

CONFLICTS AND SECURITY IN THE
WEST AFRICAN SUB-REGION:
A CRITIQUE OF THE INTERWOVEN
CONFLICTS;
LIBERIA AND SIERRA LEONE

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DECLARATION

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this thesis to the loving memory of my mum Aina Nwakaego (Baby), my father John Okondu Idegwu and my loving sister Onyeisi Nwaneamaka Ozuzu.

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I will ascribe all the glory and adoration to God, for his mercies throughout my journey of life. From the formative stage to the eventual completion of this research, I owe an immense debt of gratitude to my first supervisors, Dr. Colin Clark and Wun Chan. A special gratitude goes to Professor Anthony McGrew who accepted and shepherd me through the final stage of this research, as my Supervisor. I am deeply indebted to my proof reader, colleague and special supervisor, Selina Goran, for painstakingly reading through and correcting my thesis repeatedly. Special thanks and love to my wife, Evelyn Idegwu, and daughter, Onyebuchi Hilda idegwu, for their love and understanding despite all odds. My deepest gratitude goes to my family: Emmanuel Idegwu, Mathew Idegwu and the late Samuel Okonkwo Odiwe.

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ABSTRACT

This thesis uses the case of the Liberian and Sierra Leonean civil wars to examine the extent to which: 1) identity issues, 2) natural resources issues, and 3) porous borders combine as catalysts to escalate, sustain the intensity and prolong conflict. The original contribution to knowledge is in the development and application of the tri-focal approach as a distinctive framework of conflict analysis. This draws upon New War theory to understand the Post-Cold War conflicts in Liberia and Sierra Leone. This tri-focal approach goes beyond causes to apply these three common factors (identity, natural resources and border issues), to compare these civil wars, but also to explain how the civil wars became linked, leading to sub-regional instability. The results of this study advance current debates and analyses factors that can combine to exacerbate conflict in Africa and other parts of the world. The research is mindful of the multiplicity of factors that can lead to conflict in fragile/weak states; but will not join the debate over the most potent conflict factors, a single factor conflict analysis, but will rather be more holistic in its analysis.

This study concentrates on three conflict factors to situate the Liberia and Sierra Leone conflicts within the Post-Cold War context as highlighted by the New War theoretical framework. Kaldor (2007) and others use this theoretical perspective to analyse and examine new observable trends and changes in the pattern, nature and causes of civil wars and intrastate conflicts. This framework also applies this analysis to explaining how such conflicts are the results of a significant history of identity factor; resource based factors, both exacerbated by cross border linkages. This study treats the conflict factors holistically, not just in isolation; rather, they are part of systematic dynamic shaping peace and security in the region. It is hoped this will contribute to the on-going study on the sources of conflict, especially in Africa and Liberia and Sierra Leone in particular.

The research does not seek to refute the claims and arguments of theories that emphasise identity and/or natural resources as the cause of conflicts. Rather this study seeks to clarify and understand how identity and natural resources issues combine with porous borders, trans-national linkages among states and regional factors to exacerbate civil conflict. Accordingly, this study is distinct as far as it seeks to understand the interrelationship between these three catalysts, and how they could be applied to compare and at the same time explain the conflicts within a single research. To strengthen and validate the research, the thesis applied several qualitative and the importance of triangulation in conflict research (multiple empirical materials, combined with field research, using a semi-structured individual elite interviews and focus group discussions to establish a robust and diverse evidence base). It also applied two theories (failed states analogy and New War theory), and investigator triangulation (using different evaluators). This was to overcome the weakness or intrinsic biases and the problems arising from single method, single-observer and single-theory studies.

The thesis argues that identity crises combined with the illicit exploitation of natural resources and shared porous and insecure borders in the case of Liberia and Sierra-Leone, explains the diffusion, intensity and ultimately the complex connectivity of both conflicts.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ACRM	Anti-Corruption Revolutionary Movement
ACS	American Colonisation Society
AFL	Armed Forces of Liberia
AFRC	Armed Forces Revolutionary Council
APC	All Peoples Congress
AU	African Union
CDF	Civil Defence Forces (CDF)
DRC	Democratic Republic of Congo - DRC
ECOMOG	Economic Community of West African States Monitoring Group
ECOWAS	Economic Community of West African States
EO	Executive Outcomes
FEWER	Forums on Early Warning and Early Response
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
HDI	Human Development Index
HRW	Human Right Watch
ICG	International Crisis Group
ICISS	International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty
ICRC	International Committee of Red Cross

INPFL	Independent-National Patriotic Front of Liberia
LAP	Liberian Action Party
LDF	Lofa Defence Force
LPC	Liberian Peace Council
LUDF	Liberian United Defence Front
LURD	Liberians United for Reconciliation and Democracy
MODEL	Movement for Democracy in Liberia
MOJA	Movement for Justice in Africa
MRU	Mano River Union
NPRC	National Provisional Ruling Council
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
NPFL	National Patriot Liberation front of Liberia
NPP	National Patriotic Party
NRC	National Reformation Council
NUSS	National Association of Sierra Leonean Student
OPEC	Organisation of Petroleum Exporting Countries
PAL	Progressive Alliance of Liberian
PPP	Progressive People's Party
PRC	People's Redemption Council

RUF	Revolutionary United Front
SALW	Small Arms and Light Weapon
SIERRROMCO	Sierra Leone Mining Corporation
SLA	Sierra Leone Army (SLA)
SLPP	Sierra Leones people's party
TRC	Truth and Reconciliation Commission
TWP	True Whig Party
ULA	Union of Liberian Associations
ULIMO	United Liberation movement of Liberia
ULIMO J	United Liberation movement of Liberia-Johnson
ULIMO-K	United Liberation movement of Liberia-Kromah
UN	United Nations
UNML	United Nations Mission in Liberia
UNMSIL	United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNMIL	United Nations Mission in Liberia
UNSC	United Nations Security Council
UNSR	United Nations Security Report

USIAD United States Agency for international Development

WHO World Health Organization

CHAPTER ONE

1.0 GENERAL INTRODUCTION

In new wars, states have been replaced by groups and these groups could be based on identity, ethnicity, religion and tribes fighting over resources, using them to finance violence and across several borders (Kaldor, 2007, p. 8)

Drawing upon the New War framework, this thesis seeks to develop and apply what it referred to here as the tri-focal approach to understanding and explaining the dynamics of sub-regional conflict in West Africa. The tri-focal approach combines a focus on identity, natural resources and the porous borders as underlying variables, which helps to explain the sustained intensity, diffusion and prolonged nature of the Liberia and Sierra Leone civil wars. These variables are central to describing and explaining how the conflict that started in Liberia in 1989 influenced and ignited a civil war in Sierra Leone in 1991, until relative peace returned to both countries by 2003 following regional and international interventions. This study covers the first Liberian civil war, which started in 1989 – 1996, and the second civil war that broke out in 1999 – 2003. It also covers the Sierra Leonean civil war, which ran from 1991 – 2003.

This approach is ‘tri-focal’ not only because the study concentrates on what it considers to be three common significant variables to analyse and compare the conflicts; but, more importantly, it reflects the significant body of literature which argues that regional conflicts, such as those in Liberia and Sierra Leone, are the product of complex and interrelated factors (Gleditsch, 2007). According to Gleditsch (2007, p. 394), trans-national linkages among states and regional factors strongly influence the risk of civil conflict; he referred to this as a ‘clustering effect.’ This implies that solely internal or domestic factors or drivers do not determine the risk of civil war; rather, that it also depends on a country’s linkage to other states within the sub-region.

The degree to which each tri-focal factors shape the conflicts in Liberia and Sierra Leone necessarily varies; as did their role at the onset or during the civil wars. Nevertheless, this study suggests that identity problems, and natural resources factors are important common dynamics that, combined with porous and insecure borders, to significantly exacerbate the civil wars. Scholars of African conflicts utilise particular theories of conflict, including Marxist theory, political economy approach,

the World System Framework, structural functionalism, and Modernization theory (Adebajo, 2008; Francis, 2006; Alie, 2007). Critically reviewing these, this thesis draws upon a contemporary tool of analysis and an emerging theoretical framework: 'New War framework'. This theory focuses on new forms of political, economic and social violence/crisis in Post-Cold War developing societies. "Such conflicts are usually non-ideological, resulting from a long history of identity, religious, tribal or resources based stratification and struggle, with tendencies to spread across borders" (Kaldor, 2007, p.8). The New War framework explains how weak states like Liberia and Sierra Leone can degenerate into civil wars. It gives analytical prominence to the tri-focal perspective in understanding new Post-Cold War forms of violence. Ackermann (2003) noted that this form of intrastate violence in African jumped from eleven at the end of the Cold War in 1989 to sixteen in 1998, which means that one out of three African countries was involved in some type of internal armed conflict in 1998.

A qualitative research method was adopted, because it takes into consideration, not only the existence of different levels of analysis of civil wars understudy, according to Ratsimbaharison (2011) it also explores their intricate dynamic nature. The thesis adopts a historical comparative method, focussed on a two-country approach. It also draws upon elite interviews, with people having privileged positions in government or roles prior to, during and after the conflicts. A focus group discussion from current academic/scholastic sources allows for a comparative analysis with the findings from the elite interviews to enhance the robustness of the study and findings.

The remainder of this introductory chapter discusses the focus, rationale and justification for this study. It also discusses the failed state analogy and examines briefly, the limits of established theories of African conflicts, as well as the rationale for adopting the New War theory. The chapter introduces the tri-focal approach as a distinctive framework to analyse the civil wars in Liberia and Sierra Leone. It also explains the key research questions and the structure of the study. The next section examines the focus, rationale and justification of the study.

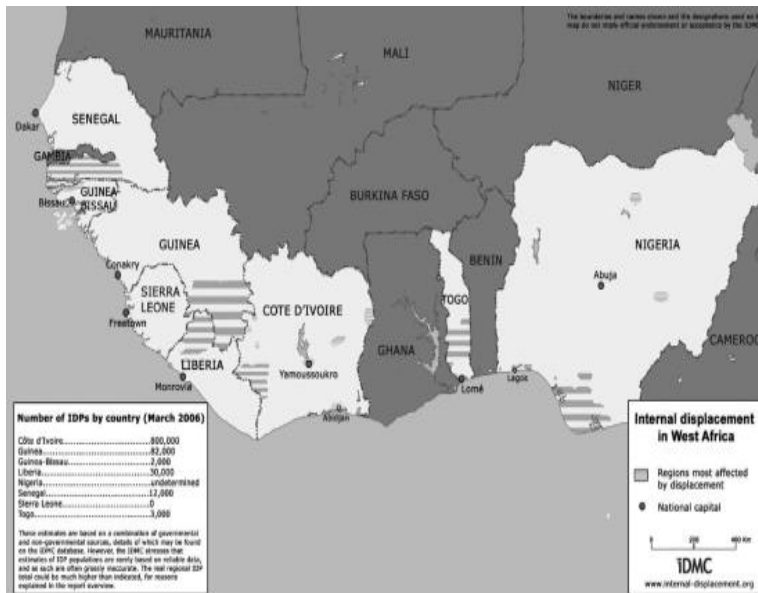


Figure 1: Map of West Africa (Accord issue, 2012)

1.1 FOCUS, RATIONALE AND JUSTIFICATION OF THIS STUDY

It is important to state that this research does not seek to identify the sole causes of conflict; rather, it is concerned to apply the tri-focal factors in explaining what sustained the intensity, and prolonged nature of the conflicts in Liberia and Sierra Leone. The aim is to understand the significant role of the dynamics of these tri-focal factors in exacerbating the conflicts. Rather than debating primary causes, of which to date there is little agreement among scholars, this study seeks to explore the conflict variables within each tri-focal factors, which exacerbated the civil wars in Sierra Leone and Liberia; in turn, undermining the stability of the entire sub-region. This is a more valuable approach, because these factors have rarely been utilised within a single research agenda, nor used to compare the dynamics of the civil wars under study. This study also refocuses conflict studies away from inter-state war to the more prevalent intra-state violence of the Post-Cold War era. According to Asiwaju (2000, p.199), during the Cold War, West Africa was a relative conflict-free region of Africa; however, the region was soon faced with several Post-Cold War forms of intrastate violence, with implications for political and economic development.

According to the Human Security Report (2012, 24 December), half of the world’s battle deaths in the Post-Cold War period have occurred in sub-Saharan Africa, making it by far the deadliest region in the world, with nearly half of the world’s state-based battle deaths between 1989 and 2009. Based on Lacina & Gleditsch (2005) analysis, about 3.86 million people were killed in civil war battles globally between 1960 and 2002. Out of this, about 1.55 million people were killed in battle in Africa, about 40 percent of the global total. This makes Africa the region with the highest total number of battle deaths. Gleditsch and Ward (2001) examine the age, and sex distribution of battle deaths and concluded those men aged 15-29 are most likely to be killed, but that nearly a quarter of all battle deaths are inflicted on women and children. “Africa is only home to about 12 percent of the world’s population; however, 31 percent of the world’s refugee population originate from Africa” (Hoeffler, 2008, p. 19). *Oxfam International* and *Safer World* collaborated in a 2007 study focusing on conflict in Africa since 1990, and claimed that the wars cost \$284 billion in lost GDP, which amounts to roughly the amount of foreign aid the conflict countries received over the period.

ARMED CONFLICT TYPE TRENDS

Figure 1: Armed Conflicts per Type, 1946–2006.

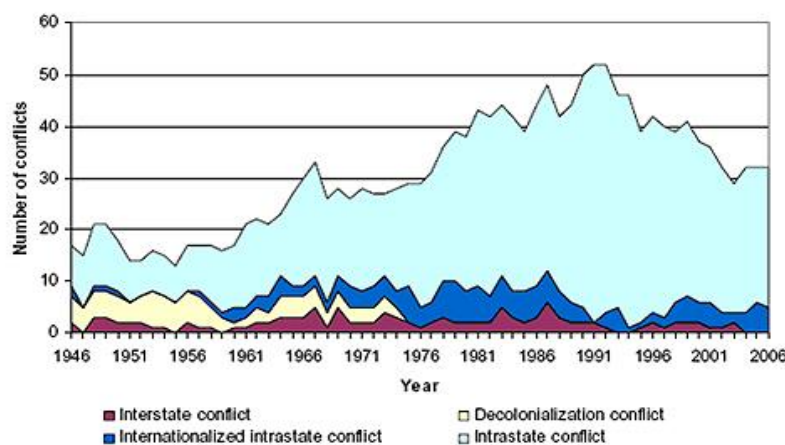


Table 1: Global armed conflict type trends. Courtesy of centre for study of civil war, International Peace Research Institute, Oslo (PRIO)¹

¹ Table 1 shows that intrastate violence has been on the increase even more so since after the Cold War

GEOGRAPHIC TRENDS IN ARMED CONFLICT

Figure 3: Armed Conflicts by Region, 1946–2006.

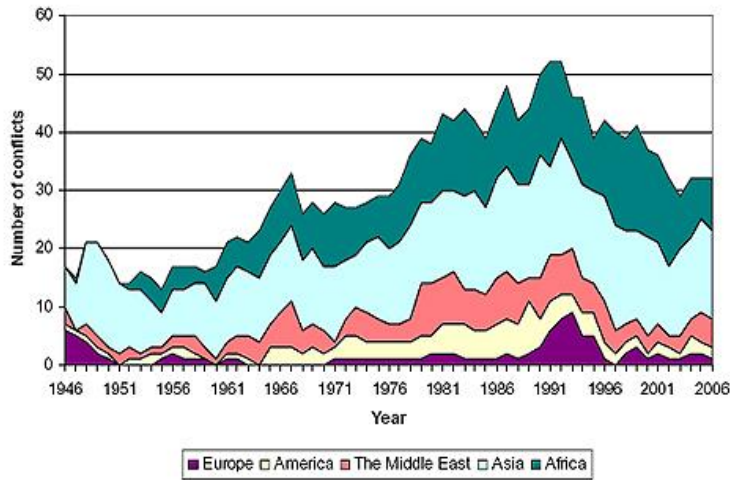


Table 2: Geographic trends in armed conflict. Courtesy of centre for study of civil war, International Peace Research Institute, Oslo (PRIO)²

The Liberia and Sierra Leone conflicts engulfed the sub-region, making it a focus of intervention and concern for the international community. The ‘Economic Community of West African States’ (ECOWAS) was fully involved through intervention by the Nigerian led ‘Economic community of West African Monitoring Group’ (ECOMOG) and the ‘United Nations Peace Keeping Mission’ are still stationed in both states till date (Adebajo & Rashid, 2004, p. 45). By 2001, the conflicts in Liberia and Sierra Leone had cost Nigeria alone about \$13bn in peacekeeping operations. Thousands were killed, adding to the 700 Nigerian soldiers that were killed and 300 hundred that were wounded in January 1999 (Adebajo, 2005, p.58).

The Liberia and Sierra Leone civil wars were chosen because they represent typical examples of Post-Cold War intrastate conflict in West African. Kaldor (2000, 2002, 2006, and 2007) use Eastern European conflicts to reflect the New War thesis, only mentioning states like Rwanda, Sudan and Somalia as examples in Africa. This, shows that using the Liberia and Sierra Leone conflicts to establish a New Wars African conflict framework is necessary and long overdue. It also offers the

² Table 2 illustrates how intrastate conflict in Africa has been on a steady rise more, and more than other parts of the world

opportunity to go beyond the failed state hypothesis to compare these civil wars within the New War framework.

Other factors in selecting these cases relates to the fact that Liberia and Sierra Leone share a common border and their conflicts share similar dynamics with minor variations, with sustained sub-regional cross border conflicts. Since the 1990's, the conflicts have caused severe humanitarian crisis, massive human suffering, social dislocation, and the destruction of the sub-regional economy (Aboagye, 2007, p. 78).

For instance, the first Liberian civil war, from 1989 until 1996 and the second that began in 1999 and ended in 2003 was one of the bloodiest in Africa (Kornprobst, 2002, p. 269). Out of a pre-conflict population of a little over two million, over 200,000 people died, mostly civilians, and by 2004, at least 850,000 Liberian refugees were living in surrounding countries (Jaye, 2003, p. 56). According to the *International Crisis Group* (24 April 2002), Liberia's civil war claimed the lives of one out of every 17 people in the country, uprooted most of the rest, and destroyed a once-viable economic infrastructure. the *ICG* (2002) report also estimated that 15,000 children fought in Liberia's civil war, meaning there is no other 21st century conflict that used child soldiers more than the Liberian Civil War.

According to Koroma (2004) the civil war in Sierra Leone of (1991–2002) lasted 11 years, displaced half of the entire population, its female population were subjected to sexual violence including rape, torture and sexual slavery. The *United Nation's* Mission in Sierra Leone (2003) report states that the war in Sierra Leone resulted in some 70,000 casualties and 2.6 million displaced people. The war was characterised by widespread atrocities, including the abduction of children and systematic rape. For example, the *UN* estimates that of those fighting with Sierra Leone government forces, a quarter were children below the age of 18. Additionally, as many as half a million persons fled to neighbouring countries to escape the civil war. The West African sub-regional conflicts also significantly illustrate how violence spreads across neighbouring states. Much research has either

concentrated on identity or economic rationalities often neglecting the porous nature of the borders, to explain how internal conflict in one country stimulated similar conflict dynamics in a neighbouring state.



Figure 2: Map of Liberia and Sierra Leone (Accord issue, 2012)

This research intends to contribute to the way scholars investigate these conflicts, and thus will influence the way policy-makers and policy-shapers perceive their outcome as regards human casualties. According to Kaldor (2013), strategists and policy makers have always imposed a stereotyped version of war, drawn from the experience of the last two centuries in Europe, in which war consists of conflict between two warring states or many states, with legitimate interests. By contrast, New Wars are different, requiring a very different policy response. Consequently, this study has contributed to the intensive policy debates on how policy makers, international organisations and regional groupings should tackle issues such as: human security, intervention, peace negotiations, human right violations, resources control during conflicts, post war negotiation, post war reconstruction and war crimes.

Adopting a New War theory in developing the tri-focal approach gives this research its distinctive edge from current literature. In doing so, this thesis identifies those conditions, which help establish potential risks of future crises in the region. Moreover, since international peace and security fall under the purview of continental, regional and sub-regional groupings, this research will be of immense benefit to the *Economic Community of West African States* (ECOWAS) and the *African Union* (A.U), as well as to the *United Nations* and other international bodies. One intention of this research is to enable these organisations to better understand the nature of West African conflict, and make a concrete and genuine effort towards establishing early warning systems regarding prompt intervention to prevent crises.

It should also help to identify trouble spots in the sub-region quickly, especially the various border crises, like the tension which still pervades the ‘Mano River Union,’ the perpetual border conflicts between Nigeria and Cameroun and other African states over the years (Asiwaju, 2000, p. 68). This study will stimulate creative scenarios and practical options for sustainable peace and development in Africa. It will also show the policy relevance and fundamental issues of the New War’s approach to conflict in Africa. The work will also offer a great deal of intellectual satisfaction to any curious minds desiring enlightenment on African affairs. Furthermore, academia will also benefit from the work because it will constitute useful reference material and act as a catalyst that will stimulate further research in African conflict studies. The next section reviews the failed states approach to understanding these conflicts.



Figure 3: Mano River Union States| *Conciliation Resources*, www.c-r.org

1.2 EXPLAINING CONFLICT DYNAMICS: THE LIMITS OF THE FAILED STATE ANALOGY

This section reviews the failed state accounts of the Liberia and Sierra Leone conflicts. It also exposes the failures and limits of the failed state framework, prior to examining the New Wars theory. Esty (1998), Logan & Preble (2008) and Newman (2009) refer to weak or fragile states as a broad continuum of states that are inherently weak, because of geographical, physical, or fundamental economic constraints. According to Logan & Preble (2008) these states are temporarily or situationally weak, because of internal antagonisms, management flaws, greed and lack of democratic principles. Rotberg (2007) referred to state failure or collapse as the implosion of the state, where the state transforms into an instrument of predation and the state effectively loses its monopoly on the use of force. Rotberg (2002) argued that when the state fails in its prime function to provide that political good of security they can be judged as failed or collapsed. From the above, it is clear that the failed state analogy is predicated on internal dynamics. The Liberia and Sierra Leone states depict societies convulsed by internal violence and can no longer deliver positive political goods to

their citizens, as their governments have lost their legitimacy in the eyes of the people. The disintegration into violence and palpable weakness and failure of the states under study threaten the very foundation of that system, to the extent that regional and international organisations consequently find themselves sucked into internal conflict involving intervention and humanitarian relief.

Patrick (2011) in his most celebrated case study of failed states argued that corruption, economic distress, a weak rule of law, and poor security provides enabling conditions for transnational threats. He traced the connections between state failure and transnational security threats based on the concern that the 9/11 attacks were coordinated from a failed state. He argued further that while some global threats do emerge in fragile states; most of their weaknesses create misery only for their own citizenry. It was the mass violence and total collapse of state structures in Liberia and Sierra Leone that drew world attention to the conflicts. Despite this, Patrick's (2011) arguments have been criticised for using a U.S. yardstick that only fulfils their security objectives. This was because he was more concerned about how fragility of a state affects U.S. security interests, therefore giving little significance to its impact on other states, regions, peoples.

The failed states concept helps to understand how Liberia and Sierra Leone degenerated into states that lacked the capacity and ability to deliver basic goods, services, and security to its population. State failures in Liberia and Sierra Leone are attributable to several forces beyond Charles Taylor of Liberia and the 'Revolutionary United Front' (RUF) of Sierra Leone that led to the eruption of violence in the region. These include internal factors stemming from poverty; a lack of economic opportunity; youth unemployment, economic hardship; ethnic animosities; and a history of political abuse and corruption (Mbembe, 2002, p. 21). Others are; lack of democracy, poor governance practices, favouritism, nepotisms, single party state, religious intolerance, politicisation of military appointment, endless military coup and counter coups.

However, the failed state framework has faced intense criticism over the years from policy researchers. Call (2008, p.45), for instance, posited that the concept of the “failed state” is arbitrary and sensationalist, as it “has no coherent definition”, and only serves the policy goals of Western states to militarily intervene in other states. Call (2011, p. 56) in a later study noted that “the concept be abandon altogether; as, he argued, it promotes an unclear understanding of what state failure means and thus refer to the notion of a failed-state as the “gap framework”. It was further argued that the concept was used as a catch-all term, for diverse states with varying problems, and has been applied to universal policy prescriptions so widely that it has effectively been rendered useless. Kaplan (2000) asserted that the concept of state failure has no coherent definition; rather, it is ahistorical and reflects a Western bias of what constitutes a successful state.

While Esty (1998) was of the view that there has been little consensus over how to define failed states, arguing further that the characteristics commonly used to identify a failing state are numerous and extremely diverse, from human rights violations, poverty to demographic pressures. This, therefore, means that a wide range of highly divergent states end up categorised together as failed, which can conceal the complexity of the specific weaknesses identified within individual states. This is what Rotberg (2004, p. 34) refers to as a “one size fits all approach”.

Another criticism of failed state has to do with its emphasis on internal dynamics as the reason for state failure. The literature on failed states should focus on alternatives multiple level analyses that include regional security complexities, and should even locate it within the global world analytical conflict trends (Call, 2008; Rotberg, 2007). What this means is that international relations discourse needs to move away from the idea of the internal failed state syndrome and toward a more critical understanding of developments beyond state frontier to the region. According to Jackson (2010) failed states are not only faced by

internal problems but with external threats, such as from more powerful regional actors or spill-over fighting from neighbouring states.

The inability of the failed state framework to address the external characteristic of Post-Cold War intra-state civil war made the adoption of the New Wars framework more plausible. Typically, according to Kaldor (2013), New Wars take place in areas where authoritarian states have been greatly weakened due to the opening up to the rest of the world, such that the distinction between state and non-state, public and private, external and internal, economic and political, and even war and peace is not so clear. Kaldor (2007) argued that globalisation is the intensification of global interconnectedness- political, economic, militarily and cultural. Globalisation led to the various agreements on free travel across borders, the revolution of information technology, communication and data processing, efficient and fast transport services. Also included are effective payment systems and transfer of funds, multilateral businesses; involving states and non-state actor in large scale joint commercial ventures.

These has joined the local to the international and moved to world closer to itself. This thus placed New War within the context of the new globalised nature of the universe. According to Kaldor (2007) globalisation is a catch-all phrase to describe the various interactive and integrative changes that characterise the contemporary period and that this contemporariness has also influenced the character of war and peace. Allowing all sorts of actors with personal interest and profit motive in the new era of what I refer to as commercial or enterprise war; involving state, non-state actors, individual business empires and multinational companies. Though New Wars are internal, civil and low intensity conflicts that are localised, but according to Kaldor (2007) they involved a myriad of transnational connections, such that the distinctions between internal and external are difficult to sustain.

New war thus reflects a new reality of the emergence of a new global world that can contribute to exacerbate conflict. According to Kaldor (2007) the global presence of these wars can include; external support of warring parties, global war economy; through transnational criminal network and diaspora network., privatisation of military force, violence undertaken by privately organised groups for private purposes, usually for financial gain, mercenary troops, military advisers, diaspora volunteers. The involvement of these groups sustains the intensity of conflicts. According to Kaldor (2007) the global presence of these wars can include; international reporters, armies of international agencies; ranging from non-governmental organisation (NGO's) such as Oxfam, save the children, Red Cross, human right watch,; to international institutions such as United nations, regional organisation or their institutions like the United Nations High Commissioner for refugees, (UNHCR) EU, UNICEF and AU.

Post-cold war New War became a focus an era of global governance that brought about more and active international institution, more multilateralist behaviour of states, new discourses of human right, humanitarianism, global warming. It also includes the rise in global civil society pressing to treaties on land mines, climate change, or international criminal court, the Kimberly accord or even restricting diaspora funding of violence. It impacts on the nature of arms supplies, pattern of violence, financing.

External factors have also prolonged the duration and ferocity of the conflict, especially the involvement neighbours: Ivory Coast and Guinea; others are Burkina Faso and Libya. According to Obiozo, (2002) these are all states that have reportedly trained and armed Taylor and the RUF. There are also other non-state actors, such as multinational companies, foreign governments, profiteers in the rich natural resources like diamond and timber; the nefarious activities of arms dealers, private security companies and other international criminal gangs.

Liberia and Sierra Leone, which eventually became failed states, shared some historical, political and socio-economic similarities, with minor variations: the history of returned slaves; the nature of ethnic dynamics; an economy that totally relies on sub-soil resources (diamonds, gold, iron-ore, and timber and rubber stock). Apart from the fact that “the conflict began in Liberia and spiralled into Sierra Leone, most of the communities in both states share a common ethnic affinity, tribal descent, language, culture, and a long history of trade and inter-marriages” (Clapham, 2009, p. 5). They both lie on the coastal front of West African sub-region; the political economy of both countries was similar, given both has rudimentary manufacturing sectors and is heavily dependent on the importation of manufactured goods. In Liberia, timber, rubber stocks and iron-ore, gold and diamonds have become dominant exports; while rutile, diamonds and palm production became Sierra Leone’s dominant export (Kaplan, 2000).

These conflict states, like most African states, are multi-ethnic in nature. In Liberia there are sixteen ethnic groups, and these can be divided into five major groups with various other sub-divisions: Mel (Gola, Kissi); Kwa (Dei, Bassa, Kru, Krahn, Grebo); Mande-Fu (Kpelle, Gio, Mano, Loma); Mande-Tan (Vai, Mende, Mandingo); and the repatriated (American-Liberians, Congo and Caribbean) (Abraham, 1976, p. 23). In Sierra Leone, the Mende and Temne are numerically dominant, occupying shares of 32.2 and 31.8 percent respectively; whilst the Limba, Kono, and Kuranko are the next largest groups at 8.3, 4.4, and 4.1 percent respectively. Other groups, by contrast, occupy a substantially smaller share of the population, including the Creole, whose population share fell to only 1.4 percent by 2004 (Hoffman, 2004, p. 78).

Both states have a history of returned slaves. In Liberia, the *American Colonisation Society* enticed freed Negroes to go back to Africa: “By 1822 Liberia had become a haven for former American slaves by the time Liberia became an independent republic in 26 July 1847” (Williams, 2006, p.21). In Liberia, they are referred to as American-Liberians and they were

established in Monrovia — the capital city of Liberia. Whilst in Sierra Leone, these returned slaves, referred to as Creoles and, since 1787, established in Free Town under British colonial rule (Clapham, 2009, p. 15)³. Like their America-Liberian neighbours in Liberia, Creoles have varying degrees of European ancestry, as some were descendants from caucasian Americans, Europeans, liberated African-American, African, and West Indian descent (Conteh-Morgan & Dixon-Fyle 1999). Both also share similar Westernise Christian English religion and education and only represent a minority of the population of both states.

The state structure in Liberia became more autocratic, hegemonic and exploitative as competitive politics among the American-Liberians elite gave way to the “dictatorship of the True Whig Party and an imperial presidency” (Ellis, 1999, p. 84). In Sierra Leone, the response of the British was to create a liberal democratic framework, within which local elites organise political parties and compete for leadership of the colonial state. Braithwaite (2006) stated that the indigenous people who were in the majority, however, edged out the minority (returned slaves) of Creoles elites in the competition to inherit the state from the British. The succeeding parties were the indigenous ‘Sierra Leones People’s Party’ (SLPP) — a coalition of chiefs, middle class professional of mainly Mende South East and the All Peoples Congress (APC) — aided by support from Temnes and Limbas from the North, the Konos in the East and Creoles from the West (Davies, 2000, p. 351).

In Liberia, the American-Liberians dominated politics with the inclusion of a few of the indigenous people, brought in by President Tubman (1944-1971). Tubman’s reforms ensured that the TWP and the American-Liberians minority still maintained their hegemony and autocratic rule over the majority (Gershoni, 1997). While autocratic rule prevailed in Liberia, Sierra Leone was experimenting with Liberal democracy, which soon collapsed due to the defeat of SLPP by the APC. The APC, under Siaka Stephen, turned the country into a one

³ Clapham (2009) gave a historical comparative study of Liberia and Sierra Leone.

party state: there was little tolerance for opposition, as the state centralised power and access to resources (Ellis, 1999; Gberie, 2005).

In Liberia, political identity problems pitched the American-Liberians against the native indigenes, on the one hand, and ethnicity, on the other hand, pitched the various indigenous ethnic groups and tribes against the other. Whilst in Sierra Leone, it was a case of ethnic and regional divide between the North-West, dominated by the Temne's, and the South-East dominated by the Mende's, that was at the base of state failure (Kpundeh, 1995). In both states, the abundance of natural resources also propelled antagonism, as it magnified the desire of the conflicting groups to continue in the path of violence. It was resources such as diamonds, timber, rubber stock, gold and iron-ore, which traded for arms. Just like any failed state, the discovery of natural resources became cursed, as it paid for the weapon of violence.

According to Abdullah & Muana (1998), several outside actors are involved in the wars, battling governments and the rebels, and, at some points, even former allies became enemies. The conflicts were characterised by the massive destruction of lives and properties, the targeting of defenceless civilians, particularly women and children, by all factions in the conflicts (Hirsch, 2000; Adebajo & Rashid, 2004). The civil wars were set against the background of the extreme socio-economic and political polarisation of both countries as the economic depression of the 1970's and 1980's took its toll on their economy — a result of the increase in petroleum prices by OPEC (Campbell, 2004). The decline in export earning in both countries soon led to serious economic hardship, meaning socio-political tension soon ensued. The massive unemployment, especially among the youths, collapse of the formal sector and social services took their toll on the economies in Monrovia and Freetown, the respective capitals of each state. This led to the agitation for better governance by the intelligensia, youth movements and radical populist agitation by civil societies. The government's failure to accept any form of political opposition or dissenting voices in Liberia and Sierra Leone led to violent protests and the emergence of all sort of quasi-

political movements, all wanting a better life for the people (Sawyer, 1992; Harris, 1999; Campbell, 2004).

In Liberia, two such organisations emerged: the 'Movement for Justice in Africa' (MOJA) formed by lecturers and students at the *University of Liberia*; the 'Progressive Alliance of Liberian' (PAL) formed by Liberian students in the United States of America (Ellis, 1998, p. 23). They both received their support from urban youths, poor masses and the local chiefs of the indigenous people. William Tolbert, who came to power in 1971, initially tolerated the challenges of the MOJA and PAL to the 'True Whig Party'; however, this disappeared due to their support of the protest on the 50 percent increase in the price of rice, the staple food of Liberians (Obi, 2007, p.83). Prior to this, opposition to the TWP grew because of the self-imposed economic burdens of hosting the 'Economic Community of West African States' (ECOWAS) in 1973 and African Union in 1975 and 1978 respectively (Omonijo, 1990, Outram, 1997).

These events, coupled with the sharp rise in petroleum prices and the declining world demand for Liberia's main exports (iron ore and rubber), affected Tolbert's ability to handle the domestic political crisis that ensued. Tolbert's downfall was precipitated by the rice riot of April 14th 1979, when, in an attempt to encourage local rice production (a staple food of Liberians), increased the price of imported rice by 50 per cent (Huband, 1998, p 44). According to Ellis (1998) the civil unrest led to the death one hundred and forty people and several wounded, which almost prompted a popular uprising by the indigenes against the American-Liberians

African-Liberians blamed the socio-economic crises facing the country on the American-Liberians, believing them to be the result of long discriminatory politics and cultural ineptitude of the American-Liberians. Furthermore, it was also an enabling political opportunity for the violent coup against the American-Liberians. This, coupled with the

intensification of the political repression and suppression of opposition parties by the TWP, contributed to the bloody overthrow and assassination of Tolbert on the 12th April 1980. A small group of non-commissioned officers led by Master Sergeant Samuel Doe from the Khran nation, Thomas Quiwonkpa from the Gio nation, and Thomas Weh Syen from the Kru nation, all carried out the coup (Ellis, 1998, p 98). They declared military rule under the name of the 'People's Redemption Council' (PRC) (Ellis, 1999, p. 36).

In Sierra Leone, the same poor economic circumstances of massive unemployment for youths led to the formation of radical movements by students of *Furahbay College*; as well as Sierra Leone students in South Africa, who were influenced by the apartheid struggle in South Africa. However, the autocratic regime was not as organised as Liberia's. There was the national uprising against the APC-led Government, spearheaded by students and unemployed urban youths. According to Adebajo (1995) the 'National Association of Sierra Leonean Student' (NUSS) demanded electoral reforms amongst other things. The party was adamant, which meant that the APC government of Siaka Stephen instituted a one party system. Similar to the True Whigs party in Liberia, the APC government in Sierra Leone meant non-violent political transition was impossible. It was evident that the political and military elite in Liberia and Sierra Leone reflect a new form of social forces which unleashed terror on their people. While the urban youths, students and civil societies used insurrections to protest and destabilise the old regimes in both states.

The Liberia and Sierra Leone conflicts are not merely civil wars; although the battles started within the national borders of each country, they soon spread to neighbouring countries of Guinea and Ivory Coast through their porous borders. Even though the main warring factions are Liberians and Sierra Leoneans, 'they have from time to time been supplemented by foreign nationals and mercenaries, and even troops of their neighbours' (Dowd & Raleigh, 2011, p. 123). It is, therefore, viable to say that both conflicts wars meet the criteria of an international or external war (Egwu, 2006, p. 76).

There were noticeable differences between Liberia and Sierra Leone in terms of rebel formation and leadership. In Liberia, the main rebel group at the start the insurgency against Doe's regime was the 'Charles Taylor NPFL' and the breakaway faction the I-NPFL: the anti-Taylor rebel group, made up of Kranh and Mandingo's. The United Liberation Movement (ULIMO) was later to split into ULIMO-K and ULIMO-J. There were also several others, such as LUDF, LPC and LDF. In Sierra Leone, the RUF is the main rebel group and they became prominent due to the support of Charles Taylor. The Kamajor, a tribal hunting society turned into a militia defence force, later emerged; this, henceforth, provoked other tribal groups to create their own local militias. Another noticeable trend was that the NPFL and other rebel groups in Liberia had a visible and relatively experienced political structure and leadership; conversely, the RUF in Sierra Leone was run by a handful of unknown, inexperienced youthful dissidents, old radical groups and a former junior military officer, Foday Sankoh.⁴ The next section examines the limits of existing theoretical framework on African conflicts.

1.3 LIMITS TO CONVENTIONAL THEORIES OF AFRICAN CONFLICTS

This section briefly examines some prominent theories often applied to explain African conflict. Popular theories of African conflicts include the Marxist theory or a political economy approach, which posits that capitalism, like previous socio-economic systems, would invariably produce internal tensions that would lead to its own destruction (Baird & Kaufmann, 2008). Marx advocated that the history of all-hitherto existing society relate to class struggle, where the oppressor and the oppressed stood in constant opposition to one another (Marx, 1932). It was further argued that these social structures create conflict between people with different interests (Kaufmann, 1996; Knapp, 1994; Malia, 1998). Marx claimed that conflict arises initially out of the antagonistic contradiction that characterises the struggles between the existing socio-economic classes in a society (Marx, 1954). The

⁴ This will be discussed further in pages 64 and 74.

civil war in Liberia and Sierra Leone could be likened to a conflict of interest among different groups. Using this framework leads to the conclusion that it was the long unresolved identity crisis, the struggle of interest over natural resources issues, and the hopelessness of the oppressed class, which all led to the build-up of the conflicts in Liberia and Sierra Leone.

The 'World-Systems Framework' advanced by Arrighi *et al.* (1996) and Wallerstein (1995) have emphasised the core-periphery as the basic unit of analysis. This relationship exists between the developed Western world and the developing and underdeveloped world (Wallerstein, 1980). The core is dominant because of advanced technology and industrialisation, democracy and rule of law; while the periphery represents an absence of any form of industrial base, export of primary product and reliance on the core for finished goods (Arrighi *et al.*, 1996). They argued that the socio-economic and political problems created by underdevelopment create tension in developing societies and these tensions manifest themselves in the form of violence similar to that witnessed in Liberia and Sierra Leone. Multinational companies and foreign governments entangle the conflicts into the global world economy of trade in natural resources. The world system framework uses its analysis in order to explain the economic dimension of the conflicts under study, based on unequal relations in the global market.

According to Urry (2000) theorists like David Easton, Auguste Comte, Emile Durkheim, Herbert Spencer, Almond and Powell used the Systems Approach as a tool of comparative political study in understanding and interpreting conflict dynamics. They illustrate how body components work together and how changes in one component affect the whole system (Urry, 2000). The System Approach to conflict studies specifically takes into account the high level of complexity and the multi-dimensionality of conflict systems, similar to the conflicts under study. Such approaches argue that when observable structural laws are not maintained properly, a malfunction of the system occurs and conflict, henceforth, ensues

(Holmwood, 2005). As a result, this heightened the complex dynamics and longevity of protracted conflicts in Africa.

The System Approach, therefore, helps to identify asymmetrical conflict structures and considers the specific roles of state actors, non-state actors and armed groups — this mirrors the conflicts in Liberia and Sierra Leone. It also recognises highly inter-connected and interwoven conflicts — such as the ones under study — and how they constitute highly complex systems (Marshall & Gurr, 2005). This approach applies to all violent inter-group conflicts pertaining to identity issues, resources of economic importance and border insecurity — as was the case in Liberia and Sierra Leone.

There are other euro-centric theoretical models, such as those postulated by Reno (1998), Keen (1998), Campbell (2002) and Kaplan (2000). Keen (1998) and Campbell (2002) use rational choice theory and market centred analyses to explain African conflicts. Consequently, they view African conflicts as the struggle for personal power and control over resources and the illegal appropriation of the state wealth for themselves and their partners, both local and foreign. For instance, Ellis (1998), similar to Kaplan (1994) before him, viewed civil wars in Africa as a crisis of modernity and, accordingly, saw African society as a traditional one, full of ritualistic cannibalism. Furthermore, scholars like Collier (2007), Collier and Sambanis (2005), and Collier and Hoeffler (2004) have looked at the economic perspective of African conflicts with the greed and grievances economic opportunity agenda of conflict actors. These scholars are comfortable with what I will refer to as single factor approach and placed too much emphasis on identity or economic resources as conflict factors.

These theories are partial models which partly — and sometimes in whole — explain aspects of African conflicts, such as the ones under study. Having said that, they tend to overlook that there may be important context and differences in the nature of Post-Cold War violence.

Such analyses tend to over-simplify African conflict; whilst some are content to blame African socio, political and economic malaise completely on colonialism, neo-colonialism and imperialism, without recognising that Africa is disadvantageously situated within the globalised new world. The next section examines the New War theory as a more relevant approach to understanding African conflicts.

1.4 NEW WAR THEORY

“New Wars’ should be understood not as an empirical category but rather as a way of elucidating the logic of contemporary war that can offer both a research strategy and a guide to policy” (Kaldor, 2013)

The focus here is to examine the New Wars theoretical framework, with the hope of exploring its relevance to this study; and, at the same time, using the argument of critics to strengthen and validate the theory. Kaldor (2000) suggests that New War theory first emerged to explain the failure of the world’s most sophisticated militaries to defeat militias in Somalia, Rwanda, Balkans, Iraq, Afghanistan and Sudan. Kaldor (2002) and Hironaka (2005) argued that the nature of contemporary war had changed, and the international system had to adapt quickly to the new paradigm of conflicts around the world. The tri-focal approach draws upon the argument of the New War theory, which placed the conflict in Liberia and Sierra Leone within the context of Post-Cold War regional conflict.

New War scholars (see, for example, Kaldor, 1999 – 2013; Duffield, 2001; Gray, 1997; Holsti, 1996, 1997; Rice, 1988; Kaldor and Vashee, 1998; Snow, 1996; Eppler, 2002; Hoffman, 2007; Munkler, 2005; Smith, 2005; Van Creveld, 1991) argued that the end of the Cold War failed to create peace, democracy and development; instead resulting in an upsurge in new forms of violent conflicts in Eastern Europe, Middle East and in most parts of Africa. These scholars also suggested that distinctions between Old Wars and New Wars are based on the new, observable trends in the nature, causes and dynamics of Post-Cold War conflicts. New War theory, however, has been subject to scholarly debate and criticisms from scholars like Newman (2004); Henderson & Singer (2002); Kalyvas (2001); Lacina

(2006); Lacina *et al.* (2006); Lacina & Gleditsch (2005); and Mack (2005)⁵. They claimed there is nothing new about the New Wars, in that such features can be found in earlier wars. Consequently, they argue that the theory does not pass empirical testing, as most of their postulations have been refuted as being exaggerated. Despite this, they do acknowledge that the New War debate has identified new patterns of violent conflicts, which could possibly be associated with a contemporary form of civil wars and conflicts (Melander *et al.* 2006, p.5).

There have been several definitions of this new pattern of violence: Kaldor (1999, 2002, & 2007) referred to it as 'New Wars'; Gray (1997) 'postmodern wars'; Rice (1988) 'wars of the third kind'; Holsti (1996) as 'peoples' wars' and Riggs (1994) refers to it as 'post-modern wars' or 'hybrid wars'; others have even called it 'privatised war'. To understand New War, Kaldor (2013) argues that the 'old' is enshrined in the concept of the 'new,' as it enables us to grapple with the overall logic inherent in contemporary violent conflicts, which provides an integrative framework for analysis. New Wars are the wars of the era of globalisation, which occurs in areas where authoritarian states are weakened; and the distinction between state and non-state, public and private, external and internal, economic and political, and even war and peace have broken down Kaldor (2007). In Liberia and Sierra Leone, the entire state structure collapsed completely; henceforth, this breakdown soon led to the civil wars.

Generally, New War theorists suggest that New War is different from Old Wars in terms of a number of features:

1) Actors: Old wars were fought by the regular armed forces of states; whilst varying combinations of state and non-state actor fight New Wars: regular armed forces, private security contractors, mercenaries, jihadists, warlords, paramilitaries, etc. In the conflicts

⁵ These critics have strongly argued that New War theorists have exaggerated reality; however, they do accept the noticeable changes in the form of socio-political and economic violence in the Post-Cold War era (Newman, 2004; Henderson and Singer, 2002; Kalyvas, 2001; Lacina, 2006; Lacina *et al.* 2006; Mack, 2005; Melander *et al.*, 2006).

under study, war warlords, mercenaries, paramilitaries and private security contractors fought the war.

2) Goals: Old wars were fought for geo-political interests or for ideology (democracy or socialism); whilst, in New Wars, identity (ethnic, religious or tribal) aimed to gain access to the state for particular groups.

3) Methods: In old wars, the method of waging war consisted of capturing territory through military means; but, during New Wars, battles are rare and territory is captured through mass population displacement, the forcible removal of those with a different identity or different opinions. These kinds of violence are directed largely against civilians, as a way of controlling territory rather than against enemy forces.

4) Forms of finance: Old wars were largely financed by states (taxation or by outside patrons). Conversely, in New Wars, new forms of predatory private finance include loot and pillage, 'taxation' of humanitarian aid, Diaspora support, kidnapping, or smuggling in oil, diamonds, drugs, people, etc. It is a part of an open globalised decentralised economy; revenue depends on continued violence, as postulated by New War theory.

Kaldor (2007) and Duffield (2001) noted that these conflicts are usually non-ideological conflicts, which result from a history of ethnic, religious, tribal or resources based stratification and struggles that have a tendency to spread across borders through rebel groups, refugees, organised crime or ethnic minorities. The Liberia and Sierra Leone conflicts typify these above mentioned characterisations as advanced by the New War framework.

The New War theory does not attempt to challenge the arguments of the Old War theory of strategist, Carl Von Clausewitz, but rather to draw the attention of the Old War argument to the changes in the nature of violence over time. According to Kaldor (2007), Clausewitz's argument that war was the use of military means to defeat another state is no longer

applicable today. She instead suggests that “states are no longer the primary agents and have been replaced by groups” (Kaldor, 2007, p. 8). The conflicts under study are intra-state conflicts and the states are not the only sole actor; rather, several state and non-state actors and international agents are enmeshed in these new conflicts interest. Kaldor (2007, p. 17) argued that “New War occur in situations when state revenue decline, there are spread of criminality, corruption, emergence of paramilitary groups and dwindling political legitimacy.”

Holsti (1996, p. 25) noted that present war trends and patterns are unexplained by “standard theoretical devices of international politics, particularly by neo-realist analysis”. The conflicts in Liberia and Sierra Leone displayed these new and unexplainable trends in the sub-region, consisting of multiple and attendant security complexities, which are connected and linked. Holsti (1996, p. 29) further maintained that ‘peoples’ wars’ are different from conventional or total wars with respect to the types of participants, their patterns of prosecution, and their purpose(s): they are characterised by a blurring of the historic distinction between the soldier/combatant and the civilian/ non-combatant, creating “a fundamentally different nexus between combatants and civilians.”

According to Kaldor (1999) and Holsti (1996), New war is not a total re-conceptualisation of the theoretical assumptions regarding the etiology of war, as critics like Henderson & Singer (2007) advanced; rather, the New War theory gave insight into new driving forces behind state failure and collapse in developing worlds since after the Cold-War. The New Wars theory has enabled us to understand why there has been an increase in internal wars, with its attendant humanitarian catastrophes. Kaldor (1999) argues that the aim of contemporary intrastate conflict is not to attain a specific military objective or victory as in the classic inter-state war; rather, it is political mobilisation with violence, which results in civilians being their main targets. According to Global Witness (2004), 200,000 civilians died in both

conflicts and about 2 million people were displaced; some other figures cited elsewhere were even higher.

The objectives of most African war belligerents is to control the population by getting rid of every one of a different identity; hence the strategic goal of these wars is population expulsion through various means, such as mass killing, forcible resettlement, as well as a range of political, psychological, and economic techniques of intimidation (Hirsch, 2000). Examples of these include: the Hutu–Tutsi distinction in Rwanda and Burundi, Nigeria, Liberia, Sierra Leone, Sudan, Somalia, Uganda, Kenya, Ethiopia and Eritrea, Algeria, Morocco and the Western Sahara conflict, Algeria, Egypt, Libya, Guinea-Bissau, Mali, Guinea, Ivory Coast, Congo D.R.C., Chad, Djibouti, Uganda, Kenya, Republic of Congo, Mozambique, Malawi and Chad (Hoffman, 2004, p. 221).

According to Rice (1988) New Wars are financed through a globalised war economy, such as plunder and the black market, external assistance, siphoning of humanitarian assistance, and through the illicit trade in arms, drugs, diamonds and forest resources. In Liberia, Charles Taylor and other rebel and militia groups exploited the resources of the state to fund the war and for personal enrichment. Additionally, in Sierra Leone, the RUF leadership and the various governments in power during the conflict financed the war with funds from diamonds trade. The various networks of illicit resources trade through the connivance of the governments and rebel groups with multinational companies, foreign governments, private security companies and mercenary organisations financed the wars. As Duffield (2001, p. 45) put it, “in New War, there are greater opportunities for extracting rents, and cover is provided for illegal economic activity.

Furthermore, Kaldor (2007, p. 9) argues that this “retrograde set of social relationships, which is entrenched by war, has a tendency to spread across borders through refugees or organized crime or ethnic minorities.” She suggests that although New Wars primarily

emerge from intrastate factors, they may swiftly metamorphose into trans-state armed conflicts. The internal violence that started in Liberia soon spread to Sierra Leone and was later to engulf Guinea and Ivory Coast. Participants in these wars primarily employ guerrilla and counterinsurgency strategies aimed at sowing 'fear and hatred.' Moreover, it is always difficult in such conflicts to distinguish between combatants and civilians, given there are no uniforms or formal hierarchy, as well as no discipline or control over troops (Kaldor, 2007, p. 8). Snow (1996) stated that New Wars are characterised by the privatisation of genocidal violence, drawing attention to the decay of national institutions, and the attendant changes which have greatly influenced the nature, mode and characteristics of war.

In Liberia and Sierra Leone, there was multi-local participation through: the various rebel and militia groups; regional involvement of Guinea, Bukina Faso and Ivory Coast; the intervention of Nigeria and later ECOMOG; and the continental involvement of Libya (Adebajo, 2007, p. 142). According to Gray (1997), there are also the global participation in the war economy by international multi-national companies and government, and the private security firms in this type of war. Gray (1997) further argued that in this new form of conflict different ethnic and tribal rebels and militia groups scramble to control and exploit the natural resources to perpetrate violence. In Liberia, there are the following groups: the 'United Liberation Movement of Liberia' (ULIMO); ULIMO-J for the Krahn people, ULIMO-K for the Mandingo's; the 'Liberian United Defence Front' (LUDF); the 'Liberian Peace Council (LPC)' for the Krahn; , a force called the 'Lofa Defence Force' (LDF) in Lofa County; 'Liberians United for Reconciliation and Democracy' (LURD); and the 'Independent-National Patriotic Front of Liberia' (I-NPFL) (Ellis, 1999). Moreover, in Sierra Leone, the most important of these groups is the RUF, the rebel group that started the insurgency; the Kamajor was of South-Eastern Sierra Leone and consisted of mainly Mende people. The other groups consisted of the Tamaboros in the Northeast, the Donsos from Kono district in the East, and the Kapras from the North (Kieh, 2005).

From the following, it could be argued that the conceptualisation of old state-based wars, which draws on political factors motivating leaders to construct states, armies and economies with the intention of waging wars of overwhelming capacity against similarly organised opponents, is now believed to be a far cry from today's wars (Holsti, 1996; Kaldor, 2002). The conflicts in Liberia and Sierra Leone do not adhere to the Old War conceptualisation, as their civil wars were not propelled by any known ideological motives. Snow (1996, p. 102) refers to New Wars as "organizationally deconstructed wars of aggrandizement waged among a myriad of actors, unified only in their disregard for legitimacy, ideological goals and military restraints". MacFarlane *et al*, (2004) supports the claims of New War theorists that, since the end of the Cold War, there has been the proliferation of armed conflicts within states, involving non state and state actors alongside criminal groups, often associated with ethnic allegiances, who are vying over natural resources. Mercenaries, as well as regular armies, using mafia-style economies fight these wars (Jung, 2003, p. 12). The complex identity problems and the criminal exploitation of forest resources and diamonds, which span across unsecured borders, became a focal point of the conflicts in Liberia and Sierra Leone.

