radically declining strategic significance of small, weak African states like Liberia and Sierra Leone after the Cold War led non-African states to channel higher percentages of aid disbursements to non-state organizations (NGOs). Non-state development organizations in Liberia received 12 per cent of bilateral development assistance to Liberia in 1980. By 1991, the figure stood at about 65 per cent. In Sierra Leone, the increase was only slightly less dramatic, from approximately 20 per cent to about 60 per cent over the same period of time (Government of Sierra Leone, 1994, National Bank of Liberia, 1995). Clapham (1996:256-66) calls this the privatization of Africa's international relations. For the cases in this paper, this new aid strategy shifted more resources out of the hands of presidents who acted as heads of patronage systems by virtue of their control of a state.

In fact, this aid to NGOs may hasten the fragmentation of a patronage network, since the president's declining centrality may encourage strongmen to look elsewhere for resources. A lot of this aid benefits farmers or the urban poor who are already outside the shrinking patronage network. Aid may help citizens develop their own survival strategies. But it can also attract rogue strongmen interested in loot, or even holding populations captive to attract relief aid. As we will see below, this also created new

opportunities for enterprising strongmen who formed their own 'grassroots' organizations to gain direct access to external aid.

The common link between the origins of the Liberian and Sierra Leone crises lies in the collapse of a ruler's control over a patronage network. In both countries, rulers had long failed to develop formal institutions that were relevant to the needs of the bulk of the population. The spark for violent conflict between armed factions, however, lies in the shifting distribution of political resources. Strongmen find new incentives to stake independent claims to sources of wealth at the same time as presidents of both countries discover that they exercise a rapidly diminishing capability to prevent their clients from doing so. It is to this growing independence of strongmen in each case to which we turn next.

III LIBERIA — MAKING WAR AS BUSINESS

3.1 Creating a social basis for warlord politics

On 12 April 1980, Master Sergeant Samuel Doe seized power in a violent coup. He then presided over a 'Liberian Beach Party,' the beach front execution of thirteen former cabinet ministers and presidential confidants. Doe initially tapped into popular ire over the dominance of Americo-Liberians, about two per cent of Liberia's population who were descended from black emigres from the United States, in Liberia's politics and economy.

In fact, Doe quickly discovered that he could not knit together an effective administration without substantial collaboration with Americo-Liberians. Many of these people possessed indispensable technical skills, access to foreign commercial networks and exercised local power in their own right. Unable to generate impressive wealth, fix Liberia's economic problems or finance a military capable of directly defending his regime, he appointed many Krahn ethnic kinsmen, who constitute about five per cent of Liberia's population, to strategic positions in government. Doe simply incorporated other politically vulnerable, but commercially well-connected elites into his regime. He grafted Mandingos, Muslim traders with commercial links abroad, but little local power to match their four per cent portion of the population, on to his expanded patronage network.

Many of Doe's new Americo-Liberian allies possessed considerable land holdings in rubber production and timber that they had acquired while acting as political and clandestine market intermediaries for the Tubman and Tolbert regimes. When Doe took power in 1980, incumbent elites, primarily Americo-Liberians, held about 3,000 rubber estates, comprising about 15 per cent of Liberia's territory (Sawyer, 1992, 252). Many of these strongmen later figured prominently in Doe's administration.

The concentration of economic resources in the hands of these strongmen and the foreign commercial connections that came with them gave these people the wherewithal to protect their own positions. They used this commercial control to gain dominance over customary holders of land in local communities and to act as local power brokers. As economic mismanagement on the part of Doe's regime chased away foreign investors, Doe desperately needed their allegiance to get resources that he could translate into power outside his capital. This elite allegiance became even more critical to Doe after the 1986-87 cut-off of US military aid, making a farther shift toward fragmentation of Doe's patronage network.

Charting avenues for future conflict for Liberia's warlords, these families built extensive informal commercial ties with regional trade networks. Rubber estate owners and logging operators, for example, used their relative independence that came from Doe's reliance on them to make private deals with Lebanese and neighbouring Ivoirian traders to export their products for solely their own profit. These commercial networks would come to play a pivotal role in sustaining the flow of arms into Liberia in the 1990s. The independence of these commercial ties soon became the bases from which members of this elite could launch their own bids for power as Doe became less relevant to political struggle conducted through markets.

Anxious about the independence of incumbent elite collaborators, Doe tried to build his own power base. He highlighted Liberia's close ties with the United States, willing to accept US troops in transit during times of crisis in hopes of attracting aid. He used this, accompanied with a vague commitment to democracy and promises to hold elections in 1985, to attract large amounts of aid from the US. Before relations with the US soured in late 1985 after Doe rigged election results to declare himself the winner, he had reaped about US\$ 450 million. This sizeable sum went toward building two paramilitary groups (Executive Mansion Guards and Special Anti-Terrorist Units) and payouts to loyal associates to build his own reliable political network.