The 'Carnegie Commission on Preventing Deadly Conflict' (1997: xvii, 11) claims, "In some wars today, 90 per cent of those killed in conflict are non-combatants, compared with less than 15 per cent when the century began". The *UN High Commissioner for 'Refugees State of the World's Refugees Report'* (2004: p.276) argued that "In the Post-Cold War period, civil wars and communal conflicts have involved wide-scale, deliberate targeting of civilian populations, and that the refugee movements are no longer side effects of conflict, but in many cases are central to the objectives and tactics of war." The extreme violence and population expulsion, which resulted in a massive refugee movement across the sub-region over 14 years of conflicts in Liberia and Sierra Leone, also typifies these trends.

Work by economists at the *World Bank* in the late 1990s and early 2000 argues that the New Wars of the Post-Cold War era typified massive illicit use of economic resources, unlike the

old ideological wars of earlier generations (Berdal & Malone, 2000; Collier & Hoeffler, 2004). In line with the New War theorist postulations, the brutality of the conflicts in Liberia and Sierra Leone involved: the use of relatively unsophisticated weapons, like light and small arms, machetes, and land mines; the use of child soldiers and women as instruments of war; the amputation of limbs; the systematic rape of women and girls; and horrific public executions (Alie, 2007). New Wars are also characterised by deliberate and systematic ethnic cleansing; a high proportion of civilian casualties; atrocities against non-combatants, such as sieges, forced human displacement, severe human rights violations; and the destruction of historic monuments (Duffield, 2001, p. 56).

The New War theory serves to add to already existing framework to explain contemporary violence in the failed states of Liberia and Sierra Leone. The New War theory offers an understanding of the most troubling of all contemporary destructive, but also genocidal conflicts. The violent and human catastrophes witnessed during these conflicts engulfed the entire region and spread ferocious violence across neighbouring states to become a regional dilemma. Furthermore, the environment was characterised by the collapse of the formal economy and public authority, as well as the exploitation of this by organised local and international syndicates.

1.5 A CRITIQUE OF NEW WAR THEORY

The focus here is to explore the argument of critics to strengthen and validate the New War Theory as a framework that deserves a place in Post-Cold war intra-state conflicts in Africa. Critics of the New War theory (see, for instance, Newman, 2004; Henderson & Singer, 2002; Kalyvas, 2001; Lacina, 2006; Lacina *et al.*, 2006; Davenport & Poe, 2003; Melander, 2006; Melander & Oberg, 2006; Moore & Shellman, 2004; Schmeidl, 1997; Lacina & Gleditsch, 2005; Mack, 2005) have generally criticised New War theory for being inadequate and vague in categorising conflict, wars and insecurity. They also assert that some of the claims

of New War theorists are problematic, especially when juxtaposed with historical scholarship of armed conflict.

Historically, according to Lacina (2006) inter-communal conflicts have always existed, therefore, it should not be exaggerated by New War theorists. Newman (2004) followed up on Lacina by arguing that certain underlying features of New Wars, such as ethnic cleansing, genocide, deliberate violence towards civilians, the use women and children as instrument of war, and economic and criminal motives, all existed prior to the advent of the ‘so called new wars’. The New War thesis does not deny that inter-communal strife, ethnicity, economic factors of war and the use of children and women existed, rather that they have become more prevalent and complex in their nature in the Post-Cold War intrastate conflicts — some of these criticisms will now be discussed.

To begin, Chojnacki (2006) and Henderson & Singer (2007) argued that New War is too vague, methodologically problematic, highly arbitrary and difficult to reconcile with conflict theory. This seems contradictory when the same critics concede that the analysis of ‘New Wars’ is useful because of its policy implication and new methods to conflict research. The term ‘new’ is a way to add to ‘old’ assumptions about the nature of war, and so provide the basis for a novel research methodology (Kaldor, 2013). It was further stated by Kaldor (2013) that the purpose of describing the conflicts of the 1990s as ‘new’ is to change the way scholars investigate these conflicts; thus, also shifting how policy-makers and policy-shapers perceive these conflicts. This is so they can put in place and develop strategies to deal with conflict situations effectively before, during and after conflicts. These issues and events will include: pre/post conflict peace negotiation and truces and conflict resolution; weapon control and use of natural resources to fund violence; mass atrocities against civilians and human right abuse; and humanitarian intervention and post conflict reconstruction.

Chojnacki (2006) and Henderson & Singer (2007) went further, imposing their categorisation of conflict actors on New War postulations: inter-state, extra-state, intra-state, and sub-state — this categorisation only makes the New War framework more complex. According to Kaldor (2013), this entirely misses the point, because in New Wars actors can either be state and non-state or internal and external. The set of actors involved in the civil wars under study are local actors and their external collaborators or neighbours. New War offered a new way to look at why and how state and non-state actors collaborate to unleash violence in an internal war in Liberia and Sierra Leone, as well as the regional complexes that linked the conflicts.

Critics like Newman (2004), Henderson & Singer (2007), and Melander *et al.* (2006) have argued that the guerrilla warfare hallmark of new wars ignores the prevalence of this type of warfare in the Old Wars. They further assert that guerrilla warfare was employed in many of the Old Wars. The New War framework does not deny that guerrilla warfare was part of Old wars; instead, it claims they have become more prevalent, as exemplified in Liberia and Sierra Leone. These critics applied Post-Cold war and Cold War examples, like the Napoleonic Wars, U.S. civil War and Franco-Prussian War, to buttress their point. However, they forgot to acknowledge that the focus of the New War theory is Post-Cold War conflicts. Henderson & Singer (2006) particularly criticise Holsti (1996) and Kaldor (2007) for arguing that the transformation in the prosecution of warfare has led to the increased lethality and causality of New Wars. Their explanation was that this was a product of the increase in the number of states over the past two centuries from 23 in 1816 to 195 in the 1980's and 90's (Henderson & Singer, 2006). They, therefore, have agreed with New War theorists that there have been an increased trend in the frequency, magnitude and intensity of civil wars in these new states. These critics need to acknowledge that New War theory covers the Post-Cold War era starting from 1989, the basis on which the theory's foundations are built.

In their various works, Melander *et al.* (2006), Davenport & Poe (2003), Melander (2006), Moore & Shellman (2004), Schmeidl (1997) and Newman (2004) have systematically reduced their criticisms to only four of the New War theorist postulations, disagreeing with the following: the numbers of civil wars is increasing; the intensity of battle is increasing; the number of civilians displaced and killed in civil wars is increasing; the ratio of civilians to military personnel killed in civil wars is increasing. This argument is predicated on data; however, the ‘new wars’ argument is largely based on qualitative empirical studies of the wars in the former Yugoslavia and the South Caucasus as well as Sub Saharan Africa (Kaldor and Vashee 1997). Having said that, the quantitative data generated by these critics — despite claims to the contrary — does seem to confirm the claims about the nature of New Wars. Kaldor (2013), however, warned that this data be used cautiously, because it largely derives from ‘Old’ assumptions about conflict.

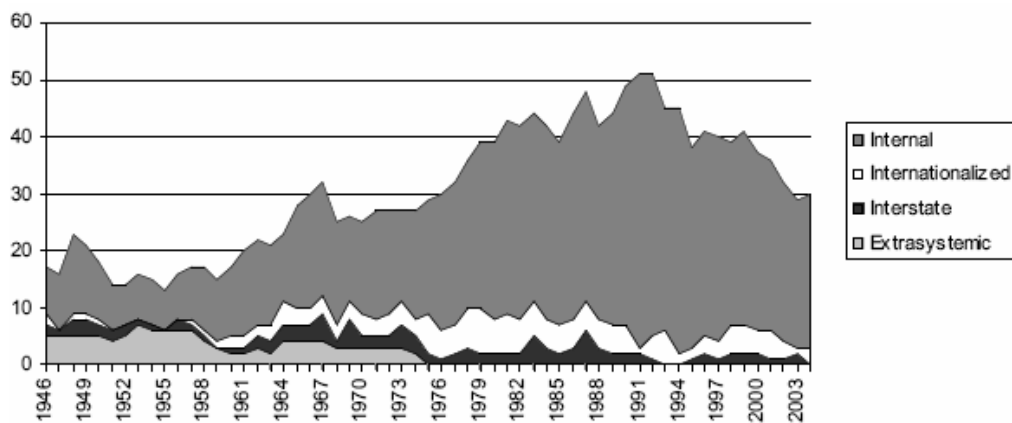


Table 3: Number of Armed Conflicts by Type 1946-2004: (Harbom & Wallensteen, 2005)

It may be extrapolated from the above chart used by critics that the number of intra-state conflicts increased astronomically from 1988, according to New War postulation. Concerning wars fought between states, only four of fifty-seven active conflicts during the period 1990-2004 were interstate wars; the remaining fifty-three were intrastate conflicts (Eck *et al.*, 2006). Even critics like Lacina *et al.* (2006) concluded that out of the 122

conflicts between 1989 and 2006, only seven were interstate; whilst 89 were intra-state conflicts and 26 were considered as internationalised intra-state conflicts.

I observed that critics of the New War theory, most of the time, contradict their own findings. For instance, they have claimed that recent conflicts and wars have reflected higher levels of deliberate civilian victimisation and that it, henceforth, may be possible to make a generalisation about this based on the specific nature of the conflict —this agrees with the New War postulation. Another criticism of the New War theory was that forced human displacement and ethnic cleansing, both collateral and deliberate, are not particular to the wars of the 1990s alone, for they are central to the objectives and tactics of wars and conflicts in the past era. The New War approach, conversely, never ascribed forced human displacement and ethnic cleansing to Post Cold war conflicts alone; rather, the argument is that civil war of this era are more genocidal and human displacement is frequently used as a tactics of war. The massive human right violation and massive refugee overflow during the Liberia and Sierra—Leone civil wars were unprecedented.

A noticeable failure in their argument was that they were comparing all interstate and intrastate conflicts: these conflicts do not usually share the same characteristics as the kind of civil/political violence typified by the Liberia and Sierra Leone civil wars and other Post-Cold war intra-state conflicts. These have witnessed unprecedented atrocities and the phantom destruction of life and properties; as well as the massive displacement of civilians, resulting in high refugee movements in an alarming proportion. The table below put together by a critic of the framework even shows that the number of death has been on the increase in intra-state conflict, when compared with inter-state conflicts since post-cold war era.

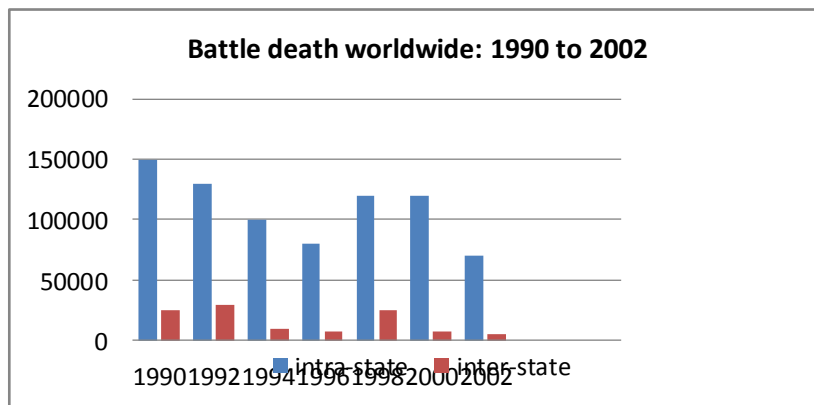


Table 4: Data culled from (Lacina & Gleditsch, 2005)

Furthermore, critics such as Newman (2004) and Shellman (2004) agree that the number of civilians displaced in civil conflicts was significantly higher in the Post-Cold War era of 1990-1994, than in the Cold war period. This is because civil conflicts in the Post-Cold War era generate larger flows of displaced people than civil conflicts of the Cold War; although they maintained that there is no consistent trend of increased numbers in the data (Kalyvas, 2001; Melander, 2006; Melander & Oberg, 2006). Critics agrees that Old War is definitely declining; however, they still refuse to accept that there has been an increase in New Wars, despite there being numerous on-going and unresolved intrastate wars and conflicts all over Africa and Middle East. Despite this, they grudgingly concede that the levels of population displacement pertaining to each conflict are increasing in New Wars. Newman (2004, p. 117) agreed with the New War theory claim that civil war has been more frequent than interstate war and that the brutalities of contemporary conflict are: gender-specific violence, rape, mass murder, the use of child soldiers, and the spread of terror through conspicuous atrocities. In the same vein, other critics — even concurred by Newman (2004) — agree with the New War argument that the targeting of civilians in conflict is now more often deliberate, rather than simply being a peripheral side effect of war. Consequently, this aptly described the conflicts in Sierra Leone, Liberia, Somalia, Congo, Rwanda, and Bosnia.

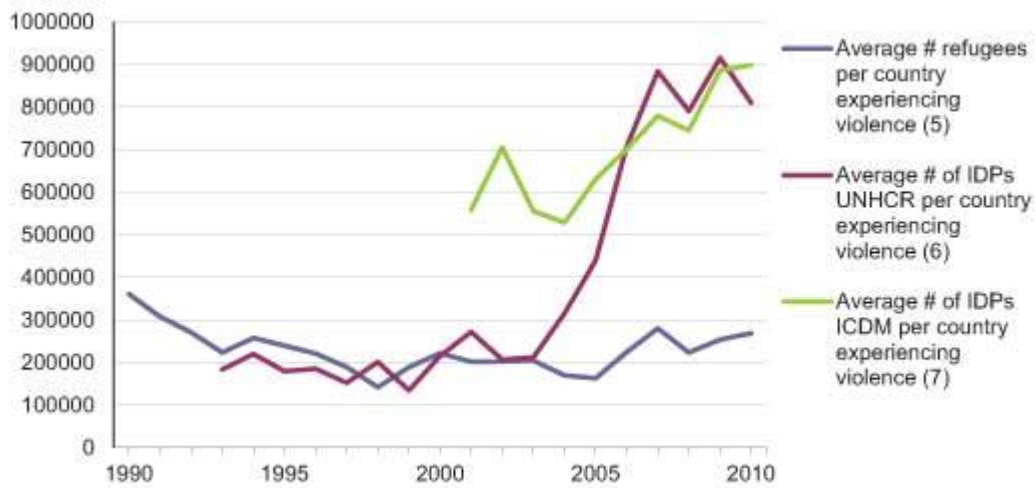


Table 5: Rise in annual numbers of internally displaced persons in countries experiencing armed conflict, substrate conflict, and one-sided violence. (Figures from Uppsala Conflict Database, UNHC and the IDMC)

Newman (2004) and Melander *et al.* (2006) argued that economic rationality and identity issues have been a consistent feature of all conflicts throughout history. They, however, agree that there may be a stronger element of this in selected cases like Bosnia, Sierra Leone, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Liberia. Melander *et al.* (2006) did also accept that New War literature has provided insights into the nature of civil conflicts, helping to dispel some earlier myths about rebels and their motivations, as well as demonstrating how these have changed with the end of the Cold War. Even Henderson & Singer (2007) agree with Holsti (1996) that, for the most part, these wars do not arise from system-level variables, but from factors internal to Third World states. Finally, these critics also concurred that a number of observations and arguments associated with the New Wars hypothesis are useful and interesting; and, furthermore, that social economic factors are underlying dynamics of Post-Cold War conflicts to a much greater degree than in the past (Newman, 2004; Kalyvas, 2001; Lacina, 2006; Davenport & Poe, 2003; Schmeidl, 1997).

Ironically, the critics of the theory are too obsessed with the ‘newness’ of New War and so miss the point about its logic (Kaldor, 2013). New War theory has succeeded to conceptualise a theory of war in line with the wider Post-Cold War security agenda; this was

needed because of the limitations — rather than failures — of traditional war theories to fully, clearly and satisfactorily explain the reasons for these emerging new trends in the global security agenda after the Cold War Era.

This was evident in the renewed vigour and reforms by the *United Nation's* special courts, which prosecuted the perpetrators of human right crimes during conflicts in Liberia and Sierra Leone. There were various international sanctions placed on Liberia and Sierra Leone during the conflicts and the international agreements on arrest of arms dealers who supplied weapons to intra-state warring groups. There were also various sanctions place on the sales of natural resources during the conflicts, such as the Kimberly agreement, which restricted diamond sales during the Liberia and Sierra Leone conflicts.⁶ New War theory addresses a range of research questions by exploring the links between violence and factors, such as socio-economic inequality, divided societies, human rights abuse, poverty, migration, economic disruptions, and international commodity markets (Kaldor, 2007). The framework has also shown how a lack of control over territory and cross-border movements of illegal activities and forced human migration affect other states and significantly undermine regional and state security. The next section introduces the tri-focal approach as a new framework of African conflict analysis.

1.6 A FRAMEWORK OF CONFLICT ANALYSIS: THE TRI-FOCAL APPROACH

This section introduces the tri-focal approach as a distinctive framework of analysis to understanding African conflicts in general and the Liberia and Sierra Leone civil wars in particular. The approach draws heavily upon aspects of New War theory — which synthesised aspects of African conflict theory —reconceptualising the nature of conflict in line with Post-Cold War civil violence. The Tri-focal approach does not seek to refute existing approaches; rather, its analysis seeks to identify new and puzzling trends and changes in the pattern of organised violence. This tri-focal approach differs

⁶ See appendices 9 , 10 and 11 for UN Sanctions, resolutions and arms embargoes; travel ban and asset freeze list because of the Liberia and Sierra Leone conflicts.

from other approaches applied to the sub-regions conflict studies, because it moves beyond causes to conflict dynamics. This also reflects New War theory, which posits that new trends in Post-Cold War conflicts deserve new methods of analysis and new tools of analysis that can explain them in the light of new global world (Kaldor, 2007).

The tri-focal factors applied these dynamics to describe how conflict variables can link and connect different intrastate conflicts. These connections and linkages exacerbated the conflicts in Liberia and Sierra Leone. This later stimulated the outbreak of further violence in Guinea and Ivory Coast and turned the entire sub-region into an area of humanitarian disaster, with implications for peace and security of the region. Recognising that Post-Cold War civil conflicts in Liberia and Sierra Leone can be influenced by similar dynamics and that these dynamics can be applied to compare their conflicts introduces a new way to study African civil wars. The approach places the conflicts under study within the wider global kaleidoscope of conflicts with complex and unexplainable trends that cannot be understood from a single level of analysis; rather, the combination of interrelated factors fusing the civil war together need to be placed in proper perspective.

Some studies have applied identity to analyse African conflicts (Nnoli, 1998; Tshitereke, 2003; Mamdani, 2002; Ellingsen, 2000; Cederman & Girardin, 2007; Quinn, Hechter & Wibbels, 2003; Lieven, 1998; Deng, 1995; Kapferer, 1988; Kaufman, 2001; Gartzke & Gleditsch, 2006; Young, 1990; Alcott, 2006; Horowitz, 2000; Phinney, 2003; Osaghae & Suberu, 2005; Fred Riggs, 1994; Yeros, 1999; Fearon & Laitin, 2004; Appiah, 2005).⁷ A cursory glance at the range of violent disputes supports the impression that identity conflicts have been multiplying at an exponential rate to the extent that by 1993, there were at least 48 existing or potentially violent conflicts in progress (Tshitereke, 2003, p 56).

On the other hand, a number of studies have identified the struggle for the control, illegal exploitation and use of natural/economic resources as a dynamic which tends to motivate and

⁷ These authors locate or identify ethnic politics and political identity as conflict indices which can impact on the nature and outcome of conflicts.

influence conflicts (see, for instance, Collier, 2007; Berdal & Malone, 2000 & 2001; Reno, 1999; Collier & Sambanis, 2005; Ayodele, 2008; Collier & Bannor, 2003; Ross, 1999; De Soysa, 2000; Collier & Hoeffler, 2001; Campbell, 2002 & 2004; Auty, 2004; Hirsch, 2000; Collier & Benton, 2003; Le Billon, 2005; Alao, 2007; Collier & Hoeffler, 2001).⁸ Others have recognised porous border as an important conflict dynamic in inter-state relation (Herbst, 2000; Nugent & Asiwaju, 1996; Zartman, 1965; Fearon & Laitin, 2004; Buhaug & Rod, 2006; Rustad *et al.* 2008; Silberfein, 2004; Onwuka, 2009; Kieh, 2005; Reno, 1997&1999; Orogun, 2003; Starr, 2003; Starr & Thomas, 2002 and 2005; Hoffman, 2004; Zacher, 2001; Zack-William, 1990).⁹

However, these only apply a single factor analysis; Schlichting, (1997) suggest different ways of mapping or tracking the evolution of conflicts, paying particular attention to the different conditions that would be favourable to their occurrences and the factors or events that may trigger them. In connection with this, Lund (1998) also suggested the use of “Life History of Conflict,” which is a framework allowing conflict analyst to track the evolution of a particular conflict from the stage of “unstable peace” or “crisis” to that of “all-out hot war.” The tri-focal approach is not only a pioneering multi factor conflict approach dynamic to the study of the Liberia and Sierra Leone civil wars; it may also be applied to fill the gap in the analysis of the conflicts that engulfed the sub-region and other parts of Africa in general. The tri-focal approach also pioneered a more reliable paradigm by adopting a two country approach (Liberia and Sierra Leone) in the analysis of African study.

The tri-focal approach introduced by this study into conflict study in Africa and particularly to the Liberia and Sierra Leone conflicts applied the theme of ‘identity’ to describe two interacting group dynamics. It, firstly, examined political identity: how the native-settler relation/syndrome (natives and return slaves relation) impacted on the nature of politics to create identity problems. The ‘natives’ are the ethnic indigenes, whilst ‘the settlers’ are the returned slaves from America and

⁸ These scholars explain the various dynamics linking natural resources and conflicts.

⁹ They describe how the nature of borders can intensify conflicts.

Europe after the abolition of slave trade. Secondly, assessed were ethnic politics: how the relationship amongst the various native ethnic groups created ethnic sentiments and divisions to the extent that it influenced the conflicts.

The tri-focal approach also examines the extent to which natural resources issues contributed to escalate the conflicts. It focuses on how the funds from the illicit exploitation of these resources were used to sustain the violence, by focussing on global and regional inter-connectedness and the various mechanisms making it possible. It, therefore, looked at the involvement of the warring factions in connivance with multinational and local companies, foreign governments and regional leaders, and the use of private security firms in the war economy. The resources here are diamonds, gold, iron-ore, and timber and rubber stocks; there are also other minor cash crops.

Finally, the approach examines the extent to which porous border and improper delineation issue led to insecurity and, invariably, escalated the conflicts. The nature of these borders facilitated the easy smuggling of arms and mercenary activities, illicit exploration, exploitation, smuggling and sales of natural resources. It will also examine how cross border ethnic affinity mix among neighbouring countries exacerbated the conflicts. This tri-focal approach not only highlights these factors in each conflict state under study, it also explores how they are linked and uses evidence to compare them. The next section will focus on key research questions.

1.7 KEY RESEARCH QUESTIONS

In this section, I draw up the key research questions upon which this study bases its enquiry and arguments. These assess the value and relevance of the New War framework and the tri-focal approach to understanding Post-Cold War forms of civil violence. The tri-focal approach uses the New War thesis to position African conflicts, especially the Liberia and Sierra Leone civil wars, within the Post-Cold War global security context, with its implication for regional peace, security and stability.

- A. Does New War theory offer a convincing account of the dynamics of Post-Cold War regional conflict in Africa?
- B. Do the inability of the failed states analogy and other commonly applied theories of African conflicts to explain satisfactorily the dynamics of Liberia and Sierra Leone civil wars offer an opportunity for a new approach to the study of African conflicts?
- C. How far do the tri-focal approaches focus on and illuminate identities, natural resources, and border problems (as common clustering factors); and do they offer a convincing account/explanation of African conflicts?
- D. How does the comparative method enhance our understanding of the conflict dynamics in the Liberia and Sierra Leone civil wars?

The key questions placed the tri-focal approach within the New War-Post Cold War theoretical exposition of African conflict. The aim is to assess if the New War theory can help explain African conflicts, especially the Liberia and Sierra Leone civil wars. The New War framework highlights identities natural resources issues and border problems as intra-state conflict factors; and further explains how these spiral into regional violence, involving state and non-state actors and regional neighbours. It also explains how these kinds of conflicts are situated within the global war economy of trade, which has become the major source of finance for such wars. According to Kaldor (2007) these wars are non-ideological, fought by irregular armies of state and non-state actors, with no formal command structure and have the tendency to spread quickly across unsecured borders. Duffield (2000) states that the intrastate civil conflict that ensues can become internationalised, with international or regional intervention and implications for civilian population, especially women and children. The key question will thus answer how well the conflicts in Liberia and Sierra Leone fit into the New War framework.

These key questions help to explain how the tri-focal factors combined as inter-related variables to escalate the conflicts under study. It also helps to identify new answers about how the tri-focal factors are common clustering dynamics that, at different level of analysis, and jointly exacerbate conflicts under study. These inter-related variables are identity, natural resources and porous border problems. They are common interrelated and clustering dynamics because they influence each other in a chain-like manner to escalate the violence in both states. Since there are no general agreements that these factors are causes of conflicts in all cases, what is not in doubt is that they are a part of conflict issues present in most conflicts which have engulfed Africa. The key question will enable us to understand the degree to which these factors contribute to escalate the conflicts in Liberia and Sierra Leone.

The key question is significant to finding out if a comparative analysis of both conflicts will offer a better understanding of the civil wars under study and other form of violence in the continent. This is important if we are to understand how the conflict that started in Liberia in 1989 managed to spiral into Sierra Leone in 1999. The unique features in each civil war need to be examined to elucidate their similarities and differences in the way they influence their civil wars. This kind of comparative analysis can also help to find out and understand why and how these variations come about; thus, enabling a better assessment of future conflict outcome.

The key questions expose the limitations of the failed state position of blaming African conflicts on internal dynamics alone. It also exposes the limits of commonly applied theories of African conflicts, for overemphasising colonialism, neo-colonialism and imperialism as the causes of contradiction and conflict. The key question positions the civil wars in Liberia and Sierra Leone within unexplainable new and emerging conflict trends of the Post-Cold War era, which has become a part new global security challenges.

In doing so, these questions have helped recognise and identify the gaps in existing literatures and open up a new debate about the nature of conflicts in Africa. The key questions not only illuminates an understanding of the conflicts under study, it also introduces and position African conflicts within the new global conflict framework as never done before in a single research project. Finally, it would allow the study to justify the tri-focal approach as a framework capable of explaining present and future conflict trends in Africa with attendant regional complexes and implications. The next section outlined the structure of this study.

1.8 STRUCTURE OF THESIS

The thesis consists of seven chapters: chapter 1 sets up the research objective, focus, rationale and justifications for the study. The chapter also explores the theoretical paradigms that will be utilised to analyse the findings of this thesis. In order to place the research within a sound theoretical spectrum, the study examined the limits of the failed state analogy and other commonly applied theoretical framework of African conflict studies, before examining the New War Theory. The chapter then introduced the tri-focal approach, and proceeded to develop and formulate key research questions. Finally, I gave a concise personal reason for my interest in this research and conclusion of the chapter.

Chapter 2, the literature reviews, is divided into three major sections, each discussing political identity, natural resources and border problems and the civil wars in Liberia and Sierra Leone. Each section is further divided into sub-sections, on a country-by-country analysis. This literature review is on a country-by-country analysis, as there are no past studies that consciously compared both conflicts, using the tri-focal factors as introduced by this study.

Chapter 3, the methodology, explores how the research designs help to achieve the objective of study. The chapter justified the data collection methods, highlighting there strength and weaknesses. A qualitative approach was adopted using an historical comparative method,

using documentary/archival sources and semi-structured individual elite interviews and focus group discussions. It also justifies the selection methods, ethical challenges, anonymity and confidentiality in conflict research. The fieldwork experiences are in appendices three to six. In order to make sense of data collected, I devoted chapters four, five and six to the analysis and interpretation of data.

Chapter 4, 5 and 6 are the data analysis chapters and each chapter is further divided into two sections following a country-by-country analysis. Each chapter examined its findings, drew a comparative analysis based on the findings and concluding remarks. Chapter 4 explored the evidence of respondents and supported by literatures to examine the nature of identity and the conflicts under study. The chapter examined identity dynamics: the native-settler relation/syndrome (political identity); ethnic politics (ethnic relations among indigenous Africans); and cross border ethnic affinity mix.

Chapter 5, the second data analysis chapters, explored the evidence of respondents and supported by literature to examine the nature of natural resources and the conflicts under study. The chapter probed into how the warring parties were able to fund their violence with the proceeds from illicit natural resources trade. It also examined the roles of multinational companies, individual and foreign government in the illicit natural resources trade, the proliferation of weapons; and the involvement of private security companies and mercenaries in the conflicts.

Chapter 6, the final data analysis chapters, explored the evidence of respondents and supported by literatures to examine the nature of borders and the conflicts under study. The chapter probed into how porous borders and insecurity problems facilitated the easy smuggling of arms and mercenary activities; illicit exploitation; smuggling and sales of natural resources and cross border ethnic affinity and bad neighbour effects on the conflicts.

Chapter 7 is the summary of conclusions. It reiterates the arguments of the study, which validate the tri-focal approach to understanding the civil wars in Liberia and Sierra Leone. The chapter further highlights the contribution of the tri-focal approach to New War literature and African conflicts. Finally, the chapter examines the limitation of study and areas of future research. At the back of the document are the reference list and collection of appendices. Throughout the entire thesis are footnotes containing additional information

1.9 MY PERSONAL INTEREST IN THIS RESEARCH

Firstly, this research is a self-sponsored scholastic pursuit — the topic was painstakingly and personally crafted based on the gap noticed in past literature. The research was conceived after reading several studies about the conflicts under study, it was discovered that these tri-focal factor requires a holistic approach in order to understand the civil wars in Liberia and Sierra Leone and, invariably, the instability of the sub-region during the civil wars. I was encouraged to embark on a multi-complex study in a single research project, because of the need to break new ground in African conflict research. Again, I am also fascinated by the New War theory not only because of its ability to explain a contemporary form of violence, but because it offers a new way to look at the tri-focal escalating variables of the Post-Cold War form of violence. This research, thus, offers me an opportunity to apply this to African conflicts study.

This research is also close to my heart, because I come from a conflict country that has long been plagued by ethnic problems and oil politics. In addition, as I carried out this research the forest of my country home in the Niger Delta part of Nigeria is home to one of the world most notorious guerrilla warfare, involving sabotaging of oil platforms, the kidnapping of oil worker and continued battle with the government. Nigeria, with over 240 ethnic groups, has seen several ethnic conflicts and even a civil war from 1967-1970. It has also had its own fair share of cross border conflict with Cameroun and Chad.

1.10 CONCLUSION

This chapter set out the objective, focus and justification for adopting the tri-focal approach. This approach draws upon New War theory to understanding the conflicts under study. This study aims to give a more nuanced explanation of the two conflicts — one which transcends its current understanding — by exploring how identity problems, the illicit trade in natural resources to fund war and porous border problems all contributed to escalate the civil wars in Liberia and Sierra Leone. The chapter examined earlier approaches to the study of the African conflict to show how this research is different from past studies; the aim was to justify why the New War approach, despite the criticisms, best described or explained the nature of Post-Cold War conflicts in Africa. The chapter also examined the failed analogy to show how both states spiralled from fragile/weak to a failed/collapsed state. The study then raised some key research questions, which the research seek to answer. These key questions were critical to the literature under review and the questions to elicit from respondents. Finally, the chapter states my interest in this research. Next is the literature review chapter, which; this examines past and existing literatures on the tri-focal factors. The chapter is divided into three sections, each looking at a tri-focal factor in a country-by-country analysis.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW AND FRAMEWORK OF ANALYSIS

2.0 INTRODUCTION

This literature review sets out to investigate how the analyses of past studies apply to the tri-focal approach. It, therefore, develops and explicates the approach, underpinning the analytical framework for studying the conflict dynamics in Liberia and Sierra Leone. The tri-focal approach, as supported by the New War theory, posits that Post-Cold War civil conflicts that engulfed Liberia and Sierra Leone arose out of socio-economic and political problems exacerbated by: identity problems, resources exploitation to finance violence, and border problems. The purpose of this literature review, however, is to place the tri-focal factors within existing studies; it is not aimed at validating the approach. By contrast, this chapter aims to identify how these studies perceive the tri-focal factors as conflict indices and how they influence the nature of civil war in general and Liberia and Sierra Leone in particular.

This chapter is organised into three major sections, each of these sections focuses on identity, natural resources and border issues. The sections are further divided into two sub-sections, which follow a country-by-country analysis. Each section starts with a general analysis of the conflict factor from a wider choice of literatures and studies that focus on the conflict theme. This follows by a country-by-country analysis, which focuses on each conflict state.

Harbom et al. (2008) suggests that the recent emphasis on civil war study is because they are the most common type of conflict since the end of the Cold War. Many studies of the Liberia and Sierra Leone conflicts draw upon the general failed state characterisation¹⁰ common to

¹⁰ The causes of African conflicts has been lumped into the following factors: political instability, mal-administration, corruption, ethnicity, nepotism, long term military rule, coups and counter coups, economy base on extractive industry, massive

all African and third world developing countries. They tend to apply a single explanatory factor approach in their analysis of the conflicts. They also classify these causes: underlying causes, proximate/immediate causes and triggers/catalytic. By contrast, this study seeks to establish the extent, which the tri-focal approach offers a more robust account of their civil wars through the mode of comparism.

2.1 IDENTITY CONFLICTS: LIBERIA AND SIERRA LEONE

This section focuses on the specifics of identity, with reference to Liberia and Sierra Leone.

The concept of identity is relevant to explaining how perceived cultural differences polarised the politics in both countries, such that it manifested in violent conflict. It is important to note that identity for this research is conceptualised into two dimensions: political identity, which focuses upon the self-interest; and perspectives of social minorities/majorities or self-defined social groups, who share similar historical experiences and outlook, belong to a certain social groups and assert their distinctiveness (Reno, 1998). These groups may pitch against other identities or core ethnic groups; it does not matter if they are a minority or majority, and may unite under a sub-group in order to affect political and social change in favour of their group. In Liberia and Sierra Leone, this relationship is articulated in the native-settlers relation/syndrome: this refers to the historical return of freed slaves from America and Europe, and how it shaped the complex socio-political and economic system of both countries.

As distinct from political identity, ethnic politics is applied in the context of the long-standing differences in tribal, cultural, linguistic, custom, traditional and ancestral relationships, which fuelled government and regime induced conflict among native Africans (Nwosu, 1999; Nnoli, 1998). Identity conflicts as applied to the conflicts under study are situated within the New War theory and are a negative consequence of the end of Cold War

un-employment, lack of democracy, lack of adequate health and educational infrastructures, over-reliance on foreign technology and civil unrest.

(Kaldor, 2007). O'Tuathail (2000) argues that such conflicts are examples of war within states replacing wars among states, but with regional implications and global concern. The civil wars in Somalia, Liberia, Rwanda, Burundi, Sudan and Sierra Leone are examples of fuelled conflicts.

It has been argued that differences in identity formation can form the basis for deep psychological distrust or enmity (Huntington, 1997 & 1996; Horowitz, 2000, 1995 & 1985; Connor 1994). Some theorists suggest that these differences inhibit effective communication and, henceforth, lead to misunderstandings and violence (Cederman *et al.* 2007; Harbom *et al.* 2008; Harbom & Wallensteen, 2005). Notably, others had observed that identity is an important driver of collective action under the security dilemma (Bayart *et al.* 1999; Herbst, 1989, Wimmer *et al.* 2009). This study examines how such deep psychological distrust leads to misunderstanding and violence, such that it generated insecurity within Liberia and Sierra Leone, with significant implications for regional peace and security.

Nwosu (1999) has argued that the colonisation of Africa forcefully band peoples of diverse culture together within one country. This has produced low level of integration, something that has precipitated identity crises in many African countries (Nnoli, 1998). Vandenberg (1998) agrees with Nnoli that the problem of ethnic conflict was rooted in colonialism. Welsh (1996) also associates identities with the colonial period, by asserting that the colonial government invented ethnicity for political and economic purposes. Osaghae (2004, p. 94) Observes that most African states are 'artificial' colonial creations, the major problems since attaining independence has been due to deep identity cleavages often marked by strong sectional loyalties. Herbst (2000) however, suggested that once these sub-national loyalties are eradicated, then national integration and political stability is possible. The colonialist argument is tenable; nonetheless, African state themselves have not shown any real interest in resolving this long age inherited problem. The above arguments did not, however, take into account the multi-dimensional issues that can be attributable to identity related conflicts.

Vandenberg (1998, p. 173) asserts that identity consciousness and conflict occur when groups feel threatened with loss of previously acquired privilege, or conversely feel that it is an opportune moment politically to overcome a longstanding denial of privilege. He further noted that the mechanisms and machinations through which these groups advance their aims is what can cause identity tensions and conflicts. It has been argued that the present manifestation of ethnicity in Africa is an elite and class phenomenon, where one community's elites feel excluded from control of economic and political power by another group. Identity, thus, became a mobilising factor in the hand of the elite to channel their demands (Vandenberg, 1998). Ibrahim (1995) blames identity conflicts on the undemocratic nature of governance and repression of the people to the extent that it ignores their aspirations. The identity grievances of the people against their government are because of undemocratic and repressive rule in Liberia and Sierra Leone.

A cursory glance at the nature of civil conflicts supports the argument that identity conflicts have been multiplying at an exponential rate. Illustrating this, by 1993, there has been at least 48 existing or potentially violent conflicts in progress (Tshitereke, 2003). Horowitz (2000) and Reno (1998) are of the view that identity conflicts are complex phenomenon, with no single explanatory theoretical approach which can capture or categorise it. Grosby (1995) and Griggs, (2000) also suggested that identities are complex and their characterisation might be located in varied degree within primordialism. This is identity based on traditions of belief such as biological features, kinship, family semblance and especially territorial location. Constructivism is identity internalised through the processes of accommodation and assimilation, where individuals construct new knowledge into an already existing framework without changing from their experiences (Schlichting, 1997, p. 98). Instrumentalism is identity division due to the lack of an effective melting pot and, in turn, is blamed on leaders who used their cultural groups for mass mobilisation and competition for power and resources (Vandenberg, 1998, p. 146). These frameworks over

the last decade may have had different interpretations and vastly different views about group affinity and identity, especially when these kinds of conflicts have become more apparent since after the Cold War, resulting in war crimes and genocide (Scheipers, 2011; Sawyer, 2004; Grosby, 1995).

According to Kaldor (2007, p.81), identity politics tend to be 'backward looking, fragmentative and exclusive.' Crawford (1998) states that elites play out such politics, by creating groups based on an exclusive identity consisting of the following factors: historical memories of injustice, marginalisation, and development. The long history of hatred created by the American-Liberian segregation against indigenous Africans and the marginalisation of other ethnic group by Doe's government was at the base of the outbreak of hostilities in Liberia. In Sierra Leone, it was more the regional ethnic politics of the dominant political parties, the SLPP and the APC that created the divide which led to state failure. It is a politics of fear, insecurity, and a sense of threat from opposing identities. Identity politics is a reaction to the growing impotence and declining legitimacy of the established political classes (Kaldor & Vashee, 1998, p.22).

Hauss (2003) observes that in situations where, theoretically, societies are seen as homogenised nationalities, identity becomes the main legitimate aegis for pursuing various forms of political, economic and cultural interests. Conflicts then erupt not because of the 'number of identities' or the 'differences of identities'; rather, it is attributable to the 'incompatibilities of the objectives or interests' of the different identity groups (Deng, 1995, p.37). This study agrees with Crawford (1998) that identities are a veritable tool facilitating — and sometimes used as a pretext for — violent conflicts. Also, Sambanis (2001, p. 2) asserts that 'conflicts over identity account for more than 70 percent of the civil wars between 1960 and 1999.' Moreover, grand scale atrocities like ethnic cleansing and genocide are particularly suitable derivatives of identity conflicts (Humphreys *et al.*, 2008).

Many conflicts in African societies are identity based conflicts and often ‘pitch people with deep and varying emotional attachments to their religious, racial, linguistic, or ethnic groups against each other’ (Haus, 2003, p. 64). Nnoli (1998, p.23) asserted that ‘under conditions of intense socio-economic competition in the society, identity is associated with hostility, conflict and violence,’ usually between the state and the particular ethnic group that believes it is being discriminated against. This form of discrimination culminated into resentments amongst the various groups in Liberia and Sierra Leone. The identity resentment that triggered the conflicts was encouraged by the illegitimate regimes of Doe and Charles Taylor in Liberia, as well as the five regimes that were consumed by the violence in Sierra Leone.

Identity politics and conflicts tend to incubate and thrive in under-developed societies where multiple identities along religious, cultural, class, professional, linguistic and ethno-communal lines tend to operate side by side (Ukeje & Adebani, 2008, p. 94). In determining why identity serves as a basis for political violence, Tajfel (1982), Boas (2005) and Herbst (2000) argue that the answer lies in the inability of identity to facilitate collective action. What they did not tell us is that the inability of identity to facilitate collective action has the capacity to create multiple conflict channels that can sustain the intensity and even prolong conflicts as seen in the case under study.

African scholars themselves have repeatedly argued that the roots of civil wars and armed conflicts are deeply rooted in identity (Nnoli, 1998; Deng, 1995; Tshitereke, 2003; Mamdani 2002) — recent conflicts in Africa seem to have substantiated this argument, to some extent, due to spates of identity related civil and armed conflicts. It could be maintained, however, that identities are insufficient and inadequate in explaining all African conflicts. Two groups in Rwanda and Burundi, the Hutu and Tutsi, share some historical identities and yet they went to war. It was further noted that in Somalia the groups in conflict were known to be relatively homogenous, with a strongly cohesive cultural tradition, a common language, a common religion and a shared history of nationalism (Rutake & Gahama, 1998, p. 79). This,

therefore, means that rather than categorise all conflict as identity based, it is more accurate to examine and locate the conflict escalating variables.

Huntington (1997) and Kaplan (2000) predicted a proliferation of conflicts, fuelled by civilisation clashes and tribalism. The conflicts in Liberia and Sierra Leone do not depict this end-time dooms day prediction. Again, what Huntinton (1997) and Kaplan (2000) did not realise is that the contestation among political elites over some fundamental issues, with a winner-take-all approach includes the control of state power, resource allocation, and citizenship are at the base of such conflict. This deep divide make the state fragile and unstable, with fewer points of convergence and consensus between the constituent groups than are needed to effectively mitigate or contain these centrifugal forces which tear society apart (Osaghae & Suberu, 2005, p. 87).

Chandra (2006), on the other hand, posits that politically defined identity interests are not sufficient explanations for the onset of civil war. It is not a sufficient explanation for the onset of civil war; yet these can still stimulate the onset of violence, especially when elites have a stake in advancing particular agendas. Collier *et al.* (2004) and Elbadawi & Sambanis (2000) argued that identity conflicts do affect the variation in the duration of civil wars, rather than civil war onset. By contrast, Balch-Lindsay & Enterline (2000) argued that, there is no relationship between identity issues and the duration of conflicts. This lack of agreement over the nature and trends of identity and conflicts only re-enforces the argument of this project that the study of identity, as a conflict factor, should concentrate more on how it contributes to exacerbate conflicts and civil war. This will also clarify the different identity dynamics that sustain the intensity and invariably prolong civil war. The next sub-section will focus on ethnic and political identity and the conflicts in Liberia.

2.2 LIBERIA

This sub-section examines and highlights how historical identity factors shaped the civil war in Liberia. It reveals how political elites used identity to perpetuate violence to advance their

political interests. The American-Liberians who share the native/settler political identity relation with indigenous Africans make up only about 2.5 percent of the population; while the majority African natives make up 95 percent (Clapham, 1991, p. 102). The American-Liberians formed a distinct cultural and social minority, which dominated all aspects of national life and held the monopoly of political and economic. They did this through the ‘True Whig Party’ (TWP) for over a century: they excluded sixteen other indigenous ethnic groups until their overthrow in 1980 (Seyon, 1998, p. 11). This was how Liberian society became polarised and identity issues became an identifiable problem in their socio-economic and political life. It is questionable whether this native/settlers antagonism created by the returned slaves was an immediate or remote cause of the conflicts in Liberia: Did it have an impact on the conflicts to the extent that it contributed to escalate and fuel the conflicts?



Figure 4: Map of Liberia showing ethnic groups: Courtesy map of the world.com

The returned slaves saw the natives the way they were perceived by their former Western slave masters and justified the exploitation of the natives based on cultural inferiority (Konneh, 1996). During this time of social segregation, natives could not vote and there were sexual and marital restrictions — even educated natives were restricted from government positions. Omonijo (1990) and Krijn Peter (2000) posits that the over one hundred years of American-Liberian rule and marginalisation of native (African-Liberians) created hatred and tension. The non-inclusiveness of the native indigenes was a critical factor in shaping the socio-political landscape of Liberia and this contradiction is essential to understanding the political disputes, which defined and influenced the nature and pattern of violence.

A key question is how far the pattern of contradiction, either directly or indirectly, influenced the conflicts. Dolo (1996) argue that the monopoly of economic and political power by the American-Liberians engendered friction with the indigenous population. “The indigenous Liberians did not benefit from education that was being provided by churches and missionaries in the heartland of Liberia and thus making it impossible to compete with the American-Liberians ruling class” (Huband, 1998, p. 33). Huband further observe that the natives were important as far as taxes were concerned, even though they were not allowed to vote nor were they consulted on public policy matters. Evidently, the minority ruling class saw itself as omnipotent and, therefore, did not encourage indigenous initiatives or participation.

This marginalisation led to a minor conflict in 1875, when the *Cuttington College* and later even the *University of Liberia* denied admission to the indigenous African-Liberians until the 1950s, when it finally changed its policy of non-admission to indigenous (Ellis, 1999, p. 67). As a prelude to American-Liberian domination, an apprenticeship law was enacted in 1838, allowing American-Liberian families to keep sons and daughters of African-Liberians in their homes until age twenty-one for boys and eighteen for girls (Gershoni, 1997, p. 27). The

purpose of this was to educate them into the American-Liberian way of life, allowing them to integrate into the American-Liberian society.

American-Liberians have been pivotal actors in the tribal war of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries among the ethnic indigenes. According to Osaghae (1998, p .133), American-Liberians have long been manipulating ethnic tensions amongst the African-Liberians, by deliberately fostering jealousy, divisiveness and exclusion through the artificial creation of the coastal native community/hinterland native community dichotomy. This led to conflicts and long-time feuds, hence creating an intra-ethnic dichotomy undermining any chance of future African-Liberian nationalism. Hauss (2003 p. 123), referred to this as the “instrumental manipulation which created political suspicion among the natives, and culminated collective grievances and delegitimized inclusiveness”. Understanding how American-Liberians created a closed and genuinely exclusive form of American-Liberian nationalism was vital to understanding how nascent political disputes can escalate and, henceforth, fuel the conflicts in Liberia.

The suppression of oppositions, coupled with the economic hardship of the time, was later to lead to the brutal military overthrow and the bloodletting, which resulted in the execution of the entire Tolbert’s family, members of the ruling the TWP and leading American-Liberian elites. The brutality on the American-Liberian was precipitated by long hatred, and how rival African-Liberian perceived them. The natives see it as an opportunity to avenge the long years of oppression and political isolation. Although defeated, the American-Liberians never gave up the fight to regain prominence and, henceforth, sponsored Charles Taylor, an American Liberian, in his effort to topple the military junta.

According to Dolo (2007, p. 55), the American-Liberians sponsored Taylor’s insurgency: they provided financial resources, both from within and outside Liberia, and used their international connections with the United States to see that he escaped from jail in America.

Furthermore, American-Liberians used their connections with the Ivory Coast government to ensure that they allowed Taylor to use their territory as a launching and recruitment ground for his insurgency as he attacked Liberia from Nimba County in Ivory Coast (Ellis, 1999, p. 74). Dolo (2007) and Ellis (1999) evinced how the American-Liberians became involved in the civil war, which was later to engulf the entire sub-region. Political identity antagonism between the American-Liberians and African-Liberians was at the base of the issues that contributed to escalate and fuel the civil wars in Liberia.

During the civil war proper as noted by Huband (1996) and Ebo (2005), American-Liberians gave covert support, particularly to Taylor and other rebel groups, as a way of provoking sentiments between the various ethnic groups involved in the conflict. The American-Liberians used their strong business and economic power to provide finance and arms to support the NPFL and regain their fading political position and relevance. The Tolbert family used their connections with the family of then-President of Ivory Coast, whose daughter married Tolbert's son to gather support outside Liberia following the brutal murder of prominent members of their family (Ebo, 2005). Whilst Dolo (1996), Ellis (1999), Huband (1996) consider political identity as one of the causes of the civil war in Liberia. This study only uses their analyses to outline how it impacted to influence the nature of violence. Next, I examine how ethnic politics amongst the various African native indigenes impacted to fuel the Liberian conflicts.

Apart from political identity, ethnic politics served as a tool of violence in Liberia. Here I examined the primary African-Liberian ethnic groups, which were directly involved in the conflicts, the principal actors, and the fractionalisation of rebel groups and tribal militia fighters. The civil war in Liberia shows how ethnic characteristics of the warring actors and factions fuelled intense violence. The new military regime of Doe that took over the mantle of power from the American-Liberian soon polarised the indigenous African by favouring his own ethnic group, the Kranh; this marked the start of ethnic blood bath and Charles

Taylor later capitalised on this to rein terror on the people of Liberia. This ethnic turbulence eventually led to two violent civil wars from 1989 to 1996 and 1999 to 2003 (Osaghae, 1998). The ethnic rift pitched four ethnic groups against each other: the Krahn and Mandingo fought the Gio and Mano. According to Qutram (1999, p. 167), the rivalry was marked by intense hostilities as never been witnessed before in the long history of ethnic feuds between these groups.

President Doe placed members of his small ethnic group, the Krahn, in positions of authority, which increased suspicion within his inner cabinet; this, in turn, pitted the other ethnic groups against the Krahn, who comprised only 5% of the population (Ellis, 1999: 145). Of the twenty-seven cabinet members of the 'People's Redemption Council' (PRC), ten were Krahn; henceforth, new Krahn ethnocism emerged (Canby, 2006, p. 77). This led to politicisation of ethnicity, as the Krahn ascended to new heights in socio-political and economic status. According to Jaye (2003), Doe and his Krahn people also aligned and favoured the Mandingo, who makes up only 4 percent of the population. Although the Mandingo had had a historical presence in Liberia since the 18th century, Liberians considered them outsiders because they were originally Guineans Adebayo. (2002). This single reason accounted for the anger of the other ethnic groups about the prominence the Mandingo enjoyed under Doe's regime and, invariably, influenced the kind of violence meted to the Mandingo by other ethnic groups.

The outsider's characterisation of the Mandingo was also to play an important part in the cross border involvement of Guineans Mandingo and the Guinean government in the conflicts in Liberia (Konneh, 1996). This not only multiplied the conflict actors, but also fuelled the intensity of the civil wars. Doe's alienation of the Gio and Mano, alongside his alignment with the Mandingo — which had a major presence in Nimba County — led to the resentment which fostered the rage of the Gio and Mano and the other African-Liberian ethnic group (Huband, 1998). Huband further stated that the resentment led to violence

against the Mandingo by the Gio and Mano; which resulted in the Mandingo forming their own rebel group just as Prince Yormie Johnson, a Gio, and formerly Taylor's 'NPFL' member captured and executed Doe in 1990. The 'United Liberian Movement for Democracy' (ULIMO) was an alliance between ethnic Krahn, mainly former 'Armed Forces of Liberia' (AFL) members loyal to Doe, and the Mandingo ethnic group.

The complex intra-ethnic dimension of the conflicts began to show early, as 'ULIMO' split into 'ULIMO-J,' led by Roosevelt Johnson; and 'ULIMO-K,' a Mandingo Muslim ethnic faction led by Alhaji Koroma. This was due to the ethnic feud between them and the Krahn (Outram, 1999, p. 355). The important characteristic of an intra-ethnic conflict is that conflicting parties define themselves ethnically and pursue a program of ethnic liberation or ethnic domination, which could possibly include genocide (Boas, et al., 2008). The civil war which ensued in 1989 was characterised by brutal, ethnic conflict; subsequently, according to Gershoni (1997, p. 56), the conflicts became less ethnic and more ethno-factional. While I agree with Gershoni that the conflict became ethno-factional, I believe this was due to the emergence of mixed ethnic alliances, which developed amongst various ethnic groups during the conflict. This, however, did not make the conflict less ethnic; rather, it became a deeply ethnically rooted violence.

The violence committed by President Samuel Doe's 'Armed Forces of Liberia' (AFL) against the Gio and Mano ethnic groups — and later by Charles Taylor's 'National Patriotic Front of Liberia' (NPFL) against the Mandingo and Krahn ethnic groups — was exceedingly vicious, resulting in accusations of genocide from the international community (Outram, 1997, p. 361; Ellis, 1999, p. 183). Whilst Harris (1999), Konneh (1996) and Outram (1997) see ethnicity as an immediate cause of the conflicts in Liberia, others like Ellis (1999) and Gershoni (1997) view ethnicity as an underlying factor in the lead up to the conflicts. This study recognises the impact of ethnicity on the conflicts and, more importantly, use the

analyses of their findings to clarify the extent to which it fuelled and sustain the intensity of the civil war.

Doe's transformation from military government to an elected president in an election marked by fraud further entrenched ethnicity, thus alienating other ethnic groups and particularly his comrades. In 1985, the Doe second in command, Quiwonkpa, subsequently, launched raids on government offices in Nimba County; and, in retaliation, Doe ordered his soldiers of Krahn dominated 'AFL' units into Nimba County, which are predominantly by Gios and Mano ethnic group, and they killed 3000 people, looting and burn down their villages (Ellis, 1999, p. 58; Pham, 2005, p. 84). The Gio and Mano retaliated by killing thousands of Krahn and Mandingo to avenge this atrocities. This rivalry between the Gio/Mano and Krahn/Mandingo escalated into the start of the civil war. This single event set the context for the intense ethnic rivalry and bloodletting. Later a failed coup attempt by Quiwonkpa was to spark another vicious response by Doe's 'AFL' (Ellis, 1999, p. 57; Pham, 2005: 85)¹¹. As a result of this, "Gio's and Mano's were purged from the armed forces and were subject to discrimination in employment, to extortion, looting and killing by agents of Doe's regime" (Outram, 1997, p. 60). The state apparatus was used by his regime to fuel intra-ethnic struggle and this heightened ethnic feud and increased the possibilities for intense conflicts.

Furthermore, Doe fuelled ethnic tensions by giving carte blanche citizenship to all Mandingos to spite the Gio and Mano, who refused to recognise them as Liberians, because the Mandingos are religious Muslims who view Gio's and Mano's as infidels due to their adherence to either African religions or to Christianity (Ellis, 1999, p. 61; Konneh, 1996, p. 152). Also, as a result of the crushing defeat suffered in Nimba County by July 1990, Doe's Krahn soldiers retaliated by murdering as many Monrovia-based Gio and Mano as possible (Konneh, 1996). In turn, the Gio and Mano retaliated by summarily executing civilian Kranh

¹¹ Ellis (1999), Pham (2005), Outram (1997) and Harris (1999) traced the ethno/political identity nature of the conflicts in Liberia during the Doe and Taylor regimes.

and Mandingo peoples near Paynesville, east of Monrovia (Williams, 2006, 45). It is important to note here that Ellis (1999), Konneh (1996) and Williams (2006) perceived the nature of intra-ethnic violence to be a major cause of the conflicts. Outram (1997) had argued further that it was a tool in the hand of the ruling elites to further their selfish ambitions. By contrast, this thesis uses their analyses to show that ethnicity was a conflict factor that impacted to influence the conflicts such that it escalated it.

It is also important to note that the four groups involved in these ethnic conflicts are only about a quarter of the total Liberian population; however, they were the most prominent at that time, because they were members of the ruling regime (Outram, 1997, p. 358). Taylor capitalised on the already existing ethnic polarisation, by invading Liberia through Nimba County from the neighbouring Ivory Coast (Williams, 2006; Huband, 1998). Doe has attempted to repel the invasion, by unleashing further brutal counter attack of his Kranh dominated army on Nimba County; this, in turn, made the Nimba people and their kin in Ivory Coast to join the rebel forces of Taylor in large numbers. Taylor, himself an American-Liberian, also had the support of the American-Liberians elites, who were relegated to the background in the Doe government (Ellis, 1999, p. 34). This inter-locking relationship between and amongst these various identity grouping was a potent conflict factor that escalated the conflict.

The intra-ethnic affinity mix dynamics was a key element during the conflicts, as the various ethnic groups within Liberia, although scattered across the country with minor cultural differences, did give support to each other during the conflicts. The Gola and Kissi see themselves as long distance blood relations; the Kru and Krahn also share an ancestral relation; the Kpelle, Gio, Mano, and even the Loma share cultural ties; whilst the Mende and Mandingo ethnic group also share some sort of historical similarities (Konneh, 1996, p. 141). As it transpired, these groups were sympathetic to the course of the conflict and supported

their relatives. The cross border ethnic dynamics is discussed in the last major section of this chapter that focuses on porous borders.

Taylor and Doe used elite manipulation to further their selfish ambitions and this inflamed the conflicts. There is no doubt Taylor and Doe murdered and plundered, alongside treating the state as their personal property when they were in power. This massive ethnic cleansing and genocidal tactics resulted in over 300,000 refugees during the first Liberian civil war alone (Ellis, 1999, p. 57). Taylor won the support of the disaffected Mano and Gio ethnic groups who were discriminated against under Doe's regime, meaning the Gio citizens of Nimba County in particular joined the 'NPFL' in large numbers. The Mandingo's who had made themselves unpopular by profiting from Doe's rule and by acquiring land in Nimba — where they were not considered to have hereditary rights — also became entangled in this multi-dimensional ethnic bloodletting. Atrocities supported by both Doe and Taylor became commonplace during 1990's, as the 'NPFL' moved into Lofa County and reportedly slaughtered 500 Mandingos (Ellis, 1999, p. 79). The 'AFL' of Doe entered *St. Peter is Lutheran Church* in Monrovia in late July and killed 600 displaced citizens of war of mainly Gio and Mano ethnicity (Pham, 2004, p. 101). The 'NPFL' were testing people for their ability to speak Gio or Mano dialects and any failure to do so result in immediate death (Outram, 1999, p. 360). After the Krahn dominated 'AFL' of Doe was eventually ousted, "roughly two thirds of Liberia's 125,000 Krahn had fled the country and the remainder were at risk of genocide" (*Human Rights Watch*, 2006: 2; Gershoni, 1997; p. 68).

Ellis (1999), Pham (2004), Gershoni (1997) and Outram, (1999) argued that intra-ethnic violence led to the formation of new rebel and militia groups and this contributed to the multiplicity of conflict actors and channels of violence. This increased ethnic nationalism, as leadership became localised and thus easier to seek support from their tribes and recruitment. For instance, the anti-Taylor militia, primarily made up of Krahn and Mandingo, was called the 'United Liberation Movement of Liberia' (ULIMO) was led by a Krahn, Raleigh Seekie.

'ULIMO' would subsequently split in 1994 into its Mandingo (ULIMO-K) led by a Mandingo, Alhaji Kromah; and Krahn (ULIMO-J) led by a Krahn, General Roosevelt Johnson (Gershoni, 1997, p. 44). By 1991, the 'Liberian United Defence Front' (LUDF), greatly made up of Krahn and Mandingo, was created along ethnic lines and led by a Krahn, Albert Karpeh. In a similar vein, in 1993, the predominantly Krahn 'Liberian Peace Council' (LPC) came into existence and was led by a Krahn, George Boley (Huband, 1998). Following that, in 1994, a local militia, the Lofa Defence Force (LDF), in Lofa County was led by local resident, Francois Massaquoi. Later on, Charles Benny led the 'Liberians United for Reconciliation and Democracy' (LURD) (Ellis, 1999, p. 79). I agree with Ellis (1999) and Pham (2004) that the entrant of various rebel groups and tribal militias was a noticeable conflict dynamic that exacerbated the conflict.

Taylor's 'NPFL' also had its own fair share of internal wrangling, which led to a split in its regular members. According to Pham (2004), Prince Johnson, a Gio from Nimba County, retrieved from Taylor's 'NPFL' to form a splinter group called the 'Independent National Patriotic Front of Liberia' (I-NPFL). He further stated that this split was due to Taylor, an American-Liberian, treating Gio and Mano in the 'NPFL' as second-class humans to be used as pawns for American-Liberian political aspirations. The widespread violence was such that, by 1992, as many as 700,000 of the 2.5 million Liberians were refugees in other West African states (Lowenkopf, 1995, p. 94). By 1995, this figure had risen to an estimated 727,000 (*International Crisis Group*, Jan. 2004). The civil war turned into a multi-ethnic conflict, as they appealed to their community at home and abroad and even to religious organisations locally and internationally.

The climax came when the international community through the West African sub-regional group 'ECOWAS' established and deployed troops from its 'ECOWAS Monitoring Group' (ECOMOG) to Liberia on peacekeeping operations. Consequently, in 1995, a peace agreement was signed (Adebayo, 2002). Presidential and legislative elections were organised

in 1997 in the place where Charles Taylor's 'National Patriotic Party' (NPP) had won and inaugurated as the democratically elected President of Liberia. This marked the end of the first phase of the fourteen-year long civil war. The new Taylor regime, however, could not tolerate any opposition and fighting eventually broke out between Taylor's 'NPLF' and the main rebel groups, the 'Liberians United for Reconciliation and Democracy' (LURD), led by Charles Benny and the 'Movement for Democracy in Liberia' (MODEL). Taylor continued to fuel ethnic divisions, by sacking 2,400-2,600 former government personnel, many of whom were ethnic Krahn in former President Doe's government (Seyon, 1998, p. 24).

This increased the wave of violence as the conflict became more volatile; giving the leaders of the splinter rebel groups a chance to appeal to their people for more support. The sacking of these government workers worsened the violence as most of them now had to join rebel groups for a means of livelihood. The *United Nations Security Council* report (2003) estimated that over 200,000 people died in the second Liberian civil war and over 700,000 Liberians were refugees in the following countries: 227,500 in Ivory Coast; 324,000 in Guinea; 125,000 in Sierra Leone; 6,000 in Ghana, Gambia, and Mali. The report concluded that the numbers of the displaced represented about one-fifth of the entire population (*Human Rights Watch*, Jan. 2006). According to the *United States Agency for International Development* (USAID) report on Liberia (2005), the Liberian civil war had horrific consequences for its people, with over 10 percent of the population — most of who were innocent civilians — were murdered. Out of the 60,000 rebel fighters recruited by the warlords, about 60 percent were child soldiers; most of them are now suffering from drug addiction and post-traumatic stress syndrome. Women and girls suffered the most, as they were raped and murdered by all the warring factions (Silberfein & Conteh, 2006).

From the analysis of the review, it is possible to clarify how what I have refer to as a 'bi-identity dichotomy': political identity (the American-Liberian/African-Liberian factor); and ethnic politics, which was more of the antagonism amongst the various (African-Liberian)

ethnic groups, was regime sponsored. It shows how the American-Liberian segregation and divisiveness polarised the Liberia society. It also examines how the regimes of Doe and Taylor entrenched ethnic division and how it exacerbated the civil war. Again, this section used the review to show how intra ethnic feud led to the multiplicity of rebel and militia groups. The phantom killings, displacement and maiming of innocent civilians by all the factions in the conflict could be attributed to their resolves to eliminate other identity groups. The next section will focus on Sierra Leone conflict.

2.3 SIERRA LEONE

This sub-section focuses on ethnic and political identity factor in the Sierra Leone conflicts. There is continued debate by several scholars that ethnic and political identity divisions are less salient in Sierra Leone than many other African countries and, more notably, were not significant conflict factors (Aboagye, 2007; Zack-Williams, 1999; Bangura, 2000; Davies, 2000; Ferme, 2001; Keen, 1998). This claim is predicated on the fact that the country never experienced any major conflict as a result and, even during the conflict, the 'RUF' rebels targeted people from every ethnic group throughout the country. The statistical analysis of documented human rights violations also shows that no ethnic group was disproportionately represented amongst 'RUF' victims (Ferme, 2001). It further stated that identity grievances were not rallying cries during the war and all major fighting sides were explicitly multi-ethnic (Keen 1998).

However, Ndumbe (2001) asserts that the civil war in Sierra Leone was eventually a struggle of various ethnic groups to control the diamond-rich mines of the country. Nevertheless, it is important to note that this struggle was borne out of regional divide. Conversely, many scholars have also argued that ethnic diversity is an important impediment to economic and political development, since economic growth rates are slower in ethnically diverse countries (Esman & Herring, 2001; Alesina *et al.*, 2003; Fearon, 2003). This means that the provision

of public goods often suffers in diverse communities both in wealthy and less developed countries (Alesina *et al.* 1999; Miguel & Gugerty, 2005).

As pointed out by Alesina *et al.* (2003), Fearon (2003) and Miguel & Gugerty (2005), however, identity issues are central to understanding the socio-political and economic phenomena in a country with diverse identity, which eventually can fuel civil violence. As the conflicts progressed, ethnic/regional alliances of the two political parties, the 'SLPP' and the 'APC,' the tribal origin of political actors/senior rebels impacted upon the conflict, even during peace negotiations.

Sierra Leone, similar to Liberia, did have a history of returned slaves; these settlers were known as Creoles and settled in Freetown. Sierra Leone is also a multi-ethnic society, sharing cross border relations with Liberia, Guinea and Ivory Coast. The founding of the colony of Sierra Leone in the late 18th century coincided with the end of slave trade and the return of these former slaves known as Krios (Creoles) to settle Freetown (Zack-Williams, 1999, p. 81). Due to their special links with the British, the smaller but more educated population of Creoles enjoyed a relatively privileged political position during the early colonial period. Due to growing tensions between the Creoles and ethnic Africans, however, the British progressively limited their political power.

The Creoles rose to positions of authority in the colonial government, but the British also promoted local indigenous chiefs loyal to them. Despite this, the divergence in the governmental structures of the Colony and the Protectorate created social differences between Freetown residents (Creoles), who were Christians, and protectorate Africans natives (Abdullah, 1998). The Mende and Temne chiefs revolted against colonial authorities in 1898: during the so-called 'Hut Tax Wars,' they targeted Creole traders and settlers, as well as British authorities (Ndumbe (2001). It could, therefore, be argued that the political

history of Sierra Leone cannot be referred to as a state of perpetual peace when it comes to the relationship between the Creoles and the Natives during the colonial era.

One consequence of the violence experienced during the 'Hut Tax Wars' was a growing British realisation of widespread animosity between the Creole and ethnic Sierra Leoneans; as a result, they began to limit Creoles' political power. By 1917, the British replaced the Creoles from positions of authority in the Protectorate and replaced by less qualified British Whites (Wyse, 1990, p. 27). Kieh (2005) observes that the British also began to allow more representatives from the ethnic Africans into the 'Legislative Council' and the Colonial Governor, Sir Ransford Slator, later dissolved the 'Freetown City Council,' the most important government body dominated by Creoles. The political marginalisation of the Creoles in Sierra Leone is in sharp contrast to the unbroken political and economic supremacy of the American-Liberians in Liberia. This gave the country's two largest ethnic groups, the Mende and Temne, the political advantage over them. A factor that ensured that despite Sierra Leone's history of returned slaves, political identity because of settlers/native syndrome did not impact on the conflicts in Sierra Leone. As Sierra Leone made its transition to independence in 1961, the primary source of political conflict had shifted considerably to political struggle and antagonism among indigenous ethnic groups. Next, I examine if ethnic politics amongst the indigenous Sierra Leoneans played a part in the build-up to or during the conflicts.

Sierra Leone has been divided ethnically and by region since independence in 1961, as the Mende and Temne, two of the thirteen ethnic groups, have used it to mobilise political support (Richards, 1996; Silberfein, 2004). When Sierra Leone was, for the first time, given more political responsibility in the election of 1951, the protectorate-based 'Sierra Leone People's Party' (SLPP), led by Sir Milton Margai from the Mende ethnic group, emerged victorious (Abraham, 1976, p.205). On the attainment of political independence in 1961, Margai emerged as the first Prime Minister; upon his death in 1964, his brother Albert

Margai succeeded him (Gberie, 2001). This allowed the 'SLPP' to become more of a regional party, drawing its support primarily from the Mende network in the South and East — this was the beginning of the ethnic/regional politics in Sierra Leone.

The opposition party 'All People's Congress' (APC) quickly appealed and attracted the support of the Temne and Limba people in the North, as well as other smaller ethnic groups like the Loko, Mandingo and Susu (Abraham, 1976, p.206). Regional and ethnic factors were thus a significant issue to the build-up of the general elections, which followed in March 1967. Siaka Stevens, candidate of the 'All People's Congress' (APC) and the Mayor of Freetown, was elected as the new Prime Minister of Sierra Leone. The regional political struggle was so intense during this era that a military coup led by Brigadier David Lansana ousted the new Prime Minister within a few hours of him taking office. Lasana, however, was toppled within a few months in another military coup on March 23 1968 by a senior military officer, Brigadier Andrew Juxon-Smith. This instability continued: Juxon-Smith was also overthrown just a month into power on April 1968, by a group of junior military officers called the 'Anti-Corruption Revolutionary Movement' (ACRM), led by Brigadier John Amadu Bangura (Kieh, 2005, p. 191).

Studies by Sawyer (2004), Richard (1996), Silberfein (2004), Zack-Williams (1999) and Christensen *et al.* (2008) argued that this constant instability gradually turned Sierra Leone into a failed state, as a result of mal-administration, corruption, un-employment and economic stagnation. Bangura (2002), Gberie (2001) and Davies (2000), however, suggested that the constant military coup and instability between 1967 and up to the onset of the conflicts, and even during the conflicts was compounded by unsettled ethno-regional political struggle between the 'SLPP' and 'APC,' which found its way into the military politics. It could, therefore, be said that the dissatisfaction and long-standing regional and ethnic power tussles and competition in the rank and file of the military propelled the constant military coups.

Siaka Stephen was re-instated as Prime Minister, but his reign was “marked by a systematic subversion of the formal state apparatus and the growth of a large informal economy, much of it based on an illicit diamond trade” (Campbell, 2002, p. 73). Gberie (2005) observed that within two months of assuming office, Stephen purged the army of its senior Mende officers, placing two northerners in charge — this was mainly to entrench himself in power and ensure the survival of his regime by surrounding himself with his ethnic group. Gberie (2005) further argued that Stephen stirred up ethnic tensions by closing the railway on economic grounds; although it was widely believed that this was an effort to cut off the Mende who had voted against the ‘APC.’ This was seen as an attempt to favour the North and, henceforth, made the ethnic/regional animosity more glaring.

Abdullah (1998), Gberie (2000) and Konneh (1996) traced ethno-regional influences to the socio-political and economic problems which were seen to be an underlying factor leading to the conflicts. To them ethnic politics was regionalised by the two political parties that represented the two major ethnic groups, with the support of other minority ethnic groups in the region. Abraham (1998), Sawyer (2004) and Richard (1996), on the other hand, went further to argue that ethnic/regional political alliances are the causes of the conflicts that later engulfed the country. According to Abraham (1998), the civil war was because of the irresponsibility of regional political and military elite; this continued to the build-up of the civil war and even during the war itself. It, therefore, means that the conflict cannot be discussed without making inferences to the ethnicisation of regional political parties.

Richard (2003), Bangura (2000), Ndumbe (2001) and Gberie (2005) have argued that since independence, the Mende and Temne — two of the thirteen ethnic groups, each comprising approximately 30 percent of the population — constituted a bipolar ethnic division in multicultural Sierra Leone and have since manifested in the elections organised in the country since. The ethnic and regional politics in Sierra Leone did in fact help to galvanise elite support and behaviour, which impacted on the nature of participation by various ethnic

groups and thus influenced the outcome of the conflict. According to Gberie (2004, p. 34), the birth of 'APC' emanated from dissatisfaction among Northerners, due to a perceived Mende hegemony in government; as a solution, the 'APC' espoused socialism and promised the Northerners equality of opportunity. In 1961, Sir Milton Margai, the prime minister and leader of the majority party 'SLPP,' ordered the arrest of the most prominent members of the 'APC,' including Siaka Stephen, to suppress any meaningful opposition, which could challenge the political hegemony of the 'SLPP' (Ndumbe, 2001). The nature of politics here exemplifies what Kaldor (2007) and other New War theorists have referred to as 'instability within a failed state.'

This evidence points to the fact that the civil wars of 1991 to 2002 in Sierra Leone were exacerbated by the political struggles between the political elite and various ethnic groups to control political power. This, invariably, escalated the conflicts and paved the way for the tragedy that the world witnessed. Theorists like Posner (2005), Fearon, (2003) and O'Tuathail, (2000) have all suggested that the sizes of ethnic groups are mobilising factors that have the tendencies to influence the pattern of future conflicts. I would like to add here that the nature of Sierra Leonean politics greatly influenced the pattern of political discourse and later violence. Bangura (2000) and Gberie (2005) argued that the age-long existence of regional separation has been a cause of some major political crises and coups, as the two political parties, the 'Sierra Leone People's Party' (SLPP) and the 'All People's Congress' (APC), selfishly pursued their quest for political gains during elections.

Ethnicity was most evident during the conflicts in the formation of the different ethnic and tribal militias groups, also known as the 'Civil Defence Force' (CDF). They were compensating for the lack of a national force to counteract the rebel force 'Revolutionary United Front' (RUF). They actively participated in the conflict and were controlled by ethnic political/military elites within and outside the government, who constantly supplied them with weapons and finances (Gberie, 2001).

Figure 5: Map of Sierra Leone showing ethnic groups: Courtesy Infoplease.com



The first and most prominent of these groups, the Kamajor, formed in South-Eastern Sierra Leone in 1996 and consisted of mostly Mende people: traditional hunters, who believe that the war is the work of northerners (Temnes and Limbas) aiming to destroy the resource-rich Mende-dominated southern and eastern parts of Sierra Leone (Abdullah, 2004). Abdullah further stated that, in 2003, the ‘Special Court of Sierra Leone’ (SCSL) indicted Sam Hinga Norman, the deputy defence minister in 1996, who supervised the Kamajor.

The Kamajor militias were wreaking revenge against those they consider the enemy, particularly Limbas, and those from Kakeni, Binkolo and other northern areas (Bangura, 2000). The fighting was between government soldiers and the ‘RUF,’ on one hand; whilst the Kamajors supported the government against the RUF. This intra-ethnic tension and the massacre continued unabated throughout the conflict. This state of affair strongly inflamed the civil war by increasing conflict actors and avenues.

Added to the long age instability in Sierra Leone was when the democratically elected government of President Ahmad Tejan Kabbah was overthrown by a military coup headed by Major Johnny Paul Koroma, an ethnic Temne of the 'Armed Revolutionary Forces' (AFRC) (Abdullah, 2004). This coup was perceived as Temne ethnic group desire to take over power. Abdullah further suggested that the new military regime accused the former President Kabbah of discriminating against other ethnic groups in appointment to high positions in government and favouring the Kamajors. The Kamajors at this point were seen as being loyal to the fallen president and had engaged the new military government soldiers, 'RUF' and the kapras (a civilian militia of the Temne ethnic group in the north, particularly in the Tonkolili District).

This development points to the fact that the civil war that later engulfed Sierra Leone cannot be discussed without reference to these ethnically charged political struggle between the political parties and elites. However, on ninth of March 1998, President Kabbah, with the help of the Nigerian-led peacekeeping forces, 'ECOMOG,' regained the presidency of Sierra Leone; his victory was largely attributed to the Kamajors. From all this, it is understandable how the Mende Kamajor and the Temne Kapras ethnic militia groups became enmeshed in bitter ethnic rivalry with the support of their political and military elites.

The Temne, on the other hand, have historically been involved in disputes over power with the other large ethnic groups in Sierra Leone, particularly the Mende. When the civil war broke out in 1991, the 'RUF', backed by Liberia's Charles Taylor and led by a Temne, Foday Sankoh, launched attacks in eastern Sierra Leone; most of the troops were Temne (Gberie, 2001). The 'RUF' claimed they were fighting the hegemony of Mende in the country, for they complained that the predominantly Mende 'SLPP' had been marginalising non-Mende and using ethnic criterion in appointing ministers (Conteh-Morgan & Dixon-Fyle, 1999, p. 67). These unsettled political issues and bitter rivalry between the two major groups was a basis for continued violence. This also refute the claim that the conflict in Sierra Leone was

free of ethnic politics, contrary to these claims ethnic and regional forces was at play prior to and during the civil war.

With the coup of May 1997, however, the 'RUF' was urged by its leader, Sankoh, to support the new military government, led by Major Johnny Koroma, a Limba; whilst the Kamajors were fighting the government and the 'RUF' (Hoffman, 2004). The Temne have largely supported the 'RUF' during the civil war; as a result, they have been involved in intra-group communal warfare, mainly with the Mende, who have tended to support the government. This criss-cross of complex ethnic support and rivalry further supports the claims of the New War theory that multiple ethnic conflict channels can exacerbate civil conflicts.

Apart from the Kamajor that represent the Mende, there were other tribal militia groups: the Kapras for the Temne, the Tamaboros in the North-East, and the Donsos from Kono district in the East (Konneh, 1996). The entrant of various local militias multiplied the conflict actors, hence making peace negotiation almost impossible. These militia groups entered the conflict at different times and fought against the 'RUF' and government troops, depending on which side their political elite belonged. According to (Koroma, 2004, p. 34), despite several claims that the civil war itself was started by the 'RUF' — with a vague populist agenda — the ethnic dynamics are more so important conflict index that needs to be explored.

From the analysis of the review of identity and conflicts in Sierra Leone, it is possible to understand why the conflict in Sierra Leone cannot be viewed as purely an identity conflict. Firstly, political identity did not impact on the conflict, as the British colonialist ensured that the Creole did not have the kind of influence as the American-Liberians. Although some have claimed that ethnicity does not have a place in Sierra Leone; however, there is the need to factor in the ethnic/regional divide of the country — enshrined by the political elite — immediately before and after independence. The regional divide polarised the country into

two political parties, the SLPP and the APC. This eroded the government apparatus and ended up making the country ungovernable. This also greatly influenced all the military and counter military coups the country had witnessed since independence. Alesina *et al.* (2003) argue that the nature of political socialisation and the eventual civil war in Sierra Leone represents a configuration mix of ethnic issues. The literature on cross-border ethnic mix and the conflict will be discussed under porous border and the conflict. The next section will examine illicit exploitation of natural resources and the civil wars in both countries.

2.4 NATURAL RESOURCES AND CONFLICT

This section reviews the literature on illicit natural resources exploitation and in Liberia and Sierra Leone. Diamonds were perhaps the most valuable assets available to all parties involved in the conflict in Sierra Leone, for providing funds for the Revolutionary United Front (RUF) and maintaining Charles Taylor in power in neighbouring Liberia (Adebajo, 2008; Campbell, 2002). This supports the New War framework, which posits that one of the most noticeable negative impacts of the end of the Cold War was the increase in lethal violence financed by illicit natural resources and extractive resources that has posed new global security dilemma (Kaldor, 2007). It appears that the funds from sales of diamonds in Sierra Leone, as well as timber, rubber stocks, diamond, gold and iron-ore in Liberia, were used to fund the civil wars that engulf that sub-region.

New War theorists have argued that natural resources endowments enriched a particular war economy especially in Post-Cold War conflicts (Holsti, 1996; Duffield, 2001). Furthermore, the end of the Cold War has prompted new focus on natural resources as a means of financing wars since patron super power finance have dwindled (Cramer, 2006). This illicit war economy in natural resources brought about distinctiveness to the dynamics of conflicts in Liberia and Sierra Leone. Natural resources exploitation and illegal exploration have influenced the nature and dynamics of conflicts; however, there has been a variation of views of how it influences, causes or sustains conflict.

The work of Collier (2007), Berdal & Merlon (2000), De Soysa (2002) and Collier *et al.* (2001, 2002) has, over the years, focussed on empirical understanding of the varying ways that economic factors combine with political, strategic, and ideational factors to shape the onset, character, and duration of conflicts. Others like Reno (1999), Collier and Sambanis (2005), Ayodele (2008), Collier and Bannor (2003), Ross (2003), Campbell (2002 and 2004), Auty (2004), Hirsch (2000, 2001), Collier and Benton (2003), and Le Billon (2005) have analysed how natural resources can fund violence. Alao (2007), Gberie (2005), Fearon & Laitin (2003) and Doyle & Sambanis (2006) have all focussed on how natural resources can motivate the desire for the continuation of conflict

The 'resource curse' hypothesis was first noted in the work of economists (Sachs & Warner, 1995; 2001). They applied their analysis to explain how the availability of natural resources can lead to underdevelopment, due to the inability of these states to convert resources to wealth. While Lee (2006); Stephan & Power (2012); Ayodele (2008) termed the exploration and mining activity in Africa as the New Scramble for Africa. The availability of natural resources, especially those of high value, like diamonds was the resources of choice in the conflicts under study, although there were other forest resources and cash crops. These were frequently linked to an upsurge of instability, violence and civil wars in Liberia and Sierra Leone.

Collier & Benton (2003), however, suggests that the tendency for the availability of resources to lead to violent conflict can be debatable. They also explored if the determinants of war onset are also significant determinants of war duration. They concluded that indeed primary commodities were insignificant in the duration model, but cannot be completely accepted as the reason for the onset of war. It is evident from countries like Angola, the DRC, Sierra Leone and Liberia, that an abundance of natural resources can play a role in fuelling civil war (Cramer, 2006; Ndikumana & Emizet, 2005). Extensive evidence suggests

that civil wars only occur if the economic conditions exist to make them financially viable (Collier & Hoeffler, 2002).

It is true that economic conditions can motivate war, but examples like Somalia and Rwanda have shown that civil war can also occur in states with no contentious natural resources issues (Malesevic, 2008). Despite this, however, the Interpretation of competition for resources does not provide an entirely convincing explanation for civil wars in Liberia and Sierra Leone. There are the tendencies to overuse the natural resources model in explaining the causes of civil war, as this can limit the ability to explain non-economic causes of conflict, or over emphasis on a single cause factor. It also fails to recognise that a government's ability to fight can often depends more on support from regional allies than economic capacity (Ndikumana & Emizet, 2005).

Collier & Hoeffler (2004) were later to argue that the existence of a loot-able resource base is both a motive for rebellion and a facilitating factor, allowing them to conclude that civil wars are motivated by either 'greed' or 'grievance.' Greed, according to them, is the desire for private gain and grievances and unsettled social and political issues that can lead to conflicts. The Liberia and Sierra Leone conflict dynamics cannot in the strict sense be simplified as a conflict of over greed, because natural resources was not at the base of the conflict neither was it a motive, although it did serve as a financing and sustaining factor (Francis, 2007). What is, however, true was that as the conflicts progress the uncontrolled exploitation of these natural resources in Liberia and Sierra Leone began to fill the greed appetite of the rebel leaders, politician and military oligarchy. The long standing grievances over the allocation of resources wealth could also not be attributable to have caused the conflict or a motive behind the violence. Although it was part of the contradictions out of the mis-management of this resource wealth that led to state collapse and invariably conflicts.

The way in which natural resources provide rents to combatants is also relevant to the duration of conflicts under study as war is an expensive venture. Berdal & Malone (2000) rightly observed that criminal networks ideally will interact with belligerents in civil wars and this serves as a source of rapid personal enrichment, and of funding for weapons and other supplies to keep war efforts running. Gurr (2002), Berdal & Malone (2000) and Elbadawi & Sambanis (2000) have brought these together in the concept of *motivation*; however, they have also argued that there must also be *opportunity* — a reasonable chance that the rebels will be able to be successful — and *identity* — a common cause essential for group formation — the funding available from looted resources is clearly relevant here. According to Elbadawi & Sambanis (2000) income from the sale of resources props up existing governments, which in many cases are incompetent, repressive and corrupt and hence give rise to widespread resentment. Keen (2001) argued that the access to natural resources appears to prolong conflicts by disproportionately benefiting insurgents and thus averting decisive military defeat by the government. He also maintained that the will and zeal to continue the violence never ceases as long as they can maintain the tool of violence. While the motivation and opportunity model above look at how resources can motivate government and rebels, Keen, on the other hand, focuses on how it can motivate the rebels. In addition, as Kaldor (2007) puts it, the wartime exploitation can be so profitable to rebels and rogue governments, which make them prefer protracted war to peace in these failed states whose government has lost legitimacy.

Ballentine & Sherman (2003) argue those combatants' incentives for self-enrichment and/or opportunities for insurgent mobilization created by access to natural and financial resources were neither the primary nor sole cause of the separatist and non-separatist conflicts. They, however, concluded that extensive combatant self-financing can complicate and prolonged hostilities, in some cases creating serious impediments to their resolution. Collier & Benton (2003) clearly observed that combatant access to lucrative economic resources has had

important impacts on the duration of civil conflict. This was because natural resources might provide the means for continued warfare or incentives for elite enrichment, especially where these resources can be easily accessed directly by rank and file soldiers rather than through the chain of command. The governments of the conflict states under study had no control over its territory during the conflict and lost the legitimacy of control over its resources. Collier & Benton (2003) concluded that rebel control of lootable resources might serve to strengthen peace spoilers and their capacity to sabotage hard-won peace agreements. Ross (2004) had earlier observed that there is a strong relationship between easy access to lucrative resources and conflicts, and that these types of conflicts, overall, last longer.

Ross (2004), Sambanis (2004), (2001), Omeje (2008) and Ward & Gleditsch, (2002) argued that the association between resource endowment and negative socio-economic and political outcomes is referred to as a *resource curse* and it has resulted in social inequality, high prevalence of poverty and conflict-ridden underdevelopment. Colliers & Dietrich (2000), Hirsch (2001) and *Global Witness* (2003), however, believe that in Liberia (diamonds, rubber stocks and timber), and in Sierra Leone diamond exploitation not only exacerbated poverty and inequality but also fuelled civil wars. The findings of the study by Ballentine & Nitzschke (2003) indicate that economic factors can shape the cause, duration, and character of intra-state conflict in consequential ways, although not necessarily in the ways that some theories would predict. Most importantly, combatant motives of self-enrichment — ‘loot-seeking’ as Ballentine & Sherman (2003, p.12) called it — and economic opportunities for rebel mobilisation created by access to natural and financial resources were not the sole or even primary cause of the conflicts.

According to Berdal & Malone (2000, p. 17), the "marketing of local resources and procurement of arms and supplies" rely on relatively easy access to global networks and markets and the access has become easier due to globalisation of trade. These authors

recognised the roles of the various network of complex local, regional and external involvements in the extractive industry to feed the appetite of European, American and Asian industries. It has also increased the prospects for local elites to benefit economically from continued violence and conflict. Reno (1999) instead seeks to explain internal warfare in terms of economic motivations specifically related to the intensification of transnational commerce in recent decades and to the political economy of violence inside a particular category of states. These states, Reno (1999) maintained, are weak and fragile and do not have any form of control over its territory. According to Keen (1998), another strand of the literature on contemporary civil wars, which could be called 'development literature,' emphasizes the negative consequences (especially economic) of war. These immediate agendas, notably economic agendas, may significantly prolong civil wars: they constitute a vested interest in continued conflict and also tend to create widespread destitution, which itself feeds into economically motivated violence.

Buhaug & Lujala (2001, p. 29) were more specific when stating that civil conflicts "tend to last longer in countries with gemstone deposits". This could be seen as a narrow view as other resources may be involved and since the objective is to finance war, any available resources will do. Since gemstones are easy to sell and buyers are readily available due to their high values, they can in fact provide easy access to funds more than other type of resources in funding and prolonging conflicts. Other studies by Smillie (2000), Lujala *et al* (2005), Silberfein (2004) and Le Billon (2001) analysed the role played by alluvial diamonds in civil wars: they have found that diamonds can prolong armed conflicts. Le Billon (2001) further argued that armed conflicts could be different according to the concentration and the geography of the natural resources. It was stated that when natural resources are proximate, non-state groups that want to challenge the state power could get the control of them only through a *coup d'état* and a change of regime (Le Billon 2001).

The controversy surrounding natural resources and conflict are such that Collier & Hoeffler (2002), for example, find that primary commodities of all types — including oil, minerals, and agricultural goods — are linked to the onset of war. Both Fearon & Laitin (2004) and de Soysa (2002) dispute this claim and suggest that only oil matters. Collier, et al. (2001) recently suggested that primary commodities have no influence on the duration of conflict, a claim that is contradicted by Doyle & Sambanis (2000) and Sambanis (2004). Taking this argument further, Fearon (2003) maintained that contraband commodities, such as diamonds and drugs, make wars last longer. The controversies and contradictions of various studies are unending and will continue for a long time to come. It was for this reason that this study focused on how natural resources can contribute to fuel and sustain the intensity of the conflicts in Liberia and Sierra Leone. As Collier & Hoeffler (2002) argued, rebels do not launch a conflict in anticipation of resource wealth; rather, they used looted resource wealth in the pre-war phase to buy arms and hire soldiers — thus funding the start-up costs of initiating a rebellion.

The long-term civil wars that consumed Liberia and Sierra Leone, for over a decade are representative of the type of endemic warfare that has become more common in the post-Cold War Africa. To clarify, they became a site for a protracted conflict due to their possession of wealth sources — these were thereafter diverted into the hands of an organised rebellion. This especially became the case when these resources became more available over time, as they were freely exchanged for supplies of small arms. The New War theory contends that resource-based conflicts have expanded with the process of globalisation: international trade has reached a new height in the quest to find the raw materials needed to maintain high levels of industrial production (Kaldor, 2007; Holsti, 1996). As the demand for a range of resources continues to climb, transnational companies — linked to alternative political entities that overlap with or replace states and thus eager to expand their inventories —do not necessarily pay close attention to the circumstances under which resources are

acquired (O'Tuathail, 2000). The next sub-section will focus on Liberia and natural resources conflicts.

2.5 LIBERIA

This sub-section focuses on the illicit exploitation of natural resources and the conflict in Liberia. It looks at how the funds generated from the war economy were used to buy weapons and pay fighters. Fragmented by different warring groups that seemingly fought each other for no better reasons than destruction, plunder and theft, the country was presented as a primary example of a 'New War' (Kaldor, 2001). In Liberia, the abundance of subsoil assets — natural capital that is purely renewable — such as timber, rubber stock, iron ore, gold and diamonds, had a direct negative effect on the conflicts and peace negotiation (Lowenkopf, 1995). When Taylor was in control of most of the Liberia's resource-rich territory, he used funds from the sales of these resources to fund his 'NPFL' forces, to great extent, by taxation and/or protection payments from local, European and US businesses (Abrahamson, 2000; Ampleford, 2002; Ayoob, 1995). This, henceforth, resulted in \$8 to \$9 million in monthly revenues for Taylor's government (Lowenkopf, 1995, p. 94). According to Reno (1998, p. 98-99), during the first two years of war, "the total yields of Taylor's warlord economy approached \$200-\$250 million a year." This was the era when Taylor incorporated commercial networks as a quick, cheap, and efficient means of extending his authority; support for this was received by the existing foreign multi-nationals corporations. The Firestone Tire and Rubber Company — which wanted to keep a foothold in Liberia's forest resource market — was one of the most prominent in Taylor's quest to control Liberia's natural resources (Global Witness, 2004; Ebo, 2005).

These foreign companies provided more than just revenue for Taylor, as they also provided other war logistics to assist him in maintaining power and unleashing mayhem on the Liberian people. Taylor and the Firestone Tire and Rubber Company — operating in Liberia since 1926 — reached an agreement: the 'NPFL' provided protection to Firestone; and

Firestone provided communication facilities (e.g., satellite linkups for cellular phones) to the 'NPFL' (Reno, 1998, p 100; Outram, 1999). Although Collier (2007), Collier and Hoeffler (2008) posited that greed and grievances have been known to greatly influence the nature of war, these are not the focus of this research project. In Liberia, it could be argued that there were some greed elements evident in the nature of exploitation. The abundance resources of the country — for instance, timber and iron; gold in the North; and diamonds in Golahun, Lorfa, Gbafolo and Yangaya — were preyed upon by Charles Taylor and other rebel groups to fund the violence, as well as enrich themselves (Global Witness, 2004; Kulah, 1999). The control and access to natural resources and minerals aided the war effort of the different rebel factions, for they constantly squabbled amongst themselves to gain control of the strategic locations of these resources.

Economic opportunities were important in reproducing and undermining the process of conflict and peace in Liberia, given rebels laid claims over the timber plantations in their areas of control, supported by their ethnic group (Adebajo & Rashid, 2004, p.137). Adebajo and Rashid further observed that some of the heaviest fighting in Liberia occurred in areas which were rich in natural resources, such as Tubmanburg, Tapeta and Bomi County, such that over time, such economic calculations came to determine the pattern of the war; henceforth, becoming a major factor in the failure of thirteen peace accords between 1990 and 1996. The relative success and innovativeness with which factions and groups exploited natural resources and negotiated economic deals with European, North American and Asian firms, gave a particularly opportunistic and instrumental edge to the manner in which Liberia's war was fought. According to Ogunleye (1995, p. 86), mining and logging activities were actively going on in 'NPFL' held territories and all the rebel groups were not willing to engage in any peace negotiations, because their businesses were at stake if that happened.

In summary, the Liberian civil wars were complicated by economic actors interested in Liberia's natural resources and these economic factors, henceforth, had a major impact by

providing the funds and resources to fuel the war. The resources for arms deal connected Taylor directly to China, Guinea, Libya and Bukina Faso, who were all indicted in the war trade (Ellis, 1999, p. 91). Most of these deals and financing went unrecorded, due to the absence of any regulatory agencies that could enforce an autonomous notion of legality on them. It, therefore, generated opportunities for politicians, the elites and rebels to use more innovative means to control natural resources and translate them into political tools of war (Musah, 2002, p. 90-95).



Figure 6: Map of Liberia: Map data @2013 Google.

According to Williams (2006, p.23), President Samuel Doe, at the same time, also accumulated a fortune equivalent to half of Liberia's annual domestic income: he distributed commercial opportunities in order to bind associates to carry out his personal favours and to arm the Liberian army. The New War thesis posits that these commercial opportunists are a part of the global interconnectedness of roged business channels, where individuals, multinational corporations and countries are all involved in illegal trade practises. Taylor ran a relatively sophisticated financial apparatus, the revenue of which helped finance his insurgency to fight other new emerging groups. To achieve this, he increased exports of diamonds from Liberia through 'NPFL' control of the Bong Mines, as well as timber for Firestone Plantation at Harbel and the Port of Buchanan (Youboty, 2004; Alao, 2007). There

is evidence to show that the timber industries, foreign owned and operated, violated U.N. sanctions by becoming involved in the financing and importing of weapons: Liberian wartime elites traded its timber for arms (Global Witness, Sept. 2004). The report indicted Guus van Kouwenhoven, a Dutch arms dealer, who headed the Oriental Timber Company, as well as the Royal Timber Company. It was also reported that, throughout the two civil wars in Liberia, the Oriental Timber Company held the largest logging concessions in Liberia.

The report of a reputable international non-profit organisation, Global Timber (2003), indicted China's role in the illegal timber trade with the warlords for arms during the conflict. Global Timber advanced sustainable forestry and also provides statistics on the positive and negative impact on illegal logging and sustainable forest management, especially in Africa and East Asia. The extent and nature of the trade in forest products between China and Africa has been poorly documented. Notably, the data which is available indicates that, from 2000–2003, Liberian timber exports to China rose faster than any other African nation, increasing from 0 to 0.6 million metric tonnes in just three years (Global Timber, 2003). According to the report, China's exports during the conflict briefly made Liberia the sixth greatest exporter of logs to China worldwide. Furthermore, by 2002, it rose to the exportation of one million metric tonnes: almost 60% to China and 28% to the 'European Union' (mainly to France). According to Global Witness (2004), these deals were with Taylor and other rebel groups, which had captured part of the timber and rubber stock plantations.

The period of rapidly expanding exports of Liberia's natural resources coincided with this brutal civil conflict. Several Global Witness and Global Timber reports indicted President Charles Taylor in the allocation of forest concessions to allies in exchange for weapons. The various rebel groups were also indicted in these reports for the exports of 'conflict timber' to purchase arms. As earlier mentioned, the Indonesian Oriental Trading Company (OTC) was

the major —perhaps the only —supplier of Liberian logs to China; the OTC Director of Operations in Liberia, Guus Kouwenhoven, aided Taylor with the acquisition of arms in exchange for control over the forests (Global Timber, 2003). According to the report, Kouwenhoven was convicted in June 2006 at The Hague and sentenced to eight years imprisonment. Unable to operate in the midst of the growing war and fearing looting of their equipment, the logging companies fled Liberia in 2003 — U.N. sanctions prevented their return once the war ended (Global Witness, 2003). All exports stopped abruptly at the end of 2003, when the U.N. Security Council placed sanctions barring the international trade of timber from Liberia, given the revenue from logging was financing the weapons used in a brutal civil war, therefore fuelling regional conflicts. (See various UN sanctions in appendix 9, 10 and 11).

Taylor's exploitation of natural resources to fund wars was often referred to as 'conflict' or 'blood' resources (Gberie, 2005; Hirsch, 2001; Husband, 1998). It was estimated that the circa figures of "warlord trade" in Liberia from 1990 to 1994 went like this: \$100-150 million in diamonds, \$121.6 million in timber, \$81 million in rubber, and \$95 million in iron ore (Aning, 1997, p. 35). In 1999, Liberia officially exported 8,500 carats of diamonds, an amount estimated to constitute only 10-15 percent of the actual exports (Global Witness, June, 2005). This ultimately led to U.N. sanctions against diamond and timber exports from Liberia. On March 7, 2001, the U.N. Security Council adopted a resolution imposing sanctions on the direct or indirect import of all rough diamonds from Liberia, whether or not they originated there. The prevalence of lootable natural resources correlated with the duration of the Liberian conflict.

It was noted that, from 1989 to 1996, during the Liberian first conflicts, combatants signed fourteen peace accords, thirteen of which failed (Aboagye, 2007, p. 47). An important reason for these failures was that the warring parties or, at least, significant factions within them feared they would lose access to Liberia's resource wealth; this, henceforth, reduced the

incentive of the parties to comply with the terms of the agreements. This led to the failure of the 1993 'Cotonou Accord' — signed by the parties under heavy international pressure — provides one of the sharpest illustrations (Alao et al., 2007; Ellis, 1999). During such conflict situations, it has been known that combatants deliberately subverted peace treaties in order to continue their looting; this not only lengthens the conflict but also gives them an upper hand during negotiations for peace and in the war field. According to Aning (1997), there were periods in which the major parties more or less ceased their combat and entered a kind of commercial equilibrium with one another in order to continue the exploitation, even at the end of hostilities.

The warring factions in the Liberian conflicts used the mechanism called the 'booty futures': the right to exploit mineral resources the seller has not yet captured but had a chance of securing in combat. Parties in combat can sell future mineral rights to foreign firms or foreign governments in order to sustain war effort and the continued supply of war logistics (Ross, 2004, p. 23). The proceeds from the sale of so called 'booty futures' pay soldiers and buy arms; therefore, gaining the capacity to capture the promised resources. Youboty (2004, p 45) posited that the mines and the timber corporations collaborated, paying the LURD and MODEL rebels groups for protection; in return, they provided the groups with logistical and other forms of assistance. Youboty (2004) further stated that the 'LURD' and 'MODEL' rebel groups continued to exploit resources for their own purposes in selected areas: for instance, several hundred former 'LURD' members were squatting on the Guthrie rubber plantation until 2004 and unwilling to leave peacefully. The Liberian peace process, disarmament slowed, because these ex-fighters were tapping, selling timber and rubber stock, even after the conflict was declared to be over (Global Witness, 2005, p. 24-5). Likewise, 'MODEL' did the same, by occupying an important bio-diversity hotspot, the 'Sapo Game Reserve' in Maryland County. As it transpired; the squatters were finally expelled by 'UNMIL' in August 2005 (Global Witness, 2004, p. 7).

The former ‘LURD’ members in Lofa County were also mining diamonds and cutting wood to, thereafter, be carried into Guinea and exported (Global Witness, 2004, p. 34). This particularly linked Guinea to the war in Liberia, for its government supported rebels in harnessing and selling these resources to their foreign partners through their territory. Neighbouring governments, political and military elite all capitalised on the insecurity pervading Liberia at that time to exploit these resources —thus furthering the campaign of terror.

From the review of natural resources exploitation and the conflicts in Liberia, it was possible to clarify the importance that diamond, gold iron-ore and forest resources (timber and rubber stock) played in exacerbating the conflict. The reviews established that natural resources exploitation did play a prominent role in the civil war, due to the exchange of these resources for weapons of war and other logistics. It also positioned Charles Taylor as the principal actor in the resources for arms deal, although Doe was also included. Even the rebels were also involved in this war economy, selling mineral rights to local and international companies. Several countries and individuals of European, Asian and African origins were also indicted in the illicit natural resources trade for arms. (See UN sanction in appendix 9, 10 and 11).

2.6 SIERRA LEONE

This sub-section, just like the preceding one, focuses on illicit exploitation of natural resources and the conflict in Sierra Leone. It will draw attention to how diamonds — as the main source of finance to the warring party — sustained and increased the ferocity of the conflict. Unlike the Claueswitz concept of war as a ‘pursuit of politics by other means,’ (Keen, 2001, p. 23) sees the Sierra Leone conflict as the ‘pursuit of economics by other means.’ At a point during the conflict, one may be inclined to believe that the case of Sierra Leone indicates a greed based conflict stratification, as ‘RUF’ propaganda noted that illegal

resource exploitation was one of the reasons for their insurgency (Campbell, 2002). Despite this, Richards (2003, p. 27) referred to the exploitation of Sierra Leone diamonds during the conflicts as “railing against the raping of the countryside to feed the greed and caprice of the Freetown elite and their masters abroad.” Silberfein and Conteh (2006) also advanced that only the economic opportunity presented by a breakdown in law and order could sustain violence at the levels plaguing Sierra Leone since 1991. These analogies buttress the arguments that diamonds were a key conflict financier and an important element in understanding the conflict. The massive internationalisation of the diamond trade, through illicit global connivance, almost gave the impression that the reason for the conflict could be located in diamond exploitation.

Scholars agreed that diamond exploitation exacerbated poverty and inequality in Sierra Leone, plus fuelled the civil wars (Cilliers and Dietrich, 2000; Hirsch, 2001; S Sawyer, 2004). The long-term conflict consuming Sierra Leone was representative of a type of endemic warfare, which the New War theoretical framework suggests has become more common in the post-Cold War era; furthermore, these resource-based conflicts have expanded with the process of globalisation (Kaldor, 2007). The problem of illicit diamond mining reached its climax during Sierra Leone’s civil war (1991 to 2003), when the government of Sierra Leone (GOSL) completely lost its regulatory power over the diamondiferous areas. Consequently, various factions, especially the ‘Revolutionary United Front’ (RUF) rebels, engaged in the illicit mining and trading of diamonds to finance their war agendas — Liberia’s Charles Taylor facilitated ‘RUF’’s diamond transactions. Proceeds from diamonds were used to purchase arms, ammunition and other war logistics, henceforth sustaining their war machinery (Hirsch, 2001; Keen, 2001; Richards, 2001). The ‘Revolutionary United Front’ (RUF) first crossed the border from Liberia and conducted operations in diamond-rich South-Eastern Sierra Leone (Richards, 1996; Gberie, 2000; Hoffman, 2004). The ‘RUF’ fought the government for the control of these diamond-rich

areas and this, henceforth, escalated the conflict to other diamond rich towns. Hoffman (2004), on the other hand, posits that the ‘RUF’ conducted operations in Sierra Leone's diamonds producing areas as part of their diamond-looting tactics, which were used to source arms for the conflict.

Charles Taylor provided support for Sankoh and the ‘RUF’: facilities for training in Liberia, instruction in guerrilla warfare, weapons, and fighters from Liberia and Burkina Faso (Global Witness, 2003). The Global Witness report (2003) further stated that the ‘RUF’ compensated Taylor with the proceeds from diamond sales when it was in control of the mines. The invasion at Kailahun and Pujehun was part of a goal to control the substantial, resource-rich territory of Koidu, the district centre of Kono. Aside from Taylor, several foreign companies and individuals were also indicted in the ‘diamonds for arms’ deal involving the ‘RUF.’ A Global Witness report (2004) and Smillie, 2010) observed that an international criminal consortium of diamond dealers and drug traffickers, were behind the attempt by Taylor to seize Sierra Leone’s diamond fields through their ‘RUF’ proxy. They named the main figures in the consortium: Col. Fred Rindle, a South African Nico Shefer; and Pablo Escobar, an Ecuadorian with business links to Colombian drug baron. The Global Witness report (2004) further stated that this consortium was behind providing the ‘RUF’ rebels with 300 Ukrainian mercenaries and hundreds of soldiers from Burkina Faso.

Regional neighbours, such as Gambia and Burkina Faso, serve as intermediate points before the stones reached the markets in Antwerp (Hirsch, 2001). According to Gberie (2000), other countries were also intermediate points in the networks of arms dealers originating primarily in the Ukraine, Russia, Slovakia and Bulgaria. Several NGOs, such as Partnership Africa-Canada and Global Witness, put pressure on the diamond industry — and later on the U.N. Security Council — to change the insidious practice of allowing ‘conflict diamonds — which had been mined by rebel groups — to enter the mainstream diamond market to be

traded for weapons (Reno, 2001, p. 68). The increasingly global character of this confrontation was exemplified by an illegal delivery made to the 'RUF,' resulting in a load of weapons being conveyed in a Ukrainian-owned helicopter by an Indian national — he was later arrested in Canada with the passport of a dead Slovak (Smillie, Gberie and Hazleton, 2000)

In Sierra Leone, government officials and rebel leaders generated enormous sums from this kind of looting; this may have led some observers to infer that resource wealth convinced the rebels to prefer war to peace (Richards, 1996; Reno, 1998; Abdullah & Muana, 1998). Moreover, even the peace negotiators anticipated this problem and drafted accords that would enable the rebel leaders to continue getting rich. The 1999 'Lome Peace Accord' offered the rebel leader, Foday Sankoh, the leadership of the country's natural resources under a unity government (Christensen & Utas, 2008, p. 17). These peace agreements put the rebel group into an advantageous position to continue mining diamonds during the conflicts. Foreign diamond-mining agents capitalised on these weak peace accords and the unstable government through the following activities: sponsoring illicit mining; buying the diamonds and smuggling them out through various channels. Additionally, since large-scale diamond smuggling was possible as long as the country remained in chaos, profits from these blood diamonds, henceforth, represented an important incentive for armed groups to prolong the war. Clapham (2009, p. 50) stated that there was the frequent cooperation between the rebels and the 'Sierra Leone Army' (SLA), as these two groups often coordinated their movements to avoid direct battles and, at times, worked out mutually beneficial profit sharing arrangements in diamond areas. This was especially true following the 1997 coup that formally brought elements of the 'SLA' and 'RUF' together into a national coalition government called the 'Armed Forces Revolutionary Council' (Smillie 2010).

During the war in Sierra Leone, the government saved itself from defeat twice by selling off the right to exploit diamond fields that it did not yet control. An example of this occurred in March 1995, when the 'RUF' had taken control of the country's main diamond fields and advanced to within twenty miles of the capital; to save itself from defeat, the government sold future mining rights of the Kono diamond fields — which were then in rebel hands — to a South African company, Branch Energy (Hirsch, 2001, p.45). The government thereafter used the proceeds to hire a South African mercenary firm, Executive Outcomes, to beat back the 'RUF' offensive and recapture the mortgaged diamond fields (Hirsch, 2001; Gberie, 2005). Given EO possessed both the technology and experience to locate and obliterate the 'RUF' camps — and were very loyal as long as they were paid — they allowed the government to retake the diamond areas and, henceforth, obtain a reliable source of income. The De Beers Group of companies, with offices in Guinea and Liberia, were one of the first diamond dynasties directly and indirectly involved in the mining of Sierra Leone diamonds since the 1930s right up until the onset of the war, with concessions to mine offshore diamonds. Through its Hoge Raad voor Diamond (HRD) of Antwerp, Belgium has been involved in the diamond trade in Sierra Leone through Guinea, Israel and Russia: in 1998, it recorded an importation of 770, 000 carats of diamonds from Sierra Leone (Campbell, 2002) — it should be noted that this was at the peak of the conflicts. The Rex Diamond, with its de facto headquarters in Antwerp, held the concession for Zimmi and Tongo Field during the conflict; when the government lost its only combat helicopter, it was its only effective weapon against the 'RUF' (Smillie et al., 2000).