After US money started to dry up in 1986, Doe tried more vigorously to redirect the resources that his unruly inherited elites controlled. For example, he allegedly established quasi-military ties to an Israeli logging company that received World Bank backing to operate a concession in Liberia's east. Israeli officials were keen to attract African diplomatic support for their position in the Arab-Israeli conflict. The Israeli firm accordingly provided weapons and a training facility for Doe's paramilitaries, along with a new Ministry of Defense building in Monrovia (Kieh, 1989 and Gershoni, 1989). Other firms such as an American mining company employed close Doe associates to provide mine security. This corporate support for what was actually a paramilitary gave Doe an opportunity to use the firm's resources and organization to launch attacks on his political opponents without having to rely upon any local strongmen (Berkeley, 1986).

3.2 Activating the social basis of warlord politics

Doe's strategy of relying on foreign investors to replace US resources to enhance his domestic security faced limits. The more that Doe relied upon his foreign firm partners to compensate for resources lost to unruly local strongmen, especially after declines in US aid, the more difficult it became for those firms to do business in Liberia. Doe's strongman rivals had less concern on this account, as the clandestine nature of their commercial ties helped them avoid extractions of the state. Large firm desertion of Doe — two large mining operations closed in the late 1980s — left Doe with fewer sources of patronage and further cuts in military resources. Local strongmen could more easily dominate their local area through increasingly exclusive and profitable relationships with their own foreign partners. Unlike Doe, they were also free of duties to service a nation-wide patronage network with profits of their commercial enterprise.

Doe's inability to offer any sort of economic opportunity or even provide for people's basic needs also strengthened the political significance of local strongmen. Liberia's formal economy shrank by two per cent annually during the 1980s (World Bank, 1993, 232). This left local strongman with control over lucrative commercial ties to the West Africa region and in a position to offer economic opportunity to clients of their own.

To a man, all of Liberia's armed faction leaders are former associates of Samuel Doe. All exploited private opportunities to profit and accumulate

political power as Doe's grip on a centralized patronage network weakened. Charles Taylor, later the head of the National Patriotic Front of Liberia (NPFL), appropriated patronage opportunities that Doe provided him in the early 1980s. Taylor used his position as head of the General Services Agency (GSA), charged with purchasing government supplies overseas, to make a quick million dollars for himself against Doe's wishes (US District Court, 1984).

Taylor's rival, George Boley, head of the Liberian Peace Council (LPC) was an education minister and presidential secretary to Doe. Doe's former Minister of Information, Alhadji Kromah, heads the United Liberation Movement of Liberia (ULIMO-K). Some former Armed Forces of Liberia (AFL) officers later converted their military commands into private followings and opportunities for personal profit amidst fighting in the 1990s. One such officer formed a private group, New Horizons, to convert connections he made to the US in the 1980s as commander of Doe's paramilitary forces into financial and political support for himself. Other military officers and soldiers allied themselves with anti-Taylor groups to reap material benefits of war in Liberia.

3.3 The economic basis of warlord rule

Taylor's 24 December invasion of Liberia from Côte d'Ivoire posed little initial military threat. One hundred and fifty men in NPFL faced well-trained paramilitary units. But Doe's strategy of pursuing political enemies without providing for popular needs left him unpopular and vulnerable to Taylor's offensive. Taylor created a multiethnic force early in the war, bound together by hatred for Doe. By June 1990, Taylor's forces occupied Monrovia suburbs and held as much as 90 per cent of Liberia for the next two years (and occasionally parts of neighbouring states) as 'Greater Liberia,' or popularly known as 'Taylorland' (Umoden, 1992).

'Taylorland' turned out to be an apt name for Taylor's realm, as he ran it much as his personal property, despite his early success as head of a populist anti-Doe coalition. Taylor quickly discovered that he could resume some corporate connections that combined fiscal and military tasks that Doe had pioneered. These connections, so long as they lasted, gave Taylor access to cash with which he could buy arms and munitions and attract clients. They also gave him strategic assistance with organizing offensives, communications and occupying strategic ground, denying resources to rivals.

An American rubber company, for example, continued to export rubber after signing agreements with Taylor in 1991 and 1992 (National Patriotic Reconstruction Assembly Government, 1992). The remnants of Doe's regime, which held on to the capital, Monrovia, with help from a West African multinational force, claimed that the company owed it about US\$ 10 million. The Monrovia regime provided details of company payment of 'taxes' to Taylor's organization (Interim Government of National Unity, 1993). The Monrovia regime also brought attention to Taylor's alleged use of the company's property as a military base from which to launch his October 1992 Operation Octopus attack on Monrovia (*Marchés Tropicaux*, 19 March 1993:763, *West Africa*, 5 April 1993:550-1).

Taylor also allegedly received payments from iron ore mining firms anxious to curry favour with him in anticipation that he would become the next Liberian president. A business journal estimated these payments to be as high as US\$ 10 million a month at the start of the conflict (EIU, 1992:32). This willingness to do business with Taylor in part stems from corporate interest in a large European Union consortium iron ore mining project planned along the Liberia-Guinea border, linked to the coast via a Liberian railroad.