Campbell (2002) further stated that it was Zoov Morgenstern; Rex's managing director, and Serge Muller, its President, who arranged to supply engine parts and ammunition totalling 3.8 million dollars. AmCan, a Toronto based company, was another known foreign company involved; a second Canadian firm was DiamondWork, an outgrowth of Carson Gold and Vengold Company, is promoted by Robert and Eric Friedland. In 1995, DiamondWork

acquired Branch Energy and connected to two international security firms, Executive Outcomes and Sandline, which supplied the government with 200 mercenaries, air support and sophisticated communication equipment's and pushed the 'RUF' back from Free Town — this allowed them to secure a 25 year lease on Sierra Leone's diamond concession (Hirsch, 2001, p.134). The intimate connection between these private security firms and the Sierra Leone diamond industry funded the conflicts and filled the pockets of rebels and government officials.

The later to be deposed president, Ahmad Tejan Kabbah, sold \$10 million in diamonds future's rights to a Thai banker and used the revenues to hire Sandline, a London-based mercenary firm, to take back the capital and the diamond fields (Campbell, 2002, p. 121). Whilst not all the details of the deal with the Executive Outcomes from South Africa are known, it is believed that the government agreed to pay the mercenaries in diamonds (Peleman, 2000). Furthermore, according to Campbell (2006), Valentine Strasser, a former Sierra Leonean Head of State, profited from illegal diamond sales made during the conflict.

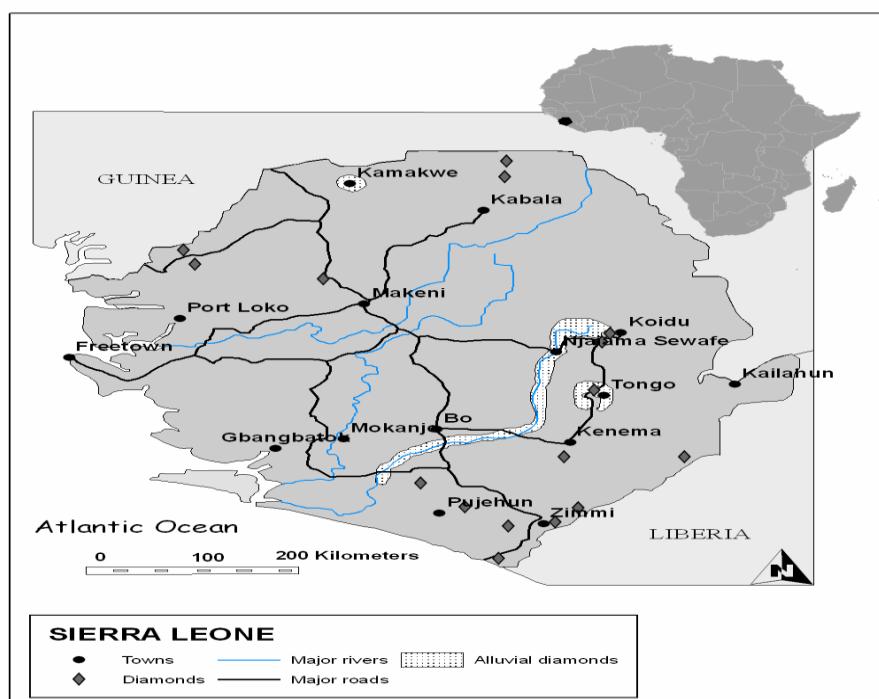


Figure 7: Map of Sierra Leone showing diamond deposits: curtesy Global witness.

It is evident from the above cases how the sale of future mineral rights helped finance the conflict, invariably sustaining its intensification. In the sub-region, Sierra Leone was an example of how natural resources became a factor in prolonging the conflicts, as well as a mechanism in its resolution. In an attempt to pacify the rebel leader, Foday Sankor, the Lomé Peace agreements conceded the Chairmanship of the ‘Commission for Strategic Mineral Resources and Development’ to the rebel leader — this was a position giving him the control of the country’s diamond resources (Richards, 2003, p. 13). Sankoh was also appointed as the Vice President and, henceforth, was granted amnesty for all the crimes he had committed before the peace deal (Ellis, 1999). This gesture did not achieve the intended result of peace, however, as there was another outbreak of conflict in the country. The outbreak of new hostilities occurred because the ‘RUF’ leader had been placed in charge of the one resource, hence allowing him to continue the conflict. Diamonds may not have been the cause of the war; yet they soon became a veritable tool and principal motivation in the ‘RUF’’s campaign of terror and its outside backers. The documents found in Sankoh’s house

in free town in May 2000 clearly demonstrate the close relationship between diamond and arms deals (Hirsch, 2001; Gberie, 2005; Campbell, 2002).

Towards the end of the civil war, the RUF leader, Foday Sankoh — due to the pressure of ‘ECOMOG’ and other international forces — fled his home and was later captured; henceforth, removing evidence of substantial illegal diamond dealing with Taylor. This led to E.U. suspension of \$50m in economic aid to Liberia (Campbell, 2002). Furthermore, the United Nations Security Council voted to ban rough diamond purchases from Sierra Leone. The certification programme also named Liberia as the conduit through which diamonds were reaching the market; Sierra Leone was later to propose a scheme to certify its own diamonds, which were being exported under this plan. This resulted in the international regulatory mechanism, the ‘Kimberley Process Certification Scheme’ (KPCS), created in 2003 to eliminate the flow of conflict diamonds (Global Witness, 2003). As a panacea, it came into existence; thus contributing to reducing contemporary smuggling and substantially increasing official diamond exports for Sierra Leone.

By analysing the review on natural resources exploitation and the conflicts in Sierra Leone, it was established that diamonds was a conflict exacerbating factor. Notably, the greed and grievance factor was applied by most studies to capture diamonds trade; however, what is evident from their analyses is that the abundance of these resources did play a prominent role in the exchange of weapons of war and other logistics. The diamonds trade led to the failure of various Peace Accords and peace was temporary guaranteed when the rebel leader was put in charge of the diamond industry. Another important dynamic was the linkage of Taylor’s to the diamond trade in Sierra Leone and his support for the ‘RUF.’ It was suggested that the involvement of Taylor in the brutal war was for pillaging rather than politics; in the process, it provided the funds for the war. Taylor and the ‘RUF’ leader operated an international criminal enterprise, looting the resources of both conflict states

with the active involvement of foreign companies, regional governments, individual diamond merchants, private security companies and criminal elements.

2.7 POROUS BORDERS, BORDER INSECURITY AND CONFLICT

This section reviews the literature on porous borders, poor border delineation and insecurity as factors shaping the conflicts in Liberia and Sierra Leone. The cross-border conflict activity between Liberia and Sierra Leone started in 1989 — coinciding with a sudden increase in violent events in Liberia at the start of the first civil war — as a result of the porosity of their borders. This was provoked by a number of factors: the massive inflow of refugees and rebels, rebel incursions across the borders, and the activities of criminals with commercial interests operating within the border zones. Border research is still at its infancy in Africa; although studies have been carried out on how border issues can impact on the nature of conflicts (see, for example, Herbst, 2000; Nugent & Asiwaju, 1996; Zartman, 1965; Fearon & Laitin, 2004; Buhaug & Rod, 2006). Other theorists (Silberfein, 2004; Kieh, 2005; Reno, 1997&1999; Orogun, 2003; Zack-William, 1990; Hoffman, 2004; Zacher, 2001) specifically focus on African border problem and conflicts. Rustad et al. (2008), Starr (2002) and Starr & Thomas (2002, 2005) have also concentrated on interstate border problems and how these can impact or cause conflicts. These studies are either inter-state cold war border conflict or Post-Cold war — in the case of the latter, they are only used to explain only a part of conflict, without looking at the dynamics or how borders facilitate conflicts.

African colonial boundaries frequently resulted from treaties or direct conquests; they took many forms, including geometric lines and arcs, or they followed natural features, such as rivers or watersheds (Annan, 1997, p. 79–80). In all cases, they were likely to cut across cultural or political regions (Mbembe, 2002, p. 58). Boundary areas were not tightly controlled in African polities; rather, rulers concentrated their resources in the core areas of

their realms, meaning their capacity for control tended to decrease from the centre outward in a series of concentric bands (Herbst, 2000; Nugent & Asiwaju, 1996; Zartman, 1965). Consequently, once civil wars broke out, border zones were overtaken by armed groups; henceforth, endangering security. Cross-border attacks have occurred as militants attempted to use the territory of a neighbouring state as a base, a source of supplies or to recruit potential fighters (Nugent & Asiwaju, 1996, p. 4).

Starr & Thomas (2005) argued that whenever conflict occurred in ethnically mixed areas bordering the kin-state of the aggrieved ethnic group, it manifests itself on three inter-related levels, usually leading to: inter-group conflict; conflict between the aggrieved minority and the institutions of its host-state; and, finally, the potential of (territorial) conflict between host and kin-state. The civil violence in Liberia, which later spiralled into Sierra Leone, typified this kind of complex multi-conflict border nexus/dynamism. The nature of cross border-ethnic affinity between these communities during the conflict has been a factor connecting the war dynamics to the extent that it was possible for the conflicts to spiral from one country to the other; henceforth, creating tension amongst these states.

The New War theoretical paradigm connects trends in widespread political, social and religious violence to regional linkages (Holsti, 1996, p.26). This kind of contemporary form of cross border conflicts reflects the Post-Cold War characterisation of new forms of civil violence, drawing attention to the complex combination of trans-border networks (Kaldor, 2007; Kaufmann, 2001). The end of Cold War have seen a proliferation of armed conflicts, involving state and non-state actors and criminal groups, who are often vying over natural resources across borders that are insecure and porous. Mercenaries, as well as regular armies, using mafia-style economies of plying their trade through unsecured border zones, fight these civil wars (Jung, 2003).

A number of researchers (for instance, Collier & Hoeffler 2004; Sambanis 2004) dismiss the effect of neighbours in increasing or decreasing, civil war risks. Others like Fearon & Laitin (2003), Fearon (2004) and Gleditsch (2007) find strong support for neighbouring effects on civil war risk. Fearon (2004) argued that the unleashing of numerous lethal identity wars and state failures resulted in instability, with a tendency for the violence to spill over to neighbouring states. — Here they connect intra-state identity conflicts to violence with attendant regional spill over. Gleditsch (2002) concluded that neighbouring and regional relationships set the trajectory (peace or war) for individual states. Hence, domestic politics in failed states like Liberia and Sierra Leone are influenced as much by regional relationships as by internal political, economic, and social dynamics. Ellingsen (2000) noted that the patterns of conflict that appear to evolve across political regions are affected by the extent to which regimes are internally stable. The internal instability of the conflict states under study, henceforth, enabled regional complexities to impact on their civil wars.

Salehyan (2006), however, doubt whether high neighbouring risk is related to unstable and poorly controlled border regions. The fact remains that porous and unstable borders did promote war diffusion, as evidenced by the conflicts in Liberia and Sierra Leone. Studies by Brochmann & Gleditsch (2012), Holsti (1991), and Vasquez (1995) argued that they expected certain geographical features (forest, mountains and river as constraining factors) of a particular border region to affect states' willingness to engage in conflicts —their focus was on purely inter-state conflicts in international relation. Brochmann & Gleditsch (2012), admitted, however, that geographical factors are not the sole or even the most important catalysts of conflict and only contribute to increase the risk of conflict between two neighbouring states.

Wesley (1962); Brochmann & Gleditsch (2012) have also argued that the length of a common border between two countries is a better measure of ‘‘geographic opportunity’ than simply the number of borders. Moreover, Brochmann & Gleditsch (2012) explained how border length increases the risk of low-intensity conflicts in general. The conflicts under study are such that the length and multiple border crossing have both created insecurity among states in the Mano River Union. Since Liberia and Sierra Leone share a long border line, the conflicts were not of low intensity, submerging the entire sub-region into wild violence.

Gleditsch & Ward (2001), Henrikson (2002) and Starr (2005), on the other hand, have been concerned more with how distance and proximity affect the interaction opportunities of states, by constraining or expanding the possibilities of interaction that can lead to conflicts. These studies maintained that the combination of opportunities generated by proximity makes states that are close to one another elevate towards either peace or conflict. Proximity means that the impact of an intra-state conflict can be felt in neighbouring countries due to closeness to each other and long-standing relationships created by this proximity. These previous studies, however, did not relate the nature and trends of these proximate interactions to African conflicts. This research project, by contrast, went further by focussing attention on how proximate relation among political leaders in the region contributes to exacerbate the civils in Liberia and Sierra Leone.

Lemke (1995), Leeds & Davis (1999) and Lemke & Reed (2001) conducted studies based on how states within politically relevant areas or neighbourhoods are able to interact with one another, especially when important stakes are involved in that interaction. What was at stake in the region was the maintenance of internal stability and its citizens from attacks from their numerous, but porous border fronts. Geographical features, length of a common borders and numbers of border (multiple entry points), distance and proximity have all, in one way or

another, been a factor in the relationship affecting the nature of interactions; invariably, resulting in connecting conflicts in the sub-region. According to Star & Thomas (2001), territory serves at least two distinct interactions: first, it defines the territorial political units; secondly, it provides an important component of group identity. These group identities can span several states within a region. The concentration of different identity population within border areas in the West African region increases the risk of further violence once civil war starts (Nugent & Asiwaju, 1996).

Figure 8: Political Map of Liberia and Sierra Leone within the Mano River sub-region:
 Courtesy of Vidiani.com Map of the World



The porous and contestable features of African boundaries are two interacting themes closely linked to the emergence and spread of conflict in Africa in the last decade. A report by Poole & Mohammed (2011) stated that Guinea has the longest border at 1,825 km and Liberia's border amounts to 1,585 km and Sierra Leone has the shortest at 958 km. The fact that Liberia and Sierra Leone solely border other countries in the sub-region is indicative of how their conflict became connected to other countries in the region. Although the largest country

within the sub-region, Ivory Coast , only shares 1,362 km of border with the other Mano River countries: there are 35 unofficial border crossings between Liberia and Sierra Leone alone, and 21 between Liberia and Guinea (Poole & Mohammed, 2011).

The study by Poole & Mohammed (2011) also looked at the various nature of cross border ethnic affinity mix amongst the members of the Mano River Union in order to understand the intricate web of relationships existing between them. In Guinea, Forécariah prefecture, shares 104 km length of border in the Kambia district of Sierra Leone; whilst the majority of people of Forécariah belong to the ethnic groups of Sousou, Fullah, Temne, and the Malinke/Mandingo. This was why during the Sierra Leone civil war, tensions at the border region increased; henceforth, a large refugee camp was in place until 2000-2001, when Guinea suffered from rebel attacks along its borders. Between September 2000 and the end of 2002, periodic rebel incursions from Sierra Leone entered Guinea via this border area, hence destroying buildings, structures and much of the social fabric of the community. Daro, another prefecture in Guinea, is bordered in the west of Liberia's (along approximately 48 km) border area, just 400 metres from its border. Again, Badiaro in Guinea belonged to about seven ethnic groups, including Toma, Tomamania, Guerze, Kissi, Malinke/Mandingo, Fullah and Dialonka — these ethnic groups are also present in Liberia and Sierra Leone (Silberfein and Conteh, 2006).

Poole & Mohammed (2011) stated that the Foya district in Liberia shares borders with Guinea to the northwest and Sierra Leone to the west. The main ethnic group in the district are the Kissi, which also share borders with the Kailahun district in Sierra Leone and Guinea. In Sierra Leone, Kailahun is one of the three districts in the Eastern Province sharing borders with Guinea and Liberia. Dawa is the main gateway to Sierra Leone from Liberia's Foya and Boya axis. As with most border communities, there are strong cross-border connections fostered by: intermarriages, a shared ethnicity, linguistic, culture and a tendency to

participate in governance (elections) processes in both Liberia and Sierra Leone (Kandeh, 1999). Many of the adults in this sub-region possess dual citizenship and they vote in both countries, cultivate farmland on either side of the border, and trade in each other's markets — all with scant regard for immigration papers (Kandeh, 2003). The above shows how the Mano River basin countries are closely linked by their common borders and ethnic groups.

With this in mind, it has become clear that boundaries at sub-region can play a pivotal role in perpetuating conflict rather than peace. Silberfein & Conteh (2006) looked at porous borders as a source of conflict in the Mano River region and used it to illustrate how border issues contribute to the perpetuation of insecurity. Among other issues, examined was how violence in one country stimulated a similar phenomenon in a neighbouring state until the entire region was enveloped. According to their findings, several facets of porous borders facilitated this pattern: the flow of weapons, the movement of former combatants, and the transnational exploitation of resources. What they fail to explain is how this flow of weapons, movement of combatants and resources exploration was actually carried out, as well as its impact on the conflicts and the region. The potential challenges to borders in the region were due to boundaries typically failing to have rigid territorial markers. These borders have instead evolved through an entirely different process; although they may look like sharp lines on a map, they can be imperceptible on the ground (Griffiths, 1996, p. 68). Whilst Silberfein & Conteh (2006) focused on porous and contestability, this thesis focussed more on porosity, because contestability was not a veritable conflict index during the conflict itself — this is not to dismiss the impact, which contestable borders can have on the onset and duration of conflict. In the cases of Liberia and Sierra Leone, it was more of proximity and porosity which has important implications for the civil wars.

The conflicts become more pertinent as the total volume of interactions amongst these proximate states have several connection points; thus, generating frictions as a result of

undefined and porous shared border points. Gleditsch & Ward (2001), Furlong & Gleditsch (2003), Starr (2002) and Starr & Thomas (2002, 2005) argued that the relationship of proximity to conflict is one of the most robust findings within the study of interstate war. The conflicts under study have shown that proximity can also influence intra-state violence due to several unsecured crossing points among neighbours. There have been accusations and counter accusations among MANO River Union states about the movement of fighters and their constant attacks on villages and towns close to their borders (Silberfein, 2004, p. 213). Notably, several cross-border incursions resulted in the kidnapping of almost 50 Sierra Leoneans, who were then forced to carry looted goods back to camps in Liberia (Asiwaju, 2000, p. 205). These cross border crises increased tensions amongst the MANO river states, often escalating into border skirmishes. The porous borders allowed for large influx of local and foreign mining agents; this facilitated the smuggling of precious minerals, especially diamonds (Diehl, 1991). The next sub-section focuses on porous border and conflicts in Liberia — this will be followed by a discussion on Sierra Leone.

2.8 LIBERIA

This sub-section focuses on how the nature of borders within the Mano River Region posed security challenges to Liberia during their civil war. Although there have been minor cases of border contestations with their neighbours over the years, none have ever led to conflict. According to Zartman (1965, p. 172), Liberian leaders sought border adjustments in 1951, due to unresolved issues and effort to reclaim land in Mount Nimba, in Guinea. This was peacefully resolved when Liberia's president visited the then Guinean head of State, Sekou Tour'e, and renounced any claims to Guinean territory during Guinea's independence from France. Reno (1998) observes that a similar sequence of events took place between the leaders of Liberia and the Ivory Coast, when Liberia disputed the ownership of the Ivorian area east of the Cavally River. Reno further stated that when President Doe led Liberia in the 1980s, there was one point at which he threatened to recapture the province of Kailahun in

Sierra Leone. In his warlord phase after 1989, Charles Taylor was a more ominous threat, for he saw himself as the historic leader of the Mano River Basin (Sawyer, 2004, p. 445). It has even been suggested that dissatisfaction with the Liberian/Sierra Leone border was the one factor motivating him to support the 'RUF' invasion of Sierra Leone from Liberian territory (Alao, 2007, p. 59).

The cross border ethnic dynamics was multi-faceted, as most of the ethnic groups have tribal, ancestral, cultural and linguistic affinity with communities across their borders with Guinea, Sierra Leone and Ivory Coast. According to Konneh (1996, p. 54), the Gios, Manos and Mandingos are scattered across all states bordering Liberia; this was, hence, the motivating factor for their participation in the conflict from its onset. Illustrating this, the 'Liberians United for Reconciliation and Democracy' (LURD) was a rebel group, consisting largely of Muslims from Mandingo and Krahn ethnic groups. The group was formed in Guinea and led by its chairman, Sekou Conneh, and his wife, Aisha Conneh; an adviser to the President of Guinea, Lansana Conté (Konneh, 1999; Huband, 1998). The LURD Rebel group was strongly supported by the government of neighbouring Guinea and crossed over the border from Guinea in 1998-99 to attack Liberia, and one of their major incursions was in April 2000 on Lofa County in Liberia (Draman & Carment, 2001). They further observed that as the Liberian civil war escalated — and responding to 'LURD' attacks of Liberia from Guinea — Charles Taylor initiated further incursions into Guinean territory in July 2000, with the assistance of the 'RUF' and Guinean Dissidents. Ivory Coast had also previously provided Taylor with aid to start his insurgency: one of the Ivorian helicopters destroyed by the French had links to Conakry; whilst mortar shells and other ammunition had also passed through Guinea (Ellis, 2001, p. 226). Furthermore, during the conflicts, former Liberian fighters and deserters were being paid up to \$400 to join the planned insurrection in Guinea, and were being trained at hidden camps organised by both Taylor supporters and the 'LURD,' along secluded border areas (FEWER, September 2000).

Nugent & Asiwaju (1996, p.34) were of the view that the borders of the sub-region were already areas beyond government control long before the spread of violence, hence making them a conduit of illegal and illicit activities like resource exploitation and smuggling. It is, therefore, evident that the Liberian border areas have often been pulled into the uncertainties and illegalities of the border economy. Over the years, smugglers have been attracted to Liberia due to a number of factors: its porous borders; the untaxed prices offered by dealers, who establish offices there in order to buy smuggled Sierra Leone diamonds (Sawyer, 2004). One such border point was the town of Toulepleu in the Ivory Coast, made up of the Gio ethnic group from Nimba County (Global Witness, 2005, p. 28). The trade in diamonds and other natural resources has illegally been going on, even before Charles Taylor (Konneh, 1996). This border area and other porous border points with Guinea and Sierra Leone have been known to be long established route for smuggling and illicit forest resources business.

The uncontrolled exchange of weapons across borders has been a constant driving force during the civil wars; hence, weapons originating in Eastern Europe, Russia and North Korea have helped fuel the Liberian insurgency (Global Witness, 2005). The Global Witness report further suggested that Guinea was a substantial source of illicit arms smuggled across the border to Liberia during the conflict. This involvement was believed to counter Taylor's effort to destabilise Guinea. According to Orogun (2003, p. 103), "functionaries in the Guinean agricultural ministry were found to be a conduit for European arms manufacturers producing small arms for the 'LURD' rebel group fighting against Taylor." Guinea also provided end-user certificates — these list a fake country as the final destination for armaments — and certificates of repair, allowing weapons to transit the country en-route to Liberia and Ivory Coast (Orogun, 2003, p. 106). Orogun further stated that when disarmament began in the port of Buchanan, Liberia, members of 'MODEL' were rumoured to be selling their weapons to dissident groups in Ivory Coast, which had previously

provided them with aid. These illegal arms deals were only made possible due to the porous borders, which had negative impact on the Liberian civil wars.

Taylor and other warlords demonstrated some dexterity in the use of these resources to guarantee a constant access to arms: this was achieved through the porous border. The regional and international transactions in diamonds, iron-ore, timber, rubber stocks and gold — ensuring that they continue to purchase arms — were all through illicit cross border exchange. In 1991 alone, Taylor was documented to have netted \$557 million for his export of timber (Ebo, 2005, p. 49). The arms flow to the ‘NPFL’-controlled Liberia was channelled through Libya, Burkina Faso and Ivory Coast — these countries were also the channels of providing foreign mercenaries and weapons (Human Rights Watch, November 3, 2003).

It is evident that the abundance of small and light weapon ‘SALW’ was a factor sustaining conflict, given armed violence is often intertwined and empowered by arms. It cannot be contested that ‘SALW’ has the capacity of exacerbating conflict and debilitating security. According to Ebo (2005) the introduction of ‘SALW’ to any conflict most definitely increases its intensity and lethality; it will also make conflict resolution complex and difficult. Armed violence, therefore, perpetrates itself by boosting supply and entrenching SALW proliferation channels. The resulting steady and increased supply, in turn, escalates and complicates the conflict, with disastrous consequences to all facets of security. According to Global Witness (2005), ‘SALW’ and violence, therefore, become mutually reinforcing, fostering a vicious circle of violence, arms proliferation, social and economic deprivation; this, henceforth, becomes difficult to break without regional or international interventions, as was the case in Liberia.

The flow of refugees across the borders was also a major source of security dilemmas, as it was difficult to differentiate between refugees and rebels. This problem became more

compounded, given these refugee camps were located close to the borders and, henceforth, served as hiding havens for rebels and recruiting grounds for new fighters. The report by HRW (December 2005) indicted the government of Guinea for supporting the anti-Taylor groups, such as the ‘Liberian Reconciliation and Democracy’ (LURD). This greatly contributed to the militarisation of the refugee camps across the Guinean borders. Daniel (2000, p. 217) posited that from 1999 to 2003, there were series of attacks on Guinean border towns by Liberia-sponsored rebel. The then-Guinean President, Lansana Conte, at one time appealed to Guinean’s citizens to defend their country by repelling the invaders and rounding up the country’s 450,000 refugees, whom he blamed for the outbreak of violence (Reno, 1999; Musah, 2002).

The conflicts became linked after the first Liberian conflict: some rebels and government soldiers joined the ‘RUF’ in Sierra Leone in the 1990s and also participated in the civil war in Ivory Coast after 2002; whilst others worked with the dissidents in Guinea to create instability in that country (Conteh, 1993, p. 40). Notably, many of the local anti-‘RUF’ militias from Sierra Leone were pulled into the LURD rebellion, since they were already linked to the Liberian dissidents through trade, refugee flows, kinship ties and an anti-Taylor orientation. These linkages and connectivity facilitated the re-recruitment and re-integration of these regional fighters into new conflicts. It also provided the opportunity for the cross border ethnic/tribal mix to impact on the conflict. Reno (1999) argues that these borders historically provided opportunities for support and connivance among ethnically homogenous communities across the borders with Liberia to become involved in the conflict.

According to the International Crisis Group Report (January 2004), there is evidence that, after the first phase of the Liberian civil war, only 4,000 out of an estimated 20,000 child soldiers were completely demobilised. This trend was facilitated by the unsecure nature of the borders, making it easy for these children to be kidnapped and taken to neighbouring

countries without any trace. (HRW, December 2005). This meant that many of these young children were kept under the informal control of their rebel leaders and were rapidly remobilised during the next phase of insurrection in Liberia. Notably, there were several reports of these children carrying out some of the most vicious attacks during the conflicts. According to Aboagye (2007) and Adebajo (2008), these child soldiers were under the constant influence of drugs, meaning they were easily used to carry out the horrific attacks on villages.

From the above review of porous borders and the conflicts in Liberia, it is possible to explain how porous border became a conflict issue contributing to exacerbate the civil war. Although Liberia had in the past had contentious border issues with her neighbours over, none had ever led to conflict, apart from few border skirmishes. It could be said that their borders are insecure and not properly delineated; hence, making them a breeding ground for rebels, arms dealers and mercenaries, as well as the hot spot for illicit trade in Liberia's vast natural resources for arms. The review examined how cross border ethnic affinity mix impacted on the conflict, with the involvement of states within the region. The involvement of Guinea and Ivory Coast, both directly and indirectly, did exacerbate the conflict, as they also gave support to the rebel groups. The review also discussed the use of children as tools of war in Liberia. The next sub-section will focus on porous borders and the Sierra Leone conflict.

2.9 SIERRA LEONE

This sub-section focuses on how the nature of borders within the Mano River Region posed security challenges to Sierra Leone during their civil war. Similar to Liberia, there have been minor cases of border contestation with their neighbours over the years, the only recorded case and a major source of contention involves a small area in Sierra Leone near the Guinean and Liberian borders known as Yenga. Orogun (2003) states that the Guinean troops first moved into this area — which is low in population density but potentially important as a

source of diamonds and fish — whilst blocking a ‘RUF’ incursion in 1998. He further observed that the Guinean troops remained in place during the ‘RUF’ invasion of Guinea in 2000; however, when peace was restored to the area in 2001, the troops refused to withdraw.

The various civil wars in the region have stimulated considerable cross border insecurity, more so along the Sierra Leone border near the North-East, due to its porous nature. Asiwaju (2000) observes that there were constant raids by ‘LURD’ insurgents and government soldiers from Liberia, who looted, kidnapped and sometimes destroyed the physical infrastructures of most Sierra Leonean towns across the borders. The failure of Sierra Leone to engage sufficiently with some of the problems in these border communities also enhanced their vulnerability to security threats; this, in turn, impacted on the conflict (Asiwaju, 2000, p. 66). The dispute with Guinea over diamonds rich Kailahun, heightened the security situation in the Kailahun district bordering Guinea. Notably, Kailahun was one of the most strategic points for sub-regional security, due to the abundance of diamonds rich fields (Conteh, 1993, p. 24).

The border insecurity was so rife that refugees ended up providing cover for militia members and army deserters, who, in turn, were engaged in smuggling arms and using the refugee camps to recruit willing youths to join the rebels. According to Silberfein & Conteh (2006) most serious were the several cross border incursions between Sierra Leone and Liberia, as Taylor’s forces joined the ‘RUF’ to raid villages and returned back to camps in Liberia. Abdullah & Muana (1998) argues that there were several cases of Liberian combatants selling weapons to Sierra Leone rebels across the borders; henceforth, undermining peace efforts in both countries and, at the same time, increasing the intensity of the conflicts. A new dynamic was added to the conflict in September 2000, when the ‘RUF’ attacked a number of Guinean border towns south of the capital, Conakry. The RUF drove Guineans out of their homes, as well as around 75,000 Sierra Leonean refugees, who had been living

on the Guinean side of the border for several years (Gberie, 2009, p. 64). According to the Gberie, these attacks forced the Guinean President, Lansana Conté, to make a broadcast including inflammatory statements on state radio and television, blaming the incursions on the refugees; this provoked widespread attacks by Guinean police, soldiers and civilian militias on the already traumatised refugees. This drew the Guineans directly into the conflict, with the contention of protecting their own nationals under attack by rebels; thus, further inflaming the conflicts.

In December 2003, the U.N. had stepped up what were termed 'vigorous and round the clock' air and ground patrols, adding armed river boats MI24 helicopter gunships and MI8 armed observation helicopters to what came to be called 'Operation Blue Vigilance' (Kieh, 2005: 174). These precautions were put in place to negate the smuggling of small arms and light weapons, as well as the illegal diamond trade and other forms of criminal activities within their borders. The high level of cross-border violence during the Sierra Leone conflict involved the sub-regional cluster made up of several head of states and international linkages, which used the poor border situation to advantage in the diamonds-for-arms trade. There were also several reports about the presence of cross-border regional mercenary rings from neighbouring countries, sponsored by neighbours and the multinational companies operating within the borders of Sierra Leone (Global Witness, 2003).

Gberie (2005) observes that during the conflicts in Sierra Leone, many of the militia members and insurgents behaved almost like racketeers, pillaging whatever goods were available and then selling them across the border for arms. According to Abdullah (2004) the communities near the northeast border of Sierra Leone experienced raids by 'LURD' insurgents and government soldiers from Liberia, who looted and kidnapped their women and children. This demonstrates how an on-going conflict can potentially destabilise a neighbouring state. The border of Sierra Leone, like that of Liberia, shared the same

common porous and insecure characterisations and has also witnessed unprecedented violence.

The situation of porous borders and the conflicts in Sierra Leone is similar to that of Liberia —although Liberia had more border friction with her neighbours than Sierra Leone — as the borders are also porous, poorly delineated and insecure. The review above explains how the nature of the border became a conflict factor contributing to exacerbate the civil war. The nature of these borders encouraged the free movement of rebels, mercenaries and arms. The reviews points to the fact that the involvement of neighbouring governments was encouraged because of their porous borders. The illicit exploitation, smuggling and exchange for arms, thereafter, were carried out at the border areas.

2.10 CONCLUSION

This literature review evinces that the socio-political, economic marginalisation and developmental problems in Liberia and Sierra Leone, which led to the conflict are common to any failed state with fragile social structures. A commonality in the literature is that identity, natural resources and border issues are conflict factors exacerbating the civil wars in Liberia and Sierra Leone. The first section of this chapter focused on identity, with specific reference to Liberia and Sierra Leone. Identity, as applied to the conflicts under study, is situated within the New War theory and is a negative consequence of the end of Cold War (Kaldor, 2007). Whilst past studies use identity to qualify all kinds of social interest groups, this thesis applied identity to examine the complex criss-crossing of recursive political identity and ethnic problems. To this research project, political identity relates to the native-settlers relation/syndrome and how it shaped the complex socio-political and economic system of Liberia and Sierra Leone. Furthermore, ethnic politics is used in this research project to describe the relations amongst the various indigenous African tribal groups as a conflict factor in Liberia and Sierra Leone.

In Liberia, it was a ‘bi-identity dichotomy’ which was more of the antagonism among the various ethnic groups and political identity (the American-Liberian/African-Liberian factor) which exacerbated the civil war. It also traces how this developed into intra-ethnic violence and the multiplicity of rebel and militia groups. In the case of Sierra Leone, political identity did not impact on the conflict, as the British colonialist ensured that the Creole did not have the kind of influence as the American-Liberians. Though the literature review argue that ethnicity does not have a place in Sierra Leone, it was however, maintained that there is the need to factor in the ethnic/regional divide of the country — enshrined by the political elite — immediately before and after independence as a conflict factor, for this eroded the government apparatus and ended up making the country ungovernable.

The second section reviews the literature on illicit natural resources exploitation and in Liberia and Sierra Leone. The studies reviewed highlighted that funds from sales of diamonds in Sierra Leone, as well as timber, rubber stocks, diamonds, gold and iron-ore in Liberia, were used to exacerbate the civil war that engulfed that sub-region. Furthermore, blame was placed on local, regional and international actors that supplied the weapons to execute war. These studies traced the connection of Taylor to the RUF in Sierra Leone and the involvement of neighbours in the natural resources trade. In Liberia, it was established that, the principal actor in the illicit natural resources trade, Charles Taylor and all the rebel and militia groups were involved in the war economy to fund the violence. Whilst European, Asian, regional countries and international companies were indicted in the war trade. In Sierra Leone, the studies reviewed also applied the greed and grievance, blood diamond and resources curse analogy to explain how illicit diamonds exploitation provided the means to exacerbate the conflicts. This led to the failure of several Peace Accords and an important part of the eventual peace process. The studies point to the fact that the looting of diamonds and other resources by all parties to the conflicts resembles natural resources war, based on

greed, with the connivance of foreign companies, regional governments, individual diamond merchants, and private security companies.

This third and final section reviewed literature on porous borders, poor border delineation and insecurity as factors that shaped the conflicts in Liberia and Sierra Leone. It was recognised that porous borders were not a cause of the conflicts; rather, border problems can be traced back to the nature of African colonial boundaries. However, cross-border issues contributed to exacerbate the conflicts in Liberia and Sierra Leone: the massive inflow of refugees and rebels; rebel incursions across the borders and the activities of criminals with commercial interest operating within the border zones; and cross border-ethnic affinity.

From the above discussion, it is noticeable that past studies applied a single factor analysis and lack the kind of holistic approach that the tri-focal approach adopted. Moreover, most studies concentrate on identity and natural resources, without looking at how border issues became a linkage and connecting factor. This, hence, means that the three conflict factors have never been applied to in a single research project to analyse both conflicts. This lack of a holistic approach by past studies is evident from this literature review and, hence, the strength of this thesis. In most cases, arguments have been narrowed down to either identity or natural resources factors; hence, excluding border issues. There is also a lack of research in the core area of how the nature of borders can impact on intra-state conflict; the concentration has been on interstate border conflicts. Although some studies (see, for instance, Nugent & Asiwaju, 1996; Silberfein, 2004; Owunka, 2009; Kieh, 2005; Reno, 1997&1999; Orogun, 2003 and Zack-William, 1990) has in passing mentioned how border dynamics can impacted on conflicts, they did not see it as a holistic part of the conflicts under study.

According to Kaldor (2007) this kind of contemporary form of cross border conflicts reflects the Post-Cold War characterisation of new forms of intra-state civil war, drawing attention to the complex combination of trans-border networks. In New Wars, groups have replaced states. To clarify, these groups could be based on identity, ethnicity, religion and tribes fighting over resources and across several borders (Kaldor, 2007, p. 8). The civil violence in Liberia, which later spiralled into Sierra Leone, typified this kind of distinctiveness of complex multi-conflict dynamism of identity and war economy, linked by proximity of their borders. In the next Chapter, the qualitative research methods adopted for this research will be discussed. Also explained will be how data was gathered, the target population sampled, the ethical considerations of the research and the data management techniques adopted.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODS

3.0 INTRODUCTION

Several principal qualitative approaches were utilised in this project, including the historical comparative method, which utilised primary, secondary and tertiary sources. It also drew upon field research, using semi-structured individual elite interviews and focus group discussions. This Chapter begins by justifying the use of qualitative methods and the importance of Triangulation in validating conflict research. A review of the historical comparative method and key sources of evidence are the discussed. Finally, issues surrounding anonymity and the ethical considerations of this research are outlined.

3.1 THE RELEVANCE OF QUALITATIVE METHODS TO THIS RESEARCH

Qualitative research methods are appropriate in many different academic disciplines and aim to provide an in-depth understanding of human complex behaviour (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005, p. 3). The complex nature of the conflicts in Liberia and Sierra Leone require an in-depth understanding of how multiple factors fuelled the conflicts. The qualitative approach is relevant to subjective and value laden conflict issues, which are often open to various interpretations. Qualitative research, as applied in this thesis, combines evidence about the conflicts from a cross sample of individual elite interviews, focus group discussions and relevant literatures. The (interviews and focus group discussion) adopted in this study allowed for an exploration of how local actors, local and international scholars, official international agencies and organisation perceived the conflicts.

Qualitative methods as Gall *et al.* (1996, p.19) notes, emphasises that scientific enquiries must focus on the study of ‘multiple social realities’. It therefore allows this study to apply the tri-focal approach to focus on the multiple social, political and economic realities exacerbating the conflicts in both countries. Qualitative methods facilitate uncovering the conflict phenomena, through identifying those who are directly or indirectly experienced or

Knowledgeable about this topic. A qualitative approach allows for the kind of flexibility needed in a post-conflict research, as it does not operate within strict technical guidelines. Willis (2007, p.54) asserted, “Qualitative method is not based on pre-specified methods and detailed hypotheses that will rigidly guide the researcher throughout the study.” This kind of flexibility in the research process, allowed for changes in the interview wordings and questions to adapt them to suit different kinds of respondents. It also allowed for changes to be made pertaining to the following matters: unexpected challenges at research sites; unanticipated reactions to interview questions; difficulty recruiting participants, particularly government officials, former rebel, former child soldiers and tribal chiefs. This, henceforth, meant that it was easy to change the wordings of my interview questions to suit the respondents’ different style, educational status, position of authority and environments; whilst still carefully evoking an appropriate response.

The flexibility of qualitative methods allowed for a wider debate and exposition of the failed state framework and, its relevance and failures, before adopting the New War theory as the framework to explain the tri-focal approach. It also allows a brief exposition of the Marxist approach, System theory, as well as the more recent Euro-centric framework. According to (Watt, 2007) this allows the researcher to ‘comprehend,’ ‘interpret’ and ‘draw’ conclusions about a social phenomenon. This process allowed for reflection on the conflict situation, highlighting some of the misinformation and misperceptions I had as an outsider. For example, my initial preconception was that political identity (the native/settler syndrome) influenced the conflicts in Liberia and Sierra Leone in similar way. However, I found out that the freed slaves (Creoles) in Sierra Leone did not have the same influence as the American-Liberians in Liberia, thus not having same political influence and impact on the civil war in Sierra Leone. The qualitative methods enabled me to pursue new and fresh lines of enquiry as part of this research process. This widened and enriched my field experience

and knowledge on how the escalating conflict factors individually and jointly contributed to inflame the civil wars under study.

Qualitative method enabled a reflection on the broader patterns revealed by quantitative analysis, to underlying processes and causal mechanisms that qualitative research is better able to illuminate, by examining and explicating the interactions of structure and agency (Lanham *et al*, 2004, p.24). Becker (1996) argued that qualitative methods can also be applied for exploratory (i.e., hypothesis generating) purposes or explaining puzzling quantitative results. In contrast to quantitative methods, qualitative data is usually difficult to graph or display in mathematical terms with precise accuracy; despite this it has the advantage of allowing for more diversity in responses as well as the capacity to adapt to new developments or issues during the research process itself (Flyvbjerg, 2006). Given that the tri-focal approach require flexibility in terms of questions posed, the environment and respondents under consideration, the choice of a quantitative approach would have limited my ability to be flexible in the field. With a quantitative approach, I would have had to stick to the same way of dealing with all conflict factors in both states and respondents regardless of the dynamics. The qualitative approach, by contrast, gave me flexibility, diversity and adaptability.

Flyvbjerg (2006), further states that, quantitative research can be expensive and time-consuming to conduct; hence, many fields of research employ qualitative techniques, because it provides more succinct, cost-efficient and timely results. The seemingly difficult and impracticalities of obtaining reliable and accurate quantitative data in Liberia and Sierra Leone solidified the adoption of the qualitative approach. Given the multi-complex tri-focal factors, this study is investigating, couple with the three fieldwork locations (Nigeria, Liberia and Sierra Leone) for the four months period, it would be practically impossible to carry out a pilot study required by quantitative method. Moreover, gaining access to the respondents would be impossible with the very difficult travel problems within West Africa, as well as

the terrains in each country. It would have been almost impossible to get enough respondents to serve as a representative sample required for an acceptable level of quantitative research.

King & Murray (2000) criticised quantitative methods on the grounds that, despite immense data collections, prestigious journals, and sophisticated analyses, their empirical findings in the literature on conflict are often inaccurate over time. It has been further argued that statistical results change from article to article and specifications, hence meaning accurate forecasts are non-existent. Instead of uncovering new, durable, systematic patterns, quantitative subfields of conflict are left wrestling with their data to find something eke out something with which they can label a finding (Tarrow, 1995; Vasquez, 1995). More importantly, statistical data on African conflicts are either non-existent, not properly stored, or destroyed due to poor storage facilities, as well as very inaccurate due to poor measurement standards.

The usage of quantitative methods would lead to inconclusive results, hence rendering the entire research process an activity in futility. Existing quantitative data about the tri-focal conflict factors under study are complex, and in some cases, they are contradictory and their sources cannot be readily verified (Vasquez, 1995). Early quantitative research on identity and natural resources concerning the Liberia and Sierra Leone civil wars are very inconclusive. Some say, for instance, that these conflict factors had no systematic effect on the risk of civil war (Fearon & Laitin, 2004; Collier and Hoeffler, 2004; Sambanis, 2001), whilst others have, however, argued that they are risk factor (Lieven, 1998; Deng, 1995; Kapferer, 1988; Kaufman, 2001; Brzoska, 2004). Moreover, others have also argued that there is a higher likelihood of civil war when identity and natural resources are at stake (Toft, 2003; Chandra & Wilkinson, 2008).

The most problematic issue with qualitative research relates to the possibility of adopting a neutral position, since qualitative researchers are said to reflect their role in the research

process (Trochim & Donnelly, 2007; Patton, 2002; Marshall & Rossman, 1998). It, therefore, rejects the notion that a researcher can be completely neutral and objective, instead maintaining that a researcher has a preconceived idea of what the results and conclusions of a proposed study might be (Willis, 2007). Given that I had a prior interest in the issue before deciding to study it, it could be said that this study, to a certain extent is subjective (Cohen, 2000). In this study, I recognise and acknowledge that some level of bias will exist –this is the case for any study. A recognisable bias evident during the interview process is that I tended to be more empathetic towards the narratives of the despondent who were victims. I think this is to be expected, given the atrocities they described, which were often committed with impunity, and so I empathise with their situation. This did not, however, in any way impact of data collected.

However, systematic transparency was achievable given this research is purely an academic pursuit of interest, carefully considered by me after noticing a gap in past studies of these conflicts. I believe that the cross-sectional approach of the interview process helped to reduce bias, as the interview sample was drawn from four different locations, involving participants, victims, outsiders and scholars. Interviewing people across the spectrum, allowed for a broader representation of behaviours, attitudes and beliefs.

The details in qualitative methods can be a blessing and a curse because generalizing across a sample of interviews or written documents can become complex (Brown & Dowling, 1998). Such detail makes it difficult to determine the generalisable themes. Despite this I was able to outline the important and re-occurring themes of the tri-focal conflict factors. Some have argued that the mixed methods increases our leverage on complex puzzles in the study of violence and is likely to reward scholars who use this approach with valuable empirical insights that will aid in theory testing and development.

3.2 VALIDATING QUALITATIVE METHODS: TRIANGULATION IN CONFLICT RESEARCH

As this study aims to analyse three conflicts factors in two different states, the theoretical framework utilises several schools of thought and combines different methods of data collection. Lincoln & Guba (1985) proposed four criteria for judging the soundness of qualitative research: credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability. According to Lincoln & Guba (1985) the criteria for credibility involves establishing that the results of qualitative research are credible or believable. Secondly, transferability refers to the degree to which the results of qualitative research are generalised or transferred under another context or setting. The qualitative researcher can enhance transferability by doing a thorough job of describing the research context and the assumptions that were central to the research. Thirdly, dependability is essentially concerned with whether the same result could be obtained if it was observe again. The idea of dependability is that it emphasises the need for the researcher to account for the ever-changing context within which research occurs. A researcher is responsible for describing the changes that occur in the setting and how these changes affect the way they approached the study. Fourthly, confirmability refers to the degree to which the results are confirmed and/or corroborated by studies.

To achieve the above validity criteria, this study applied triangulation to strengthen and validate the quantitative method. According to Cohen & Manion (2000), triangulation has the advantage of combining multiple observers/participants, theories, methods, and empirical materials; it is hoped that with this, the researchers will overcome the weakness or intrinsic biases and the problems arising from single method, single-observer and single-theory studies. Triangulation is a powerful technique facilitating the validation of data through cross verification from more than two sources; it is often used with a view to double check results (Cheng, 2005). This kind of triangulation gave the research a well-grounded empirical and methodological framework.

Patton (2002) identified four types of triangulation: data triangulation, involving different sources of data; investigator triangulation, using different evaluators; theory triangulation, with the use of more than one theory perspective on the same data set; methodological triangulation, the use of different methods. In order to achieve data triangulation, this study combined datasets from primary and secondary documentary sources, diary entries from the field with interviews and focus group discussions. The key advantage of using triangulation is “converging lines of enquiry which tends to give any finding or conclusion a more convincing viewpoint since its results will be based on diverse sources of information following a process of corroborating facts” (Yin, 2003, p.94).

This study applied investigator triangulation by using different evaluators in the conduct of my fieldwork in four different locations; United Kingdom, Nigeria, Liberia and Sierra Leone. More importantly, my selection methods extended beyond the conflict states to include outsiders: (international, African and local researchers and scholars). Using these techniques reduces bias and gives a wider view and opinion about the conflicts under study. It also adopted theory triangulation, by using more than one theoretical perspective on the same research: the failed state framework and the New War Theory.

Greene & Caracelli (1997, p. 15-18), highlighted the ways in which triangulation can enhance research. Firstly, it can test the consistency of findings through different instruments and increases the chance to control some of the threats or multiple causes influencing results. By developing results from one data method to shape the other, new research questions can be stimulated to challenge the results obtained from other data methods. Finally, richness and detail to the study can be provided by exploring specific features of different sources. In this research project, triangulation ensured the different sources of data were consistent with the research objectives and findings; thus increasing the understanding of human nature and social reality in their full complexity (Brown & Dowling 1998).

Triangulation has vital strengths and encourages productive research: this lifts qualitative methods to their deserved prominence and simultaneously demonstrates how quantitative methods can and should be utilised in complementary fashion (Green & Caracelli, 1997). In short, mixing or integrating research strategies is considered to be a common feature of all good research. Triangulation clarifies the broad but holistic approaches serving as methodological guides or roadmaps for a thorough analysis of the tri-focal conflict factors. According to Brannen (2005), despite the benefits of triangulation, there are also certain limitations, as the findings, for example, may not be projectable in a statistical sense.

Qualitative methods are unique in its ability to overcome the above limitation by providing focussed insight into the underlying issues most pertinent to the identifiable tri-focal conflict variables under study. Other constraints are that triangulation may not be cost effective and can be time consuming (O'Donoghue & Punch, 2003). Despite this, triangulation has vital strengths and encourages productive research. This was why the study used extensive field work/trip and the time necessary to achieve the objective of study.

3.3 COMPARATIVE HISTORICAL METHOD

This section focuses on the value of comparative historical method for this research project. Historical method is a useful tool, enabling the discussion of past and present events within the present context Denzin & Lincoln (1998). It also elucidates present and future trends; and provides an understanding of solutions to contemporary problems (Cohen & Manion, 2000, p. 213). The historical method holds the key to examining the tri-focal approach for the conflict factors are historical issues of the past, but their present analysis will help understand future conflict dynamics in the region. It is therefore, of immense value to this study, affording the opportunity to have a brief but in-depth look at the origin of crises in each state under study to allow for an understanding of the causes, nature and dynamics of the inter-webbed linkages. The historical approach enabled past and present literatures about the conflicts to, organise, verify, and infer results based on the objectives of this research.

This ensured a meaningful understanding of the extent to which the tri-focal conflict factors contributed to exacerbate the conflicts in Liberia and Sierra Leone.

Historical research stimulated the effects of key interactions within a culture, or sub-culture allowing for the revaluation of data in relation to selected hypotheses, theories and generalizations presently held about the past and present (Loseke & Cahil, 2007, p. 42). It is like using present day experiments to explore the intricate and multi-complex conflict issues surrounding the tri-focal factors under study. Busha & Harter (1980) provided six steps to conducting historical research: recognise historical problem and use it to identify certain historical knowledge; gather as much relevant information about the problem or topic as possible. The next step is to, therefore, form hypotheses that tentatively explain relationships between historical factors; rigorous collection and organization of evidence, and verification their authenticity, veracity of information and its sources. Finally, selection, organization, and analysis of the most pertinent collected, hence allowing for conclusions to be drawn.

Based on the above six steps by Busha & Harter (1980), the historical method enabled this study to gather relevant information about the crisis, organise and verify these data in order to ensure that only authentic evidences are used. It also enabled the study to extrapolate from evidence collected from various sources, in order to reach meaningful conclusions. The value of historical method for this study stems from the fact that although the conflicts under study ended in 2003, the entire region and the international community is still grappling with the consequences in the form of providing security, reconstruction and a stable society. These conflicts introduced new dynamics into the continent's conflict nexus and scholars and policy makers are still unable to explain their causes. The historical method thus becomes relevant in the continued study and search for answers, which the tri-focal approach seeks to analyse.

Busha & Harter (1980) faulted the historical approach because of its complexities, and data sets such as diaries, memoirs or letters can be changed from time to time can be biased, corrupt or skewed. Corden *et al*, (2005) also posited that historical data in paper form could be vulnerable to time, which can destroy fragile paper and fade ink until it is illegible. Despite these shortcomings, the historical approach remains valuable for this study. It was because of these flaws that this research adopted a mixed method approach, which creates the avenue for verification and corroboration of facts through interviews and focus group discussions. I now turn to discuss the historical comparative method.

The comparative historical method elucidates the multiple social systems that posed a threat to the socio-political and economic development of Liberia and Sierra Leone and how these become a regional security problem. According to Schutt (2006), the method is relevant when the scale of the social system, it is attempting to study is complex and overwhelming, with wider implications. This research applied the historical comparative method in order to compare the broad, wide reaching and complex identity, natural resources and border conflicts issues which intractably connects the civil wars. Firstly, it enabled a comparative analysis of how Liberia and Sierra Leone became failed states: their historical, socio-economic and political developments, and routes into conflict.

Secondly, the comparative method was applied to each of the data analysis chapters in order to compare the findings in both conflict states. The aim of this comparison was to see the similarities and differences of the extent to which each tri-focal conflict factors exacerbated the civil wars. The historical comparative research method was therefore of immense value to this research: it critically examined and compared two crises in West Africa, giving a detailed analytical account of their complex linkages and their intricate connectivity. Liberia and Sierra Leone share similarities and some differences concerning their historical developments to statehoods, and under-developed economies, based on the exportation of mineral and natural resources, as well as a common undefined border with cross border

affinity. There are also similarities in their political intrigues, internal power formation and conflict dynamics, with their only being minor differences.

Emirbayer (1996, p. 114-116) discussed four stages of systematic qualitative comparative historical studies: developing the premise of the investigation; identify the events/concepts that may explain the phenomena; choose the cases and, nation/region to examine; examine the similarities and the differences; base the information gathered, propose a casual explanation for the phenomena. Liberia and Sierra Leone shares a lot of similarities and some differences in terms of their pre-colonial and colonial state formation and experiences given, they both lie on the coastal front of West African Sub-Region and have a history of return slaves. Additionally they share similar under-developed economies, based principally on the export of mineral and natural resources they also share a common and undefined border, intra/cross border ethnic affinity and a long history of intermarriage and trade.

The qualitative comparative historical method enabled the study to apply the above to develop the premise of the investigation, by identifying and using the tri-focal approach to explain the conflict phenomena, in Liberia and Sierra Leone. It also examines their similarities and the differences based on the information gathered to justify the tri-focal approach within the New War Post cold War conflict phenomena. The method recognises that within each case there are multiple different social systems influencing the conflicts: these factors were separated and analysed, so that causality could be attained for each of them. Mahoney (2003), one of the current leading figures in historical comparative research, identifies some difficulties that historical comparative research faces: for instance, it continues to overlook issues such as law in its analysis. In terms of this research project, it is more or less a socio-political and economic issue, with no core legal implications.

3.4 DATA COLLECTION: LIBERIA AND SIERRA LEONE

This section focuses on data collected for the purpose of this research, including primary and secondary data, and individual elite interviews and focus group discussions. The individual

elite interviews and the focus group discussions involved conducted in Liberia, Sierra Leone and Nigeria involves meeting them within their cultural environment, where they have power over their views and opinions. Field research is an important approach to gathering qualitative data and I went into the field to: conduct interviews, observing past conflict phenomenon, face-to-face interactions, as well as data collection from primary and secondary sources.

Primary sources are the most sought after in historical research, for they provide first-hand accounts of information. Notably, finding and assessing primary historical data is an exercise involving logic, intuition, persistence, common sense and extensive networking (Schutt, 2006, p. 49). For the purpose of this research, primary sources will include the following documents: official reports, speeches, pamphlets, posters, or letters by participants; and oral history and eyewitness accounts. The elite interviews and the focus group discussions also fall into the categories of primary sources. These primary sources are created by people with direct, personal knowledge of the events being described; hence could serve as an original source of information about the themes of the research (Krueger & Casey, 2000, p. 121).

It is important to note that most of these primary sources were not referenced at the request of the providers: sources from ECOWAS, ECOMOG, UNMIL and UNMISL, pamphlets from government information offices in Liberia and Sierra Leone and documents from TRC in Liberia and Sierra Leone. Another primary source that cannot be references is from the personal notes and reports from the members of TRC from Liberia and Sierra Leone. The researcher was given access to these manuscripts, which according to these sources may be published in the future. Other important primary sources were from the national library in Liberia and Sierra Leone. These primary data were kept in special archives and access was gained through top government connection to the Liberians. Some of these data are almost in ruin due to poor storage, but they represent official government reports about the conflicts.

These important and reliable data were however, corroborated by other sources in a way that made them a reliable first-hand information about the civil wars in Liberia and Sierra Leone.

These sources are usually difficult to get, given most require some sort of approval by top government officials, in private collections. With approval and personal contacts, I was able to gain access to some official government reports and documents about the conflicts in the *National Libraries*, *National Information Centres* as well as their various agencies for *National Statistics* in Liberia and Sierra Leone. Some of these primary sources had been lost, stolen or destroyed, due to poor archival facilities. To overcome this, I had to access some high ranking past government officials and military elites; rebel leaders and top executives of non-governmental agencies and civil societies, who were in these countries during and immediately after the conflicts; they provided me with some personal and official documents, published and unpublished official reports, speeches, pamphlets, diaries, memoirs and biographies.

Primary sources have the most objective connection to the past and, whether accurate or not, offer new input into historical questions; they 'speak for themselves' in ways which cannot be captured by secondary sources (Stebbins, 2001, p. 302). One of the most reliable sources of primary data in this research project was the complete volumes of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission report into Liberia and Sierra Leone. Commissions were set up in each of the countries after the conflicts to examine the political, historical, economic, social and moral causes of the crises, as well as their impact. It has the mandate of investigating and determining responsibility for domestic war crimes, gross violations of human rights and serious humanitarian law violations, as well as examining the root causes of the conflicts. The various volumes of these reports were available in Libraries in the states under study.

I interviewed members of the committee in both countries (more on this later). In Sierra Leone, I was in contact with the following TRC members: Franklyn Bai Kargbo (Executive Secretary) and Chairman Bishop Joseph Humper; in Liberia, Bishop Arthur F. Kulah, Rev. Gerald B. Coleman, and John H. T. Stewart. Additionally, they gave me some of their notes and were a source of further referral for other primary sources. I made high ranking contacts at the 'Head Quarter' of the 'Economic Community of West African States' in Nigeria ('ECOWAS'): the president of the 'ECOWAS' Commission in Abuja; Ambassador James Victor Gbeho; Col. Mahamane Toure, commissioner for political affairs, peace and security. I also got approval to use the official library under supervision; as a result, I gained access to primary data and some important correspondences prior to, during and immediately after the conflicts.

Some important primary data was found in the libraries of local and international agencies based outside or within Liberia and Sierra Leone, the Red Cross, United State aids agencies, *Amnesty International*, *United Nation's* agencies, *Global Witness*, *Resources Trends*, *Timber Global*, and the *British Foreign Offices* and religious groups. According to Drake & Finnegan (1997) primary sources have been criticised for usually being fragmentary, ambiguous and very difficult to analyse and interpret. Furthermore, there can be biases and simplification of events, for "original material may be ... prejudiced, or at least not exactly what it claims to be" (Howe & Lewis, 1993, p.112). Due to the multiplicity of the sources of primary data, however, I had a wide choice and opportunities to filter through and compare data to ascertain their authenticity and relevance to this project.

Bishop (2007) states that secondary sources of information are records or accounts prepared by someone other than the person(s), who participated in or observed an event. This study extensively evaluated other evidence relating to and produced soon after the crisis. Some of it was from the same sources as the primary data; however, the difference lay in the fact that

the study had to separate those written during the crises by eyewitnesses and/or participants, who have a direct bearing on the conflicts.

Secondary data are those written after the conflicts, which tend to be found in general publications and libraries, including: the various government publications on the crisis, such as the government's historical records, political journals/papers and government gazette. I also relied heavily on sources from published and unpublished reports from both local and international non-governmental organisations, which were directly or indirectly involved in conflict: the *Red Cross*, United State aids agencies, *Amnesty International*, *United Nation's* agencies in Liberia and Sierra Leone, the *British Foreign Offices*, *Global Witness* and religious groups. McCaston (1998) argues that secondary data analysis saves time that would otherwise be spent collecting new data; it also adequately captures past developments and pre-established validity and reliability, negating the need for it be re-examined by those re-using such data.

This research also relied greatly on sources, such as journals and seminar publications from the 'ECOWAS' and 'ECOMOG'; the 'African Centre for Strategic Research and Studies' in the *National Defence College*, Nigeria; the *Nigerian Institute of Policy and Strategic Studies*, Kuru, Jos; the *Nigerian Institute of International Affairs* in Lagos and the *Institute of Peace and Conflict Resolution* in Abuja. Some officials of these organisations also participated in the individual elite interviews I conducted. Other secondary sources utilised were the various international peer review journals and papers published during and after the conflicts. These journals trace and analyse the complex threats to the fragile peace in Post-Cold War West Africa, especially Sierra Leone and Liberia. Also of use were the relevant newspapers, periodicals and reports.

3.5 RATIONALE FOR ELITE INTERVIEW METHODS AND PROBLEMS

This section examines why this study adopted the methods of interviews and the problems they may pose to conflict research. Tuchman (1994) outline a range of uses of interviews: gathering basic information about a case; filling in gaps in existing historical accounts; finding omitted variables and hypotheses and uncovering causal processes. Interviews have the ability to generate insights pertaining to the research objective (Kidder *et al.*, 1991, p. 132), as well as allowing respondents to express their feelings and opinions freely and honestly (Stebbins, 2001). Interviews allow for descriptive analysis of how respondents socially construct their views about the tri-focal conflict factors, this is usually not possible with the use of quantitative methods. The complexity and multiplicity of these conflict factors carry underlying emotional elements, which may often be disregarded by quantitative methods such as surveys and experimental designs.

Interviews offer researchers an excellent platform for understanding others by accessing and analysing people's views, meanings, and definitions of situations and constructions of reality (Daymon & Holloway, 2011). In dealing with human behaviours, the use of observation has its limitations, as it cannot reveal what is in the mind. This limitation is especially true when investigating events considered as traumatic as the conflicts under study, which usually requires the respondents recalling behaviours/events in certain times and spaces.

Yin (2009) asserted that interviews provide useful insights into situation, described and understood through the eyes of the subject. Interviews can also be used to gain access to the history of a particular topic and help to identify other sources of relevant evidence (Yin, 2003, p. 23). It was further asserted by Yin (2009) that interviews are oral reports, subject to memory lag, prejudice, and at times inaccurately articulated? One must also be mindful of own biases and that of the person being interviewed, meaning care must be taken to ensure the person is being led in the right direction. Denzin & Lincoln (2005) emphasised that the interviewer's and interviewee's personal characteristics of race, class, ethnicity, and gender

could influence the interview process. With this in mind, I have corroborated my interview data with information from other secondary sources.

This study adopted a semi-structured interviewing technique: there were some initial guiding questions or core concepts to ask, but there was no formal structured instrument or protocol to follow. The purpose of this was to allow the conversation to move in any direction of interest. Semi-structured interviewing was particularly useful in exploring the research themes, given the process enabled me to direct the nature and type of questions; whilst the respondents' answers prompted further questions about the issues raised. The Liberia and Sierra Leone conflicts are complex, so semi-structured interviewing allowed for the kind of flexibility the research required. Ritchie & Spencer (1994) observed that a potential drawback of semi-structure interviews is that they can be difficult to analyse. Being mindful of this, I carefully chose a general outline of questions guiding the interview process to ensure easy analysis and synthesis of the interview results.

Elites are critical source of information of socio-economic and political developments issues such as the conflicts under study (Oisín, 2007). Elite interviews are thus a potent source of data for conflict researchers, and can contribute to empirical research in important ways, as it has specific advantages that can compensate for weaknesses in alternative techniques. The elite interview method was chosen, because the elite due to their privileged positions in government, held information on the conflicts, in Liberia and Sierra Leone.

Tansey (2007) outlined four important reasons and ways elite interviews are a potent source of data for political and sociological researchers. Firstly, these corroborate what has already been established from other sources. Elite interview data is rarely considered in isolation, the goal of collecting such data is often to confirm, compare and offer an alternative account of information that has already been collected from other sources. Secondly, it provides new information that will advance the research process. One such additive function of elite

interviews is to establish what people's attitudes, values, and beliefs are, as it focuses on their thoughts and on key issues relevant to the research project.

Thirdly, elite interviews can be used to gather new data and make inferences about the beliefs or actions of specific individuals. This is particularly important when seeking to research the beliefs or activities of key political groups, such as politicians or civil servants, who are too large in number to interview individually. Finally, elite interviews are conducted in order to establish the decisions and actions that lay behind an event or series of events. Through direct and focused questioning, researchers can reconstruct political episodes; it can be the basis for first-hand testimony; a broader picture of a complex phenomenon; gather detailed information about the process in question. Elite interviews can elucidate the hidden elements of political action that are not clear. In this way, elite interviews are part of triangulation, where collected data were crosschecked through multiple sources in order to increase the robustness of the findings.

According to Seldon & Pappworth (1983) one of the strongest advantages of elite interviews is that they enable researchers to interview first-hand participants of the processes under investigation. This allows researchers to obtain accounts from direct witnesses to the events in question. Whilst documents and other sources may provide detailed accounts, there is often no substitute for talking directly to those involved and gaining insights from key participants. Aberbach & Bert (2002) suggested that the nature of interviewing allows interviewer to probe their subjects, thus moving beyond written accounts that may often represent an official version of events, by gathering information about the underlying context and build up to the actions that took place.

According to Seldon & Pappworth (1983) other advantages of elite interviews relate to the particular weaknesses of archival documents, as interviews can compensate for both the lack and limitations of documentary evidence. Hammer & Wildavsky (1989) were of the view

that important political processes often lack an accompanying body of documentation, given written materials are often not created to document important processes, as participants either feel their actions are not important enough to merit recording them. Hammer & Wildavsky (1989) further argued that they may instead feel they are too sensitive to document in written form. Over time, important documents may also be unintentionally discarded, archived or destroyed. Mahoney (2005) observes that governmental secrecy rules can also ensure that key documents are withheld from public analysis.

According to Jeffrey (2002), documents can often be incomplete, conceal the informal processes and present a misleading account of the events. It was further stated that when there is an abundance of documentation, the wealth of primary data could become a liability in terms of sorting through the evidence and prioritising. Hammer & Wildavsky (1989) asserted that elite interviews can often help the researcher cut through this surplus of data, as respondents can provide the kind of data that can be critical in uncovering the causal processes and mechanisms central to comprehensive causal explanations. The elite interview allowed me to gather new data about the conflicts, as well as compare, and contrast them with the general beliefs and views from the literature reviewed. Through direct and focused questioning, I was able to reconstruct political episodes, events and actions; henceforth, utilising the various testimonies of respondents, to form a broader picture of the complex phenomenon under study.

Notably, I have not used the word 'elite' in its strict sense in this study to describe the rich and affluent or only the privileged in society. By contrast, 'elite' in this study describes those who are principal actors/non-actors; directly/indirectly involved and/or are close to those who are participants and observers that directly/indirectly encountered the conflict; close confidants of political and military actors; officials of local and international governmental agencies and non-governmental agencies. Since the term 'individual elite interview' here connotes richness, closeness and access to raw verbal data, I have also included academics

who have researched the conflict themes of this study and, henceforth, have had the opportunity to encounter important individual data sources immediately after the conflicts.

According to Denzin & Lincoln (2005), elite interviews, in many circumstances could compensate for the distortions that exist in written sources; however, it is also sometimes the case that interviewees can misrepresent their own positions, hence raising questions over the reliability of their statements. Robson (1993), Kramer (1990) argues that in particular, elites may attempt to slant their own accounts, or inflate or minimise their own role in an event or process, depending on whether there is political capital to be gained or lost from association with the issues in question. In this sense, political actors may either want to distort information to defend or justify their actions/inactions or invariably conceal their role the civil war.

Furthermore, in many cases interviews will take place some years after the events of interest have taken place, meaning that simple lapses of memory can limit the usefulness of one-to-one meetings (Kramer, 1990). Due to these potential limitations, it becomes incumbent on the researcher to be aware of the possible drawbacks that come with conducting interviews, as well as critically evaluate any interviews carried out in the research process. In order to evaluate such interviews, however, it is necessary to have criteria against which such interview data can be assessed. These possibilities were mitigated by the availability of rich written materials from within and outside West Africa. The elites interviewed were properly screened and carefully selected from the conflict country, Nigeria, and neutral country the United Kingdom.

3.6 JUSTIFICATION OF SELECTION METHODS

This section justifies what influenced the selected location of interviews and interviewees.

According to Ritchie & Lewis (1999), there must be an internal consistency and a coherent

logic across the study's components, including its sampling plan and the parameters should be in line with the overall research purpose and questions. Purposive sampling is a selection method where the purpose of the study and the researcher's knowledge of the population guide the process. Since the study entails interviewing a pre-defined set of actors, the researcher was in a position to identify the particular respondents of interest and those most appropriate. According to Patton (2010) purposive sampling is a type of non-probability sampling technique; it is widely used in qualitative research for the identification and selection of information-rich cases related to the phenomenon of interest. Although less desirable than probability samples, the validity of non-probability samples can be increased by approximating random selection, and also by eliminating as many sources of bias as possible (Vidich & Lyman, 2000). Purposive sampling is useful to this research, because it best enables the study to answer the research questions, and is suitable for the mixed method research design of this study. It also enabled the researcher to zero in on the target respondents, and at the same time take advantage of the snowballing technique; asking participants to suggest someone else who might be willing or appropriate for the study.

Combining purposive sampling strategies, apart from being appropriate and consistent with recent developments in quantitative methods, also helps in triangulation, allows for flexibility, and meets multiple interests and needs of a qualitative research (Patton, 2010). This study combined different purposive sampling methods to achieve its objective and to answer the research questions from valid respondents. This study applied criterion sampling to select respondents that meet stipulated criteria's, and expert sampling was used to glean knowledge from individuals that have particular expertise about the tri-focal conflict factors as it applies to Liberia and Sierra Leone. The maximum variation sampling method is applied to select a wide range of respondents from diverse socio-economic backgrounds, who have an interest in, and knowledge about the phenomenon under study. Comparative

studies sampling was applied because the thesis is a two country study, involving several identity groups and conflict factors with distinct characteristics.

Purposive sampling is valid for semi-structured interviews, as applied in this study, as it helps define whom to interview from a wide range of individuals. Again, purposive sampling is relevant to focus group discussions, as it helps to set and plan the focus group selection process. These various purposive sampling techniques each have different goals, and provided the researcher with the justification to make generalisations from the sample that is being studied (Watt, 2007). Purposive sampling has been criticised for being prone to researcher bias, because it was created based on the judgement of the researcher (Patton, 2010). However, this judgemental, subjective component of purpose sampling is not ill-conceived by this research, as the selection process was based on clear criteria's that elicited individuals and organisations that were directly or indirectly involved in the civil wars. As Kidder *et al.*, (1991) suggest the basic assumption of purposive sampling is that with good judgement and an appropriate strategy, researchers can select the cases and thus develop samples that suit the needs of the study.

This selection cut across four countries: United Kingdom, Nigeria (Lagos, Enugu, and Abuja), Liberia and Sierra Leone and the duration of the field trip was four months. The reason for selecting these locations and the way interviewees were selected will be discussed later on a location-by-location basis to avoid repetition. The respondents finally selected from this pool were chosen because they are directly or indirectly involved in the conflicts; they are knowledgeable about the themes of the research, and more importantly, their interest and willingness to participate. In most cases, they served a dual purpose as interviewees and a source of primary, secondary and tertiary data for this research. According to Cole (2001), a primary disadvantage of this kind of purposive sampling, is the possibility of overweighing subgroups in a target population, resulting in the over-representation of the opinions of one

particular group to the disadvantage of others. The home office advice restricted my movement to the capital city of the conflict states might have caused a sort of disproportionality. Also some potential interviewees opted out at the last minute and some were difficult to access, like the rebel/militias and former child soldiers, who are now adults. In all 69 elite interviews were conducted and 42 were used (See table of interview in appendix two).

The general questions guiding the individual elite interviews and the focus group discussions were based on the objectives of study (See appendix one). These questions were not judgemental, value-laden nor biased. Furthermore, I did not ask my respondents to describe any violence they partook in, witnessed or suffered from. I also refrained from sharing my own personal opinions about issues under consideration; this was helped by my knowledge of the cultures of the different categories of people I was interviewing. (See ethical and safety preparation before fieldwork in appendix three, preparation before field trip in appendix four and field trip risk of travel in appendix five).

3.61 UNITED KINGDOM

The United Kingdom was selected as one of the location for field research because several scholars here have long been researching in Liberia and Sierra Leone. Secondly, the United Kingdom was involved in the conflict in Sierra Leone through direct intervention with her past colonial power. Again several government and non-government organisations from the United Kingdom have been in Liberia and Sierra Leone prior to, during and after the conflicts. Finally, this location houses the head offices of non-governmental organisations involved in both states before, during and after the conflicts: the International society of the Red Cross, Global Witness, Timber Global and Resources Trend. These organisations and individuals served as sources of interview, and also allowed me to use their library, introduced me to their staff on ground in Liberia and Sierra Leone and were a source of further reference to important contacts in the conflict states.

Additionally, a telephone interview was conducted with Professor David Francis, a Sierra Leonean and Professor of African Peace and Conflict Studies at the *University of Bradford*. The interview covered all questions relating to the three themes. Lastly, I also carried out an email interview, with Joseph Smaldone, an adjunct Professor of *Georgetown University*, Washington, D.C. These interviews were conducted in the United Kingdom were without bias as they spoke freely from an outsider point of view and as expert and witnesses. Although these were re-verified with other sources, one could argue some of this international organisation may be more interested on information that suits the objective of their funders.

3.62 NIGERIA

Nigeria is important to this study, because it seats the Head Quarters of the ‘Economic Community of West African States’ (‘ECOWAS’). Nigeria also played a leading role in the ‘Economic Community of West African States Monitoring Group’ (‘ECOMOG’): this is the regional military coalition group, which intervened in the conflicts. Nigeria contributed the largest number of military personal and equipment during the conflicts in Liberia and Sierra Leone (Adekeye, 2007), Most of the raw data, early studies and publications about the conflicts found their way to Nigeria through ‘ECOWAS’, ‘ECOMOG’, military commanders, journals, newspaper articles and other governmental and non-governmental organisations (local and international). Interviews were conducted in three Nigerian cities: Lagos (*University of Lagos* and the *Nigerian Institute of International Affairs*); Enugu and Abuja (‘ECOWAS’ head office, *The Nigerian War and Defence College*, the ‘African Centre for Strategic Research and Studies’, and the ‘Nigerian Institute of Conflicts and Peace Studies’). These respondents opted out of anonymity because they believed; their thoughts on these issues are already in various publications, whilst their various research works and papers had been presented at conferences. They were also of the view that they are

consenting adults and, henceforth, were not faced with any risk for their views and opinion on the issues.

Nigeria is my home country: I speak two of its three main languages, and understand the terrain and the politics. Moreover, I had families and friends to guide and assist with data sources and interviews. The interviews conducted in Lagos at the *University of Lagos* and the *Nigerian Institute of International Affairs* was with academics/researchers in the field of West African conflicts, especially Liberia and Sierra Leone. At the *University of Lagos*, interview was conducted with scholars who have extensively researched West African conflicts. Ferdinand Offor researched the Sierra Leonean Civil Wars, looking at the issue of the proliferation of small arms and light weapons during and after the conflicts; whilst Dr Emmanuel Onah has researched the issue of natural resources and conflict in Liberia. Furthermore, at the *Nigerian Institute of International Affairs*, interviews were conducted with Dr Aja Agwu, Dr. Ogaba Oche, and Dr. Charles Dokubo: they are all researchers or senior researchers within the institute, who have several publications on themes relating to this research.

These scholars, due to their backgrounds, provided theoretical conceptualisations of the causes of conflicts in Africa, tracing it back to imperialism, colonialism, and neo-colonialism and using the Marxist paradigm of dialectic materialism to interpret and explain conflicts in Africa. They advised that my research project should follow the same theoretical path in order to capture the true dynamics of the African conflicts. In response to this, I justified the reasons for adopting the New War Theory, explaining why the chosen theory is a framework, capturing the true essence of the tri-focal approach. This resulted in a fruitful intellectual debate about the themes of this research.

It was, however, evident that some African scholars are not too familiar with the New War approach, or deliberately avoid it, because it is still going through barrage of criticisms and

refinement. Although they have heard about the New War theory, their only scepticism lay in the fact that it is relatively new. Interestingly, they saw the three themes of this research as representing a dynamic peculiar to most African conflicts; henceforth, accepting that these are important to the study of the conflicts in Liberia and Sierra Leone. They requested that they should not be anonymised: rather, they wanted to be quoted and published in original terms; I, henceforth, agreed to their request after thorough risk assessment debates with these scholars.

The interview in Enugu with Rtd. Col. Azubuike Nass, author, and former 'ECOMOG' infantry commander, an eyewitness to the conflict, was a very important one - He also opted out of anonymity. He fought in both Liberia and Sierra Leone and is now a security consultant. Moreover, he authored one of the first books to be published about the Liberian conflict: *A Study in Internal Conflicts: The Liberian Crisis and the West African Peace Initiative* (2000). I contacted him through a retired top military officer, who happened to be a close family friend. The interview in Abuja, Nigeria was conducted in three institutions: the Office of the 'Economic Community of West African States' ('ECOWAS'); the 'African Centre for Strategic Research and Studies' in the *Nigerian War and Defence College*;) and the *Nigerian Institute of Conflicts and Peace Studies*. At the *Nigerian Institute for Conflicts and Peace Studies*, interviews were conducted with two top conflict researchers: Dr. Oshita Oshita and Dr. Tswah Bakut. Those interviewed in Abuja are all academics and technocrats in various aspects of African conflict and peace studies in West Africa, or participated in the conflicts as military officer or official of 'ECOWAS'. The 'ECOWAS' officials, due to their access to some unpublished literature and other secret documents, were able to give an insight into the activities of the political actors pertaining to diamond trading and also how ethnicity impacted on the conflicts.

3.63 LIBERIA

A cross-section of the elite interviewed in Liberia, cut across regional, ethnic, religious and even political divides. Those interviewed include past and present government officials; researchers/academics; members of the ‘Truth and Reconciliation Commission’ of Liberia; local and international non-governmental organisations; media, social and political commentators; former rebel/militia leaders, former child soldiers and some local chiefs and paramount rulers. Notably, the names of the government officials, past and present military elites, and former rebel leaders and child soldiers will not be mentioned here to adhere to their requests for anonymity. These interviewees included Professor Alaric Togba, Dr. Tarnue Sherman, Dr. Kollie, Dr. Momodu and Professor Jonathan Taylor, all of the *University of Liberia*. They have all been in government at one point or another and authored books and journals about the conflict in Liberia. Also interviewed was Reverend Emmanuel Bowier, a former information minister under Samuel Doe, now a renowned author, tutor and commentator on public affairs; he also provided me with some original manuscripts of published and unpublished work on the conflict. Others include the editor of the *Daily Observer Newspaper* of Liberia; social critic, Stanton Peabody; Dr. Brahim Kabba, a scholar and presently a commissioner in the Land Commission of Liberia. Officials of local and international non-governmental organisations interviewed included; staff of ‘Sustainable Development Institute’ (*Friends of the Earth, Forest and Natural Resources*); the *Catholic Justice and Peace Commission*; the *Green Advocate*; the *International Red Cross*; and the *International Centre for Transitional Justice*.

3.64 SIERRA LEONE

Similar to Liberia, the elite interview process followed the same pattern of selection process. At the *University of Sierra Leone*, the following participants were interviewed: Professor Joe Alie, a renowned historian; Mrs. Memunatu Pratt, head of department and director of studies at the ‘Department of Peace and Conflict Studies’; and Reverend John Allie of the same department. At the ‘TRC’, I interviewed Bishop Joseph Humper, its former Chairman and

former Bishop of the Anglican Church of Sierra Leone; John Caulker, the Executive Director of the ‘TRC’; and Franklyn Bai Kargbo, the executive secretary. I also interviewed the commissioner at the Sierra Leone *Human Rights Commission*, Reverend Moses Khanu, who was a member of all the Peace Accords. Some of these contacts also gave me unrestricted access to their unpublished memoir. My contacts at the *United Nation’s* Special Court of Sierra Leone included Peter Anderson, the Press Secretary of the Public Affairs to the Special Court and Head of the Outreach Programme; Patrick Fatoma, the Special Court Outreach Coordinator; and Finda Mbawa, the Special Court Senior Out-reach Associate. Local and international non-governmental agencies included *Red Cross*, the Sierra Leonean *Human Rights Commission*, *Green Scenery*, and *Defence for Children, Natural Resources and Conflict Project* and the *Centre for Good Governance*.

3.7 FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSIONS: LIBERIA AND SIERRA LEONE

This research project combined the individual elite interview with the non-elite focus group discussions to ensure diverse group participation, views, opinions, and ideas. The intention was to give the research a wider participation, fact finding and to check the information from other sources. It also reduces the possibility of bias, rumours, lies and stories of deception, which are common with post-conflict studies. These methods provided a different atmosphere and a unique environment to solicit answers from respondents from purely academic background and of younger postgraduate students in a group dynamics. This gave the study an academic debate, with some form of argumentative fact-finding.

According to Kreuger (1997), focus group interviews were created in the late 1930's by social scientists that had doubts about the accuracy of traditional information gathering methods. Krueger & Casey (2000, p. 102) posited that, “A defect of individual interview is that the questioner takes the lead and data obtained from an interview are likely to embody the preconceived ideas of the interviewer as the attitude of the subject interviewed.” The focus group interview is a non-directive approach to interviewing where emphasis shifts

from the interviewer to the interviewee (Willis, 2007, p. 56). According to Thomas *et al* (1995), a focus group is a technique involving the use of in-depth group interviews in which the participants are selected because they are purposive, although not necessarily representative sampling of a specific population and will have something to say and contribute to a given topic due to their knowledge and experience.

Focus groups are structured small group interviews, where the people being interviewed are similar in some way and its aim is to gather information about a particular topic guided by a set of focused questions Stewart (1990). Participants are expected to interact with each other to develop a broad and deep understanding of the topic under study. It was further suggests that focus groups emphasise on insight, perceptions, views, responses and opinions. According to (Stewart & Shamdasani (1990), Greene, *et al*, (1997), Krueger & Casey (2000) the uniqueness of a focus group is its ability to generate data based on the synergy of the group interaction, this means that its members should feel comfortable with each other. Focus groups as a method, have its own drawback, especially when some group members lack confidence and low self-esteem, at the same time, it is a vehicle to empower the participants to air their views (Krueger & Casey, 2000) it was further observe that another potential problem in using focus groups is the number of non-attenders, so the recommendation is, therefore, to over-recruit by 10–25 percent. Qualitative research, particularly, focus-group interviews, can generate large amounts of data, this can be overwhelm for novice, as well as experienced researchers. Green *et al* (1997) posits that an hour interview could easily take 5–6 hours to transcribe in full, leading to thirty to forty pages of transcripts. Yin (1989) points out that data analysis consists of a number of stages in order to address the initial goal of a study: i.e. examining, categorising and tabulating or otherwise recombining the evidence. Krueger & Casey (2000) build on this concept, suggesting that the purpose should drive the analysis; they believe that ‘analysis begins by

going back to the intention of the study and survival requires a clear fix on the purpose of the study’

Participants in the focus group discussions, which took place in Liberia and Sierra Leone were selected on the basis that they were knowledgeable about the topic or aspects of the research themes. The idea was that they could provide information they have about issues relating to the conflicts, as well as illuminating the differences in perspectives between members of the group. These discussions elucidates insights, perceptions, views, responses and opinions; hence, allowing for probing of the conflict themes. The focus groups discussions really lived up to expectations, as the debates and arguments engaged with brain storming sessions and even after session debriefings. I was also aware that recording and transcribing focus group interviews could be a difficult and cumbersome task. To counteract this, appointed a moderator to direct the affairs and a secretary to take notes; whilst I ensured the recording and facilitating of the event.

3.8 ORGANISING THE FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSIONS

For the purpose of this research, six participants were selected for each focus group discussion — this excludes the moderator and the secretary. During each of the focus group discussions, I mapped out five to six questions, estimating duration of between one and half hours to two hours maximum. Krueger (1997) and Kitzinger (1995) suggested that for a simple research question the number of focus groups members’ necessary might only be three or four, whilst Krueger & Casey (2000) suggested between six and eight participants, as smaller groups show greater potential. Moreover, Maykut & Morehouse (1994) and Becker (1996) posited that the questions in the focus group should consist of fewer than a dozen questions; these should be unstructured, open-ended questions, which allow respondents to answer from a variety of dimensions. Finally, Stewart (1990) suggested that the time for a focus group should be between one to two hours. During the course of the

focus groups, keeping to time was a difficult task, because sometimes the arguments and discussions became so heated and interesting that even the moderator lost sense of the time.

The focus group discussions were conducted in Liberia at the *University of Liberia*, with tutors and postgraduate students of the 'Babangida Centre for International Relations', the 'Koffi Annan Centre for Peace and Conflict Studies' and the 'Department of Political Science'. In Sierra Leone, it was conducted at the *University of Sierra Leone* (Furahbay College), with tutors and postgraduate students of the 'Department of Peace and Conflict Studies' and the 'Department of History'. All the participants understood the theme of this research project, for those selected either had carried out research on one of the themes of the study or had been involved in fieldwork with international/local non-governmental agencies during and after the conflicts. In addition, they were from different ethnic groups, and all witnessed the conflicts.

I made contact with these institutions three months earlier through letters, emails and telephone conversations; thereafter, a tentative date for focus groups was fixed. I ensured the universities were still in session. I made personal contact via email and telephone conversations with all the participants prior to the day of the focus group to introduce myself. Meetings were also organised with all of them before the day of the interview, so that we could familiarise ourselves with each other. I also arranged to provide light refreshments and agreed to provide a stipend to assist the transportation of student who had to travel long distances. The discussions were held in halls within the faculty of the universities and on the day, I ensured the venue was well arranged and conducive. Calls were made to all participants beforehand to ensure they would attend and I made provisions for standby participants in case anyone did not turn up, although they all did turn up. I bought a voice recorder and long life batteries and tested them.

These questions were carefully crafted to appear as natural as possible and the questions were limited to the research themes to avoid wasting time; I also ensured that the sequence of the questions flowed from very broad and general to narrow and specific. At the beginning of the focus groups, I introduced myself, thanked everyone and explained to them that the purpose of it was to solicit their perceptions, views and a range of opinions, rather than to gain a consensus about the research themes. Additionally, I reviewed the ground rules to everyone and welcomed ideas and suggestions; I also let them know that everyone would have an opportunity to speak and there are no right or wrong answers. Moreover, I introduced the moderator and the secretary, explaining their roles to participants. Participants were assured that even negative comments are useful in gaining insights about the topic under discussion and that all comments would be confidentially treated, with only summarised information being published in the thesis.

The moderator also served as a timekeeper, deciding and ordering the events. The secretary took additional notes, summarising what each person said. The researcher carefully guided participants into the questioning, beginning with a general question on what they individually thought were the causes of the conflicts. Once questions relating to one issue were finished, I summarised the discussion thus far, before we then moved to the next question. Some of the participants did mention other aspects not directly related to the topic, this meant I had to be a bit more flexible with the discussion, but at the same time be careful not to deviate to unnecessary or irrelevant issues. At the end, I thanked the participants and reminded them about how the information would be used. I also promised them that they would receive a follow-up and a summary of the discussion. The moderator and the secretary were thereafter, debriefed.

During the transcribing process, I had to examine, categorise and tabulate, by recombining the interviews to facilitate analysing and interpreting focus group data. In order to achieve the above, I had to listen carefully to tapes, read the transcripts in their entirety several times,

as well as the observational notes taken during the discussions. It took a lot to break these discussions into parts, sift through them, as well as highlight and sort them into useable categories. These discussions were all transcribed using the *Nvivo9* software obtained at the *University of Strathclyde*.

3.9 ETHICAL CHALLENGES

Conflict research often involves many ethical and methodological challenges; this is more prevalent when researching conflicts in two countries. Firstly, ethical issues were addressed in my application for ethical approval from the Departmental Ethics Committee before embarking on the fieldwork. Punch (1994) gave a list of recommendations, I followed each of these guidelines to help eliminate any ethical concerns in this study: research should not cause harm to the participant; there should be informed and voluntary consent; no deception; privacy and confidentiality should be a priority at all times. Punch's (1994) second recommendation on informed and voluntary consent was addressed by giving a copy of the consent and participant information sheets to all participants in this study, all of these were duly completed and signed by participants, (see electronic forms in Appendix 8). I engaged in direct face-to-face conversations with my respondents and conducted the interviews in an environment where they felt most comfortable (their homes, restaurants or offices).

Since this research was not sponsored by a particular funding organisation, it was easier to remove personal biases, emotional prejudices or other group interests within or outside the phenomena being researched. This research project also took special care to be unbiased when gathering of data, ensuring the scope was widened to include written materials, elite individual interview, and focus group discussions, both within and outside the countries of conflict. Due to my background, identity or value system did not conflict with the outcome of this research work, for I was considered an 'outsider.' I am neither from any of the countries of conflict, or sponsored by anyone or interest groups within or outside the researched phenomenon. This work is purely an academic endeavour, intending to answer

some of the questions pertaining to conflict issues in West Africa in particular and Africa more generally.

One of the biases, almost affecting me during the interviews conducted in Liberia and Sierra Leone was that I empathised with the narratives of the child soldiers; however, I soon remembered the atrocities they committed and had to maintain a healthy balance as the interviews went on. Notably, this kind of bias did not occur with any of my other respondents. The cross-sectional approach of the interview process also reduced bias, which would otherwise have been more prevalent when interviewing respondents from a cross section of the society. Interviewing people across the spectrum allowed for a broader representation of behaviours, attitudes and beliefs relating to the conflict.

Another ethical issue lies in the ability of the researcher to primarily ascertain and identify the potential risks of the research against the benefits for the researcher, the participants and the researched subjects. Care was taken to ensure that the research did not in any way put the researcher at risk; it, therefore, adhered strictly to the advice of the United Kingdom's *Home Office*, the *University of Strathclyde's* ethics regulation, as well as that of my supervisors and my contacts in the conflict states. The participants were all adults who understood the purpose of the research and were able to make independent decisions about whether to participate or not, even the Child Soldiers have now grown into adults. More importantly, the data generated have been well secured, in order not to endanger the life or career of participants.

I also made sure that participant was not exposed to any risk because of their participation, so the identity of the most vulnerable group was protected: the ex-rebel leaders and members, especially the child soldiers, were adequately anonymised. I was also careful that the research outcome did not provoke new conflict situations, or ethnic, tribal and religious hatred and antagonism. Another issue centred on suspicion from the participants. First, I had

to convince them why I chosen to research their countries and, more importantly, why I specifically selected them to participate in the research. Moreover, I had to assure them that the research was for a purely academic study and that I am not a spy for their governments or foreign countries.

3.10 ANONYMITY AND CONFLICT RESEARCH

Anonymity is the concealing of the identities of research participants in all documents resulting from the research, due to the sensitivity of the information recorded in order to respect their privacy (Procter, 1995, p. 209). Anonymity for research participants is an integral feature of ethical research; it is also a legal requirement of the Data Protection Act (1988): this assumes that anonymity will be maintained wherever possible, and its importance has been emphasised over the years. I therefore, had to assign pseudonyms, so that participants' identities were protected from any attendant risk. During the field research to Liberia and Sierra Leone, I clarified the steps to ensure protection of respondents' identities and provided assurances concerning security measures and the storage of any data collected during the course of the research.

Conflict research tends to result in a lot of risk to participants; such risk can be physical, psychological or could lead to loss of job or community/political ostracism. I, Therefore, took care to ensure anonymity was respected; the exception to this was in cases where a clear understanding to the contrary had been reached between the researcher and the participants. Some of the participants, especially the academics, did not want to be anonymised; this was despite my explaining the possible risks. Some researchers will go to considerable lengths to protect respondents' identities, even when participants feel they may lose the ownership and originality of the data when anonymised. They sometimes even protect respondent's identity when there is no risk at all. Researchers often underestimate the likelihood of research participants wish to be acknowledged in published research, in order to retain ownership of their stories (Grinyer, 2001, p. 55).

I do not question the use of pseudonyms or to challenge anonymity as a research ethic, however the use of pseudonyms in this research is predicated on participants' decisions, following a joint evaluation of risks involved. According to Dr, Onah of the *University of Lagos* in Nigeria, the desire to be quoted is predicated on the need for his contribution to be properly documented. I explained to the respondents the kind of risk they may face, including backlash, risk of political violence and political, social and economic alienation, some participants who do not wish to be anonymised dismissed these concerns. Grinyer, (2001) suggested that using pseudonyms to protect identities that can cause unanticipated distress and that the practicalities of mixing real names and pseudonyms in publications can be complex. The difficulties in balancing disguise and distortion in research means that researchers need to carefully weigh up the potential damage to the data resulting from changing details versus the potential damage to the participants being identified, especially if no risk was involved.

It is important to indicate that anonymity using pseudonyms is still the norm in social science research. Despite this, ethical guidelines and methods textbooks contain limited discussion or advice about the ways in which identities are disguised beyond the use of pseudonyms, as well as the implications anonymising might have on the data (Lee, 1993; Corden & Sainsbury; 2005; Becker & Bryman, 2004). The danger in anonymity is that some researchers have become skilled at disguising individuals, by changing their age, gender, and area of residence or other personal characteristics. This research project gave participants the opportunity to participate in the risk assessment process and the freedom after such assessments to decide if they wanted to be anonymised. (see appendix seven for details on data storage)

3.11 CONCLUSION

This chapter detailed my choice and justification for adopting a qualitative approach to investigating the complex and sensitive socio-political and economic tri-focal approach. This

was based on its strengths for in-depth understanding of human behaviour. In addition I justified the strength of qualitative methods. This chapter also justified the use of a multiple qualitative approach: field research, historical comparative methods, elite interviews, focus group discussions and semi-structured approach. While primary data provided first-hand accounts of information, secondary data were used to supplement with sources of information records or accounts prepared by someone other than the person(s), who participated in or observed an event. Also included in the chapter was a general overview of my research participants in this study.

The chapter also focussed on the extensive field research to Liberia, Sierra Leone and Nigeria, taking into account ethical issues, safety preparations and precautions to reduce the risk to the researcher and the researched. Also included was the controversial issue of Anonymity and conflict research. Finally, the chapter looked at how generated data was documented, stored, coded and analysed. It is however important to add here that due to the volume of fieldwork experience; some write-up was moved to the appendix. The next three chapters (4, 5 and 6), discuss the findings of each tri-focal factors.

CHAPTER FOUR

IDENTITY CONFLICTS: SIERRA LEONE AND LIBERIA

4.0 INTRODUCTION

This chapter analyses the first conceptual building block of the tri-focal approach namely; the role of identity. The aim is to understand how significant identity was as a factor contributing to the conflicts in Liberia and Sierra Leone. It focuses on three sub-themes, which are the focus of much contemporary theory (as noted in the literature review), the 'native-settler relation/syndrome': the relationship between the freed slaves and ethnic Africans (political identity); ethnic politics (ethnic relations among indigenous Africans); and cross border ethnic affinity. The chapter is organised in two major sections; focussing on the Liberia and Sierra Leone conflicts respectively. Each section is further divided into sub-sections, each exploring identified dynamics within identity such as political identity, ethnic politics and cross border ethnic affinity. The chapter concludes with a comparative analysis of the significance of identity on both conflicts.

According to Kaldor (2007) since after the Cold War there has been a sudden rise in ethnic and identity based stratifications. These according to New War theorists are the noticeable negative consequences of the end of the Cold War, which unleashed lethal ethnic and identity wars (Shaw, 1990). This chapter is not concerned with identity problems as a cause of conflict or whether identity issues were the determinant factors in Liberia and Sierra Leone conflict. Rather, it explores how far identity was a significant conflict-escalating factor and the extent to which it influenced the nature and outcome of the conflicts.

The empirical research in this chapter seeks to elicit the extent to which identity issues are identified catalysts, contributing to the intensity of the conflicts in Liberia and Sierra Leone. It seeks to ascertain whether identity problems were identifiable conflict variables prior to and during the conflicts. It also examines how political elites used the existence of identity issues to perpetuate violence in order to advance their political interests. Finally, it will

explore how identity issues connected both conflicts, creating further regional insecurity and instability.

4.1 SIERRA LEONE

“The civil war in Sierra Leone almost degenerated into an ethnic vendetta where opponents and political rivals seeks cheap revenge in the political boardroom of violence, such that the suspicion among the ethnic groups increased as the attacks on selected tribes by the rebels and government troops increased” (Bangura, 2000, p. 76).

This section specifically explores the evidence generated from respondents and the existing studies to understand the extent to which identity issues exacerbated the conflict in Sierra Leone. Scholars and commentators have argued that identity issues such as ethnic politics (ethnic relations among indigenous Africans) and political identity (native-settler relation/syndrome) have no considerable significance on the onset or outcome on the civil war in Sierra Leone (Keen, 2001; Davies, 2000; Richards, 1996). There is no doubt, however, that political development of Sierra Leone was shaped by the ethnic/regional politics of the two prominent political parties: the ‘SLPP’ and the ‘APC,’ which have operated since independence Ndumbe (2001). Manson (2007) also notes that Sierra Leone politics has had its own fair share of ethnic/regional problems: these have been a cause of constant political instability, military coups and counter coups.

According to Alie (2007), identity issues are a part, but not necessarily the whole story, in explaining the conflict in Sierra Leone; however, political elites prior to and during the conflict did in fact, mobilise to ethnic/regional politics to advance their interests. Despite Sierra Leone having a history of returned slaves who settled in Free Town, this did not considerably influence the nature of political struggle and was not a primary issue during the conflict (Hoffman, 2004). The first sub-section examines political identity and the conflict in Sierra Leone.

4.11 POLITICAL IDENTITY

The focus of this sub-section is to examine the extent which, ‘political identity,’ that is the relationship between ethnic indigenes (native Africans) and the return freed slaves (Creoles),

was a significant factor in shaping and exacerbated the nature of the conflict. The Creole settled in Freetown and enjoyed a relatively privileged political position during the early colonial period. According to Alie (2007) due to growing tensions between them and ethnic Africans, the British progressively limited their political power. Alesina *et al.* (1999) argues that before independence, the key political division in Sierra Leone was between Creole and other African indigenous ethnic groups. The identity tensions between these groups led the British colonial masters to limit the political power gap between them. According to Koroma (1996, p. 83), the divergence in the governmental structures of the Colony and the Protectorate at the start of British colonial rule created a social difference between Freetown residents (Creoles), who were literate Christians, and protectorate Africans. Participant PF¹² asserted that the relationship between the Creoles and the ethnic indigenes was not a state of perpetual peace, as there were several conflicts, which occurred because of high handedness of the Creole officials. He states that:

“There were several violent attacks by the local tribes, targeted at the Creoles in the early days of colonialism; the Temne fierce hunters and the Mende people had, over the years, attacked these settlers over land, taxation and high handedness of the Creole administrative officials”.

Creole settlements faced constant attacks from Temne warriors over land, as well as revolts by Mende and Temne chiefs, the ‘Hut Tax Wars’ of 1898 (Konneh, 1996). Drawing upon the evidence of the focus group discussion FALG¹³ argues that in Sierra Leone, the British took steps to reduce Creole political power, which ensured that there was no considerable dominance over other groups. According to him, this gave the country’s two largest ethnic groups, the Mende and Temne, a political advantage over them. FSFG and ARM agreed with FALG yet advanced the argument that the Creoles were disadvantaged in terms of

¹² PF, a staff at the *United Nation’s* Special Court of Sierra Leone

¹³ FALG, a postgraduate student at the Department of History

population as they were only concentrated in Freetown. This hence ensured that they became politically irrelevant, although they still maintained privileged positions in trade and commerce.

The Creoles even tried to use several means to restore their privileged position. FNBG¹⁴ asserts that the Creole used the instrumentalities of the law and their influence with the British colonial government to protest the over bearing influence and strength of the ethnic indigenes; however, the colonial government maintained their ground and their relevance of the Creoles waned further. She argued that:

“The colonial government started replacing them with educated local elites and tribal chief in administrative positions they once held; this angered them so much so that they resorted to sabotage, which also worsened their situation. In this case, we can see that the returned slaves did not have any influence whatsoever or any bearing on issues that escalated the conflicts”

Alie (2007) argues that as Sierra Leone made its transition to independence in 1961, the primary source of political conflict shifted considerably to protecting Creoles huge commercial interests. He further notes that, “The salience of the Creole-protectorate cleavage was eclipsed after independence by the rivalry between the Mendes of the South and Temnes of the North” Krijn & Richards (1997, p 23). It is important to note that despite Sierra Leone’s history of returned slaves, this identity mix did not considerably influence the nature of political struggles; rather, minor socio-political antagonisms were resolved by the colonial government.

JR¹⁵ posited that Sierra Leone was one of the few African nations with history of returned slaves, which did not suffer from the ‘so-called native-settlers syndrome’. Professor Alie¹⁶

¹⁴ FNBG, a postgraduate student of History

¹⁵ JR, a former *United Nation*’s representative in Sierra Leone

agreed with JR that political identity was only a social issue and did not have any direct impact on the conflicts, as the British colonial master has addressed the Creole-native issue before it degenerated into identity antagonism. Alie further notes that this was surprising, as, in the early days of colonialism, prominent Creoles influenced the introduction of the Creole as national lingua franca (the second most spoken language). He, however, concluded that:

“We must recognise that the Creoles were involved in the struggle for independence from Britain, as their prominent citizens like Isaac Wallace-Johnson, Dr Karefa-Smart, Edward Wilmot Blyden, Hector Reginald and Sylvanus Boltman was involved in the delegation to London and early party formation.”

Abdullah & Muana (1998) argued that the Creoles discovered that they did not have the population to compete for political office; they instead resorted to using their superior education and economic influence to promote their interests, which were well protected during the conflicts. Dr Memunatu Pratt,¹⁷ however, argued that it would be wrong to completely overlook the Creoles' role in the conflict:

“We should not forget that these political elite were the most educated and richest in the country at that time. They were prominent members of both political parties and were major financiers. Their influence in the APC/SLPP wrangling was enormous as they provided funds and support for these parties.”

Dr Ferdinard Offor¹⁸ agreed with Pratt that the Creoles were influential in government and commerce. Dr Ogaba Oche¹⁹ further argued that despite the Creoles insignificance in

¹⁶Alie, a professor of Historian at the *University of Sierra Leone*

¹⁷ Dr Memunatu Pratt, the Head of Department at the Faculty of Peace and Conflict Studies at the *University of Sierra Leone*

¹⁸ Dr Ferdinard Offor, a lecturer at the *University of Lagos* in Nigeria

¹⁹ Dr Ogaba Oche of the *Nigeria Institute of International Affairs*

elections since self-rule, Valentine Strasser, a prominent Creole, over-threw President Joseph Saidu Momoh in 1992 and served as head of state for over four years through his military junta called the ‘National Provisional Ruling Council’ (NPRC). He was over-thrown in another military coup, accused of extra-judicial killing, illegal diamond deals, and failure to deal properly with the peace accord of the ‘RUF (Alesina et al. 2003)

DG²⁰, VE²¹, and PA²² all agreed that the Creole were influential in the politics and commerce of Sierra Leone and used their influence for the advancement of their goals. Edwards added that:

“The Creoles have heavy investments in the mining sector and have been trading partners to the Lebanese in the diamond trade. They also shared close relations with the American-Liberians and during the conflicts; they were in business partnerships with Charles Taylor. This alliance was to protect their business interests since they do not have a political voice.”

These arguments suggest that despite the initial political dominance of the Creoles over indigenous African ethnic groups, this did not shape the conflict as they increasingly become insignificant in the politics of Sierra Leone before independence. This hence, suggests it was due to the British colonial policy of imposing representative democracy and the fact that the Creoles population was so insignificant in relation to any of the indigenous ethnic groups. Some, however, have argued that the Creole’s should not be neglected: this is due to their enormous political and economic influence, which continued even during the conflict. Political identity issues do not appear to be a factor impacting the conflict, or in its

²⁰ DG, is of the *Red Cross*, in *Sierra Leone*

²¹VE is of the *Centre for Good Governance*

²² PA of the *United Nation’s* Special Court

escalation. Notably, next sub-section explores the extent to which ethnic politics as distinct from political identity impacted on the civil war in Sierra Leone.

4.12 ETHNICITY, REGIONALISM AND THE CONFLICT

The focus of this sub-section is to explore the extent to, which ethnic politics' (that is, the relationship among the various ethnic indigenes native Africans) impacted upon the conflict. Several scholars claim that ethnic divisions are less salient in Sierra Leone than in many other African countries, hence were not a particular leading factor driving the 1991-2002 civil wars (Davies, 2000; Richard, 2005; Abdullah, 1998). At the onset of the conflict, the 'RUF' rebels targeted people from every ethnic group throughout the country (Oyetade & Luke, 2008). Moreover, Keen (2001) argues that ethnic grievances were not rallying cries during the war, as all fighting sides were explicitly multi-ethnic. In an interview, David Francis,²³ asserted that:

“Ethnic issues are an important part of African political crisis and it has often been used as a mobilising factor; however, care should be taken in order not to reduce the causes of conflicts in Africa to ethnicity alone, as some Western studies will want us to believe. We should look at fundamental conflicts inducing issues like corruption, lack of democracy and long legacy of military rule, as underpinning factors that opens the door for ethnically motivated conflicts in Africa. The conflict in Sierra Leone is typical types, where ethnicity was not in the forefront while discussing the civil war.”

As a Sierra Leonean, Dr. Francis further suggests that, ethnicity was not a serious conflict factor at the onset of the conflict; although regional political alliances, played out along ethnic lines, was exploited by political elites to create artificial divides in the country. Clearly, the misuse of political power, the mal-administration of economic resources and

²³ David Francis; a Sierra Leonean and Professor of African Peace and Conflict Studies at the *University of Bradford*

lack of democracy have been destabilising factors in most African states to the extent that ethnic issues should not be over-emphasised as a primary factor in conflicts in Africa. PA²⁴ noted that:

“I used to think that every war in Africa was a tribal war, but this is not particularly factual. In Sierra Leone, the war was not a tribal war, but a conflict that ensued due to the insensitivity of the various governments to fundamental developmental issues over the years. However, ethnic regionalism has been a major factor in the nature of politics; but ethnicity became an influencing catalyst that developed at certain point in the war and thus did indirectly influence the dynamics as the conflict progressed and drew to conclusion. The political leaders began to connive with local tribal leaders to set up ethnic/regional militia and they began to appeal to particularistic interests of their ethnic groups; and especially during peace negotiations”.

PF²⁵ also claimed:

“The various student/youth riots considered to be the immediate cause of the conflict were not based on ethnic/regional divides, but on the high level of corruption and poor governance of the political and military elite. It must be noted too that the motive behind the insurgent was not ethnic, but because of the mismanagement of the economy. However, as the conflict progressed, ethnic consciousness grew and became a fuelling factor as each ethnic group took the law into their own hand, by forming tribal militia to fight their course and this was subsequently hijacked by the political/military elite to silence their opponents”.

Consequently, PA and PF accepted that ethnicity/regionalism were part of the political history of Sierra Leone; although they do not consider it to be a primary conflict factor. They

²⁴ PA is at the *United Nation’s* Special Court of Sierra Leone

²⁵ PF at the *United Nation’s* Special Court of Sierra Leone.

argued that the elite exploited ethnicity as a political tool, which eventually shaped the nature of the conflict. Their views stem from the fact that they experienced first-hand, how ethnic issues influenced the conflict. Dr. Ferdinand Offor²⁶ argued that in Sierra Leone the long history of regional political division created by the political elites in their quest for political power was manifest in ethnic/regional allegiances and struggles, which crippled the central Sierra Leone state. This, according to Dr. Offor, fuelled and inflamed the conflicts, making it a significant conflict dynamic. Likewise, Charles Dokubo²⁷ posited that:

“Ethnicity was played along regional baseline through the instrumentalities of the two major political parties: ‘SLPP’ and ‘APC’; this developed into political crisis that was later to lead to constant political instability. Such that when the conflict started, the regions were fragmented into ethnic and tribal groups to protect themselves against the ‘RUF’ and government troops. These ethnic and tribal groups had recognisable political elites as the sponsor/leadership.”

Dr Oshita Oshita²⁸ argued that the role of ethnicity in Sierra Leone will always be a contested issue:

“Regional power dynamics based on tribal differences was used by the military, political and rebel elites as a mobilising agent and a launch pad to actualise selfish political interests prior and during the crisis. This cannot be said to be a major conflict factor, far from it. I will even be careful to say that ethnicity impacts on the conflict. What I will like to say is that the politics of regionalism accentuated by prebendalism led the country into economic chaos.”