Ultimately, these firms lost interest in Taylor as the war dragged on and Taylor failed to become president of the Republic of Liberia. They faced legal action from the globally recognized Monrovia regime just as they discovered that contracts with a warlord were difficult to enforce. Taylor's lasting commercial strength, however, lay in his capacity to act as a patron to existing clandestine and small scale logging and diamond mining concerns operated by many of the same strongmen that Doe tried to cultivate.

In the logging industry, for example, Taylor invited investment from a Liberian Timber association located across the border in San Pedro, Côte d'Ivoire. The five members of this association paid 'taxes' on the order of a quarter million dollars each during 1991-92. They also took over state-like functions, visibly directing 'tax' payments to local officials, financing NPFL operations and providing local utilities.

These operations, which included participation from Ivoirian officials across the border, tapped into a lucrative transit trade in timber exports and arms imports. Noting these mutual interests, a Monrovia paper wrote that 'For

over five years, Ivoirian politicians and businessmen have rejoiced at Liberia's nightmare.' (*New Democrat* [Monrovia], 15 June 1995). Likewise, Ivoirian officials acknowledge this commercial collaboration. 'The consequence of all this for Côte d'Ivoire,' wrote an Abidjan daily, 'is the rise of crime rates thanks to the weapons we are supplying to Liberian rebels, and which are in turn sold on the Ivoirian black market by these very same Liberians.' (*La Voie* [Abidjan], 24 March 1995).

Alluvial diamond mining and transit trade in diamonds from Guinea and Sierra Leone represented a further source of income, though one that is difficult to quantify. Prewar diamond sales attributed to Liberia stood at about US\$ 150 million (*Africa Energy & Mining*, 1995). It can be reasonably supposed that Taylor controlled a portion of this amount from 1990.

Overall, Taylor seems to have had access to revenues in excess of US\$ 100 million annually from 1990, with an upper limit around US\$ 200 million. While this figure is important for Taylor's capacity to arm himself and his associates, the structure of this warlord economy is critical for understanding specific abuses aggravating the humanitarian emergency in Liberia.

Taylor used strongmen's followers to create his private army. Local strongmen who survived the Doe regime quickly made deals with Taylor's NPFL, using alliances with Taylor as license to expand their own clandestine commerce. In turn, this provided more economic opportunities to armed young men. Many of these young men understood that the presence of Taylor's NPFL increased economic opportunity by organizing and promoting trade in natural resources, in contrast to Doe's strategy of trying to edge out enterprising locally based strongmen with large concessions that centralized accumulation away from local people. Richards (1996) shows how a similar version of this process in Sierra Leone led to a rebellion of young men against the old patronage network's abandonment of them.

Exploitation of natural resources in this manner also led to forced labour. At least in southeastern Liberia, eyewitnesses report that the NPFL's Special Forces Commandos used forced labour to grow food and produce timber exports (Ogunleye, 1995). Old Doe agencies such as the Forestry Development Authority were also directly integrated into Taylor's military

command. Thus people who are unable to defend themselves become an additional resource to be exploited for the task of earning hard currency.

Armed young men also discovered that control over business operations gave them access to additional benefits, such as the opportunity to extort food from farmers, set up roadblocks to levy tolls on internal commerce and organize protection and looting rackets. One fighter described this as the 'Khalashnikov Lifestyle' that suddenly elevated poor young men to the top of the local economic pyramid and gave them a material incentive in warfare. This promise of survival, exemption from widespread exploitation of local populations, and even material gain amidst the destruction of war, is a major incentive drawing young men and boys to be fighters. Taylor and his rivals recognize these incentives as a military resource. Taylor has organized children as young as ten and twelve in 'SBU's' or Small Boy Units (Human Rights Watch, 1993).

Taylor's economic strategy of incorporating existing diamond and cross-border consumer goods trades into his network had dramatic implications for disintegrating patronage politics in neighbouring Sierra Leone. Taylor first sponsored the creation of the Revolutionary United Front (RUF), initially to use dissident Sierra Leoneans as intermediaries to gain direct access to Sierra Leone's export products. Taylor was thus able to recruit some of the rogue strongmen that Momoh found so difficult to manage. The appearance of RUF also attracted the allegiance of young men who, like their peers in Liberia, could no longer automatically rely upon their commercially independent strongmen to patronize them and certainly could expect no benefits from a collapsing national government.

3.4 The proliferation of warlord politics

Thus warfare and chaos in one collapsing state aggravated internal security dilemmas for rulers in neighbouring states with vulnerable patronage systems. This cross-border dimension of the Liberian conflict played a pivotal role in forcing Sierra Leone's rulers to innovate with new political and military arrangements, some of which mimic Taylor's practices. This they did to address this threat to their survival in the absence of formal state institutions.

Taylor also encountered others among Doe's former associates who adopted his methods for their own purposes. The remnants of the Doe regime called upon a regional organization, the Economic Community of West African

States (ECOWAS) to intervene to defend what had now become the Monrovia enclave. Some speculate that this Nigerian-led intervention followed close commercial ties between some military officers in Nigerian president Babangida's entourage and Doe's military (Ellis, 1995). An equally valid possibility is that a concert of vulnerable West African rulers may have also acted to deny control of Liberia to a strongman who so closely resembled would-be rivals in their own vulnerable patron-client networks. This explains the shift in Côte d'Ivoire from official support for Taylor to high level anxiety over the attractions of warfare and clandestine trades to Ivoirian local officials and its threat to central political control.