²⁶ Dr. Ferdinand Offor, a lecturer at the *University Of Lagos* in Nigeria, and has research extensively in Liberia and Sierra Leone

²⁷ Charles Dokubo, a senior researcher at the *Nigerian Institute of International Affairs*, Lagos

²⁸ Dr Oshita Oshita, a Director of Research and policy analyst at the *Institute of Peace and Conflict Resolution* in Abuja Nigeria

VE²⁹ was more direct, arguing that ethnicity was not a factor in the conflict. According to her, this is because at the onset the composition of the ‘RUF’ was a mixture of groups from various ethnic backgrounds. She further argued that:

“Despite all the ethnic and regional political turmoil this country has gone through over history, it was the irresponsibility of our successive governments, civil and military, which bled the economy of the country dry, which led to youth restiveness and later full blown war. Blaming ethnicity or regionalism will be a mistake and a miss-representation of fact. It is true that ethnic militia were formed along tribal and ethnic lines, but these were mere effort by the ordinary people to protect their land and people from rampaging rebel fighters. ”

In similar vein, Sheikh Bawoh³⁰ asserted that although parties were formed along regional divides, the conflict did not arise from ethnic or regional politics: these have been a factor in political development but never the cause of any internal conflict. RMK³¹ also claimed that ethnicity never led to any noticeable conflicts except political squabbles among elites. RMK further suggested that:

“Ethnic/regionalism was a misleading concept, which politicians used to their political advantage in the pretence that they are championing the course of their people. However, because the rebel leader, Foday Sankoh, is from the North, so people will then say that it was the North that brought war to the rest of the country? Some have even argued that when the rebel captured the North, they did not commit atrocities as they did in the South and East. Again, because the rebel leader Sankoh was from the North, the government did not supply arms to the local militia in that

²⁹ VE is of the *Centre for Good Governance* in Sierra Leone

³⁰ SB, an Editor of one of the major daily newspapers in Sierra Leone

³¹ RMK is an official at the Sierra Leone *Human Rights Commission*

part of the country, while they were arming militias in the South. These, though can be seen as noticeable ethnic dynamics during the conflict”.

Dr Aja Agwu³² argued that in Sierra Leone, although there has been a struggle for political power between the North and the South (regional squabble); it was the politics of exclusion and the dis-enchantment amongst the youth and the inability of the state to provide effective governance, which served as a more potent conflict factors. Dokubo concluded that:

“At the beginning of the conflict in Sierra Leone, we could not locate ethnicity at all; in that case one can conclude that ethnicity was not a factor. However, as the conflict progressed, a lot of ethnic sentiments were invoked by the political actor; this was later to lead to the creation of multi ethnic militias of which the Kamajors was the most prominent”

Bangura (2000) posited that despite its two party regional political differentiations, Sierra Leone never had any ethnic problems; although there was ethnic favouritism in governments over the years, which did not directly cause conflict. Agwu and Dokubo, however, did not consider how the emergence of different militia groups polarised the violence with multiple conflict nexus and actors, which inflamed the conflict. Whilst ethnicity was not a major cause of political competition amongst elites, it became a discursive tool to further elite hold on power and, thereby, indirectly became source of tension and conflict.

Politicians in Africa draw upon ethnicity as a political resource; however, in the case of Sierra Leone, it was a remote factor in the crisis discourse. Joe Alie³³ asserted that ethnic problems pervade most political formations in Africa, particularly in the post-colonial era, given most parties were formed along ethnic lines: this is the case with Sierra Leone, where

³² Dr Aja Agwu, another senior researcher at *Nigerian Institute of International Affairs*

³³ Joe Alie, a professor of history at the *University of Sierra Leone* (Furahbay College)

ethnic/regional party politics were immediately entrenched after independence. He noted that:

“Here, in Sierra Leone, the formation of political parties was not particularly based on ethnic lines: but, rather on larger regional divides, which was as a result of the sharp divide between the colonies and the protectorate. It could be stated here that ethnicity has never been a factor in the everyday life in Sierra Leone. It was, however, the ‘APC’ that started to beat the ethnic drum to get the support it needed so as (sic) to win elections against the older party ‘SLPP’ that was a South Eastern based party for the Mendes — the second largest ethnic group; only second to the Temni”.

He further claimed that:

“As the conflicts began, the political and military elites began to take particularistic tribal, ethnic and regional steps through their direct and indirect involvement in the conflicts and in their support and arming of tribal militias. To this extent, we can rightly say that ethnic and regional considerations did impact to fuel and changed the dynamics of the conflict. ”

DJR³⁴ asserted that the Sierra Leone conflict cannot be said to have emanated from ethnicity; although there are underlining factors, which may have caused ethnic sentiment to have a role in the conflict when it started. He argued that:

“Despite that Sierra Leone was dominated by the Mendes from the South East and the Timne and limbas from the North, ethnicity was not a potent conflict factor at destabilising the state; rather, [it was] bad governance, massive corruption and constant military dictatorship. The state apparatus collapsed and it became a failed

³⁴ DJR a former *United Nation’s* representative in Sierra Leone during the conflict and experienced first-hand most of the atrocities committed during the war

state. However, as the conflict progressed, the politic of patronage found its way through dubious elite involvement. Elite complexity of tribal regional sentiment became pronounced, as the conflicts degenerated into a battle of survival for elite and this, in some way, sustained the intensity of the conflict.”

The Sierra Leone conflict could not be categorised as ethnic, even though ethnic/regional political influences plagued all regimes, both military and civilian governments (Zack-Williams, 2001). According to Ndumbe (2001, p.45), “the conflict variables that ignited the war could not be directly attributable to the political failures resulting out of regional political struggle, but more of the failure of the political system to protect the citizens from abject poverty.” Ndube concludes that as the conflict became uncontrollable regional politicians and military oligarchy resolved not to lose out in the power play and galvanised local and tribal forces involvement in the war. A re-occurring theme has been the issue of elite involvement in the conflict: elites were accused of being responsible for the use of ethnic sentiments to create mutual suspicion and then violence. DG³⁵ noted that:

“The North-South political divide could be said to be ethnic/regional in orientation, but did not play itself out so blatantly during the conflict. The ‘RUF’ was not even formed along ethnic line, as Sankoh, the ‘RUF’ leader, recruited mainly disillusioned youths and they came from all part of the country. However, civil defence forces were formed along ethnic lines to protect their land from rampaging rebels and government troops. I must however, add here that prominent elites hijacked these local defence forces and used them for their own political game, such that it influences the nature of the conflict. I will like to add again that the constant change in government during the conflicts was based on ethnic regional power struggle and this may have had some influence on the civil war”.

³⁵ DG is of the Red Cross in University of Sierra Leone

Alie, DJR and George traced ethnic regionalism to the post political development of Sierra Leone in which this by-partisanship led to corruption, nepotism and mal-administration. They, however, posited that ethnic regionalism in Sierra Leone cannot be completely ignored in understanding the conflicts and civil war. Koroma (2004, p. 56) stresses that the elites hijacked the Kamajors (a prominent tribal militia) and used regional and ethnic sentiments in their campaigns of carnage. It was further argued that the Kamajors soon became a force to contend with, fighting not only the RUF, but also the excesses of the NPRC government to protect their Mende ethnic group. What may be inferred from all these arguments is that the Sierra Leone conflict was not at root an ethnic conflict, rather ethnic factors impacted on the dynamics of the conflict to varying degree.

Bishop Humper³⁶ argued that ethnic/regional political divisions have been critical to the political development of Sierra Leone. It was noted by him that ethnicity infringed on the development of Sierra Leone since independence and, invariably, contributed to the events leading up to the conflicts:

“It is, therefore, a legitimate assertion that ethnicity and regional alliances became pronounced immediately after independence from the first indigenous head of state, Sir Milton Magai, on a moderate level. His successor, Siaka Stephen, used ethnicity to gain and maintain power: he used his northern ethnic group to gain power and soon established a one party state under APC and declared a republic. Primarily, ethnic/regionalism was used in Sierra Leone for personal aggrandisement to gain political, economic and social status; and also as a driving force to channel the grievances which manifested to the build-up of the conflict and during the conflicts”.

Drawing upon the evidence of the focus group discussions, FRLG³⁷ noted that:

³⁶ Bishop Humper, the retired Bishop of the Anglican church of Freetown, Sierra Leone and a former member of the ‘Truth and Reconciliation Committee’ in Sierra Leone

³⁷ FRLG is a tutor at the Department of History at the University of Sierra Leone

“I have heard people say there are no issue of ethnicity in Sierra Leone’s politics, because it had never led to direct conflict. Nevertheless, over the years, we have come to recognise ourselves as belonging to an ancestral descent in our political and social relationships with each other. Added to this was that the two political parties, ‘APC’ and ‘SLPP’, represented the country’s political affiliations and these affiliations are on the bases of ethnic and tribal groupings. These groups play a major role in governmental decisions over the years and even during the conflict. We will be in denial if we fail to recognise the impact of ethnic politics and regional division on the conflict.”

FSFG³⁸ asserted that ethnic and regional issues in Sierra Leone dates back to the death of the then-President Milton Magai, who ceded power to his brother, Albert Magai, rather than through the normal party democratic structure. He further claimed that:

“This was in a bid by Milton Magai to retain power in the North; and this inflamed the already existing ethnic/regional dichotomy within the party, and was at play all through the political turmoil that engulfs the country and leading up to the conflict. There is the need to put this into proper perspective if we are to understand the nature of the Sierra Leone war. This ethnic/regional palavers, though not too apparent, did at different times during the conflict impact on the nature of violence and stalled most of the peace accord, as each ethnic/regional power brokers refused a truce to stop the violence; except they are made politically relevant in the discussions to end the civil war.”

According to Kandeh (2003), when Siaka Stephen relinquished power to President Momoh, 50 percent of his top cabinet post were occupied by his ethnic group; the Limbas, even though the Limbas are only the third largest ethnic group. Nnoli (1998) argues that African

³⁸ FSFG, a postgraduate student of Peace and Conflict Studies at the *University of Sierra Leone*

political socialisation is such that an individual is perceived to be an embodiment of the tribe they strongly identify with.

According to Gberie, (2005), in order to understand the civil war that ravaged Sierra Leone, we must also understand how the two political parties, which emerged, were formed along ethnic and regional lines. It was further noted that the 'SLPP' became more of an ethnic party, drawing its support primarily from the Mende network in the South and East. The opposition party, 'All People's Congress (APC),' quickly appealed to and attracted the support of the Temne and Limba people in the North, as well as other smaller ethnic groups like the Loko, Mandingo and Susu. Early party formation shaped the nature of political socialisation; this, hence, had some consequences on the nature, dynamics, and events that stimulated and fuelled the civil war. FNBG³⁹ argued that:

“The conflict between the Timnis and the Mendes (Dobousu invasion) was an outcome of ‘APC’ deliberate policy that excluded the Mendes. The APC politics of exclusion to the detriment of other ethnic/regional groups in the country soon became the norm for subsequent governments that came to power through the barrel of the gun. While politics of ethnicity and regionalism did not cause or lead to the conflict, it did however, weaken the state structure and this contributed to the crisis that led to the civil war.”

Tshitereke (2003) argued that early party formation in Sierra Leone followed ethnic/regional lines, which created the 'SLPP' and the 'APC'; these two parties created regional tensions with a tendency to fuel conflicts. This is evident in the period (1964-67), when Albert Magai, who took over from his brother Milton Magai, entrenched ethnicity and regionalism into Sierra Leone through significant political appointments to the South-East, who is mainly

³⁹ FNBG, a postgraduate student of History at the *University of Sierra Leone*

Mendes, Siaka Stephen, who later took over power, reserved political power to people from the North.

According to Kieh (2005), the Mende and Timni dominated the politics of Sierra Leone after independence; they shared power, and used this power to the benefit of their respective ethnic groups. Abdullah (1998), observed that ethnicity in Sierra Leone followed a systematic regional division, which favoured the two main ethnic groups; the Mende and Timni; this also extends to the third largest group, the Limba people. He further argued that these major groups from time to time included other minor ethnic groups through association, meaning that ethnicity was never so explicit, but it was a powerful instrument of political socialisation.

Dr Memunatu Pratt⁴⁰ argued that there is no single answer to whether ethnicity, played along such regional divides was a primary conflict factor:

“Ethnic/regional politics is not a new phenomenon in our politics, due to the North-South and South-East political divides; but this was overshadowed by poor governance, corruption, unemployment, oppression and one party system as the immediate causes of the conflict. In fact, this bi-partisan patronage milked the country’s economy and turned us into a beggar nation. I will, however, quickly add here that ethnic/regional dimension to a reasonable degree did raise its ugly head. True that at the heat of the conflict, all the military and political leaders went back to their constituencies to organise ethnic/tribal support for their selfish agenda and this brought a negative twist to the nature of violence. So yes ethnicity was at the base of the conflict; no, it is not an ethnic conflict and yes, it impacted to escalate the conflict. This to me is the true picture of an unbiased assessment of the ethnic dynamics of our civil war.”

⁴⁰ Dr Memunatu Pratt, the Head of Department at the Faculty of Peace and Conflict Studies at the *University of Sierra Leone*

This sub-section has examined the extent to which ethnic politics was a key factor, in escalating the civil war in Sierra Leone. The analysis suggests that care should be taken not to presume that ethnicity is a key factor in African conflicts, the civil war in Sierra Leone is no exception. The arguments point to the fact that a long history of ethnic/regional political bifurcation has been a source of socio-political and economic problems. The inter-party conflicts over power between the two major political parties, the 'SLPP' and the 'APC,' was rooted in ethnic and regional alliances. According to this line of argument, it led to mal-administration, nepotism, corruption, one party state, a lack of democracy, unemployment and youth restiveness — these, amongst other factors, contributed to the conflict.

Furthermore, some argue that ethnic/regional politics may not have been a direct conflict factor, but it was a tool in the hands of the political elites seeking to maintain power. Although ethnic/regionalism is not a direct conflict factor, it did contribute to the escalation of the conflict. Others have also strongly argued that various ethnic groups, with the support of their political and military elites, formed ethnic and tribal militia to counter the 'RUF' and government forces. They further claimed that ethnic and regional considerations hindered the quick resolution of the violence during the various 'Lome Peace Accords'.

While some asserted that ethnicity did not directly induce the conflict, others pointed to regionalism, ethnicity or both as key factors in the country's underdevelopment perpetuating conflict. Those that associate the conflict with regionalism and ethnicity blame it on elites, who used the tribal militia to further particularistic interests. This analysis suggests that the strong sense of ethnic identification indirectly exacerbated the nature of the conflicts and became a conflict escalating mechanism.

4.13 CROSS BORDER ETHNIC AFFINITY MIX AND THE CONFLICT

The focus of this sub-section is to examine the extent to which cross border ethnic population configurations impacted upon the conflict. In Sierra Leone, ethnic groups share ethnic affinities with other sub-regional neighbours because of colonial border demarcations:

“In Sierra Leone, multi-cross border ethnic affinity with our neighbours; Liberia, Guinea and Ivory Coast greatly impacted on our civil war. These border neighbours provide shelter, training grounds, recruitment havens, and weapon storage for the rebels. The cross border incursions that result out of this usually drag the governments of these neighbouring countries into the conflict.”⁴¹

PHJ⁴² noted that:

“These border areas were turned into conflict zones due to cross border assistance to rebels, as they use these borders for recruiting and weapon smuggling. For instance, the Mende ethnic group in Sierra Leone are also a large ethnic group in Liberia and they are equally known as the Mende. They were also instrumental in giving shelter to their kin-relation, who is running away from the war in Sierra Leone. So the cross border ethnic dynamics can be said to serve two purposes; peace and war”

Lund (1996) and Sambanis (2001) posits that wars that have multiple ethnic characteristics and cross border affinities are harder to resolve, especially when rebel groups are fighting in the name of a primary groups or in support of other groups. According to Kaufmann (1996, p. 34), “conflicts that involve multi-ethnic groupings like that of Sierra Leone are usually difficult to end and peace negotiations/truce are almost impossible due to multiple interests”.

It was asserted by DGW⁴³ that:

⁴¹ A director in a government agency in Sierra Leone

⁴² PHJ, a Senior Director at the ‘ECOWAS’ Head Quarters in Abuja, Nigeria

⁴³ DG, of the *International Red Cross* in Sierra Leone

“It was not a hidden secret that our neighbours were involved in the violence. This was for two reasons: to help their tribes that has been displaced and to join in the battle to fight off the ‘RUF’ and the government forces who, at various times, took the battle to these border towns, fighting deep into the territory of Guinea and Liberia.”

SB⁴⁴ notes that cross border, ethnic relationships with neighbours contributed to the violence, but this was not a fundamental problem. He, however, concludes that:

“There were reports for cross border cooperation and neighbouring government involvement in the conflict. There are debates that the Limba ethnic groups in Sierra Leone were assisted by the Limba in Liberia, Guinea and Ivory Coast.”

According to Bangura (1991, p.56), “the cross border ethnic relation was such that tribes like the Fula and Mandinka are known to be scattered all over our neighbouring states across the borders and were drawn into the conflicts”. The government of Sierra Leone never paid attention to border security, meaning it was easy for trans-border activities to impact on the conflict:

“The cross border ethnic dynamics had a great impact in escalating the civil war, due to ethnic linkages that connects all the conflicts in the sub-region and the fact that these linkages multiplied the conflicts nexus and actors,”⁴⁵

This sub-section conclusion has drawn upon the analysis of respondents and existing literatures to examine the extent to which identity issues contributed to the civil war.

On the first identity sub-theme of, ‘political identity’ (the native-settler relation with ethnic indigenes), it was generally argued that, it was never a conflict index in Sierra Leone. They

⁴⁴SB, the Editor of a major daily newspaper in Sierra Leone

⁴⁵ A tutor at the Department of History

asserted that, despite the history of returned slaves (the Creoles) this did not create a core identity polarisation in Sierra Leone. There were minor clashes during the early days of political development; however, the relative advantages the Creoles had over the native indigenes soon disappeared. Notably, the Creole did play prominent role in the political development of the country and a Creole was the military head of state for over four years during the conflict, but this was where their influence ended.

With regards to the second identity theme 'ethnic politics' (ethnic relations among various indigenous Africans), it was generally asserted by the respondents and studies that ethnicity has no place in the politics of Sierra Leone. It was argued, however, that political instability in Sierra Leone was partly caused by the ethnic/regional dichotomy, resulting from the struggle for political power amongst the political elites. This was due to the intense rivalry between the two main political parties: the 'APC' and the 'SLPP'. Moreover this led to constant political conflict between two main ethnic groups: the Mendes in the Southeast, and the Temnes and Limbas in the North. The 'SLPP' started to consolidate its own power from the Southeast and the 'All Peoples Congress' (APC) from the North (Francis, 2005).

The arguments noted in their analysis that regional ethnicism⁴⁶ was, thus, a springboard for personal aggrandisement to achieve political, economic and social status; in addition to being a driving force to channel their grievances and settle scores. It was argued that, although ethnic issues influenced political appointment and elections, ethnicity was a minor factor in the build-up to the conflict.

The analysis evinced however that at the onset of the conflict, the 'RUF' rebels targeted people from every ethnic group throughout the country and ethnic grievances were not rallying cries, as the fighting were explicitly multi-ethnic (Keen 2001). A common emerging argument was that, various ethnic groups, with the support of their political and military

⁴⁶ This unique characterisation is a sort of regional political division made of up of different ethnic alliances.

elites to protect their interest, formed all the six traditional militia groups. It could be concluded that ethnic/regional problems were not a primary factor in the conflict; rather they are a part, but not necessarily the whole story that explains the Sierra Leone conflict.

To conclude, cross border ethnic affinity mix impacted to escalate and link the conflict at the sub-regional level. Cross border ethnic affinity configurations had negative consequences for the civil war, although, it allowed refugees to easily integrate into the community. The next section considers how identity issues contributed to the Liberian civil war.

4.2 LIBERIA

This section explores the evidence of respondents and existing studies to examine the extent which, political identity (native-settler relation/syndrome), ethnic politics (ethnic relations among indigenous Africans) and cross border ethnic affinity contributed to the escalation of the conflict in Liberia. Scholars, authors and commentators generally suggest that identity issues have been a primary conflict factors since the early political development of the Liberian state, and is at the root of the civil wars (Huband, 1998; Ellis, 1999; Gershoni, 1997). The concern here, however, is to examine the extent to which, it contributed to the escalation of the conflict.

4.21 POLITICAL IDENTITY: NATIVE-SETTLER SYNDROME

The focus of this sub-section is to explore the extent of influence on the conflict from ‘political identity’: the relationship between ethnic indigenes (native Africans) and the return freed slaves (American-Liberians). The repatriated freed slaves resettled from the United States, the Caribbean and the Congo became known as the American-Liberians. This study sees them as an identifiable political group—different from the ethnic indigenes: the American-Liberian’s spoke English, shared a common Christian religion and memories of a common slave ancestry. Dr Ferdinard Offor⁴⁷ suggested that the American-Liberians were a distinct group different from the ethnic indigenes. According to him, this is how identity

⁴⁷ Dr Ferdinard Offor, a lecturer at the *University of Lagos* in Nigeria

issues became embedded in the political history of Liberia and the beginning of segregated interactions, which led to antagonism between the American-Liberians and the local indigenes. Dr Emmanuel Onah⁴⁸ noted that:

“The foundation to the Liberian conflict could be traced to political identity motivated strife between the ethnic indigenes and the American-Liberians; but, despite this factor, political identity was not a factor that caused the civil war. We can refer to it as an underlying factor or a remote factor.”

Williams (2006) and Huband (1998) noted that, these descendants of former American slaves formed a distinct cultural and social minority dominating all aspects of national life; excluding sixteen other indigenous ethnic groups until their overthrow in 1980. Williams (2006) states that the antagonism and social isolation of African ethnic indigenes by the freed slaves created tension and mutual suspicion. JT⁴⁹ agreed that:

“Segregation problems’ emanating from early state formation, caused by the American-Liberian policy for almost a century, was at the base of the conflict. The indigenous people were discriminated against and left in abject poverty. It is therefore an underlying factor that cannot be ignored while discussing the civil war.”

Drawing upon the arguments of the focus group discussions, socio-political segregation is the reason why the Doe’s coup unleashed violence on the America-Liberians.

“As an American-Liberian myself, I believe that the class system instituted by the American-Liberians was such that they wield both political and economic power over the indigenous Liberians. This perpetual domination and suppression created a

⁴⁸ Dr Emmanuel Onah, also of the *University of Lagos*

⁴⁹ JT, a professor of International Relations at the *University of Liberia*

divided country along identity lines. Eventually it was the echoes of this divisiveness that prompted the coup and invariably, violence. I will, therefore, like to conclude that political identity problem was at the base of the conflicts; though [it was] not a factor that started the civil war, but more of a fuelling agent⁵⁰.”

Others noted that:

“Liberia inherited a state with a history of habitual identity contradiction as the American-Liberians waged a psychological warfare of domination and fear on the local people. The indigenous ethnic groups eventually have their revenge with the coup to free themselves of the long years of total subjugation. The American-Liberians did not give up the fight, even after Doe’s coup as they galvanised support for Taylor insurgency with support from their friends in Ivory Coast⁵¹.”

The Ivorian government played a prominent role in Taylor’s insurgence, as he launched his attack from their territory. According to Ellis (1999), the family of the last American-Liberian were in-laws to the then family of the President of Ivory Coast and they gave Taylor logistic support for the war. Identity segregation exacerbated and inflamed the outcome of the violence, because of American-Liberian covert involvement and support for Taylor from within Liberia and from their well-connected and rich diaspora community. Charles Dokubo⁵² argued that:

“It is a known fact that the 150 years of the American-Liberian domination through its True Whig Party has been a major source of antagonism. The contradictions were at the back of the mind of the Samuel Doe junta and so (they) executed most of the prominent American-Liberian political elite. This mass execution was at the

⁵⁰ A tutor at the department of political science at the University of Liberia

⁵¹ A tutor at the department of International Relations at the University of Liberia

⁵² Charles Dokubo, a senior researcher at the *Nigerian Institute of International Affairs*, Lagos, Nigeria

backdrop of Taylor's violence and support he received from the American-Liberians during the conflicts."

Dokubo linked the brutal murders of the American-Liberian political elite during Doe's coup, as the reason for their support for Taylor's insurgency. Dolo (2007) and Ellis (1999) argued that the American-Liberian could not separate the conflicts and civil war in Liberia from the socio-economic and political control. TS⁵³ asserted that the political development of Liberia was saturated by politics of divisiveness, given the American-Liberians did not foster a sense of national unity and instead ruled based on class privilege:

"We could trace the root of the conflict to the American-Liberian hegemony over other groups, which went on for so many years until 1980: non-commission officers seized power to end many years of political centralisation, which came with suppression, economic stagnation and closed politics."

When the freed slaves returned to Liberia in the 19th century, they perceived the natives in the way their former Western slave master did: i.e. mimicking white rule and justifying exploitation based on cultural inferiority (Ellis, 1999). The social segregation was such that natives did not vote, even educated natives were restricted from government positions; there were also sexual and marital restrictions (Dolo, 2007). FC⁵⁴ asserted that apart from the American-Liberians denying the indigenes access to education, employment, health and other opportunities, there was also a racial hierarchy amongst the settlers themselves: the white skinned the mixed-race and the dark skinned. CA⁵⁵ noted that most indigenous

⁵³TS, is a political science tutor at the *University of Liberia*

⁵⁴ FC, a former member of the 'Liberian Truth and Reconciliation Committee' and now the Programme Director of an NGO in Liberia

⁵⁵ CA is of the International Committee of the *Red Cross* in Liberia.

Liberians have to be adopted or given a name associated with American-Liberians, before they can be recognised or rise in status. Professor Alaric Togbah⁵⁶ argued that:

“American-Liberians set themselves up as a ruling class based on class identity; therefore, it could be remotely said that the conceptualisation of identity as exclusive from those who were indigenous did form a factor that fuelled the conflict and their influences during the civil war itself inflamed it.”

REB⁵⁷ asserted that the concept of Liberia was rooted on a hierarchical separation of racial types, such that identity-based stratifications and long-standing animosity was an underlying conflict factor. American-Liberians were a common enemy of other ethnic groups; this meant that it was unsurprising that Doe’s violent coup aimed at ending American-Liberians oligarchy.

Dunn (1999, p. 123) refers to the American-Liberian policy of segregation as the “instrumental manipulation that delegitimized inclusiveness.” He further stated that they also used this instrumental manipulation to manufacture ethnic tensions amongst the African-Liberians; this deliberate divisiveness created an artificial coastal native community/hinterland native community dichotomy amongst the ethnic indigenes themselves. This fostered past conflicts and long-term feuds, which undermined any chance of future African-Liberian national cohesion (Dunn, 1999).

Other arguments, however, do not consider the American-Liberian hegemony as a potent conflict factor in Liberia. For instance, Dr Aja Agwu⁵⁸ argued that:

“I do agree that the American-Liberian held hegemony over the ethnic Africans, and that this differentiation has been at the root of antagonism. Yet, we must call to mind

⁵⁶ AT, a commentator on public issues/critic

⁵⁷ REB is a former Minister under Samuel Doe

⁵⁸ Dr Aja Agwu, another senior researcher at the *Nigerian Institute of International Affairs*

that Doe's government was the architect of the conflict as his regime polarised the state and Taylor made matters worse."

JY⁵⁹ agreed that Doe should be blamed for the onset of the conflict, rather than the American-Liberians:

"We have lived with the American-Liberians for over a century before the civil war and there was never a time we had such a bloody violence against our own people. We should put the blame on our political leaders and their greed for power and wealth and especially Doe and Taylor. The American-Liberian influences during the conflicts are just a minor case of a people trying to survive at a time of political powerlessness."

AT⁶⁰, however, posited that the economic burden created by the American-Liberian regime of William Tolbert was the immediate conflict factor.

"The regime hosted the 'Economic Community of West African States' (ECOWAS) three times in the 1970's. Again, the regime increased the price of Liberians staple food, rice by over 50%; the riot that ensued culminated to the 1980 coup by Doe."

So much money was wasted by William Tolbert, due to the self-imposed economic burdens of hosting the 'Economic Community of West African States' (ECOWAS) in 1973 and the 'African Union' in 1975 and 1978 respectively (Ellis, 1999). It was further argued that, this coupled with the rise in petroleum prices and the declining world demand for Liberia's main exports at the time (iron ore and rubber), destabilised the economy. The 'rice riot' of April 14th 1979 —, following the increase in the price of imported rice by 50 per cent — led to violence (Ellis, 1999).

⁵⁹ JY, a Director at an NGO in Liberia

⁶⁰ AT, a legal practitioner and human rights lawyer

This sub-section examined the extent, to which the native/settlers relationship contributed to escalate the conflict in Liberia. It explores the political socialisation of the two identity groups, the return of free slaves and ethnic indigenes. From the analysis the general arguments suggest that American-Liberian segregation and domination was at the root of the contradictions that later led to the conflict. American-Liberians created an exclusive American-Liberian nationalism in order to control the socio-political and economic life of other Liberians. American-Liberians not only sponsored Taylor's insurgency from the Ivory Coast; they also used their connections to the Ivorian government to instigate Taylor's attack on Liberia. Several American-Liberians also joined Taylor's rebels, using the diaspora to support Taylor. Some of the respondents suggest it was American-Liberian connection to the American government which ensured Taylor escaped from jail in America (Ellis, 1999, p. 74).

Understanding how the American-Liberian created divisions among themselves and other groups is critical to understanding how political identity issues contributed to exacerbate the civil war in Liberia.

4.22 ETHNICITY

This sub-section explores the extent, to which 'ethnic politics' in the form of the relationship among the various ethnic indigenes (native Africans) impacted upon the conflict. It could be said that Doe's regime-induced ethnic cleansing contributed to the conflict in Liberia. The terms 'regime-induced' and 'regime-sponsored' refers to the deliberate ethnic cleansing policy of Samuel Doe's regime, after he took over power from the American-Liberians. Taylor continued this policy when he eventually took over power from Doe. The nature of ethnicity as a conflict factor in Liberia made the conflict appear as an ethnic civil war; yet, it is still questionable whether ethnicity was the immediate cause of conflicts (Reno, 1998).

The end of American-Liberian domination following Doe's military coup did not usher in peace and stability to Liberia; rather, it provoked violence, which culminated in two civil

wars, from 1989 to 1996, and 1999 to 2003 (Bassey & Oshita, 2009). Dr Offor⁶¹ noted that when President Samuel Doe ended the American-Liberian domination, he soon started to entrench his Krahn ethnic group in power. Doe's politics of alienating other ethnic groups did cause dissension within the top military and led to tension, which later erupted into violence. Dokubo argued that:

“What boiled over in Liberia was that the ethnic fractionalisation of Doe's government motivated ethnic hatred amongst the various ethnic and tribal groupings; and this created an atmosphere for intense competition, which promoted violence.”

Dr Aja Agwu⁶² noted that:

“The squabbles and differences between Doe and other members of his cabinet over appointments into government, especially Qwinwonpka; his second in command who became dissatisfied with the ruler-ship of Doe for favouring only his ethnic group. This degenerated into mutual suspicion between Doe's supporters in the cabinet; the Krahn ethnic group, and his other comrades in arms”.

According to Husband (1998), Doe had accused Qwinwonpka and other prominent members of his cabinet, who are majorly Gio and Mano from Nimba County, of planning to overthrow him, hence, there were reports that Doe had demoted Qwinwonpka. This created instability between the various ethnic groups within Doe's ruling 'PRC'. It was also noted that the civil war that ensued in Liberia between 1998 and 1999 was, at the onset, characterised by brutal, ethnic conflict (Husband, 1999, p. 33). AT⁶³, following the same line of argument stated that:

⁶¹ Dr Ferdinand Offor, a lecturer at the *University of Lagos* in Nigeria

⁶² Dr Aja Agwu, another senior researcher at the *Nigerian Institute of International Affairs*

⁶³ AT, a commentator on public issues/critic in Liberia

“When the military took over, there was soon dissension amongst the top hierarchy ruling military junta of the ‘People Redemption Council’ (PRC), which led to rumours of coups. When the crackdown began, Doe’s inner cabinet targeted Mano and Gio. Charles Taylor took advantage of this situation to launch his attack with the assistance of the American-Liberians from Nimba County, populated mainly by the Mano and the Gio. It was thus difficult to separate ethnicity from the two Liberian civil wars.”

Dr Oshita Oshita⁶⁴ suggested that ethnicity was a mobilising factor in the build-up to the conflict, as Taylor capitalised on this to launch his attack on Liberia with aggrieved ethnic tribes. According to Oshita:

“This means that ethnicity served as underlying factor and was later an immediate cause of the conflicts. I say this because Doe started it immediately [when] he got into power and Taylor entrenched and played on it to get the support of the Mano and the Geo.”

The near ethnic cleansing carried out by supporters of Doe and Taylor inflamed and sustained the intensity of the conflicts. According to Lowenkopf (1995, p. 66), President Doe’s intention was to repel the invasion of Charles Taylor and his ‘NPFL’ rebels, by unleashing a brutal counterattack of his Kranh-dominated army on Nimba County, which was inhabited by Mano and Gio ethnic groups. This further alienated the inhabitants of Nimba County, who are majorly Mano and Gio. The people of Nimba County, therefore, had no choice but to join the rebel forces of Taylor in large numbers. The ‘NPFL’ also drew the bulk of its fighters and supporters from the Gio and Mano; at the same time, the Mandingo supported the predominantly Krahns (Adebayo, 2002).

⁶⁴ Dr Oshita Oshita, a Director of Research and policy analyst at the *Institute of Peace and Conflict Resolution* in Abuja Nigeria

According to Outram (1997, p. 361), the violence committed, at first, by President Samuel Doe's 'Armed Forces of Liberia' (AFL) against the Gio and Mano ethnic groups and, later on, by Charles Taylor's 'National Patriotic Front of Liberia' (NPFL) against the Mandingo and Krahn ethnic groups, was exceedingly vicious. This led to claims of genocide from some local and international organisation/communities (Ellis, 1999, p. 183).

“If Doe and Taylor had the people of Liberia at heart, they would have sat [down] to negotiate a truce; but, due to their hunger for power, they now use their own people as pawns of war. Ethnicity, thus, becomes a tool in the hand of Doe and Taylor. Ethnicity can be rightly said to have contributed to escalate the conflicts; and even a potent conflict factor⁶⁵.”

The two major political actors were more interested in retaining power and, ethnic allegiances were mobilised to achieve this aim. Ethnicity therefore, could be considered an immediate factor, igniting the violence and eventually civil war. REB⁶⁶ noted that Doe and Taylor were power hungry; in order to achieve this they mobilised each ethnic group against the other. As part of the bloodletting, Taylor's 'NPFL' moved into Lofa County, killed hundreds of Mandingo; whilst Doe's 'AFL' entered a church in Monrovia, and killed hundreds of Liberians. According to *Human Rights Watch* (2005), at the time Doe was ousted, roughly, two thirds of Liberia's 125,000 Krahn had fled the country and the remainder were at risk of genocide.

Rtd. Col. Azubuike Nass⁶⁷ however, argued that the conflicts are a mixture of complex ethnic political problems and the inability of the Doe's regime to deliver economic stability.

⁶⁵ FJC of the 'Department of International Relation

⁶⁶ REB, a former Minister under Samuel Doe

⁶⁷ Rtd. Col. Azubuike Nass, an 'ECOMOG' combatant/commander

He concluded that it is understandable why ethnicity was perceived to be a major factor in igniting the conflict. JY⁶⁸ supported this argument:

“Ethnicity was a spill-over from problem of bad governance of the Doe regime, which was autocratic and used patronage in the allocation of state resources to his friends and close associate. At this time, even the other members of his inner cabinet benefited from this, they only became suspicious, because they were not consulted in some major decisions and Doe was favouring his own ethnic clan more than others. Ethnicity therefore fuelled the sentiments that later culminated into violence, but this must be blamed on Doe and later Taylor.”

Whilst the analysis of the Doe and Taylors’s ethnic politics is correct and captures the nature of the conflict, ethnicity should not be considered a de-facto conflict agent.

“Though ethnicity was used to propagate the selfish agenda of Doe and Taylor, and which later reflects in the nature of violence. It was more of a case of elite sponsored violence, rather than core ethnic factor.”⁶⁹

Another dimension of ethnicity that exacerbated the conflict in Liberia has to do with how the violence became intra-ethnic. The increased ethnic violence of the two political actors led to the breakaway of some ethnic rebel groups to form splinter groups. This meant that the conflicts became intra-ethnic, increasing the intensity of the violence. According to Pham (2005), the intra-ethnic feud posed four ethnic groups against each other: the Krahn and Mandingo, on the one hand; and the Gio and Mano, on the other. Although himself an American-Liberian, Taylor was joined by Mano and Gio, especially Gio of Nimba County who were discriminated against under Doe’s regime; at the same time, the Mandingo joined

⁶⁸ JY, a Director at an NGO in Liberia

⁶⁹ AK is a Senior Director at a government department in Liberia

the Krahn to support Doe. This developed into intense rivalry marked by genocidal hostilities throughout both civil wars in Liberia.

AT argued that the conflicts becoming multi-ethnic influenced the nature of rebel and tribal militia formation:

“At the start of the conflict, the only rebel group was Taylor’s ‘NPFL’: it was not exclusively comprised of one ethnic group, but dominant ethnic groups included the Mano and Gio. As the violence progressed, the state as a survival unit was replaced by the ethnic categories with all sorts of ethnic allegiances and the split with the NPFL created other sub-rebel groups. The ‘NPFL’ was later to split, as the Gio elements led by Prince Johnson, a Gio from Nimba County, formed the ‘Independent National Patriotic Front of Liberia’ (I-NPFL).”

This division was not only limited to Taylor’s NPFL, but also Doe’s camp. Adebayo (2002) argues that after the death of Doe, the ‘United Liberation Movement of Liberia’ (ULIMO), was the first anti-Taylor rebel group formed as an alliance between the Krahn and Mandingo, which was led by a Krahn, Raleigh Seekie. ULIMO primarily consisted of Krahn and Mandingo. Nevertheless, ‘ULIMO’ split into its Mandingo faction, ‘ULIMO-K,’ led by a Mandingo, Alhaji Kromah, and ‘ULIMO-J’ led by a Krahn, General Roosevelt Johnson. The split was due to differences between the Krahn leadership of ‘ULIMO’ and the Mandingo in the group.

The various militia groups re-organised themselves along ethnic lines; although some of their members cut across other ethnic groups, their leaders were recognisably ethnically divided and motivated (Koroma, 2004, p. 164). Also formed was the ‘Liberian United Defence Front’ (LUDF) — another Krahn/Mandingo rebel force and led by a Krahn, Albert Karpeh. When the leadership of LUDF began to pursue a particularistic agenda, the predominantly ‘Krahn Liberian Peace Council’ (LPC) was formed, led by a Krahn, George

Bole. The splitting of 'ULIMO' was the first sign that the Krahn-Mandingo alliance was crumbling:

“When this split led to further splits of ‘ULIMO’ on religious lines (‘ULIMO-K’) led by a Muslim Mandingo, Alhaji Kromah, appealed to Muslims and were also seeking international support from the Muslim world.⁷⁰”

The emergence of splinter rebel groups was motivated, more by personal greed and ambition rather than pure ethnic motives. The selfishness of these new emerging rebels and militia leaders increased ethnic tensions, thus inflaming and sustaining the intensity of the civil war. According to Ellis (1999, p. 101), the principal actors of the 'LDF,' the 'LURD' and the 'I-NPFL' were responsible for the brutal violence unleashed on defenceless civilians, especially women and children, during the two wars fought in Liberia. JT⁷¹ asserted that since Liberia is a multi-ethnic society, it was not surprising that, over time, several rebel and militia groups emerged to fight and protect their people; although most of the leaders are only doing so to propagate their own agendas. He concluded that:

“The emergence of rebel groups like the ‘Liberians United for Reconciliation and Democracy’ (LURD) was led by Charles Benny and [the] ‘Independent-National Patriotic Front of Liberia’ (I-NPFL) by Prince Yormie Johnson, was to forward their own personal goals when they were made irrelevant by Taylor in ‘NPFL’. The activity of these two rebel groups was later to lead to the emergence of other smaller local militia groups”.

This sub-section has examined the extent, to which, ethnicity escalated the civil war in Liberia. A focus of discussion was how Doe and Taylor introduced ethnic violence into Liberia. It also explored how this later created intra-ethnic conflict among various groups.

⁷⁰ TS

⁷¹ JT is a professor at the *University of Liberia*

The analysis suggests that ethnicity is a significant conflict factor, contributing to the escalation of the civil war. The analysis notes how Doe's regime consolidated power by alienating other ethnic groups; which caused dissension and mutual suspicion within the top military. The ethnic fractionalisation of Doe's government motivated ethnic hatred amongst the various ethnic and tribal groupings; Doe's inner cabinet targeted the Mano and Gio.

Charles Taylor capitalised on this ethnic segregation entrenched by Doe and the grievances of the American-Liberians to attack Liberia from Nimba County, populated mainly by the Mano and the Gio. The people of Nimba County, therefore, had no choice but to join the rebel forces of Taylor in large numbers (Adebayo, 2002). It is, thus, difficult to take out ethnicity from the two Liberian civil wars. Ethnicity was a mobilising factor in the build-up of the conflict; an underlying factor, which later became an immediate conflict factor. The analysis suggests that ethnicity was a conflict factor, akin to a disease spread by the elite for political purpose; hence, indicating that ethnicity was a conflict-sustaining variable.

4.23 CROSS BORDER ETHNIC AFFINITY

This sub-section examines the extent to which, cross border ethnic affinity was a factor that exacerbated the conflict. According to (Ellis, 1999) the Mandingo people of Liberia, have historically been Guineans, who only migrated to Liberia in the 18th century. FHE⁷² argued that:

“The Mandingo has always been considered as foreigners, despite their long historical presence in Liberia. These predominantly Muslim communities are scattered all over Liberia and are successful traders. They supported Doe and so became the common enemy of other ethnic groups, especially the Mano and Goi. They, however, receive support and protection from Guinea that has the highest numbers of Mandingo in the region.”

⁷² A postgraduate student at the 'Department of Peace and Conflict Studies

This characterisation of the Mandingo played an important role in the cross border involvement of Guinean Mandingo's and the Guinean government in the Liberia conflicts:

“The conflict actors within Liberia used their cross-border connections to solicit all sorts of assistance, including weapons supply. Alhaji Koroma of ‘ULIMO-K’ and MODEL received support from countries, such as Ivory Coast and Guinea, because they too have a large Muslim Mandingo community”⁷³.

JY⁷⁴ noted that even Charles Taylor's ‘NPFL’ heavily relied on the support of the Gio and Mano people of the Ivory Coast in order to commence and sustain his insurgency, these were actually Ivorian's and some other indigenes of Nimba County within Liberia. Charles CA⁷⁵ posited that:

“It is important to note here that our borders with Sierra Leone, Guinea and Ivory Coast are of mixed ethnic origin. This configuration enabled the rebel leaders and even Charles Taylor to fight the battle from various points, as they constantly receive support from these border zones.”

Professor Odiaka⁷⁶ argued that the nature of cross border ethnic affinity amongst the various ethnic groups neighbouring Liberia made the conflicts multi-dimensional and, invariably, multiplied the conflict actors:

“These ethnic brothers were giving all sort of support to their kinsmen in other part of the country and across the borders. This led to the involvement of other states in the conflict and the fighters were getting assistance of all sorts.”

⁷³ PKB is a director at a government agency in Liberia

⁷⁴ He is a Director of an NGO in Liberia

⁷⁵ CA of the *International Committee of the Red Cross* in Liberia

⁷⁶ Professor Odiaka of the *University of Lagos*

Cross-border ethnic configuration played both a positive and negative role in the conflict:

“[The] majority of the ethnic groups in Liberia can be found in neighbouring countries of Sierra Leone, Guinea and Ivory Coast. On the positive side, it was easy for people to seek refuge, shelter and food with their brothers and sisters in other part of Liberia or countries across the borders. On the negative side, it was easy for rebels and arms to be smuggled across borders and served as safe haven for fighters; at times too, they have been known to fight side-by-side their kin during the conflict.”⁷⁷

This analysis suggests that cross border ethnic affinities did exacerbate the conflict and connected it at the regional level. The relationship between Liberian Mandingo’s and Guinean Mandingo’s did impact on the nature of diaspora assistance and intervention. Moreover, this kind of ethnic and tribal ties also exists between the Gio’s and Mano’s in the Nimba County of Liberia and the Nimbas from Ivory Coast.

This sub-section has examined the extent to which, identity issues escalated the Liberian conflicts: the native-settler relation/syndrome, (political identity); ethnic politics, and cross border ethnic affinity.

With respect to ‘political identity’ (the native-settler relation with ethnic indigenes), it was generally asserted that the returned freed slaves (American-Liberian) polarised Liberian society. The analysis suggests that political identity is not an immediate conflict factor; rather it is an escalating factor. The arguments focussed on how the American-Liberians not only sponsored Taylor’s insurgence from the Ivory Coast; they also used their connections to the Ivorian government. Several American-Liberians also joined Taylor’s rebels, using the diaspora to support Taylor’s war logistics.

⁷⁷ FCP, a tutor at the ‘Department of Political Science’ at the *University of Liberia*

With regards to ethnic relations among various indigenous African, 'ethnic politics.' Ethnicity became a conflict issue once the first indigenous head of state, President Samuel Doe, took power: hence, giving more political power to his Krahn ethnic group. Charles Taylor also took advantage of this situation to bring other ethnic groups into the conflict: this eventually led to the polarisation of ethnic rebel/militia groups. The general argument was that ethnicity was not only the immediate sources of the conflict, but also a factor that fuelled it.

Finally, the analysis suggests that colonial partitioning of Africa did not consider the diverse ethnic identity configuration, known as 'cross border ethnic affinity.' The cross border ethnic affinity mix of the population did escalate and, thereafter, connected these conflicts. In the case of Liberia, the Kissi, Bassa, Mende, and especially the Mandingo are spread across Liberia, also in countries like Sierra Leone, Guinea and Ivory Coast.

4.3 COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS: IDENTITY AND CONFLICT IN LIBERIA AND SIERRA LEONE

This section provides a comparative analysis of how identity issues shaped the conflicts in Liberia and Sierra Leone. It explores the similarities and differences in how identity issues may have exacerbated both civil wars. The significance and manner in which identity issues impacted upon the conflicts in both countries varied. Despite both states having a history of returned slaves, for example, there was a sharp contrast in the way political identity impact both conflicts.

In Liberia, for instance, political identity was at the root of the conflict due to the American-Liberian/indigene dichotomy (Adebayo, 2002). Segregation, as an American-Liberian deliberate policy, was a source of antagonism with the native indigenes. The American-Liberians supported Taylor's insurgency, and their influence was significant during the two civil wars (Huband, 1998). In Sierra Leone, however, political identity was not a significant conflict factor. This had more to do with the British legacy of colonial policy. The political

marginalisation of the Creoles in Sierra Leone stands in sharp contrast to the unbroken political and economic supremacy of the American-Liberians.

Concerning ethnic politics, in both Liberia and Sierra Leone, ethnic differences contributed to escalate the conflicts; yet, there were significant differences in both countries. In Liberia, for instance, ethnic politics played a dominant role in the lead up to and during the conflicts, which led to the general assumption that ethnicity was the immediate cause of the conflict and hence an escalating factor. Once the Doe regime came to power, he began to favour his own ethnic group over others and this, henceforth, led to division in his government (Aning, 1997). Taylor, thereafter, took advantage of the situation to launch his attack from Nimba County, supported by the Gio and Mano people of that region. In Liberia, it was therefore, more of a regime sponsored ethnic politics that resulted in violence.

In Sierra Leone, however, ethnicity was not as potent a conflict factor as it was the case of Liberia. As noted earlier, some have argued that ethnicity had little impact on the civil wars. This study, however, traces political and economic instability to ethnic/regional politics, which divided the Sierra Leone polity between the 'SLPP' for the Mende and the 'APC' for the Temne and Limba people (Alie, 2007). It is also evident that, in Sierra Leone, the conflicts degenerated into ethnic violence, for each ethnic group began to set up tribal militia groups; at the same time the governments in office during the conflicts were supporting and arming one group against the other. In Sierra Leone, regional ethnic problems exacerbated the civil war; whereas, in Liberia it was more of a regime induced ethnic politics.

Liberia and Sierra Leone both have a history of multi-ethnic existence within and with neighbouring countries. Intra-ethnic co-existence was not a conflict factor at all in Sierra Leone; instead, majority ethnic groups protected the minority tribes living among them (Abdullah, 1998). In contrast, in Liberia, the minority ethnic groups living within major ethnic groups were attacked. In the case of the Mandingo's, known to be scattered all over

Liberia, those in Nimba County were attacked because they supported Doe (Boas, 2005). Moreover, Doe and Taylor embarked on massive ethnic cleansing, involving four ethnic groups: the Gio, Mano against the Krahn and Mandingo (Clapham, 1991).

Cross border ethnic affinity did impact on the civil war in both states because of the history of weak colonial border demarcation, which did not take account of ethnic, tribal, linguistic and cultural similarities (Boas, 2005). Liberia and Sierra Leone share borders, not only with each other, but also with Guinea and Ivory Coast, this was henceforth, how the conflicts became linked and spread so quickly. In Liberia, cross border ethnic affinity was more pronounced when the Liberian Mandingo were being attacked by the Gio and the Mano, who supported Taylor, because of the support the Mandingo's gave to Doe. The Mandingo received support from their kin across the sub-region, especially from the large Mandingo population in Guinea (Aning, 1997). The Model rebel group in Liberia also receive support and funding from Ivory Coast, because Gio and Mano in Liberia is the ethnic kin of the Nimba's in Ivory Coast (Akinde, 2004). In Sierra Leone, cross border ethnic relations did participate in the conflict, but more importantly, however, Sierra Leoneans were well accepted as refugees in Guinea, Ivory Coast and even Liberia (Alie, 2007). Cross border ethnic affinity mix was, therefore, more of a conflict factor in Liberia than in Sierra Leone.

4.4 CONCLUSION

In this chapter, I examined the extent to which, identity issues contributed to the conflicts in Liberia and Sierra Leone. The chapter identified three sub-themes: political identity (native-settler relation/syndrome) in terms of the relationship between the freed slaves and ethnic Africans, ethnic politics (relationship among indigenous Africans): and cross border ethnic affinity. The chapter assessed and evaluated how each contributed to the conflicts in each state, drawing upon the evidence from fieldwork and existing studies.

The tri-focal approach recognises that politically defined identity interests by themselves are insufficient explanations for the onset of violent conflicts; however, as exemplified by the

Liberia and Sierra Leone civil wars, conflict onset may be stimulated by a combination of identity factors. As this chapter shows, political identity (native/settler relation) was at the base of antagonism, although, it was more pronounced in Liberia than in Sierra Leone. Ethnic politics (relationship among the native ethnic group) combined with political identity to ignite conflicts in Liberia, although these are not potent conflict issues in Sierra Leone, they nonetheless escalated the civil war. Finally, cross border ethnic affinity, had implications for the conflicts in both states. These three identity dynamics individually and jointly combined to exacerbate the conflicts, connect them and generated regional instability. The New War theory argues that a combination of identity problems, can lead to non-ideological tribal intra-state conflict with regional implications, especially after the Cold War (Kaldor, 2007).

The chapter concluded with a comparative analysis of how these identity dynamics impacted upon the conflicts. The similarities and differences elucidate variations in the way identity issues impacted both conflicts. It was noted that both conflicts share similar identity dynamics, yet, in some regards, they impacted differently on each conflict. Despite a common history of returned freed slaves, for instance, political identity was a conflict dynamic in Liberia, more than in Sierra Leone civil war. Again, ethnicity ignited the onset of conflict in Liberia; yet, in Sierra Leone, ethnicity only became a noticeable dynamic as the conflict progressed. Finally, although cross border ethnic affinity dynamic contributed to exacerbate both conflicts, this was also more pronounced in Liberia, than in Sierra Leone.

CHAPTER FIVE

NATURAL RESOURCES AND CONFLICTS: SIERRA LEONE AND LIBERIA

5.0 INTRODUCTION

For parties in conflict, primary commodities have the advantage of direct extraction and sales to traders in these resources, and thus provide critical finance, which facilitates the pursuit of their war objectives (Ross, 1999, p.65).

This chapter considers the second element of the tri-focal approach namely; natural resources. The aim is to understand how significant the exploitation of natural resources, (such as diamonds, timber, rubber stocks, iron-ore and gold) was as a factor contributing to the civil wars in Liberia and Sierra Leone. The chapter is divided into two sections; each of which, analyses how natural resources shaped the conflicts in Liberia and Sierra Leone respectively. The chapter commence with an exploration of the wider literature on natural resources and conflict in Africa. Subsequent sections then examine how governments, rebels and other warring factions in the conflicts in both states exploited natural resources to fund the prosecution of the war.

It examines the role of multinational companies, individuals and foreign governments in the illicit natural resources for arms trade. It considers the role of diamonds trade to linking the conflicts, the role of private security companies, and the interests of regional leaders in the natural resources trade. The chapter concludes with a comparative analysis of both conflicts, to identify similarities and differences.

This chapter seeks to elicit the extent to which natural resources trades escalated, sustained and prolonged the conflicts. It explores how economic considerations resulting from the exploitation of natural resources shaped the ferocity of the conflicts and linked the conflicts in both states, creating regional insecurity and instability.

5.1 NATURAL RESOURCES AND AFRICAN CONFLICT: AN OVERVIEW

Keen (1998), Berdal & Malone (2000), Collier (1999), Ross (2003), Richard (2003) and Campbell (2004) have, over the years, examined conflict in Africa, through theoretical

paradigms focusing on resources and remittances, greed and grievances, ‘resource curses,’ ‘blood diamonds’ and the new ‘resource scramble for Africa.’ A number of theorists (for instance, Collier & Benton, 2003; Collier & Sambanis, 2005; Collier & Hoeffler, 2001; Collier & Hoeffler, 2004; De Soysa, 2000), have also argued that conflicts in Post-Cold War Africa have been largely resource-induced.

A New War theorist, Holsti (1996) argues that, in some cases, natural resources have been the primary driving force in perpetuating violence. Duffield (2001) also asserts that natural resources endowments create a particular kind of war economy, which has become more prevalent in Post-Cold War conflicts. This illicit war economy has been facilitated by global exchange and trade relations, having distinctive impacts on the dynamics of conflict in Liberia and Sierra Leone.

Ross (2003) argues that for parties in conflict, primary commodities have the advantage of direct extraction and sales; thus, providing critical finances facilitating the pursuit of their war objectives. He further asserts that natural resources are tools of war, employed to prolong the military campaign. Dr Emmanuel Onah⁷⁸ argued that the conflicts in Liberia and Sierra Leone, at some stages, were almost reduced to a natural resources-based war (especially diamonds). He concluded that the availability or scramble for natural resources was not a factor that led to the civil war; rather, it was the irresponsible use of these resources to fund the violence, which escalated and fuelled the civil wars in both states. Dr. Odiaka⁷⁹ also shared this view:

“The conflicts in Liberia and Sierra Leone started basically as conflicts of nation building; however, at the base of these conflicts is the struggle for power. It was never solely aimed, primarily at the control or struggle over economic resources of

⁷⁸ Dr Emmanuel Onah of the *University of Lagos*

⁷⁹ Dr. Odiaka of the *University of Lagos*

the states. But, as the conflicts progressed, Charles Taylor and other war lords in Liberia, the RUF and local militias and the governments in power at various stage of the conflicts in Sierra Leone relied on the extraction of available natural resources to execute their war plan, so as to continue to hold grip of political power.”

In order to be viable, rebel organisations must be able to survive militarily against a government army; hence creating the need for independent source of finance (Collier & Hoeffler, 1999). It is important to add here that government in order to keep up with the cost of war needs a quick and easy means of finance: natural resources served that purpose in Liberia and Sierra Leone. Dr Ferdinand Offor⁸⁰ argued that the availability of these resources and the use of its proceeds to finance the war had negative consequences on the ferocity and duration of both civil wars. He noted that:

“The greedy exploitation of these resources by the political and military elites is a factor that cannot be ignored during the conflicts. In addition, the rebels all keyed into this scramble to finance their insurgency. Conversely, it must be pointed out here that just as Liberia did not go to war over natural resources; so also Sierra Leone did not go to war because of diamonds, it was the war that necessitated the scramble for natural resources as a tool of war.”

New War conflicts are characterised by the deliberate use of natural resources for war purposes, since client states rarely obtain external support during conflicts (Kaldor, 2007). Collier (2003) and Collier & Benton (2003) argues that the ability to finance violence after the Cold War was facilitated by the criminal intents of rebels and guerrilla fighters to directly exploit natural resources.

⁸⁰ Dr Ferdinand Offor of the *University of Lagos*

There is another strand of argument, suggesting that the conflicts in Liberia and Sierra Leone resemble a conflict over natural resources, because the manner of exploitation and the mismanagement of these resources are at the root of the antagonism. This means that the conflicts in Liberia and Sierra Leone can be classified as a war over natural resources, especially diamonds.

“The nature of exploitation of diamond was unprecedented, it became a business of the day for all manners of actors; even ‘ECOMOG’ officials were indicted in the illicit diamond trade. The fight for supremacy centred on the diamond towns and mines. Despite this, I don’t see it as a conflict factor, but more or less an inducer that gave the parties to the conflicts a reason to prefer war to peace.”⁸¹

“The intensity with which the battle for resources was fought resembles a battle over resources; as such I can confidently say that the war in Liberia and Sierra Leone almost degenerated into a war over the rich and vast resources of these states by the warring groups. War is a very expensive venture that required enough financial resources: the abundant availability of natural resources in the region means that all parties in the conflict will have no other alternative but to scramble for these to buy weapons.”⁸²

Rtd. Col. Azubuike Nass⁸³ argued that at the crux of the conflicts were the long years of economic mismanagement of these resources, which crippled the economy; despite natural resources facilitating their ability to wage war. According to Nass:

“Though diamond, timber, rubber stock, gold and iron-ore facilitated the ability of the warring parties to wage war, these same resources have been at the base of

⁸¹ PHJ is one of the Director at the ‘ECOWAS’ Head Quarters in Abuja Nigeria

⁸² PHQ is one of the Senior Director at the ‘ECOWAS’ Head Quarters in Abuja Nigeria

⁸³ Rtd. Col. Azubuike Nass, was a former infantry commander of the ‘ECOMOG’ forces that fought in both Liberia and Sierra Leone.

antagonism even before the civil war in both countries. The politics of diamond was rife before the conflict in Sierra Leone, just as the antagonism over the vast forest resources of Liberia has been lingering even during the reign of the American-Liberian oligarchy. To me, natural resources were a pre-conflict problem, further exacerbated by the civil wars that engulfed the region.”

David Francis⁸⁴ argued, however, that international attention has focused too much on how conflict diamonds (natural resources) have fuelled civil wars in Africa. This kind of analysis has been applied not only to Liberia and Sierra Leone, but also to the violent and protracted civil wars in former Zaire (now the Democratic Republic of Congo - DRC) and Angola. According to Francis:

“I have always argued that the international community has wrongly diagnosed the civil war in countries, such as Liberia and Sierra Leone. I believe that failure to understand the root causes of African conflicts has led to inappropriate international policy responses and misguided attempts to manage and resolve these civil wars. Again, when conflict starts, the international community should rather focus attention on targeting illicit extraction and sale of natural resources to the West, especially where there is possibility of resources being a fuelling agent and at the same time devise best method of intervention. This is not however to say that diamond was not a conflict facilitator; far from it.”

The arguments so far has focussed on the role of natural resources in the conflicts in Liberia and Sierra Leone. The evidence suggests that natural resources may not be at the base of the conflicts, tracing the onset of the conflict to the mismanagement of these resources; some even argue that the conflicts almost resembled a war over resources.

⁸⁴ David Francis, is a professor of ‘African Peace and Conflict Studies’ at the *University of Bradford* and an expert on African Peace and Conflict Studies, African Regional Security Studies, and International Politics and Security Studies.

Next, I explore how the conflicts became enmeshed into the global war economy, to the extent that the conflicts were prolonged. According to Aboagye (2007) the illicit exploitation of natural resources as a tool of war entangled Liberia and Sierra Leone civil wars into the global natural resources war economy trade. Dokunbo⁸⁵ noted that it is important to explore the role of globalisation in the extraction of these resources, linking Liberia and Sierra Leone into the international illicit commodity trade:

“Several countries were indicted in the diamond trade in Sierra Leone and the vast forest resources trade in Liberia. So also were several individuals, multinational companies with international connections in the illicit business of exploring and exploiting the rich wealth of these two countries, especially during the conflicts. They connived with the governments and rebel groups to harness these resources for profit and, in return, provide finance and weapons in exchange.”

Dokunbo’s argument is that loot-able resources such as diamonds, timber, gold and iron ore were exploited with the assistance of foreign companies. The activities of these companies and their parent countries helped pay the wages of fighters, buy weapons and fill their own pockets. Several countries were involved in the resources for arms trade and even provided private security firms to the government of Sierra Leone and to Taylor at different times during the conflicts.

“The governments of both states and the rebel forces had enormous access to funds to fight the war and these connections also provided security advice and other logistic consultation to the warring factions. If not for the connection with companies from Canada, Belgium, United States, Britain, China and South African; and the direct involvement of some of these countries in the resources for arms

⁸⁵ He is a research fellow at the Nigerian Institute of International Affairs

*trade, then the conflict would have either ceased earlier or the willingness to continue the violence would have waned.*⁸⁶

*“Both countries have always been of interest to the international commodity market as sources of raw materials for industries in Europe and America. What attracted further international illicit attention was the lack of control over these resources by the various governments, due to state failure. These foreign agents were directly and indirectly involved in mining and providing security to the government of Liberia and Sierra Leone in exchange for natural resources exploitation and mining rights. The rebels in Sierra Leone, through the ‘RUF’, were involved in the diamond trade for arms just as the government. While in Liberia, Charles Taylor was in command of the forest resources and the diamond trade within the sub-region. The various rebel groups that emerged were more interested in the forest resources, especially timber and rubber stocks in Liberia.”*⁸⁷

This illicit trade in resources involved several regional leaders and elites within and beyond the continent. According to Alao, (2007, p. 77), “the conflict that engulfed the MANO River Union, especially Liberia and Sierra Leone was a conflict that was financed directly by illicit diamonds through the internationalisation of the conflicts, as European countries through their agents became involved in the lucrative business.” Similarly, Dr Aja Agwu and Dr. Ogaba Oche⁸⁸ noted that the conflict was further inflamed and sustained through the involvement of international and regional resource traders, especially in the diamonds trade. Agwu posited that companies like *Firestone Tire and Rubber Company* in Liberia and *Branch Energy* and *Executive Outcomes* in Sierra Leone were key players in the conflicts: they financed the war effort of the governments and rebels. Oche claimed that:

⁸⁶ DEG, is a senior field research consultant with *Global Witness* and has been in Angola, Sierra Leone and Liberia

⁸⁷ FIGW, is also a senior field researcher with *Global Witness*

⁸⁸ Dr Aja Agwu and Dr. Ogaba Oche, both senior researchers at the *Nigerian Institute of International Affairs*

“I was on field research to both states immediately after the civil wars in 2002/3 and, at this time, some of these companies were still operating and businesses were on as usual; although with the observation of the international peace keeping force. These companies believe that they were carrying out legitimate business ventures, although some of them were later to be indicted as the United Nation peace keeping force took a hold of the security of both states.”

These foreign companies and their home governments facilitated the continuation of the conflict, which made peace negotiations or truces almost impossible. If it were possible to curtail the sales of primary commodities like diamonds, financing conflicts, the prospects for peace would increase: for example, diamond exports from Sierra Leone probably account for the high incidences of conflict within that country (region) (Collier, 2003). The globalisation in natural resource trade as outlined by the New War approach typifies the nature of the Liberia and Sierra Leone conflicts. Even if the personal economic motivations of conflict actors have been an undeniable and persistent feature of these conflicts, economic factors, nonetheless, only serve to exacerbate the conflicts by providing the means of violence.

Natural resources also linked the conflict in Liberia to that in Sierra Leone. New War theory indicates that natural resources are a conflict escalating factor, whilst the resource trade links and connect conflicts at a regional level (Kaldor, 2013). Dr. Offor⁸⁹ noted that:

“Diamonds trade was the major connecting link between Charles Taylor of Liberia and Sankoh, the RUF rebel leader in Sierra Leone. The relationship between these two conflict actors is central to understanding how natural resources, especially diamond became a major source of funding for the civil wars. This is an important dynamic that regionalised the exchange of diamonds for arms.”

Rtd. Col. Azubuike Nass noted that:

⁸⁹ He is a senior lecturer at the University of Lagos, Nigeria

“Taylor became the main actor in the greedy exploitation of natural resources in the region as he had agreement with the RUF In Sierra Leone; to help out with their insurgency and have a share of the diamond trade in that country. This alliance ensures that diamond was a connecting factor that linked both conflict and at the same time connected Bukina-Faso to the conflict.”

Nass further argued that the then Head of State of Bukina-Faso, in West Africa, Compaore was a friend to Taylor and he facilitated the diamonds trade across the region. Ofor and Nass indicate above that diamonds established a relationship between Taylor and the RUF in Sierra Leone, thus linking and connecting the conflicts in both states. Charles Dokubo⁹⁰ observed that the Liberia and Sierra Leone civil war were linked through the diamond trade as Taylor become the main facilitator of this illicit exploitation and trade

According to Gberie (2002), the states of the Mano River Union all had a stake in the natural resources trade, for the governments of Bukina-Faso, Guinea and Ivory Coast were implicated in the war economy trade. Silberfein and Conteh (2006) noted that although diamonds were a very important wartime regional trade link, other resources such as timber and rubber stocks, also were. This interconnected regional natural resources trade exacerbated the conflicts, not only by providing funds for arms but intricately connecting the conflicts.

This section has examined how natural resources were factors that escalated the Liberia and Sierra Leone conflicts, by financing the wars. Whilst some argue that natural resources were at the root of conflict, because this mismanagement led to economic chaos, undermining development, others would say it was not a primary conflict factor. Natural resources were a means to fund the war campaigns of governments and rebels, linking the conflicts into the global natural resources trade networks, consisting of: countries, multi-national companies, regional governments, mercenaries, private security companies. Another important dynamic

⁹⁰ Charles Dokubo, a senior researcher at the *Nigerian Institute of International Affairs* in Lagos, Nigeria,

is that the diamonds trade linked the conflicts in Liberia with that of Sierra Leone and connected the conflicts on a regional level.

5.2 SIERRA LEONE

This section specifically explores the evidence generated from fieldwork and existing studies to understand the extent to which, the diamonds trade was a contributing factor, escalating the civil war in Sierra Leone. It examines how the funds generated from the exploitation of the natural resources, especially diamonds helped sustain the intensity of the war and the willingness of the warring parties to continue the violence in Sierra Leone. It systematically explores how natural resources dynamics, influenced the conflicts. It discusses how the governments, rebels and other warring factions exploited natural resources to fund their war. It also examines the role of multinational companies, individual and foreign governments in the illicit natural resources for arms trade.

Keen (1998) argued that the civil war in Sierra Leone cannot really be understood without comprehending the deep sense of anger at the lack of good governance and educational opportunities pervading Sierra Leone prior to the conflict. It was argued by Francis that, the motive behind the 'RUF' launching its insurgency from the diamond rich areas was to provide the sources of finance to execute their war aims. It must be noted that, the diamonds trade is not the cause of war; instead, it is a conflict enabler, which arose out of the necessity war. The 'RUF' in Sierra Leone were involved in all sorts of smuggling activities to raise funds for their war efforts: they traded in illegal cash crops smuggling, before they engaged in the diamond trade (Egwu, 2006; Gberie, 2005).

DG⁹¹ noted that Sierra Leone did not go to war because of diamonds, although, the mismanagement of the abundant diamond resource is one of the factors, which led to economic problems that crippled the economy. He argued that:

⁹¹ DG is of the Sierra Leone *Red Cross* in Freetown

“The RUF was more concerned with capturing the diamonds town and or site, whenever they do, they tend to stay there without pushing the revolution forward, as diamond was strategic to the purchase of arms and ammunition. It was at this point that diamonds played a major role in sustaining the intensity of the conflict. In addition, [the] majority of the youths that joined the ‘RUF’ did so to benefit from the illegal diamond trade to earn some means of living. The government was themselves involved in this illicit diamonds trade to fund what was left of the government apparatus and more so the civil war.”

Dr Memunatu Pratt⁹² drew upon the historical context to explain how the diamond rush of the 1930 killed the agricultural life of the country, as every ablebodied person rushed to the diamond field for fortune:

“When the war broke out, diamonds became everybody’s business: rebels, governments, multi-national corporations, international diamond dealer and powerful individual within and outside Sierra Leone. In addition, by 1996, the ‘RUF’ had taken over the South Eastern diamond areas; and even some government officials were conniving with the rebels to loot the diamond and sell for arms for their own selfish gain.



Diamonds may not be considered as the root cause of the conflicts, but it has been an underlining factor, historically, by leading to the unproductive nature of the human capacity of the country and the corruption of state officials. It also provided the blood money used to procure weapons by all the parties in the conflict and, thus, contributed to prolong the conflict and made peace negotiations difficult. Without diamond blood money, the lives of thousands of women and children would have been saved and the general destruction of lives and property would not have been so unprecedented.”

RMK⁹³ posited that diamonds were not an immediate cause of the civil war. He argues further that, historically, the conflicts can be traced to the mismanagement of the diamonds wealth, due to a long history of corruption amongst the various governments since diamonds were discovered. According to RMK, it is well known that the national elites, politicians and military within Sierra Leone connived with the international and regional diamond trades to mine diamonds; pauperising the masses, despite the wealth generated.

“The war was fought in the diamond regions, no doubt about that; but it was purely for them to buy arms and ammunition and fulfil the interest of Charles Taylor, who is now facing trials for war crimes at the international war crime in The Hague. Diamond is at heart of the ruins of this nation, as it also provided the arms that serve as opium for the destruction of life and property and, indeed, escalated and prolonged the conflicts.”

According to Kamara (2003), the RUF rebellion took off from the South East region of the country: the province of Sierra Leone where the bulk of diamonds are located. The rebel leader, the late Foday Sankoh, commenced the rebellion from South-Eastern region, because it provided him with a disenchanted multitude of youths: they had suffered neglect and

⁹³RMK, a commissioner at the Sierra Leonean *Human Rights Commission*

unemployment, despite their communities providing the diamonds sustaining the national economy (Alao, 2007; Ndumbe, 2001). PF⁹⁴ noted that the civil war in Sierra Leone was not a resource war, but the result of a long mismanagement of economic resources, which led to massive youth unrest. He further asserted that the rebel group, the ‘RUF,’ subsequently, used this to mobilise against the government.

According to Richards (1996, p. 27), however, the case of Sierra Leone exhibits one of the indicators of a grievance-based conflict: ‘RUF’ propaganda complained about resource exploitation and mass youth unemployment railing against "the raping of the countryside to feed the greed and caprice of the Freetown elite and their masters abroad". The grievances of the ‘RUF’ were overtaken by their greed for diamonds and the use of the funds from their illegal exploitation to finance the violence against Sierra Leoneans.

Although PF and Richards (1996) emphasised the mismanagement of the economy and youth unemployment as conflict factors, they both agreed that the diamonds trade did shape the nature and intensity of the conflicts. Alie⁹⁵ noted that at the root of conflicts in West Africa are issues of resource allocation and accumulation; however, the conflicts in Sierra Leone were never about diamonds, despite the focus on them during the conflicts. He further argued that:

“Before the conflict, politicians and military leaders were looking for their own share of the national cake (diamonds); but, when the conflict started, all parties to the conflict were now not only looking for means of enriching themselves, but funds to sustain themselves in the conflict. And, so, diamonds for guns became the easiest way for the rebels and the government to accomplish this.”

⁹⁴ PF is of the *United Nation’s* Special Court of Sierra Leone

⁹⁵ Joe Alie, a Professor of History at the *University of Sierra Leone* (Furahbay College)

PA⁹⁶ claimed that:

“The rebels’ first source of income, to my understanding, was from looting villages; but, diamonds trade certainly developed into a motivating factor among various groups, including the government officials and even ‘ECOMOG’: each group has their own mining field. In addition, at the same time, it was an enabling factor, since once you have diamonds then you can buy arms. However, we must distance conflict enabling factor from core conflict variables; such as the collapse of formal state economy and development structure.”

DJR⁹⁷ agreed with the above assertion that the scramble for diamonds is not a core conflict factor:

“Diamonds financed the ‘RUF’ war and gave them a bargaining chip for trade with international allies, who profited in the diamond trade, and in return, provided arms and other war logistics to the ‘RUF’. And this is how the issue of diamond for arms became an issue in the conflict.”

Scholars like Gberie (2005) and Kamara (2003) posited that the ‘RUF’ conducted operations in Sierra Leone's diamond producing areas simply as a part of the ‘RUF’'s diamond-looting tactics. This meant that the diamonds trade helped the RUF to commence their insurgency. This was because the only way the rebels could pay for the cost of the war, was to rely on the sales of diamonds; hence, once they gained control of the mines, they engaged both local and international companies who were interested in the diamond business to supply arms.

“I come from Kono, which is a diamond ferrous town, and so witnessed the massive exploitation of the diamonds by the rebel to prosecute the war; and my brothers not

⁹⁶ PA of the *United Nation’s* Special Court in Sierra Leone

⁹⁷ DJR, a renowned author, political elite and consultant

only joined the rebels because they were forcefully conscripted, but also because he wants to make life better for our family members when he became rich. This was part of the promises made to them by the rebel leaders. The battles in Kono were more ferocious; it was here that the first claim of amputation was reported and the air strip at Tonkolili was to facilitate the diamonds for arms trade during the conflict.”⁹⁸

When mining activities by the rebels increased in Kono, they established the Tonkolili airstrip facilities (Keen, 2001). During fieldwork, I visited this airstrip with the *United Nation’s* Special Court team. It remains in ruins, with evidence of destruction and the town being massively dislocated. Keen (2001, p. 107) observed that:

“The rebel forces were again making military advantages after having taken control over Kono — the country’s premier diamond district in the Eastern area — which enabled them to capitalise on the black market diamond trade to buy weapons and supplies, and recruit local fighters. Allegations soon emerged that army soldiers were, in fact, cooperating with the rebels in the illegal diamond trade and in the looting of the civilian population; [hence] giving birth to the expression ‘sobels’: soldiers by day, and rebels by night.”

The ‘RUF’ were also involved in mining activities in another diamond town of Bo.

“Bo was also another important town to the rebel and government forces, as they battled for supremacy to capture the mines. The control of these mines changed hands several times during the conflicts and did fund the war. Diamonds thus played a major role in inflaming and escalating the conflicts. Bo diamond mines were a beehive of activity for all sorts [of] diamond mongers from the international community and other African diamond traders. I can only describe the situation in

⁹⁸ FKFG, a postgraduate student of History

*Sierra Leone as a complex form of war economy with negative consequences on the economy and cataclysmic effect on the populace.*⁹⁹

As Keen (1998), Abdullah (1998) and Campbell (2004) have all noted, the Bo, Kailahun and Kono regions of Sierra Leone were very rich in alluvial diamonds and these were the main location of the battles which increased the will of the parties to prefer violence to peace. According to the Global Witness (Dec. 2004) report, battles were more intense in areas where there were concentrations of diamond mines. The report further notes that, in Sierra Leone, battles tended to be concentrated in the northern territories: this coincides with the presence of diamond in these areas. The report concluded that three hundred and fifty-seven battles were fought in the area between armed combatants, compared to two hundred and four in the East: the region with the second highest levels of violence.

The *United Nation's* Security Council Report (July, 2003) stated that in the Kono district (the Eastern part of Sierra Leone), 94 percent of houses were destroyed; out of a population of 389,653 of the 1985 census figure, 291,993 were returned as refugees by 2001. Similarly, in the densely populated town of Kailahun, a diamond rich town, 80 percent of the town destroyed, and over 300,000 people were recorded as refugees in Guinea. The report further stated that, these figures only represents two districts, and was recorded just as the conflict was ending, so they might possibly be higher. This degree of destruction was possible due to the importance of the two district holds to the warring faction.

To buttress the above point, when protesters raided the 'RUF' leader, Foday Sankoh's, house in May 2000, they found secret documents on mining operations in Kono and Bo, and an inventory of every diamond collected by the 'RUF' officers between October 1998 and July 1999 (Kpundeh, 1995; Kamara, 2003; Keen, 1998). This confirms years of mining

⁹⁹ FJSRG is a tutor of 'Peace and Conflict Studies

operations and the sales of diamonds in large quantities to various organisations and individuals.

I explored the extent to which the diamonds trade exacerbated the civil war in Sierra Leone. The arguments developed from fieldwork and studies evinced that Sierra Leone did not go to war over diamonds; rather, diamonds facilitated the means of conflict. The arguments also centred on the mismanagement of diamonds wealth, corruption and youth restiveness as underlying factors.

Next, I will examine how the government and RUF collaborated with multinational companies, individual and foreign governments, in the illicit diamonds trade exacerbating the civil war. According to Campbell (2004), the civil war was connected into the global war economy as governments in power during the war and the RUF collaborated with multinational companies, individuals and foreign governments in the illicit diamonds trade. It was further stated that business connections and relationships facilitated arms brokerages, whilst the provision of private security firms and mercenaries that sustained the battles. VE¹⁰⁰ argued that Western countries and multinational companies facilitated the diamonds trade and placed the country in the hands of international diamond merchants. According to Keen (1998, p. 74):

“The conflict in Sierra Leone involved bizarre forms of collaboration between government and rebels as both sides exploited diamond resources and cash crops at the expense of civilian and this have seen the emergence of war economies often centred in particular regions controlled by rebels or warlords and linked to international trading networks”.

¹⁰⁰ VE is an Executive Director of an NGO in Sierra Leone

These immediate notable economic agendas significantly prolonged civil wars, creating widespread destitution (Keen, 1998).

“Diamond trade could be said to be a major factor that internationalised the conflict in Sierra Leone, as all-known world diamond merchants and their host countries used the conflict as a spring board to have a share of the diamond loots; and also provided weapons and mercenaries and other logistics to their suppliers.”¹⁰¹

According to Kandeh, (2003), the government of Tejan Kabah procured weapons and engaged mercenaries to fight the rebel force, as the government made a deal with the South African private security firm, the *Executive Outcomes*, and paid them with diamonds so as to assist to recruit mercenaries and supply war logistics. The governments in power were involved in agreements with diamond merchants and private security organisations to help them fight off the insurgency. Various alliances were formed with their local and foreign partners for protection and the supply of arms and mercenaries; most of these were both formal and informal (Hirsch, 2001; Peleman, 2000; Gberie, 2005). Bishop Humper¹⁰² noted that:

“The Rebel leader, Foday Sankoh, was a trading partner with Taylor; while the government too was in several diamond trade relations with local and foreign business entities. The aim was to find the funds and arms to continue the violence. This increased the intensity of the violence and extended any form of negotiation to end the war.”

According to Campbell (2004, p.41), “conflict diamonds have generated huge personal fortunes for warlords, rebel movements and their regional and international clients, indeed

¹⁰¹ FNBG a postgraduate student of History

¹⁰² Joseph Humper, is the former Anglican Bishop of Freetown in Sierra Leone and a former member of the ‘Truth and Reconciliation Committee’ in Sierra Leone.

the sale of conflict diamonds by the Revolutionary United Front (RUF) rebel group was estimated at \$70 million by 1999". Based on the above it may be inferred that emerging formal and informal networks of dysfunctional illicit trade in arms for diamonds influenced the ferocity and duration of the conflict in Sierra Leone. *Executive Outcomes (EO)*, a private security company in South Africa, entered the conflict in May 1995 (Gberie, 2005; Hirsch, 2001). Moreover, the *EO* is not new to conflict in Africa, especially where precious stones are involved. The *EO* supplied private security forces to Angola in its fight against the 'National Union for the Independence of Angola' ('UNITA') (Hirsch, 2001). The *Global Witness* (2004) report indicted the main figures in the consortium behind the RUF: Col. Fred Rindle, a South African, and Nico Shefer, an Ecuadorian with business links to Colombian drug baron Pablo Escobar. They reinforced the rebels with three hundred Ukrainian mercenaries and hundreds of soldiers from Burkina Faso.

Drawing upon fieldwork evidence, 'RUF' directly sold diamonds to known Lebanese traders, serving as the conduit between them and arms dealers. The *Global Witness* (2004) report indicted *Branch Energy*, a South African company, and went on to argue that the more experienced and well-connected Lebanese were engaged in the diamond business, along with South Africans, Belgians, Israelis, Eastern Europeans and Angolans. The funds from this illegal business were then used as extra-national currencies to purchase arms and ammunitions. There is a solid evidence to suggest that the trade in diamond was going on in Kono, involving Chinese business men:

*"I was a resident of Kono during the conflict and I personally noticed the increase in the number of Chinese businesses springing up in the town. They have no factories and are known to be connected to top government officials at the local level in the diamond trade."*¹⁰³

¹⁰³ FGRL, a tutor at 'the Department of History', and FEL, a postgraduate student of 'Peace and Conflict Studies'

The *Rex Diamond* Company, with its de facto headquarters in Antwerp, held the concession for Zimmi and Tongo Field; this field was also shared with prospectors from the People's Republic of China (Smillie *et al.*, 2000). The Chinese became involved through the Burkina Faso government in the diamonds trade with the 'RUF' and Taylor (*Global Witness*, 2003). International and local interested parties aligned with the 'RUF' and the government to ensure they stayed in the illegal diamond trade and assisted to provide the finances, which were then used to inflame the conflicts (Francis, 2006).

The *EO* in May 1995 helped the government to beat back the RUF from Freetown: within a month, it had cleared the diamond areas (Gberie *et al.*, 2000). According to Hirsch (2000), the introduction of the *EO* to the government of Sierra Leone; was made by a Director of *Branch Energy* and *Heritage Gas and Oil*, Anthony Buckingham. According to Hirsch (2000), he negotiated the contract with *EO* and made advance payment to *EO* in return for the government's concession relating to Sierra Rutile and the diamond areas. JC¹⁰⁴ asserted that:

“The big shame about it was that diamonds merchants from the United Kingdom, Canada, Belgium and the United States were involved in this illicit trade unchecked by their own governments.”

Hirsch (2001), Peleman (2000) note that the regime of past President Ahmad Tejan Kabbah, sold millions in diamonds and even future diamond rights to traders from Asia; the revenue was used to hire *Sandline*, a London-based mercenary firm, to take back the capital and the diamonds fields from the RUF. The sales of future mineral rights were a common issue in the 'RUF' and government to help finance the conflict and, invariably, sustained its intensity. DJR¹⁰⁵ was particularly angry at what he referred to as the double standards of the

¹⁰⁴ JC, a former member of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Sierra Leone

¹⁰⁵ DJR, a former *United Nation's* representative in Sierra Leone

international community, especially Canada and the United Kingdom: these have well known diamond companies, which were freely dealing, directly and indirectly, with the 'RUF', on the one side, and the government, on the other.

JC¹⁰⁶ suggested however, that the absence of any international agency to monitor the activities of the 'RUF' and the various regimes in power during the conflict facilitated the continued violence:

“Despite the ‘Kimberley Process Certification Scheme’ (‘Kimberley Process’ or ‘KP’), these international diamonds merchants were able to develop a more sophisticated method of smuggling diamonds out of Sierra Leone and, in turn, providing arms in exchange to both the ‘RUF’ and the government.”¹⁰⁷

'KP' was an international governmental certification scheme set up to prevent the trade in diamonds, which funds conflict. It was launched in January 2003 in response to growing international pressure from *Global Witness*, and other NGOs, which had launched a campaign in 1998 to expose the role of diamonds in funding conflicts. The meeting took place in Kimberley, South Africa to determine how to tackle the problem of blood diamonds (*Global Witness*, 2005)

As it transpired, 'KP' was a total failure at the onset because the parties to the conflict were not involved in this process:

“The ‘KP’ was a good idea at the time, but the ‘RUF’ and the government were not ready to follow this process through, as they continued to independently decide how

¹⁰⁶ JC, a former member of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Sierra Leone

¹⁰⁷ DDP, is a research consultant with *Global Witness*

and where they sell their diamond and even diamond future rights; despite that this process was rectified by the United Nations.”¹⁰⁸

The ‘Kimberly Process,’ certifies legitimate diamonds from outlawed conflict diamonds (Hirsch, 2001). The ‘Kimberley Process’ was endorsed by the *United Nation’s* General Assembly (UNGA) and the *United Nation’s* Security Council (UNSC). Moreover, it launched as an import-export certification scheme, requiring participating governments to certify the origin of rough diamonds, and put in place controls to prevent conflict stones from entering the supply chain (Campbell, 2004).

Taylor was indicted in The Hague for being the chief sponsor of the ‘RUF’ rebels and for his involvement in the diamond for arms trade in Sierra Leone. According to Gberie (2005, p. 67), “Taylor negotiated the diamond for arms deal on behalf of the RUF and he used his contacts to get suppliers for war logistics and ensured that RUF diamonds got to the dubious international market”. Diamonds trade was also an important issue and played a role in the complex peace process during the Sierra Leone civil war. In the sub-region, according to Jaye (2003), Sierra Leone was a case where diamonds greatly impacted on the conflict; as its major factor in its sustenance and duration, as well as an important mechanism in its resolution. Drawing upon the result of my fieldwork, the ‘RUF’ leader was very smart, for, during the negotiation, he requested that the South African security company, *Executive Outcomes*, and the ‘ECOMOG’ withdraw from Sierra Leone as part of the deal:

*“At this time, [the] Executive Outcome and ‘ECOMOG’ had forced [the] ‘RUF’ out of most of the diamonds mine they operated; and this was a smart move on their side.”*¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁸ PJR was a top civil servants in Sierra Leone during the conflict

¹⁰⁹ FNBG a postgraduate student of History

As part of the peace treaties, Foday Sankoh was appointed as the Chairman of the Natural Resources Board, hence making him directly responsible for diamonds and other natural resource matters. According to Hirsch (2001) the Chairmanship of the Board of the Commission for the Management of Strategic Resources, National Reconstruction and Development (CMRRD), as provided for in Article VII of the present agreement, was offered up to the leader of the 'RUF/SL,' Corporal Foday Sankoh. (Hirsch, 2001), further stated that Sankoh enjoyed the status of Vice President, and was only answerable to the President of Sierra Leone. This means that Sankoh only agreed to peace because he was made the minister of mines: this allowed him to continue to have access to funds for his war campaign. The 'Abidjan Peace Accord' of 1996 in Ivory Coast, for instance, was alleged to have failed because the RUF was fully involved in diamonds trade at this time.

According to Adebajo & Rashid (2004), the failure centred on the 'RUF' ability to sustain the violence, because they had captured diamond mines in the Southeast and North of Sierra Leone. To buttress this point, Gberie (2005) claimed that the failure of the 'Abidjan Peace Treaty' allowed changes to be made during the negotiation table at the 'Lome Peace Accord' of 1999. To expand on this, the 'Lome Peace Accord' was a peace agreement signed on 7 July 1999, by the warring parties in the civil war between President Ahmad Tejan Kabbah and the 'Revolutionary United Front' ('RUF') leader, Foday Sankoh. The accord granted Sankoh a position in the transitional government, as well as amnesty for him and all combatants (Smillie *et al.*, 2000).

This section has examined the extent to which, diamonds financed, escalated and prolonged the conflict in Sierra Leone. The government and the RUF exploited diamonds in collaboration with multinationals companies, foreign governments, regional neighbours and individuals. I also examined why the diamonds trade connected the conflict in Sierra Leone to that of Liberia, and how it was an important issue during peace negotiations. Despite this, although diamonds trade financed the war, the civil war was not a war about diamonds.

While some see the diamonds trade as an underlying conflict factor, rooted in the unproductive nature of the economy and corruption of state officials, others suggests that its mismanagement led to the economic chaos that undermined development. Diamonds financed the government and the ‘RUF’ war, providing them with a bargaining chip for partnership and trade with international allies who profited through the diamond trade and, in return, provided arms and other war equipment (Gberie, 2000). Diamonds were also a factor, in the negotiation for peace during the ‘Lome Peace Accord’.

This analysis concludes that the illicit diamonds trade played a pivotal role in sustaining the intensity and duration of the civil war. It also played a major role in the conflict as an escalating agent and, at a certain point during the conflicts, as motivating and enabling factors, prolonging the violence and war. Diamonds fuelled the war when it started and, thereafter, became a bargaining factor during peace negotiations. The next section moves on to focus on natural resources and the conflict in Liberia.

5.3 LIBERIA

“Between 1989 and 2003 Liberia experienced two exceptionally bloody civil wars that killed over a quarter of a million people and displace a further 1.3 million. President Taylor used diamonds and timber to bankroll brutal campaigns against the people of Liberia and neighbouring Sierra Leone” (Global Witness, 2003)

This section specifically explores the fieldwork evidence and existing studies to understand the extent to which, natural resources issues —in this case timber, rubber stock, iron-ore, gold and diamonds — contributed to the escalation of the civil wars in Liberia. It examines how the funds generated from the exploitation of the natural resources helped sustain the intensity of the war, as well as the willingness of the warring parties to continue the violence. This section systematically explores natural resources related dynamics and how they influence the conflicts. It examines how the governments, rebels and other warring factions exploited natural resources to fund war. It also examines the role of multinational companies, individual and foreign governments in the illicit natural resources for arms trade.

The abundance of purely renewable natural capital, forest resources (timber and rubber stocks), iron-ore, and gold in the North; diamonds in Golahun, Lorfa, Gbafolo and Yangaya, became an important factor in reproducing and undermining the peace process in Liberia (Ellis, 1999, p. 163). The abundance of economic opportunity created from the exploitation of natural resources and the funds generated had a significant impact on the outcome of the wars in Liberia.

“Three power centres have mismanaged these resources for over a century now; first is the domination by the American-Liberians over Liberia’s natural resources and wealth; second is Doe and ethnic favouritism in the allocation of these resources, and finally Taylor also harnessed these resources to execute the war and for his own personal gain. This irresponsible use of our vast natural resources bled the economy dry this I believe is at the base of the conflict.”¹¹⁰

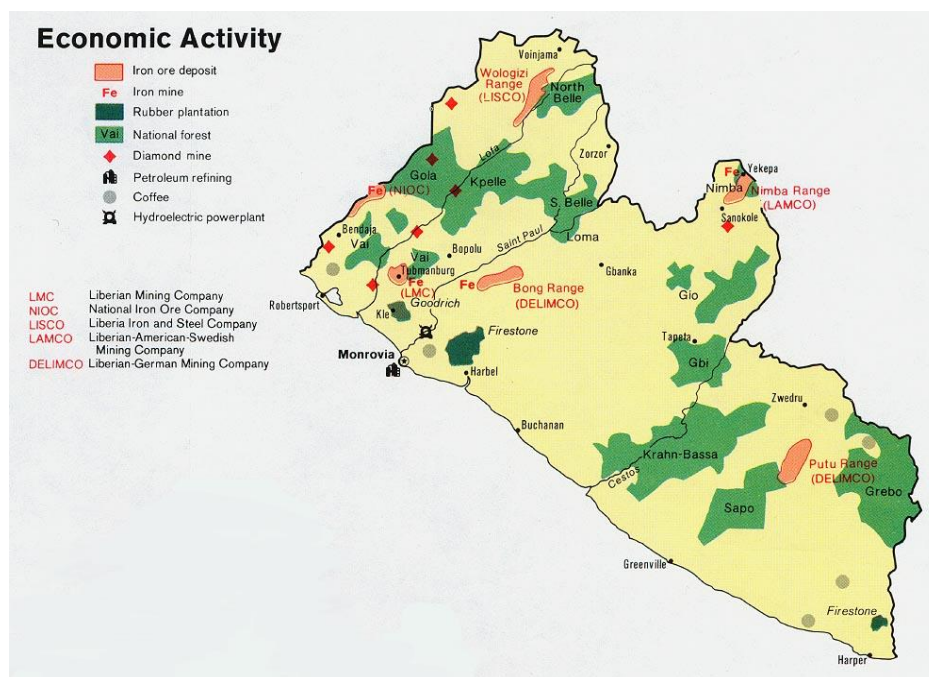


Figure 10: Resources districts of Liberia, Courtesy of Global Witness

¹¹⁰ AK, is a Senior Directors in a government department in Liberia

TS¹¹¹ noted:

“I know that, for years, there has been tension over the way our resources have been used by the American-Liberian oligarchy to suppress the people. However, at that point in history, it was not used to fuel any violence, though there have been conflicts over misappropriation of land with indigenes. However, during the conflicts, Taylor concentrated on the massive exploitation of the forest resources and gold, diamonds and iron-ore to execute the war and for personal wealth. It was, therefore, not surprising that all other parties in the conflicts participated in this massive exploitation to fund the violence.”

TS traces natural resources exploitation to the American-Liberians, Doe and Taylor. AT,¹¹² however, asserted that the war still would have been fought, even without these resources:

“It is true that our natural resources were used for the benefit of the few, while the majority has been deliberately excluded. The entire community that produces these resources has been impoverished for decades and the land use act only succeeded in ostracising the people from their land. But I still maintain that the war would still have been fought without these resources, but this is not to deny that natural resources contributed to sustain the violence.”

The American-Liberian monopoly over the forest resources was not in doubt. As the war broke out, Doe launched the country into the global war economy and, Taylor further entrenched it, taking it to a regional and international level; whilst the rebel groups that later emerged capitalised on it to fund the conflict. JY¹¹³ claimed that natural resources have been exploited for decades and not been equally, distributed: this had been a major conflict issue

¹¹¹ TS is a Professor at the *University of Liberia*,

¹¹² AT, a legal practitioner and human right lawyer in Liberia

¹¹³ JY is an Executive Director of an NGO in Liberia.

in Liberia before the war started and, thereafter, became a major motivation for the continuation of violence. He further argued that:

“Both the rebels and government were all interested in the huge timber trade, the already lucrative iron-ore exploration, the gold and diamond deposits. These huge forest and mineral resources have been under the control of the political and military elite for so long. Now with the entrant of new rebels and militia groups, it became a fight to finish; and this led to intense fighting, which impacted negatively on the lives of the people. Thousands of innocent women and children died, and others (were) maimed for life.”

Extrapolating from my results, it could generally be argued that the American-Liberians, the governments of Doe, and, Taylor, as well as the rebel factions, were all involved in resources for arms deals. Charles Taylor took advantage of the ungovernable state of Liberia during the civil wars in order to expand his control of natural resources beyond the Liberian borders, even into Sierra Leone:

“All the rebels’ splinter groups which emerged also helped themselves to the spoils of war, by using the funds from the sales of these resources to replenish their weapons of war; thus, sustaining the violence.”¹¹⁴

It was the way and manner with which Taylor and the rebels groups used timber and rubber to fund the civil war, that brought untold hardship on the people, yet, this does not make it a war over resources:

“Though our national wealth was concentrated on the war, they were over exploited by the government and rebels and at a point almost degenerated into a war over

¹¹⁴ FVF, a female postgraduate student at the ‘Department of Political Science’

resources. But we must not forget that these resources have always been at the base of contradiction over the year."¹¹⁵

JT¹¹⁶ argued that natural resources should be regarded as a cause of conflict in the case of Liberia. According to ERY, Liberia is an example of a fragile state that eventually went into total state collapse:

*"The political leaders and elites have disappointed us for a long time and the people have been enslaved by the irresponsibility of these few groups led to state collapse. However, during the two civil wars, they exploited the confusion brought about by the crisis to continue to milk this country of its wealth. Doe and Taylor were in the forefront of looting spree, while the rebel groups have no other choice, but to follow suit. They raped the resources of the people to buy weapons that almost annihilated a generation of youths. Despite this, I will still distance natural resources exploitation as a conflict factor, but more of a means in the hand of the elite to shed the blood on innocent women and children."*¹¹⁷

Huband (1998, P. 54) posited that the exploitation of Liberia's resources began as early as Taylor's control over Greater Liberia, this means, that the significance of the 'NPFL's territorial control and its impact on the war cannot be overstated: to clarify, Taylor ran a relatively sophisticated financial apparatus, the revenue of which helped finance his insurgency:

"Taylor increased exports of natural resources from Liberia through 'NPFL' control of the Bong Mines, the 'Firestone Plantation' at Harbel, and the port of

¹¹⁵ FJE, a postgraduate student at the 'Department of International Relations'

¹¹⁶ JT is a professor at the *University of Liberia*

¹¹⁷ ERY, a foremost educator, social commentator and critic

Buchanan. He took over these rubber plantations at various stages of the two civil wars; and the mine and Timber corporations allegedly collaborated, by paying Taylor and rebels for protection and, in return, provided them with logistical and other assistance directly and indirectly” (Husband, 1998, p.54).

Ellis (1999, p. 55) argued that for the rebel groups, the sustenance of their war efforts depended heavily on the amount of resources they could control, hence, the wars were principally fought and won on rich lands. Accordingly, Husband (1998) concluded that natural resources provided the revenue, logistical means and weapons funding the civil war in Liberia. According to Adebajo & Rashid (2004), the rebels and local militia groups in the conflicts had control over and access to natural resources; with the heaviest fighting taking place in those areas, such as Tubmanburg, Tapeta and Bomi County. It was these economic calculations, that came to determine the pattern of the war; they were also a major factor in the failure of thirteen peace accords between 1990 and 1996 (Dunn, 1999, p.190).

Mining and logging activities were actively on-going in the ‘NPFL’ (‘National Patriotic Front of Liberia’) held territories; at the same time, the rebel and militia groups were also operating in areas under their control (Obi, 2003). It was further noted that any efforts to talk about opening a peace talk or even uniting with the Monrovia-based government only remained an illusion, because their business would be at stake if that happened.

“The warring parties did not get any financial aid from outside Liberia; rather, they used the resources at their disposal; timber and rubber stocks, which the political leaders had refused to use to benefit the citizens of Liberia.”¹¹⁸

“I went into the jungle to save my people from the greed of Doe, and, luckily for us, our ancestors provided us with the forest resources to wage this war against our enemies. Before now the resources was in the hands of American-Liberians but

¹¹⁸ RJW is a former rebel commander

Doe's regime was not different as he also took our wealth for himself and his Krahn ethnic group."¹¹⁹

FC¹²⁰ argued that all the major battles in Liberia were fought in mineral rich communities, meaning natural resources played very big roles in escalating and fuelling the conflicts. He further noted that when rebels captured a rubber plantation, they would sell it to raise needed funds to purchase ammunition for battle. The *Sano Rubber Corporation*, the third largest plantation in Liberia was occupied by rebels; even after the conflict, ex-rebels still control this plantation — this led to the rebel group 'LOURD' occupying the *Gumtree Rubber* plantation after the 2003 war (Pham, 2006, p. 152). The argument here is that the warring parties used these natural resources to enrich themselves and buy arms for the war.

To take this argument further, the involvement of local and foreign companies, individuals and other countries ensured that trade in these resources provided funds for the war. According to Braithwaite (2010) Liberia's civil war was a typical example of how conflicts in the West Africa sub-region connected into the global war economy market. Timber and rubber stocks were probably the most exploited resources by the government and rebel groups, because they are local and international buyers.

"The company had to pay the rebels huge sums of money for protection, so we can continue operations; at some points, we were paying 3 rebel groups and a local militia at the same time, as they all lay claims to some part of our plantation and operational areas across the country. Our company had to do this to remain operational just like others. My company was not involved in arms deal with the

¹¹⁹ RGG also a former rebel commander of NPFL

¹²⁰ FC, the programme director at an NGO.

rebels; but we did offer logistic assistance to the government as a condition to expand our business.”¹²¹

BK¹²² noted that:

“When the rebels take over a timber or rubber plantation, they negotiate with logging companies and their parent Western company. These companies go into business negotiations with rebels, so they can continue their operation. They provide them with money, war vehicle and a source of contact to international arms dealers. Sometimes these companies supply rebels and even the government with arms directly. My concern, however, is that even after the civil war; these resources are still contentious issues and, if not properly resolved, will lead to a more ferocious war in the nearest future.”

According to Reno (2001), once the vast forest of Liberia was taken over by rebels and militia forces, which still needed to access needed revenue for their insurgency, deals were directly negotiated with local companies. The wrangling within the ‘NPLF’ led to the cracks in its rank and file due to squabbles over the control of funds from resources exploitation.

*“As the war heated up Charles Taylor’s high handedness led to a crack within the rank and file of his high ranking officers. Six commanders, including myself, left him to form our own rebel movement with our closest tribe’s men. Since we know the business, we, thus, appealed to our community to support us so we can be in control of the wealth of our land. Once we capture a plantation or gold field, we make our own contact with foreign companies, who in turn pay us money or help us with communication equipment’s or vehicles.”*¹²³

¹²¹ ATA, was a former top executive at a *Rubber Company* in Monrovia

¹²² BK is a commissioner in a government department of Liberia

¹²³ GAM, a former top rebel commander with the ‘NPFL’

Moreover, 'ECOMOG' officials were indicted in the illicit natural resources trade.

*"It was not a secret that ECOWAS and 'ECOMOG' officials were involved in the illicit diamond trade too, they joined local companies, foreign governments and regional neighbours in looting Liberia's wealth for selfish aggrandisement."*¹²⁴

Reno (2000) noted that when Taylor was in control of most of the Liberia's resource-rich territory, he used the funds from the sales of these resources to fund his 'NPFL' forces to a great extent by taxation and/or protection payments from local, European and US businesses. According to Lowenkopf (1995, p. 94) Ruprah Sanjivan Singh, a businessman and Taylor's former Deputy Commissioner of the *Bureau of Maritime Affairs* was indicted for arms dealing by the *United Nation's* Security Council. It was further stated that Mr. Singh was also indicted as a strong supporter of former President Taylor's regime in efforts to destabilise Sierra Leone and gain illicit access to diamonds. Consequently, he is now on the 'UNSC' travel ban and asset freeze list (refer to 'UNSC' resolution 1343 in appendix 10 for further details).

Even before invading Liberia, Taylor established relationships with leading Ivorian, French and Lebanese business people (Ellis, 1999). The Liberian Minerals Company (LIMINCO) reportedly paid Taylor \$10 million per month for the opportunity to extract and export iron-ore from NPFL territory (Reno, 1998). Forest resources have been a conflict issue since the creation of the Liberian state. Several Western countries and, recently, China have exploited timber; hence, meaning the people do not receive the benefits:

"For years, the exploitation of Liberian vast forest resources has created a developmental problem; but the problem was worsened by the conflicts. Charles Taylor and his 'NPFL' needed more funds to wage war. They captured these plantations, took control and renegotiated deals with foreign logging companies

¹²⁴ FVF, a female postgraduate student at the 'Department of Political Science

*whom, in turn, supply Taylor with arms. Taylor re-negotiated logging rights with these companies and some of them supplied him with war vehicles and mercenaries to help him with the war.*¹²⁵

The rebel groups were involved with local logging companies, who supplied them with logistics during the conflict:

*“I was 15 years old when I joined the rebels and because I know the jungle very well, I was usually on the entourage that takes money and arms from the timber company to our boss. The white bosses of this company came to visit us in our camp and sent people to repair our vehicles and give us food and ammunitions.”*¹²⁶

The timber and rubber industries were implicated in the financing and importation of weapons in violation of *UN* sanctions as Liberia traded its timber for arms and funds to purchase arms (Owunka, 2009). A *Global Witness* (June 2005) report had alleged that a key player in the resources for arms trade was Guus van Kouwenhoven, a Dutch arms dealer, who headed the *Oriental Timber Company*, as well as the *Royal Timber Company*. Consequently, in November 1992, the *UN* ‘Security Council Resolution 788’, which was unanimously adopted, established an arms embargo on Liberia. The *UN* Security Council renewed resolution 985 in April 1995: which ended in March 2001; others were drawn up in May 2002 and May 2003 (*Global Witness*, 2005).

Due to the instability in the country, both the government and rebel groups’, negotiated economic deals with Europeans, North American and Asian firms to exploit these resources (*Global Witness*, Dec. 1998). This particularly opportunistic edge influenced the manner in which Liberia’s war was fought to the extent that thousands of people had a stake in the continuation of the conflict:

¹²⁵ RHGW, a field researcher with *Global Witness* stationed in Liberia

¹²⁶ BEW was a former child soldier but now works with an NGO in Monrovia

“We had no choice but to fight back Taylor and his NPFL, and we needed money to do so. It is not wrong that we took control of our timber to buy weapons and food, after all that was what every other person was doing. We had to make friend with Chinese business men to buy our timber and, in exchange for money and sometime vehicles.”¹²⁷

“We directly deal with these companies and their executives: they supply us with money, food, medicine and vehicles and, on our part, we give them security and assure them that they will get more logging concessions. Well, I must also add that they sometimes link us to arms dealers too.”¹²⁸

The Oriental Timber Company held the largest logging concessions in Liberia: they were the major source of Liberian timber exports through Chinese businesspersons during the war (Orogun, 2003). The *Global Witness report* (December 1998) indicted Joseph Wong, an Executive of the *Oriental Timber Company*, for providing military and financial support for Taylor (See UNSC resolution 1343 in appendix 10). The report also stated that Jobe Baba, a Gambian and former Director of the *Gambia New Millennium Air Company*, was one of Taylor’s friends supplying arms for diamonds and was even indicted by the ‘UNSC.’

Others indicted by the ‘UNSC’ and, subsequently, placed on travel bans were: Aleksic Jovan, employee of the Serbian company *Aviogenex*; involved in making the necessary arrangements to fly more than 200 tons of weapons to Liberia; Bah Ibrahim, a Senegalese Arms dealer involved in illicit access of diamonds in Liberia and Sierra Leone (also see appendix 10 and 11). According to (Ebo, 2005), several countries directly and indirectly funded the Liberian war, but most of this went unrecorded. In Liberia, the absence of

¹²⁷ TON, a paramount traditional Chief and a spiritual leader of a local militia

¹²⁸ RHT is one of the former rebel commander of the ‘United Liberation Movement of Liberia’ (‘ULIMO’)

agencies that can enforce an autonomous notion of legality also generated opportunities for elites and rebels to use more innovative means to control natural resources and translate them into political tools of war (Reno, 1999),

Due to the collapse of state structures, elites and their international rogue partners managed war economies. Between 1992 and 1996, for example, Charles Taylor was estimated to have accrued between U.S. \$400 million and \$450 million per year from the conflict in Liberia Seyon (1998, p. 76). According to Aning (1997, p. 125), it was estimated that the approximate total value of “warlord trade” in Liberia from 1990 to 1994 stood at: \$100-150 million in diamonds; \$121.6 million in timber; \$81 million in rubber; and \$95 million in iron ore. In 1999, Liberia officially exported 8,500 carats of diamonds: an amount estimated to constitute only 10-15 percent of the actual exports. During 1992 alone, logging firms removed an estimated 200,000 cubic meters of hardwood, which was valued at \$20 million, from NPFL territory (Reno, 1998, p. 97).

This exploitation led ultimately to the *United Nation’s* sanctions against diamond and timber exports from Liberia. Consequently, on 7 March, 2001, the *U.N.* Security Council adopted a resolution imposing sanctions on the direct or indirect import of all rough diamonds from Liberia, whether or not they originated in Liberia (*United Nation’s* Security Council Report, Dec 15, 2003, S/2003/1175).

This section has examined the extent to which the illicit trade in the natural resources of Liberia contributed to escalate the civil war. It also explored how Liberia connects into the global war economy, by examining how the various warring factions collaborated with multinational companies, individuals and foreign governments in the illicit natural resources trade to fund the civil war. The section also explores how this facilitated arms brokerages, provision of private security firms and mercenaries that sustained the ferocity and intensity of the conflict. From the result of my fieldwork analysis natural resources like timber, rubber

stocks, diamond, gold and iron-ore do not appear as a direct conflict factor; rather, they financed the civil war, and by doing so sustained the intensity of the conflict.

It was noted that natural resources trade contributed to its escalation and sustained the conflict, as it provided the funds for the purchase of weapons used by all the warring faction to kill and destroy the infrastructures in both states. Some research participants noted that the conflicts almost resembled a war over resources, due to the massive exploitation of them and the attention it generated during and after the conflicts. The analysis here traced the mismanagement of natural resources as an underlying factor that led to the civil wars in both states. Accordingly, this led to economic stagnation, misappropriation of state funds, massive corruption and eventually underdevelopment. The result was massive unemployment, economic hardship and the growing frustration led to mass protest. This according to these arguments led to youth protest and eventually, violence from an intolerant government of both states.

The evidence, suggests that the multinational companies, both local and foreign, logging and diamond merchants of Eastern and Western Europe, and Asia, facilitated illicit exploitation and trade in natural resources. Countries like Canada, the United Kingdom, China and the United States of America were also indicted: they facilitated the trade in natural resources of both states and provided funds and arms to the warring parties. According to these arguments, the zeal with which the rebel groups continued the violence was due to their access to these resources to sustain their war ventures. These foreign companies and their home governments were blamed for the continuation of the conflict, which made peace negotiations or truces almost impossible.

The analysis also explores the roles, which, diamond exploitation and trade played in the complex peace process during both civil wars. In Sierra Leone, the 'RUF' leader was not only made the commissioner in charge of mining; he also requested that the South African

security company, *Executive Outcomes*, and the 'ECOMOG' withdraw from Sierra Leone as part of the deal (Jaye, 2003). In Liberia, the rebel and militia groups in control of most of the timber and rubber plantations continued to exploit these resources, even after the civil war was a part of the peace agreement (Aboagye, 2007). The implication of these was, they continue to be able to fund arms and continued the violence as the peace process was going on.