Taylor himself faced rivals who operated in a manner similar to his own. George Boley's LPC, for example, took over a lot of Taylor's smaller-scale cross border timber and rubber trades. This group allegedly continued Taylor's use of forced labour and restricting the movement of populations to better exploit local resources (Human Rights Watch, 1994). ULIMO broke into two factions, one led by Roosevelt Johnson that specialized in alluvial diamond mining at Bomi Bridge in Liberia's west (*Inquirer*, 1 August 1995).

3.5 The dangers of negotiating peace among warlords

A UN-brokered peace agreement of August 1995, required that these rival factions disarm themselves. But disarmament was impossible so long as each faction regarded weapons as integral to their capacity to exploit Liberia's resources. In Bomi, for example, both ULIMO factions relied upon income from diamonds to reward loyal fighters and buy Chinese weapons and munitions (United Liberation Movement of Liberia for Democracy, 1995).

Liberia demonstrates the difficulty of negotiating peace between political factions that are really commercial operations. The defining feature of factional conflict in Liberia, as with other once highly centralized and militarized patron-client political systems like Somalia and Angola, is the extent to which rulers left faction leaders with commercial means to operate independently of a state. In Liberia, once Doe became less attractive as his control of economic opportunity declined in the 1980s, incentives to defect from Doe's patronage network grew.

Recent peace agreements (the latest in September 1996) have targeted these individuals who have guns to negotiate settlements. But in doing so, they do not incorporate a large array of Liberian citizens groups — such as the

Africa Faith and Justice Network, the Catholic Archdiocese of Monrovia, independent journalists, anti-war activists and others whose interests have not been served in this war (Armon & Carl, 1996). Peace agreements based upon negotiations with warlords and the approximately 60,000 fighters (about one in forty Liberians) who benefit from war gives global recognition to, and solidifies the control that these people already exercise over Liberian society. Proposed elections pose the further risk of further legitimating among global actors the division of Liberia into commercial empires.

These agreements reflect war weariness among most Liberians. They also reflect the incapacity of the UN or any other agent to act as arbiters among all interests in society. Meanwhile, outsiders are anxious to see political authority in Liberia restored to a state-like form that will confine local political struggle within its frontiers. Creditors increasingly interpret their stress on 'governance' to really mean stability, not democracy. They and politicians from outside Africa desire to see stability restored in Liberia as cheaply as possible.

Together, these external forces help institutionalize warlord politics into an uneasy cease fire. Rival warlords settled into their local commercial realms, waiting for opportunities to expand into a neighbour's realm. To not do so would risk losing one's own supporters to more attractive prospects elsewhere. Peace under these conditions does not address the underlying cause of warlord politics in Liberia, the fragmentation of a patronage network and the lack of a reciprocal relationship between rulers and citizens. These international pressures and a similar outcome also prevail in Sierra Leone, the case to which we now turn.

IV SIERRA LEONE — COMMERCIAL POLICY AS ANTI-INSURGENCY STRATEGY

4.1 The Liberian shock

The Liberia case showed how warlords base their political power on control over production and exchange, rather than mobilizing populations through effective state institutions. Sierra Leone's rulers faced the consequences of this strategy with the 1991 invasion of RUF fighters and subsequent alliances between it and segments of Sierra Leone's own crumbling patron-client political network.

Sierra Leone's rulers never encountered the extensive cut-off of external resources that Doe faced, even though Sierra Leone's government was far more dependent upon development aid as a proportion of state spending. For example, foreign aid in 1989 totalled 141 per cent of domestic receipts. By 1993, they had risen to 178 per cent (Bank of Sierra Leone, 1995). This external support reflects more the extreme extent to which Sierra Leone's formal taxable economy had fallen into the hands of unruly strongmen, rather than great strategic or diplomatic importance. State spending in real terms from all sources had already been cut in half during the 1980s. The post Cold War rupture in this case came from the collapse of Doe's patron-client political alliance, subsequent commercial warfare, and its effects on Sierra Leone's increasingly fractious patronage network.

Extremely low state revenue capacity was a consequence of earlier patron-client political strategies that more recent Sierra Leonean rulers could not control. Former president Siaka Stevens (1968-85), for example, distributed preferred (untaxed) concessions in diamond mining areas to political allies who were essential to his effort to resist local demands for greater revenue allocations. As noted earlier, Stevens' patronage soon stripped the state of what had provided up to 70 per cent of state revenues in the early 1970s.

Stevens effectively invited cooperative strongmen to become diamond mining entrepreneurs. It is these favoured officials in the diamond mines and in the military who later made deals with Liberians and rebels after 1991 to continue their mining operations (Richards, 1994, 1995). Young men who actually mined diamonds for them later played important roles in the insurgency against the Sierra Leone regime that was increasingly irrelevant to them as a patron (Zack-Williams, 1995).

Stevens retired from office in 1985 and picked Joseph Momoh (1985-92) to succeed him. Momoh was a popular army officer, but lacked personal control over resources to build a power base. He thus faced organized groups of strongmen, many of whom were lodged in the state bureaucracy, who used their positions to gather private wealth.

4.2 Foreclosing the institutional state option

Momoh quickly learned that attempts to strengthen state bureaucracies and make them more efficient instruments to stamp out illicit trade brought him the ire of these strongmen. A coup attempt in 1987 that emanated from these quarters alerted him to the danger of challenging these entrenched interests.

It also showed him the immediate political risks of building up state institutions, effectively foreclosing a political strategy of gaining popular support for battles against his rivals by offering citizens state institutions that could meet their needs.

Meanwhile, triple digit inflation, massive budget deficits and a lack of basic control over the economy convinced multilateral creditors that rampant corruption and mismanagement was at the heart of the country's economic programmes (IMF, 1990). Sierra Leone's president thus faced demands that, in return for desperately needed loans, he preside over the dismissal of a third of all state employees and the dismantling of entire agencies such as customs and fisheries.

Creditor prescriptions for Sierra Leone focused on privatizing state agencies that generated revenue. These prescriptions follow what IMF officials perceive to be a success in rooting out corruption in Côte d'Ivoire's utilities sector (World Bank, 1994a, 1994b, Ingram, 1994). Creditors supposed that private employers would be removed from the political demands of patronage politics and would have more leeway to trim staffs and stress economic efficiency. In Sierra Leone, creditors also stressed that state employment had to decline radically to reduce budget deficits and recommended cutting civil service employment in half (Swaray, 1995).

Paradoxically, this aspect of creditor-sponsored reforms had the unintended consequence of helping to shrink the Sierra Leone state to the point where Momoh could only rely upon personal networks rather than state institutions for managing strongmen and rebel invaders (Reno, 1996).

Momoh faced a serious dilemma in 1991. He needed to defend his regime against the increasingly threatening coalition of illicit diamond mining syndicates, rogue military units and rebels, while also appeasing creditors with his commitment to fiscal austerity. Ultimately, Momoh chose an unsustainable strategy of boosting the size of his army from 3,000 to 14,000 men (US Arms Control and Disarmament Agency, 1995, 81). Momoh was unable to ensure that front-line soldiers received their pay, as officers often took soldiers' salaries for themselves. The war severely strained dwindling state resources, accounting for an astounding 75 per cent of state spending (Government of Sierra Leone, 1994, 8). Front-line soldiers thus found more private benefit in collaborating with rebel mining and looting operations, transforming themselves into what are popularly known as 'sobels,' or soldier-rebels.

It is thus not surprising that Momoh found himself the victim of a coup in April 1992, led by a 26 year old front-line officer, Valentine Strasser. But as a ruler, Strasser faced the same radical shrinkage of state institutions, both from the loss of revenue sources to rebels, sobels and renegade strongmen, and the creditor attack on surviving institutions in the capital. Facing dismissed former civil servants in the capital, Strasser attempted to boost his popularity as a 'Redeemer,' bringing 'Revolution' to deliver Sierra Leone from its corrupt past rulers (Massaquoi, 1992). Sporting wrap-around sunglasses and stressing his youth, Strasser attempted to create a following among young shantytown dwellers in Freetown.

But rebel attacks ate further into state revenue capacity, and with it, Strasser's feeble capacity to distribute patronage. Austerity and civil service layoffs amidst war did bring a steady stream of aid from creditors, foreign governments and aid organizations, some of which could be manipulated for to enhance Strasser's political power. More alarming, RUF attacked and shut down the Sierra Rutile and SIEROMCO plants in January 1995. Together, these firms paid US\$ 12 million in taxes in 1994 (Saccob, 1995, 57). They generated 15 per cent of the country's gross national product and accounted for 57 per cent of Sierra Leone's total formal export earnings (EIU, 2, 1995, 26)

The balance of economic resources looked grim for Freetown. Together, renegade strongmen and RUF controlled about a quarter billion dollars in diamond trade and successfully cut the Freetown regime off from its major independent source of revenues. In contrast, 1995 official export figures for agricultural products and minerals stood at US\$ 3.6 million, compared to US\$ 144 million four years earlier (Bank of Sierra Leone, 1996). By 1995 not even the most extreme austerity programme could balance the state budget, generate debt service payments and finance war fighting.

4.3 Strasser's innovation

Strasser partially solved his dilemma with the help of Sierra Rutile. Anxious to protect its property from rebel soldiers, Sierra Rutile sought to hire a British firm, Gurkha Security Guards, Ltd (GSG), to protect their mine site. Sierra Rutile's January 1995 evacuation cooled their interest in GSG, but Strasser used them for the more general task of training Sierra Leone Army soldiers in anti-insurgency warfare.

GSG's appearance in Africa is partly a consequence of post Cold War cuts in military budgets elsewhere. Made up of demobilized British Gurkha military units, GSG's Sierra Leone commander had Cold War combat credentials. Commander Robert MacKenzie's qualifications included service in Rhodesian Selous Scouts special forces, the South African military and private fund raising efforts for RENAMO fighters in Mozambique (Minter, 1994). Well connected to US intelligence services, he married Sybil Cline, a contributor to *Soldier of Fortune* magazine and daughter of former US Central Intelligence Deputy Director Ray Cline. GSG demonstrated the ease of conversion of old Cold War security networks to commercial operations.

Ironically, for all of MacKenzie's combat savvy, he made the mistake of working directly with the Sierra Leone Army. MacKenzie was murdered in February 1995 in an ambush that appeared to have followed from inside information regarding MacKenzie's schedule. Other dire signs of military collaboration with rebels appeared. A Ukrainian mercenary pilot was murdered in April 1995 inside the army's Murraytown barracks, indicating that 'sobels' occupied high positions indeed. The desperate Strasser regime now faced rebel attacks as close as 16 km from State House.

4.4 The Executive Outcomes solution

Strasser and his foreign firm partners found a South African firm in a South African firm, Executive Outcomes (EO), to replace GSG. This firm employs former members of the apartheid era South African Defense Force's 32 Buffalo Battalion and 5 Recce Battalion anti-insurgency fighters. These men fought in Angola against Cubans and the marxist Angolan government in the 1980s. Some also served in anti-insurgency campaigns in Namibia. EO's head, Eeban Barlow, saw service in the Civil Cooperation Bureau, an intelligence organization dedicated in part to circumventing sanctions against the apartheid regime. Barlow would find that connections that he made in this capacity could be put to profitable use once his and his compatriots' military skills were no longer needed by a South African government.

Barlow and a partner, former British Special Air Services (SAS) officer Tony Buckingham, managed to join the military skills of EO employees to the business acumen of Buckingham, who became head of Branch Mining. The combined operations of these two made it possible for Strasser to mortgage Sierra Leone's diamonds to Branch Mining, which then allegedly saw that EO got paid. They had pioneered that arrangement in Angola, when

EO and Heritage Oil, another associated firm, switched sides to protect the Angolan government from rebel attacks. This syndicate also took advantage of the availability of cheap Soviet weaponry, requiring as a condition of service that the Sierra Leone government buy several surplus Soviet helicopters. Accordingly, a Russian-Sierra Leone joint venture, Soruss, was formed to import helicopters and Russian technicians. Valentine Strasser's cousin Stephen Bio held a significant share in this firm. This pattern is repeated in Uganda. Branch established a subsidiary located in an area plagued by rebels. The president's brother, head of anti-insurgency operations, holds a share in this firm, along with a stake in Saracen Uganda, EO's local subsidiary (*Indian Ocean Newsletter*, 8 February 1997, *Africa Energy & Mines*, 22 January 1997).

EO quickly cleared rebels from the country's diamond mining areas by mid 1995, radically reversing the military situation. By late 1995, Branch had begun to produce diamonds, promising to invest US\$ 80 million to develop a mine in the heart of the contested area. Sierra Leone's government registered an increase in diamond exports for the first time since the start of the war. The increase in exports and decline of expenditure to fight the war made it possible for Freetown to service its debts. Subsequent Paris Club debt negotiations brought a 20 per cent reduction in the country's foreign debt to under one billion dollars.

EO's offensive against rebels was instrumental in making possible the holding of March 1996 elections. In the first free multiparty elections since 1973, 79 per cent of the country's registered voters went to the polls to elect a civilian president, Tejan Kabbah, a former United Nations official. This brought the government considerable global goodwill and legitimacy, which translated into a tripling of bilateral aid in 1996, compared to 1994. The firm's presence also improved the short-term security situation, permitting refugees to return home.

EO's prowess on the battlefield forced RUF into peace negotiations. EO used surplus Soviet helicopter gunships and mortar barrages in an early 1996 offensive against RUF fighters along the Bo-Taima road. This left 281 rebels dead, their worst single defeat of the war (Hooper, 1997:92). EO opened most the country's major roads with a March offensive against rebel concentrations near strategic diamond mining areas, permitting the large-scale return of refugees and access for relief aid convoys. By late 1996, EO attacks on RUF camps had killed about 500 of an estimated armed rebel

force of 1,500. It was a defeated rebel command that agreed to a 30 November 1996 cease fire.

On the surface, EO appears to have saved Sierra Leone from the fate of collapsing patronage politics seen in Liberia and Somalia at a cost of about three to four million dollars a month. Multiparty elections played a key role in legitimating this turn around and in mobilizing external relief support. Promised, but yet to come as of early 1997 is an IMF US\$ 200 million allocation for programmes to demobilize and integrate RUF combatants and cashiered army soldiers into mainstream society with agricultural and craft skills courses. The British Government has promised support to shrink the Sierra Leone army from three to two brigades, providing funds to pension off officers. EO departed Sierra Leone in February 1997, leaving in place Life Guard, an EO trained firm composed mostly of Sierra Leoneans and black South Africans.

V THE ECONOMICS OF HUMANITARIAN CRISES

5.1 The important presence of natural resources

Warfare in Liberia and Sierra Leone point to the pivotal role that control over natural resources plays in shaping conflict. Overall income is not the most salient feature of this control. Instead, its importance lies in the tendency for portable, concentrated resources to attract foreigners who can carry out political tasks, particularly to deny resources, and hence income to rivals. This partnership was critical for sustaining Charles Taylor's insurgency in the early 1990s. Table 1 illustrates the income to which Charles Taylor had access from exploitation of natural resources in cooperation with foreigners. While not matching prewar Liberian output of about US\$ 800 million, Taylor's income far exceeded the Monrovia enclave's minimal command of resources and revenues after 1989. This domination of the local economy gave Taylor the means to attract and arm fighters who could find little opportunity elsewhere.

TABLE 1
'TAYLORLAND' INCOME (US\$ mn)

	1990	1991	1992
Diamonds	---- c US\$ 100 to US\$ 150 ----		
Timber	US\$ 15	US\$ 21.3	US\$ 30.3
Rubber	US\$ 27	US\$ 29	US\$ 26
Iron Ore sales & transport fees	US\$ 40	US\$ 30	US\$ 25
Total (low end)	US\$ 182	US\$ 180.3	US\$ 181

(Source: correspondence and records from Taylor's National Patriotic Front Reconstruction Assembly).

The income from diamonds highlights the importance of foreign partnerships for capturing market advantages. While Liberia became a center for clandestine transit trades in diamonds from Sierra Leone and Guinea, overall income remained low because small transactions and disorganized producers did not possess market knowledge necessary to properly price diamonds or work out purchasing agreements with foreign buyers. Taylor and his NPFL did use timber, rubber and iron ore producers to regulate their market contacts and bargain with outsiders on more favourable terms.

By comparison, Sierra Leone shows the dire threat that insurgencies can pose to internal resources of a government and a ruler's patronage network. Table 2 highlights the catastrophic decline of income available to Strasser as the RUF insurgency gathered steam.

This radical decline in domestic resources available to State House in Sierra Leone points to the cost advantage of launching a military campaign of reconquest of land containing natural resources. Providing security to small agricultural producers would initially generate far less income at much greater expense. Protection for subsistence farmers would not be cost effective at all, since they could not be expected to generate revenues with which to fight insurgents or pay off clients.

TABLE 2
SIERRA LEONE EXPORTS (US\$ mn)

	1991	1995
Agricultural Products	US\$ 10.4	US\$ 2.7
Palm kernels	US\$.05	nil
Cocoa	US\$ 2.3	US\$.006
Coffee	US\$ 2.4	US\$ 1.3
Minerals	US\$ 134	US\$ 0.9
Diamonds	US\$ 20.6	US\$ 0.8
Gold	US\$ 0.5	US\$.013
Bauxite	US\$ 26	nil
Rutile	US\$ 69.1	nil
Total	US\$ 144.4	US\$ 3.6

(Source: Bank of Sierra Leone, 1995, 1996).

Thus the prosecution of war in Liberia and Sierra Leone centers on control of natural resources and attraction of foreign partners to exploit them. Alternatively, those most at risk from the predations of maundering rebels or rogue military units such as subsistence or small commercial farmers will remain at greatest risk in these wars. This lack of concern with establishing reciprocal relations between the bulk of a country's citizens and political leaders, whether rebel or government, plays a large role in generating the huge refugee movements that have occurred in both countries' wars. In Sierra Leone, this has disrupted agricultural production which occupied 70 per cent of population before the war.

This political economy of violence fundamentally reconfigures the relation between ruler and subject. Liberal assumptions that political authority exists as a consequence of a reciprocal relation between ruler and subjects do not hold in the Sierra Leone and Liberia cases. 'Civil society' is irrelevant to rulers who depend upon outsiders for resources and the capacity to deny them to rivals. Their target of legitimation is foreign investors and shareholders. This recalls the colonial era's attention to an *Afrique utile*, the Africa that can be exploited to provide scarce resources to underwrite political control. *Afrique inutile* are those whose needs would absorb scarce resources that the ruler prefers to devote to more immediate political tasks.

The security and survival needs of these people are thus judged as beyond the concerns of rulers.

Warlords and weak state rulers alike abjure costly and risky tasks of building transformative state institutions. It is less risky and more profitable to rule as if conducting business, using access to foreigners to integrate the political unit into global markets and more effectively exploit the local population who happen to occupy economically attractive areas. Weak state rulers and their foreign allies can more easily pretend that the political unit is a state. But weak state or warlord, rulers willingly ignore 'civil society' that exists along economic and political margins, and in fact, encourages the 'exit' of unproductive inhabitants.

5.2 External pressures to privatize peacemaking

Conflict resolution amidst collapsing state authority in the late 20th century resembles European policy toward Africa in the 19th century. Both operate as a private affairs. In the 19th century, missionaries, traders and explorers played a major role in shaping European relations with Africa. In the 20th century, powerful state governments disengage from Africa, and relations are increasingly left to aid agencies, multilateral creditors and organizations like Executive Outcomes.

The presence of effective fighters like EO recruits additional outside resources that benefit hard-pressed regimes, exempting them from the time consuming and risky task of providing for their own citizens' needs in exchange for support. Creditors, foreign officials and aid organizations in Freetown, for example, found that Executive Outcomes' presence made their jobs easier. Mining revenues from Branch help repay debts to creditors. Had the country dissolved into competing factions, creditors would have to devise creative techniques to avoid writing off loans, as they do for Liberia and Somalia. Diplomats would face trouble influencing developments in territory without globally recognized sovereign interlocutors. Some military observers in Sierra Leone appreciated the stability and discipline that Executive Outcomes brought to the country. Concerned officials outside Africa were spared the anxiety of facing public clamor (but not willingness to pay for) a response to yet another humanitarian crisis. Workers for aid organizations move about the country more freely to distribute aid and run projects.

5.3 The political role of NGO resources in private peacemaking

Duffield observes that NGOs play a role in the informal extraction and mobilization of political resources (Duffield, 1994, 1995). Weak state rulers and warlords use NGO contacts to extract resources. In Sudan, for example, government officials have diverted private overseas aid to feed soldiers and assist war-fighting (Keen, 1994). Southern insurgent groups have done the same with food and other humanitarian aid received on their side (Marchal, 1995). Rwanda's Habyarimana regime used access to aid and offers of NGO assistance to buy breathing room to prepare plans for massacres in 1994, according to several critics (African Rights, 1995, Prunier, 1995:83).

Sierra Leone's RUF, for example, uses a close relationship with the British group, International Alert, to pursue its foreign policy aims of attracting diplomatic and material support. Sierra Leone's politicians have also learned that fake NGOs offer prospects for attracting overseas resources. In one case, Sierra Leone politicians set up fake 'Women's Movements' in 1996, associated with foreign mining firms. In principle, these firms were designed to generate revenues that could be used for humanitarian aid. The NGOs' were recruited to solicit contributions from abroad, using the attraction of 'self-sustaining' development as a selling point. One Sierra Leone official cynically observed that organizations with 'women' or 'peasants' attracted uncritical attention from foreigners. In fact the operations helped finance politician-foreign firm joint venture mining ventures and set up networks that could be used to clandestinely transport resources and money.

Aid agencies and others may define their missions as apolitical. But their need for approval from local political authorities often leads them to condone or even participate in the commercial networks that sustain political power in warlord and weak state political units. Many share the disastrous assumption with 19th century missionary societies that the question of African development is not political. Executive Outcomes agents explicitly recognize their political role. In fact, many NGOs and Executive Outcomes play similar roles in the political economies of African conflicts, a fact that many NGO workers are unwilling to admit.

5.4 The risk of contagious humanitarian emergencies

The non-territorial nature of warlord politics in Liberia and Sierra Leone poses a major risk to neighbouring states with factionalized patron-client systems. In Guinea, for example, the regime of Lansana Conté (1984-) faces

the same pressures as Sierra Leone to trim payoffs to clients in the name of fiscal balance and anti-corruption. Warfare along the country's southern border with Liberia and Sierra Leone provides attractions to the president's erstwhile allies as his former clients seek better deals on their own.

Like rulers next door, Conté's clan exercised power through influencing much of the country's clandestine trade and rackets. But like Doe, Conté faced inherited clients of his predecessor. In this case, this meant that Conté had to appease Malinké speaking associates of former President Sekou Touré who managed clandestine trade networks. Many state bureaucrats profited from tight personal relations with this group (Morice, 1987). This meant that Conté, a Soussou, ruled precariously over a political alliance not of his making.

Thus as Malinké speaking people faced the looming costs of austerity, many took up the cause of an ethnic kinsman south of the border, Liberian warlord Alhadji Kromah. Kromah maintained a residence in Conakry, Guinea's capital, and has used his role in clandestine long distance trade to recruit Casamance (Senegal) fighters into his anti-Taylor coalition (*Lettre du Continent*, 14 December 1995). This autonomous involvement in trade and warfare is especially threatening to Conté's regime, as many army officers (a target of cost-cutting reforms) are Malinké.

A coup attempt in February 1996 underscored the danger that Conté faced from his fragmenting patronage network. Enlisted soldiers reportedly received only US\$ 18 a month and officers with 20 years' service earned US\$ 120 a month at a time that a 50 kg bag of rice, the national staple, cost US\$ 12 (*L'Independent*, 15 February 1996). For officers and bureaucrats deeply involved in clandestine trade, the attractions of private accumulation through alignment with warlord organizations in neighbouring countries is great. And like his neighbours in Sierra Leone, Conté deals with his internal security threat by recruiting foreign investors who speak delicately about 'servicing security needs' in areas where clandestine operations cut into profits.

This political economy of humanitarian crises signals the creation of new, post Cold War political units in Africa. Violence is integrally tied to new modes of accumulation. It is not a consequence of chaos, or drugged child soldiers or 'the spirit of the forests,' as one commentator who is widely read among policy makers in Washington writes of Liberia (Kaplan, 1996, 27).

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