Another natural resources related dynamic examined is how the diamonds trade linked the conflicts in Liberia with that of Sierra Leone. The analysis noted that the connection of Charles Taylor to the RUF rebel leader, Sankoh, facilitated the illicit exploitation of diamonds and its trade, in addition to this, the war in Sierra Leone, and, at the same time, linked illicit trading at the regional level. To clarify, Taylor was recently indicted by The Hague for being the chief sponsor of 'RUF' rebels and for his involvement in the diamond for arms trade in Sierra Leone and the sub-region (Adebayo, 2002). From the above, it can be noted that Liberia's conflicts can be better understood if issues of natural resources and how they influences the conflicts are properly examined. In the next section, I compared the extent which natural resources exacerbated the conflict in Liberia and Sierra Leone.

5.4 COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS: NATURAL RESOURCES AND CONFLICT IN LIBERIA AND SIERRA LEONE

This section provides a comparative analysis examining the similarities and differences, if any in respect of how natural resources contributed to the escalation of the civil wars. In Liberia and Sierra Leone, natural resources were important factors in undermining security in the region (Sawyer, 2004). The governments and rebels did not simply capture lucrative economic assets for self-enrichment, but more importantly as a means to finance war (Seyon, 1998). In Sierra Leone, despite the existence of other resources such as coffee, diamonds alone accounted for over 90 percent of the conflict resources exploited for war purposes (Hirsch, 2000), this was due to the abundance of alluvial diamonds all over the country.

Liberia has a rich forest resource, especially of timber and rubber stock, and; other natural resources included iron, gold and diamond. The rebels and militia groups relied more on forest resources under their control; whilst Taylor concentrated on the regions diamonds trade to fund his insurgency (Ellis, 1999).

An important similarity in both conflicts were the sales by governments and rebel groups of what might be called ‘booty futures’: the right to exploit mineral resources that the seller has not yet captured (Alao, 2007). In Sierra Leone, and Liberia, rebel groups and the government who had no resources to sell, but had a chance of securing them in combat, were able to sell future mineral rights to foreign firms or neighbouring governments. There is circumstantial evidence that the various governments during the civil war and the ‘RUF’ leadership traded financial support for future diamond rights: in essence, using informal mining futures to purchase their assistance (*UN Panel of Experts, 2000*). Also in Liberia, Taylor and the LURD’S rebel group were indicted in the future rights for arms dealing (Reno, 1998; Ellis, 1999).

In Sierra Leone, the principal actor in the conflicts diamonds trade was ‘RUF’ with the support of Taylor in Liberia, on the one hand, and the various governments in power for the duration of the conflict, on the other. To clarify, it was more of a two-party diamonds trade network, as the trade was concentrated in the hands of the RUF leader Sankoh, Taylor, and the Sierra Leone government alone. In Liberia, Charles Taylor controlled the majority of illicit natural resources trade with his rebel group the NPFL, however, several other rebel and militia groups share the illicit trade, each controlling a part of the vast forest resources. This list includes the following: Movement for Democracy in Liberia (MODEL), Liberians United for Reconciliation and Democracy (LURD), United Liberation Movement of Liberia’ (ULIMO), (ULIMO-K) and (ULIMO-J), ‘Liberian United Defence Front’ (LUDF) ‘Liberian Peace Council’ (LPC) the Lofa Defence Force (LDF) in Lofa County and the ‘Independent National Patriotic Front of Liberia’ (I-NPFL).

In Sierra Leone, the 'RUF' relied on mercenaries from Russia, who supplied helicopters to assist the 'RUF' in raiding the North of Sierra Leone when they temporarily lost it to 'ECOMOG' (Adebajo, 2005). The 'RUF' also got other logistical assistance from the Australian-American company, *Sierra Rutile*, in exchange for diamonds rights (Ndumbe, 2001). The various governments in Sierra Leone, of Kabbah, Koroma and Strasser engaged the services of these private security companies and used all sorts of diamond concessions to pay the bills (Gberie, 2001). Those governments were linked to *Executive Outcomes* and *Sandline*, which was involved in the coups and counter coups of Jonny Paul Koroma in 1997 and the re-instatement of Tejan Kabbah (Sawyer, 2004). It was further notes that the British government, through its intelligent network, was indicted in the coup.

The list of some top mercenary organizations and private security firms included: the German firm, *Specialist Services International*; the British firm, *Marine Protection Services*, *Frontline Security Forces*, *Special Project Services Limited*, as well as the American outfit, *Sunshine Boule* (*Global Witness*, 2005). The government of Strasser contracted the British security firm *Gurkha Security Guards (GSG)* at the beginning of 1995, when the 'RUF' occupied part of the mining area and impeded further exploitation of diamonds fields in the Koidu-Yengema deposit of the Kono region, Tongo in the Mende chiefdom, and Zimni along the river Mano bed (Adebajo, 2002).

By contrast, in Liberia, Charles Taylor had well organised international, local and regional networks of companies involved in the natural resources trade. There were also the official government-to-government pacts, such as the US Cold War supplies to the Liberian government (Kieh, 2005). Other channels of Taylor's supply of arms, war logistics and mercenaries included countries like Ivory Coast, Burkina Faso, Guinea and Libya (*Global Witness*, 2005). By contrast, the various rebel and militia groups relied more on existing timber and rubber multinational companies already operating in their area of control and some new business partners from Asia, especially China (Boas, 2005).

Finally, natural resources were instrumental during the various peace negotiations in Sierra Leone and Liberia. In Sierra Leone, the RUF leader, Sankoh as part of the negotiation was placed in charge of diamonds ministry before any peace accord was signed (Gberie, 2002). In Liberia, however, natural resources were an issue in peace negotiations only to the extent that some of the major rebel groups like LURD and MODEL were allowed to keep exploiting the vast forest resources as part of the peace negotiation (Huband, 1998).

5.5 CONCLUSION

This chapter examined how the illicit natural resources trade contributed to escalate, inflame or help to sustain the intensity of the conflicts in Liberia and Sierra Leone. It presented evidence suggesting that natural resources played a key role in the conflicts, plaguing a number of African countries over the last decade, both in motivating and in fuelling armed conflicts (Le Billon, 2001, 2005). I established how the trade in natural resources facilitated access to weapons and highlighted the role of natural resources in both wars. The chapter also examined how combatants in Liberia and Sierra Leone relied upon the flow of weapons, mercenaries and assistance from multinational companies, regional neighbours and foreign governments, who had a stake in lucrative natural resources trade.

The approach adopted the New War theory locating the civil wars in Liberia and Sierra Leone within the Post-Cold War global interconnectedness, especially through trade and illicit commerce in natural resources to fund the conduct of the war (Kaldor, 2007). It is evident from this chapter, how in Liberia and Sierra Leone, the governments and rebel groups collaborated with sub-regional states, multinational companies, foreign governments and private security companies in order to exploit these resources for war purposes.

The New War thesis highlights that these kinds of conflicts are financed through a globalised war economy, where the combatants finance themselves through plunder and the black market, external assistance, siphoning of humanitarian assistance, and through illicit trade in arms, drugs, diamonds and forest resources (Rice, 1988). Notably, through his alliance with

the RUF, Taylor took control of Liberia's vast resources and Sierra Leone's diamonds. This was how diamond trade links the civil war in Liberia to that of Sierra Leone, and eventually becoming a regional problem. Moreover, the government of Sierra Leone was also involved in, several trade deals to secure weapons to fight off the RUF insurgents.

This chapter concluded with a comparative analysis of both conflicts, to highlight their similarities and differences in the way the natural resources dynamics exacerbated them. It highlighted how natural resources share similar dynamics in terms of how they financed war. It further to explored how diamonds trade was primary source of finance in Sierra Leone, yet, since Charles Taylor controlled the diamonds trade in Liberia, other resources as timber and rubber financed rebel and militia groups.

Also explored were the variations in the role of natural resources trade supporting peace negotiations. Accordingly, was concluded that the natural resources trade supported government and rebel ability to wage war and provided sufficient motivations for the armed factions to prolong war. The next chapter examined how porous borders and insecurity exacerbated the conflicts in Liberia and Sierra Leone.

CHAPTER SIX

POROUS BORDERS AND INSECURITY: SIERRA LEONE AND LIBERIA

6.0 INTRODUCTION

“States within the Mano River Union witnessed highly interconnected conflicts as the porous and poorly delineated border areas between Guinea and Liberia, Sierra Leone and Guinea, Liberia and Côte d’Ivoire have often been the focus of fighting with heavy impact on the civilian population and local structures” (USAID, January, 2005, P. 12).

This chapter analyses the third of the tri-focal approach, namely; the significance of porous borders. It examines how significant, weak border delineation and policing, was a factor contributing to internal and transnational insecurity, which exacerbated the civil wars in Liberia and Sierra Leone. The chapter is organised in two major sections; each of which looks at a different country. The chapter begins by exploring the wider literature on porous borders and conflict in Africa, and subsequently each state. I examine how relationships between neighbouring states multiplied the conflict potential, escalating and connecting the conflicts in Liberia and Sierra Leone. This insecurity arising out of border porosity facilitated the following: illicit smuggling and trade in natural resources across borders, the proliferation of small arms and light weapons; the free movement of rebels and mercenaries across these borders.

The chapter concludes with a comparative analysis of cases, identifying similarities and differences in relation to how porous borders contributed to the escalating of both conflicts. Existing literature on intrastate border problems and the specific conflicts under study here are limited, so the analysis will rely on the wider literature, and fieldwork evidence. It is also important to note that this analysis is less concerned with identifying whether border problems were the determining factors in the conflicts; rather, it focuses on how the porosity of borders shaped the dynamics of both civil wars.

6.1 BORDERS AND AFRICAN CONFLICT: AN OVERVIEW

This section draws upon the wider literature and fieldwork conducted as part of this study, to examine the extent to which border dynamics exacerbated both conflicts. Borders have been

a recurring source of tension, dispute and minor conflicts on the African continent. This explains why African Heads of States at the 1964 ‘OAU Summit of Cairo,’ adopted ‘Resolution AHG/RS 16 (1)’, proclaiming the preservation of existing borders at the time of growing accessions to independence (Adebajo, 2005). As Kaldor (2007) argued, New War theory explicates how the nature of weak or porous borders contributes to widespread civil, political, social and religious violence.

Boundaries in Africa play a role in perpetuating conflict, as opposed to being a primary conflict factor (Konneh, 1996; Silberfein & Conteh, 2006; Silberfein, 2004). Borders contribute to insecurity, with their contested nature resulting in substantial number of geopolitical tensions, although not necessarily interstate war in the sub-region (Rothschild, 2002). According to Konneh (1996), the problem of African boundaries can be traced to colonial border demarcation. Oshita¹²⁹ noted that the territories of West African states were not sufficiently policed, due to the poor delineation of the borders by the various Western colonial governments, whose interests at the time centred on the artificial division of boundaries for their own economic gains. It was the treaties, agreements and exchanges of notes and protocols between the various colonial powers that provided the legal basis for African boundaries; likewise, the Liberian and Sierra Leonean borders were a product of these arrangements:

*“The difficulties encountered by Liberia and Sierra Leone and other African countries, individually and collectively, in coexisting with the given borders were born out of the Berlin Conference of November 1884 to February 1885. This was in an attempt to integrate Africa into the European concept of nation-states, with clearly defined and demarcated borders.”*¹³⁰

¹²⁹ The interviewee had authored several publications on border security and governance in Africa, specifically the West African Sub-Region.

¹³⁰ PHJ, a Senior official at the ‘ECOWAS’ Head Quarters in Abuja Nigeria

Conversely, Onah has argued that poor delineation cannot be entirely blamed on the colonialist; this is also attributable to the post-colonial policies of Liberia and Sierra Leone governments, which did nothing to solve the problems they inherited from colonialists and have not taken the issue of border delineation and security seriously:

“The colonial and imperialist policies and, more importantly, post-colonial government across Africa were not keen to properly demarcate their borders, as their major concern was primarily to retain political power at the centre, at all costs. True, colonial boundaries demarcated were carved according to river courses or imprecise perfunctory or out-dated boundary-marking technique. However, post-colonial government did nothing to redress the situation; rather they relied on more ridiculous techniques like mere local tracks or marking trees. As a result, the majority of Africa’s current borders, even where there is absolutely no territorial dispute, cannot be considered to be well demarcated.”¹³¹

Onah has based his assessment on the fact that, post-independence governments in Africa concentrated more on consolidating power at the centre, rather than solving historical border problems. It is important also to note that, African colonial boundaries resulted from treaties or direct conquests. Taking many forms: geometric lines and arcs, or following natural features, such as rivers or watersheds (Asiwaju, 2000). Colonial demarcation thus becomes part of the security architecture of the continent. Aning (1997) argued that the Berlin Conference of 1882, only served to regulate the imperial process of demarcating all African territories. According to Ampleford (2002), a clear indication of the arbitrariness of the borders is the fact that 44 per cent of African boundaries follow either meridians or parallels, whilst another 30 per cent follow other rectilinear or curved lines.

¹³¹ Dr. Onah is a tutor at the University of Lagos, Nigeria

The artificiality and arbitrariness of African borders were products of the rivalries between the imperial powers in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries (Adebajo, 2008). In addition to these rivalries, the imperial powers were interested in the control of commerce and markets or access to trade routes and river transportation systems (Asiwaju, 2000). The European imperial colonisers did not take the multi-ethnic, tribal, cultural and linguistic configuration of the society into consideration during the partitioning of Africa. This colonial imposition led to multi-cross border ethnic affinity communities.

Asiwaju (2000) noted that of the estimated one hundred and four international borders existing in Africa in 1984 and 1985, seventy-five contain dissected cultural communities or groups. The implication is that people of common ancestries were divided, meaning their political, social systems and cultural norms were fractured. This eventually led to further dislocation of border populations. Oche¹³² asserted that African borders were conceptualised without any reference to the social, political, or cultural characteristics of the people they partitioned. In the same way, Offor¹³³ suggested that population dislocations cross several countries was a result of undefined boundary demarcation, denying any real integration of the resident populations into a common political community. What Offor means is that colonialist's did not ensure that ethnic groups were not scattered across several states. He further argued:

“Even when Liberia and Sierra Leone — acting with the best of neighbourly intentions — have engaged in joint demarcation exercises, they have often had to struggle with the imprecise nature of the population configuration. Problems of who would like to be on which side of the borders always serve to make this process unachievable.”

¹³² Dr Ogaba Oche, a Senior Researcher at the *Nigeria Institute of International Affairs* in Lagos, Nigeria

¹³³ Dr. Offor of the University of Lagos

It is therefore, not surprising that the population configuration of the border zones between Liberia and Sierra Leone, on the one hand, and with their neighbours, on the other, represents a criss-cross of ethnic mix. Accordingly, Onah posited that poor border delineation is a feature of trans-border conflicts in Africa; in Liberia and Sierra Leone, ethnic groups cut across all the countries within the sub-region. This ensures that conflict involving one ethnic group spreads to their kin in other neighbouring countries, which will eventually become involved:

“This multi-ethnic configuration regionalised and sort of internationalised the conflicts in Liberia and Sierra Leone. Some ethnic groups, such as the Mandingos, the Manos, Madinka who have been involved in one ethnic conflict or the other over history, can be found in Liberia, Sierra Leone, Guinea and Cote d’Ivoire. They gave support to their ethnic groups in conflict by providing financial, material or personal support to rebels, providing safe haven, and serving as strategic grounds for recruitment and training. This kind of situation did escalate conflicts, but also increased the antagonism and hostilities among the factions in the conflict; invariably, making the conflict more deadly in terms of human casualties, people displaced and the level of destruction to properties.”¹³⁴

Nass argued that most vicious battles were fought at border areas, because it was easy for the rebels to slip into neighbouring countries where they were welcomed due to tribal ties.

“We were not only fighting rebels, but also local ethnic militia from neighbouring states fighting side by side with their brothers. We also encountered and captured fighters from other West Africa countries, especially Guineans, Ivorian’s and Burkinabe, fighting side-by-side with the rebel forces from Sierra Leone and

¹³⁴ Dr. Onah is a senior tutor at the University of Lagos, Nigeria

Liberia. These border areas are where we had the most difficult battles and, at some points, it becomes difficult to know who the enemy was."¹³⁵

According to DDP¹³⁶ the borders of Liberia and Sierra Leone are rather ambiguous — described as ‘no man’s land’ — and no one has ever laid full claim or authority over the running the affairs of the communities along these border areas.

“The communities across these borders are like international communities: [they] belong to three or four states, they are taxed, vote and see themselves as citizens of Liberia, Sierra Leone, Guinea or even Ivory Coast, depending on need to identify themselves. This inter-ethnic border mix means that they have relations in four countries and so the government of these countries always have interest in the welfare of the people across these borders. This border zone configuration confusion, as I will term it means that any violence that erupts is a violence of all against all. During conflicts, therefore, they give support to groups that are ethnically or tribally related to them.”

Kandeh (1999) argues that the border communities in Liberia and Sierra Leone have strong cross-border connections, and a shared tribal, linguistic and cultural past; furthermore, they have even been known to participate in governance (elections) processes in both Liberia and Sierra Leone. Agwu¹³⁷ notes that many of the adults in this sub-region possess dual citizenship participate in elections and cultivate farmland on either side of the border, regardless of immigration status. According to him, this kind of proximate interaction has the capacity to perpetuate peace due to mutual beneficial interaction; yet, it can also trigger insecurity within the region as conflicts spread violence:

¹³⁵ RTD. Col. Nass was an infantry commander in both wars and now a security consultant

¹³⁶ He is a senior field researcher with *Global Witness* and has travelled extensively through the borders of Liberia and Sierra Leone for over five years for research purposes

¹³⁷ Dr Aja Agwu is a Senior Researcher at the *Nigerian Institute of International Affairs* Lagos, Nigeria

“During war, this kind of relationship can inflame, spread, link and connect the conflicts. I must add here that this cannot be said to be an immediate or underlying cause of the conflicts, they are issues that arises when a conflict has started, with the propensity to inflame and multiply conflict.”¹³⁸

When the civil war broke out in Liberia and Sierra Leone, their border zones were frequently overrun by armed groups endangering cross border security with constant cross-border attacks, when militants attempted to use the territory of a neighboring state as a base, supplies or to recruit potential fighters. Francis suggested that this ethnic population overhang — an outcome of cross border ethnic mix amongst surrounding states led to ethnic solidarity:

“It is true that the nature of border has the capacity to exacerbate conflicts, as seen in the case of Liberia and Sierra Leone, it was not a conflict factor. It was a case of internal conflict dynamics, combining with proximate factor to spread the conflict across the border through ethnic linkages.”¹³⁹

Porosity and insecurity of the Sierra Leone and Liberia border is a result of colonial demarcation and post-colonial governments neglect of border issues, hence causing the cross border ethnic community mix, contributing to the conflicts, this invariably escalated and connected the two conflicts in this study.

Moreover, the relationships and interests of the leaders of the Mano River Union states further contributed to the conflicts. Ofor asserted that the conflicts engulfing the region were such that several inter-connected relationships amongst the states in the region, specifically the sub-region fuelled the violence. Leaders of the countries of the Mano River Union had become related through inter-marriages, a shared ethnic, tribal and ancestral

¹³⁸ Dr. Aja Agwu

¹³⁹ Dr. Francis

background and, sometimes, mere friendship or business partnership, developed over the years:

“Another motivating factor for their involvement and interest in the conflict was to ensure that their natural resources rich border areas were not annexed by rebels or other governments. Secondly, there was the need to ensure that the border regions were secured in order to avoid destabilising their already fragile states. Finally, these states wanted to ensure that they remained relevant in the politics of the sub-region.”¹⁴⁰

Notably during the conflicts, the four states making up the sub-region sought to ensure that they did not lose their natural resources rich territory along these undefined border areas to other states. Oshita argued that the government of Ivory Coast and Guinea sought to influence the conflicts in Liberia and Sierra Leone because they did not want the dispute to destabilise their countries, which were already battling insurgencies supported by the Liberia and Sierra Leone warring factions. The relationships amongst the states in the sub-region, how these contributed to interconnectivity of the conflicts will be examined in a later section of this chapter. Next, I examine how porosity and insecurity of these borders facilitated natural resources exploitation and the impact this had on the conflicts.

The vast resources of Liberia and Sierra Leone are scattered across the porous border zones, making it easy for the warring factions to take advantage of the unsecured borders to carry out an illicit trade. This was also encouraged by the inability of central governments to control border trade, or any sort of international regulation, which could help control the illicit border trade. This helped sustain the intensity of the conflicts, by providing the funds to procure weapons. The easy exploitation of natural resources trade, through the porous border area of the ‘Mano River Union’ ensured that the rebel groups’ and government’s

¹⁴⁰ He is a senior field researcher with *Global Witness*

ambition of raising funds could be achieved without direct or indirect financial help from outside sources (Kornprobst. 2002). Agwu argued that African borders have long been a route for smugglers, especially in the Mano River Union areas.

“The porosity enables the border zones turned into the market place for illegal and illicit trade of diamonds and other available forest resources, which was used to fund and buy small arms and light weapons, which made the violence to be intractable. The conflicts in the region became difficult to deal with because of the multiple channels of supply of weapons and the availability of the resources in exchange for these weapons.”¹⁴¹

This link between porous borders and trade in natural resources validates the argument which links natural resources trade to the proliferation of weapons in the sub-region, since the porous borders facilitated natural resources trade and this, in turn, provided funds to acquire weapons of war:

“The rich and vast porous borders of Liberia and Sierra Leone with their neighbours has for long been a beehive Illegal logging and prospecting, with the connivance of government officials, private individuals and multinational companies for decades. This is because the government of both countries could not effectively control them during peace time due to lack of adequate man power and other resources. As the conflicts started, so also did the activities of illicit resources trade increased as these borders became more insecure and in the hands of rebels and militia groups.”¹⁴²

¹⁴¹ Dr. Agwu

¹⁴² He is a senior field researcher with *Global Witness*, had been travelling extensively across the borders of the Mano River Union for over seven years before the conflict

Oshita added that the governments of the MANO River states were all involved in this informal natural resources trade by allowing unrestricted passage across their shared borders.

“These borders have long been routes for illegal natural resources trade for smugglers from Gambia, Mali and Bukina Faso. These are lucrative routes for regional merchants that buy these resources on behalf of their foreign partners. As the conflict escalated from Liberia to Sierra Leone in 1991, the commercial boom that came with it was a result of direct involvement of new and emerging rebel groups into the conflicts. The ‘RUF’ in Sierra Leone, and ‘LURDS’ in Liberia, are the most prominent of these groups, that became directly involved in the illicit natural resources border trade.”¹⁴³

As noted in chapter five, the porous border area between Liberia and Sierra Leone linked Taylor and the ‘RUF,’ so that the diamonds for arms trade became one of the links connecting both conflicts. According to Silberfein & Conteh (2006) Liberia and Sierra Leone share common borders with Guinea and Ivory Coast, this also became the route for illegal natural resources trade and transfers en-route to their final destinations in Europe or other African countries. They further noted that the Foya district in Liberia shares borders with Guinea to the northwest and Sierra Leone to the west, this was, hence, an important diamonds trade route. The general argument is that the porosity and insecurity of the borders facilitated the illicit exploitation and easy trade in natural resources, thus providing the funds that financed the conflicts, and also being a motivating factor for warring factions to continue the war.

According to Alao (2007) porous borders facilitated the weapons trade and militarization of the borders. Herbst (2000) and Nugent & Asiwaju (1996) describe how states with several porous proximate border connections with natural resources endowments facilitate the

¹⁴³ Oshita

proliferation of small arms and light weapons (SALW) during conflict. Notably, the porosity of these border zones facilitated weapon exchange by mostly Eastern European dealers. Dokubo¹⁴⁴ argued that the high level of insecurity across the various borders of the Mano River Union area of Liberia, Sierra Leone and Guinea has made it ‘home of insurgency and proliferation of weapons’:

*“The rebels plan and launched their attack from these border areas with weapons that are largely in circulation, and funded by illicit trade of natural resources flowed. Once the conflicts had broken out, the borders of Liberia and Sierra Leone and regional and international arms dealers frequently overtook the border zones of neighbouring countries of Guinea and Ivory Coast. Even local companies with rights over exploitation of these resources were directly indicted in the illegal border arms trade.”*¹⁴⁵

Dokubo concluded:

“The concern, however, is on how rebels acquire their arms through illegal arm dealers and mercenaries from East European, who use the weak nature of the borders to transfer and sell arms without detection. It is the easy transfer and availability of these arms that tends to inflame and prolong the conflicts. If the rebels do not have access to arms, perhaps the conflict would have ended earlier and, thus, become less ferocious.”

The above argument is also supported by an ECOWAS official¹⁴⁶, who asserted that. As a regional organisation, ‘ECOWAS’, had on several occasions reported eastern European and Western European arm dealers to their governments and international governing bodies for

¹⁴⁴ Charles Dokubo, a Senior Researcher at the *Nigerian Institute of International Affairs* in Lagos, Nigeria.

¹⁴⁵ Charles Dokubo

¹⁴⁶ He is a senior official at the ‘ECOWAS’ Head Quarters in Abuja Nigeria.

supplying arms to the warring factions in Liberia and Sierra Leone. Oche¹⁴⁷ suggested that the lethal nature of the conflicts greatly depended on the availability and accessibility of the most common arms due to the multiplicity of unmanned border areas. This, invariably, made the border zones a market for merchants of weapon dealers; this, henceforth, sustained the conflicts and determined the duration of wars.

Zacher (2001, p. 217) noted that the illicit trade in arms was unchecked at the border areas and, there were reports of light aircraft using these vast but porous border areas as landing sites and bases to sell small and light weapons. It was further argued that the availability and stockpile of weapons for the Liberia and Sierra Leone conflicts came from the Cold War arms stock in Eastern Europe, which ended up in the conflict regions of West Africa. Armed conflicts in Liberia and Sierra Leone set the tone for other civil conflicts within West Africa and created the environment for the circulation of millions of illicit small arms within the Mano River Union of Guinea, Sierra Leone, Liberia and the Ivory Coast. In the report produced by *Amnesty International* and *Oxfam*, it was revealed that out of the 600 million illicit arms in circulation world-wide, an estimated 100 million are in Sub-Saharan Africa, with 10 million being concentrated in the West African Sub-Region alone (Onwuka, 2009, p. 176).

Border porosity and insecurity also facilitated the free movement of mercenaries, rebel and refugees across the region posing serious security challenges. The *United Nation's* Security Council Report (Sept. 1, 2005) and the *United Nation's* Security Council Ninth Report (Dec. 7, 2005) identified cross-border activities — especially the presence of regional mercenaries from neighbouring countries — as a major cause of concern for peace and security in the region during the conflicts. The *United Nation's* Security Council Twenty Seventh Report (Dec. 12, 2005) and the *International Crisis Group* reports (July, 2004, June 2005 and Jan.

¹⁴⁷ Dr Ogaba Oche, a Senior Researcher at the *Nigeria Institute of International Affairs* in Lagos, Nigeria

2006) also noted that mercenaries and arms dealers' activities across the borders between Liberia and Sierra Leone were areas of major concern for the states, regional and international community.

Offor, however, Offor argued that mercenary movements across the border zones were not the only security issue, more importantly, it was the persistent pressures emanating from the flow and movement of displaced people:

“This meant that Sierra Leone, Liberia and their neighbours were vulnerable to threats, because this pattern of domestic and regional movements involved former combatants and rebels and refugees who can easily join in the fighting as the only choice open to them at the time.”

This population dislocation, had implications for the refugee camps as they also accommodated rebels and fighters from across the sub-region; hence making them a base for insurgency and recruitment. Nass asserted that some of these refugees were discharged former soldiers and supporters of rebel group.

“It's been known for rebel groups to have been formed or emerged out of these camps and they have also been a hiding and recruitment base during the conflicts in Liberia and Sierra Leone. Again, military wings of political parties have gone into these camps to assassinate opponents and their families and friends. In addition government troops of Liberia and Sierra Leone have had to attack these camps themselves, thus making them an enemy of the host states.”¹⁴⁸

This situation led to a border criss-cross of violent attacks involving host forces, rebel groups and warring government forces, diffusing the conflict regionally. It was the communities at the borders with the inflow of refugees, former combatants and mercenaries; this militarised

¹⁴⁸ Nass

the border areas, to the extent that host nations were known to have attacked these camps to rid them of insurgency.

This section has considered evidence of respondents and wider literature to examine how porosity and insecurity of the borders contributed to escalate the conflicts in Liberia and Sierra Leone. It has highlighted the role of borders in generating regional instability. The analysis also indicates that the relationships and interests of neighbouring governments were a source of conflict not only exacerbating the violence, but also linking the conflicts. These porous borders facilitated the following: unprecedented increase in the circulation of illicit arms; massive flow of refugees and internationally displaced persons (IDPs); the easy movement of combatants; the transnational exploitation of natural resources, especially diamonds and criminal networks in the sub-region (Owunka, 2009). These factors inflamed, and linked the conflicts.

6.2 SIERRA LEONE

This section examined how the weakness of the borders posed a security challenge to Sierra Leone during the conflict. The section systematically explores how these borders related dynamics contributed to the escalation of the civil war. I will examine how the nature of colonial border demarcation led to cross-border ethnic affinity mix and how this influenced the nature of conflicts; in addition to how the relationship between governments of the neighbouring states multiplied the conflict possibilities, exacerbating and regionalising the conflict. It also examined how further exacerbating the conflict was the insecurity arising out of the porosity, which facilitated the illicit smuggling and sales of natural resources across their borders, the proliferation of small arms and light weapons, as well as the free movement of rebels and mercenaries across these borders.

Improper colonial border demarcation and post-colonial government ineptitude towards border issues has been a constant issue in independent Africa. This has resulted in minor border contestations over the years:

“We have been lucky not to have gone to war with our neighbours over border contestations despite poor colonial delineation and the failure of our successive governments to take border delineation as a serious matter. However, Samuel Doe when he was head of state had flexed his muscle over the borders North of Sierra Leone with Liberia, but (this) was settled amicably. Guinea is to date contesting the fishing town of Yenga with us, due to (an) abundance of diamonds. Here, too, there has been dialogues going on between the two governments and the international community, too, am sure are watching closely. Apart from these minor incidents, I can confidently say that border contestations have never been a conflict dynamic between Sierra Leone and its neighbours, rather it is the relationship out of proximity that has been problematic.”¹⁴⁹

Egwu (2006) noted that during the civil war in 1998, Guinean troops had moved into the Yenga area. The intention of this was to block off the ‘RUF’ incursion into the Guinean part of the borders, since this area is endowed with diamonds and serves as an important fishing town for both countries. This area of the border is still contested by both states.

“The borders were loosely marked and it is difficult, even up to date, to determine clearly the distinction between Sierra Leone and Liberia, apart from a legacy of physical natural land marks, like river, mountains and hills. Though both countries since the end of the conflicts have been working together to secure the border areas with the help of the international community. I must add here that, in the past there has been minor contestation of border boundaries: none of these have been a serious issue or led to an out blown conflict.”¹⁵⁰

¹⁴⁹ Joe Allie, a History Professor at the *University of Sierra Leone*

¹⁵⁰ JR one of the senior directors of a government agency in Sierra Leone



Figure 11: Map of Sierra Leone, showing its extensive borders with other Mano River Union States: courtesy <http://www.nationsonline.org>

According to Davies (2000, p. 69), the only recorded case of minor border tension was when ex-president of Liberia, Doe, declared unilaterality that areas in Puyon district belonged to Liberia and even closed the border between Sierra Leone and Liberia for a short while. The then president of Sierra Leone, Siaka Stephen, used diplomacy to settle the dispute amicably. Poor colonial and post-colonial border legacy has made the borders of Sierra Leone with her neighbours both problematic and contestable.

This colonial border problem resulted cross border ethnic affinities, which contributed to the escalation of the civil war. According to Kandeh (2003), identity differentiation was not taken into account when partitioning of Africa, as communities' that shared common tribal, cultural and linguistic similarities were organised into the states that made up the sub-region. Inter-ethnic affinity mix amongst the communities in the border area has never been a source of war. During the civil war however, the heterogeneous make-up of these borders areas

shaped the conflict dynamics: each group supported their kin during the conflict and allowed the rebels to use their community as a base for training and recruitment of fighters.

“Just as each group supported their kin-relation in the conflict and allowed the rebels to use their community as bases for training and recruitment of fighters, they also gave shelter and food to fleeing refugees who are their kin’s. We can, therefore, say that this served a humanitarian purpose too.”¹⁵¹

“The multi-ethnic configurations in these border areas are such that, for instance, I am what you will refer to as a Mende-Mandingo; which means that I am related to Mandingo and Mende people of Liberia, Guinea and Ivory Coast. The conflicts, thus, became every body’s war and [they] helped each other out. This not only increased the numbers of actors, but also connected the violence in the sub-region.”¹⁵²

Alie (2007, p. 34) noted that the Mandingo’s ethnic groups are also found in Liberia, Sierra Leone, Guinea and Ivory Coast, alongside the Fulla, Kissi, Mende, Soso and Vai. This meant they participate in each other’s festivals, intermarriage, participate in elections, and sometimes are taxed by the various governments. Also, the Geo and the Mano alongside the Mandingo’s are ethnic groups, which can be found in Liberia, Sierra Leone, Guinea and Ivory Coast; these groups speak similar, and sometimes the same language and are culturally homogenous (Boas, 2005).

This cross border ethnic connection, however, also served a positive purpose in meeting security and safety conditions for refugees.

¹⁵¹ JR one of the senior directors of a government agency in Sierra Leone

¹⁵² VE, the Executive Director of an NGO in Sierra Leone

“I am from Kenema and we share common boundaries with two Liberian Counties, Grand Cap Mount and Lofa. The border crossing along these areas runs into dozens added to the fact that we share common ancestral lineage with communities here. So, just as our communities were dragged into the Liberian conflicts, so were they, too, dragged into ours? We became our brother’s keeper at this difficult times — I remember that my family had to seek refuge in Liberia at different times. Again the refugee camps were easily set up in Guinea and fleeing Sierra Leoneans were welcomed by these communities and governments because of shared tribal ties.”¹⁵³

Richard (1996) elucidated how these transnational kin-relationships increase not only the number of conflict actors, but also the channels through which they express their support for and alliances with warring groups. Sesay (2003), however, stressed how multi-ethnic configurations at the sub-regional level can guarantee the safety of refugees and their integration into these states during the conflicts. The kin-relationships made the border conflicts very elusive, as it became difficult to differentiate fighters from the people. Such communities allow the rebels to providing supports, including food, shelter and sometimes arms.

Next I examine how porosity of the borders facilitated neighboring government’s involvement in Sierra Leone conflict and how this helps escalate the conflict. Gberie (2005) argued that political leaders in Liberia, Guinea and Ivory Coast took advantage of the internal crisis in Sierra Leone to expand their territory, by attempting to annex the border towns rich in diamond deposits. It was further noted this was also to fortify their borders to stop RUF incursions into their territory.

¹⁵³ FKT, a postgraduate student of History

Pratt¹⁵⁴ asserted that the governments of Liberia and Guinea had a long-term secret expansionist policy to claim some of the diamond fields across shared borders.

“These governments, at some point or the other during the conflict, were supporting the rebels and militia groups who were fighting against the government of Sierra Leone. The Guinean government especially was sending troops into Sierra Leone and did engage the RUF in battles at the borders.”¹⁵⁵

The Guinean President, Lansana Conté, sought to pursue an expansionist policy over diamond rich border areas and to defend his territory against ‘RUF’ rebels, supported by Taylors NPFL. It was, however, posited by Alie that the involvement of neighbouring countries was in the pursuit of national interests:

“There is no evidence of the Ivorian government’s direct involvement in the Sierra Leone conflict; however, Taylor of Liberia did have a vested interest in the conflict, because of the lucrative diamond trade. The government of Guinea involvement was more for national interest and security of the states. Guinea also wanted to ensure that their natural resources rich border areas were not annexed by rebels or other governments.”

DJR suggested that Guinea, being a fragile state, wanted to avoid further instability, as they were already battling a home grown insurgency at the time. A Global Witness (2003) report claimed that the Guinean government involvement was more to protect its territory from rampaging RUF rebels and secure their diamonds field of Yenga, which have been long been contested with Sierra Leone. Sierra Leone rebels drove Guineans living within the border areas out of their homes; this was alongside as many as 75,000 Sierra Leonean refugees, who had been living on the Guinean side of the border for several years (Hoffman, 2004). These

¹⁵⁴ Pratt is a senior tutor at the University of Sierra Leone

¹⁵⁵ Pratt

attacks forced the Guinean President, Lansana Conté, to make a broadcast including inflammatory statements on state radio and television: this blamed the incursions on the refugees; hence provoking widespread attacks by Guinean police, soldiers and civilian militias on the already traumatized refugees (Gberie, 2005).

The *US Committee for Refugees* (2000) reported that following several deadly cross-border raids by Sierra Leone rebels, Guinean authorities declared a midnight to dawn curfew in some areas. This violence spilled over into Guinea and led to the intensification of the conflicts, as the Guinean government found themselves fighting off the RUF and government troops from their territory from time to time. This greatly increased the number of war actors and created a multiple channels of conflict that contributed to the escalation of the civil war.

The 'Peace Diamond Support Project' close-out report of the *United States Agency for International Development (USAID)*: January, 2005) reports that the multiple porous borders of Sierra Leone during the conflict facilitated the illicit diamond trade, smuggling and eventual use of proceeds to execute the war. Research participant, Humper, argued that the borders between Sierra Leone and her neighbours were notorious over the years, due to the activities of diamonds smugglers and drugs traffickers. Moreover, all sort of criminal activities took place around these border zones, because of a lack of any security arrangements.

PF¹⁵⁶ suggested that the porous borders of Sierra Leone served as a marketplace for diamonds, as external parties took advantage of the porous nature of these borders to carry out illicit diamonds trade. PA¹⁵⁷ also noted:

¹⁵⁶ PF is of the *United Nation's* Special Court of Sierra Leone

¹⁵⁷ PA is of the *United Nation's* Special Court of Sierra Leone

“The diamond trade and the porosity of the borders are linked, as it was the porous nature that facilitated the smuggling and trade in diamonds. This illicit trade and exchange took place within the borders and, out of the control of the central government due to state collapse and who themselves are involved in the diamond business. The insecure borders linked the trade at the regional and international levels.”

The Liberia border security situation at the time was the main factor that enabled diamond smuggling to flourish:

“Soon enough, the abundance of diamonds linked the RUF Leader, Sankoh to Taylor, through our porous border; this connected and linked both conflicts together such that the trade in Sierra Leone’s diamonds was controlled by Taylor. At this point, Sierra Leone had totally lost control of its borders, due to their lack of capacity to man them effectively.”¹⁵⁸

The ‘RUF’ entered Kalahun with the help of Taylor’s men from Lofa County in Liberia¹⁵⁹; they launched several incursions into the diamond fields and retreated to Liberia after the attacks:

“They attacked my people from several border crossing points, burning down housing, killing and maiming innocent women and children. The battle here was fierce, as the government troops and ‘ECOMOG’ could not defeat them easily, because they had the backing of white men who came to buy the diamonds. It was at

¹⁵⁸ TAM is a top post conflict government technocrat

¹⁵⁹ Kalahun is rich in alluvia diamonds and shares common border with Liberia’s Lofa County. The town was an area of intense fighting during the civil war.

this point that we decided to protect ourselves by calling on our people to take up arms. This was how I became involved in the war and I have no regrets.”¹⁶⁰

T was, however, noted by JC¹⁶¹ that:

“Yes, the borders were a beehive of illegal trade in diamonds, which was used to fund the violence. But this was a natural flow of the pattern of any conflict, though tense battles were fought at the border regions; and, so, we cannot ignore how it connected both countries’ conflicts and other regional states.”

Porous borders facilitated the illicit exploitation of diamonds during the Sierra Leone civil war, providing the funds to procure the arms for the conflict. At the same time, weak border security made the area a smuggling zone, even before the civil war.

The porosity of borders also facilitated the proliferation of small arms and light weapons (SALW) during the Sierra Leone civil war. The easy exchange, sales and stockpiling of these weapons was a major factor in making the conflict more ferocious and lethal. Humper¹⁶² argued that poor delineation and the lack of any noteworthy security arrangements ensured that arms freely flowed across the border zones:

“The beginning of the conflicts in Liberia increased the insecurity in the borders, as arms and ammunitions were smuggled through these borders freely to Sierra Leone. These border zones were used by gun runners from former Soviet republics, as they sell arms to rebels and the government and, at the same time, providing logistic support to the warring parties. This was why it was easy for all the fighting groups

¹⁶⁰ GFH is a traditional Militia leader in Kalahun, a town rich in alluvia diamonds

¹⁶¹ JC was a former member of the Sierra Leone Truth and Reconciliation Committee.

¹⁶² Bishop Humper was a former Anglican Bishop of Sierra Leone and also a former member of the Truth and Reconciliation Committee.

to be well armed with enough logistic to fight a destructive war that totally destroyed almost all the infrastructures in Sierra Leone.”

When the conflicts in Eastern Europe ended, former fighters and arm dealers found their way to these new conflict zones to continue any trade. Alie¹⁶³ argued that weapons were easily smuggled across the border after the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1989-90 and this, in turn, had a huge impact on the proliferation of small arms and light weapon in conflict. FKFG¹⁶⁴ noted that:

“The borders are the theatre of war and trade at the same time. This trade was made possible to acquire the AK47 by all warring factions, which was the weapon of choice as it was easy to use, maintain, and conceal. It is a stated fact that these small arms don’t cause war; but because of their easy availability, durability and easy access, they have become a weapon of choice for rebels and guerrilla fighters.”

DG also claimed:

“The United Nations placed an arms embargo on Sierra Leone in 1997; but this was not working, as arms were still flowing into Sierra Leone through the several illegal and un-secured crossings, which made it easy for the free flow of arms and ammunition and mercenaries across the borders of Sierra Leone.”

Documented in the *United Nation’s* Security Council report (March 2, 2005), Security Council resolution 1132 of October 1997, established an arms embargo on Sierra Leone; whilst the resolution 1171 of June 1998 lifted it, but it still applied to the ‘RUF’. Despite these arms embargo, the activities of well-established international diamond merchants

¹⁶³ Professor Joe Alie, a Professor of History at the *University of Sierra Leone* (Furahbay College).

¹⁶⁴ FKFG, a postgraduate student of History at the *University of Sierra Leone*

operating within and outside Sierra Leone still ensured that arms were available to the government forces and rebels.

Porous borders also facilitated the easy and free movement of rebels and refugees and mercenaries. PA noted that, although armies disbanded, they would sign on as mercenaries anywhere, as they moved freely through the border since lack of proper border controls within the sub-region allowed them to move freely through the borders. The insecurity of the borders with their neighbours allowed for the recruitment of rebel fighters and even refugees were conscripted or willingly joined the rebels:

“It was also at this point that ex-fighters from the Liberian conflicts quickly joined our civil war. Some of these ex-fighters are renegades and soldiers of fortune from the Liberian Army and other rebel groups. This also facilitated the easy recruitment of child soldiers into the conflict in Sierra Leone by the ‘RUF.’”¹⁶⁵

According to Daniel (2000), the proximity of borders offers the warring factions the opportunity to recruit fleeing refugees and deserters from Liberia’s warring factions:

“The rebels and sometimes the government fighters took advantage of the massive outflow of refugees to conceal gun and hide themselves among them. The refugees at the border camps were providing cover for rebel, militia members and army deserters, who, in turn, were engaging in smuggling or the recruitment of the demobilised Liberians into the Sierra Leonean conflict. These cross border incursions resulted in the kidnapping of Sierra Leone kids, who were forced to carry looted goods back to camps in Liberia.”¹⁶⁶

¹⁶⁵ PAM, a Director in a government agency in Sierra Leone

¹⁶⁶ FNB, a postgraduate student of History

Silberfein (2004) argued that the conflict in Sierra Leone actually began in the border region with Liberia in 1991, an area plagued by isolation and neglect and which had twenty-six unofficial crossing points. Accordingly, this made it easy for Liberian combatants' fleeing the demobilisation program to sell or hide their weapons in Sierra Leone, thus undermining peace efforts in both countries. In December 2003, the *UN* stepped up what were termed 'vigorous and round the clock' air and ground patrols to include the introduction of armed river boats; furthermore, MI24 helicopter gunships and MI8 armed observation helicopters were added to what came to be called 'Operation Blue Vigilance' (UNAMSIL, 2003, p. 23). This was implemented in a bid to prevent cross border arms exchanges.

This section has examined how porous borders facilitated the dynamics of conflict escalation. The weak demarcation of colonial boundaries and the failures of post-colonial governments to pay adequate attention to border problems created the conditions for insecurity. As a result, there were minor disputes and tensions over the years, for instance, the dispute of northern borders of Kalahun, and Puyon with Liberia during Doe's and Taylor regimes respectively; and the contestation with Guinea over the rich diamond town of Yenga, which is still on going. These disagreements however, never led to war, but created suspicion and tense relationships amongst states in the sub-region.

The implication is that border problems not only exacerbated the civil war in Sierra Leone; yet, it, also linked and connected the conflicts in Sierra Leone to that in Liberia, creating a regional conflict. This is in line with New War theory that the civil war in Sierra Leone is an example of a post-cold war conflict, shaped by porous border problems.

6.3 LIBERIA

This section examined how the porous nature of the borders contributed to escalating the civil war in Liberia. It discusses how the nature of colonial border demarcation led to cross border ethnic affinity communities, which shaped the conflicts. It explores how the relationship between governments of the neighbouring states multiplied the conflict actors,

exacerbating and regionalising the violence. Also outlined is how the case of border security facilitated the illicit smuggling and trade in natural resources, the proliferation of small arms and light weapons, and the free movement of rebels and mercenaries.

As noted earlier, border problems in Liberia were a creation of colonial government and the failure of post-independence governments to take the issue of border security seriously. This has resulted in minor contestation and skirmishes with Liberia's neighbours over the years (Daniel, 2000). Liberia's leaders had reasons to contest the colonial demarcation of its borders with its neighbours, which continued to create problems for the Liberian states:

“Our colonial master’s interest in border delineation was only limited to economic derivatives; they did not take into account the multi-ethnic nature of our people. As a result, there have been constant contestations our borders with Guinea, especially along the Nimba County. Though we never went to war with them, it has strained our relationship with them over the years. The same county had witnessed clashes among the local communities from both states due to disagreement over land.”¹⁶⁷

¹⁶⁷ AK, a Director in a government department



Figure 12: Map of Liberia, showing its borders with Mano River Union members

Courtesy <http://www.nationsonline.org>

FC¹⁶⁸ agreed that colonial delineation was at the heart of the border problems facing Liberia and her neighbours. He further argued that the border rift between Liberia and Sierra Leone was extremely problematic during the reign of Doe and Taylor, although it did not lead to war. He also asserted that:

“The borders were so poorly demarcated that we only have land marks that suggests little or nothing about where our borders with our neighbours start or ends. There have been constant rift between Liberia and Sierra Leone on the one hand, and even with Ivory Coast, over border issues.”

¹⁶⁸FC, is a programme director for an NGO in Liberia

The Liberian government attempted to seek border adjustments in 1951 to resolve border contestation over Mount Nimba with Guinea, the east of the Cavally River with Ivory Coast and province of Kailahun with Sierra Leone (Sawyer, 2004). Illustrating this was the following argument:

“The colonial government were not keen on drawing fine lines of borders, but the blame be shared by our political leaders that failed to redress border issues. I am not trying to blame the nature of our porous border as the reason for the conflicts, but rather, that the poor state of these borders led to security that was to impact on the conflicts.”¹⁶⁹

Problems created by poor and improper Colonial border demarcation, resulted in cross border ethnic affinity mix among border communities, and this shaped the nature of the civil war. Ethnic groups of the same tribal, cultural and linguistic origin were all separated into the surrounding states within Liberia (Outram, 1999). This divided communities who had previously been living in four different states: Liberia, Guinea, Sierra Leone and Ivory Coast. This drew these communities into the conflict, because Charles Taylor attacked Liberia from Ivory Coast who are also Nimbans, for this reason, Doe sacked our people from the army and the civil service.

“Our town and people tasted the bitter pills of Doe government, Taylor — and our brothers from Ivory Coast came to our aid. They sheltered and fed us and even joined us to fight back Doe’s soldiers.”¹⁷⁰

TS¹⁷¹ observed that Ivorian’s across the border, like the Tel, Buyo, Man and Duekoue, share common ancestry with the Nimba people in Liberia:

¹⁶⁹ JY is the Executive Director of an NGO and the Chairman of the Steering Committee of ‘Transitional Justice’ in Liberia

¹⁷⁰ Chief BAB, a traditional chief and head of the local Militia group in Saglepie, a major town in Nimba County

¹⁷¹ TS, a Professor at the *University of Liberia*

“Taylor capitalised on this relationship to get the support of the Nimba people — and when they were attacked by Doe — got help from across the border. The Liberian conflict was such that there are close ethnic affinity among dwellers in the border areas and people of same ethnic origin, language, culture and long history of communal living across the borders did, indeed, help out and also were involved in the conflicts.”¹⁷²

Chief BAB and PS arguments elucidate how cross border ethnic relationships can influence conflict dynamics. AGER¹⁷³ asserted that he was from Nimba County and only joined the rebellion when Doe sacked him from the civil service:

“During the conflicts, our people in Ivory Coast, the Duekoue tribe, gave us all sort of support: first, to fight Doe and then when Taylor began to treat us as outsiders within the NPFL, they also helped us out. When we are under intense attack, we move across the border to Ivory Coast until it is safe to re-group again. We are not the only group that enjoyed this kind of cross border relationship as this extends to all the other rebel and militia groups too.”

The Liberian conflict started in December of 1989, when Charles Taylor and the National Patriotic Front (NPFL) took advantage of the porous borders to invade Nimba County from neighbouring Ivory Coast in order to overthrow the regime of President Samuel Doe (Williams, 2006, p. 63). BK¹⁷⁴ argued that the borders of Liberia were not properly delineated in terms of ethnic configuration; this meant that the same ethnic group with the same tribal, linguistic and cultural modes of life can be found living across the borders of the Liberia, Sierra Leone, Guinea and Ivory Coast. Accordingly, he made the following argument:

¹⁷² TS

¹⁷³ AGER, a former rebel commander with ‘LURDS’

¹⁷⁴ BK is a high ranking serving government in Liberia

“Though, this is not a cause of conflict, but at a point during the civil war, it becomes difficult to know who the enemies are. The rebels and tribal militias especially, find shelter and camps in these border communities and they sometime join in to fight.”

This long history of inter community ethnic mix across the MANO River Union expanded the conflict and contributed to the escalation and prolonging of the civil war. This was further compounded by relationships amongst the governments of the sub-region. According to Fithen & Richard (2005, p. 67), during the reign of the American-Liberian oligarchy, the first son of the then President of Liberia, William Tolbert, was married to the daughter of the President of Ivory Coast. This relationship facilitated Taylor’s insurgency, because of the support he received from the then Ivorian government. Moreover, Ivory Coast allowed Taylor to use the borders as launch pads for his attacks, providing logistical support and assisting with recruitment of rebels. This relationship directly brought Ivorian’s into the war.

The family ties between the Tolbert family and the President of Ivory Coast was a factor, which influenced Taylor’s decision to launch his campaign from Nimba County:

“The inter-marriages between the families of the first president of Ivory Coast at that time, Félix Houphouët-Boigny, whose daughter was married to the son of former Liberian president, William Tolbert, the same lady later married to the president of Burkina Faso Blaise Campore. It was, therefore, not a surprise that Bukina Faso too played a very prominent role in the Liberian conflict. The involvement and support these families gave to Taylor was openly carried out through their various borders; and it is on record that they supplied arms, logistics and fighters, a role which, in turn, escalated and prolonged the conflicts.”¹⁷⁵

¹⁷⁵ FJC, a tutor at the Department of International Relations

The nature of the neighbour/border dynamics could not be complete, without emphasising the role of the Guinean government under President Lansana Conteh:

“Conteh has had several personal clashes with Taylor, especially during the second Liberian conflicts, over border incursions by Taylor’s men on Guinean territory. More so, the leadership of the LURDS rebel group have had long relationships with the Guinean head of state family, due to tribal ties and personal friendship. This relationship ensured support for the ‘LURDS’ not only to use the Guinean territory as a base, but they also got other logistic and material support from the Guinean government.”¹⁷⁶

Responding to the ‘LURD’ incursions into Liberia in July of 2000, as the civil war escalated, President Charles Taylor initiated a series of incursions on Guinean territory carried out by the ‘RUF’ in conjunction with the Liberian armed forces and Guinean dissidents, the Movement of Democratic Forces of Guinea (RFDG) (Pham, 2005). The Guinean government directly responded by attacking towns on the Liberian borders. Moreover, the Guinean President, Lansana Conte, appealed to Guineans citizens to defend their country, by repelling the invaders and rounding up the country’s 450,000 refugees, whom he blamed for the outbreak of the violence (Richards, 2005, p.156). This was because the conflict was spreading deep into Guinea and its government was distracted as the refugee camps were infiltrated by Taylor’s ‘NPFL’ rebels. Conte has sought to eradicate rebels from the refugee camps with the intention of easing tension in the border towns where these camps are located; in doing in so doing, however, he spread the conflict.

According to Williams (2006), the Liberian conflict was destabilising Guinea, which was already battling home grown insurgencies supported by Liberia and the ‘RUF’ in Sierra Leone. At this point, the government of Ivory Coast also faced political instability as the

¹⁷⁶ JE, a post graduate student of International Relations

support for Taylor began to wane. Moreover, the Liberian civil war was not only fought inside Liberia, but across the border regions.

The porosity of the Liberian borders also facilitated an illicit natural resources trade, which contributed to fund the civil war. The Liberian border has long served as a route for diamond smuggling to other countries within the region, especially Gambia and Ghana (Alao, 2007). This expansive illicit trade also involves timber, gold, iron-ore and rubber stocks from the vast Liberian forest. These porous borders only served to increase the illicit trade momentum, as the rebels desperately needed funds for arms. Accordingly, the borders of Liberia became a marketplace for all sorts of illicit trading, such as dealing in natural resources for arms, by the government and the rebel groups (Ebo, 2005).

FC observed that these resources trade financed and sustained weapon exchange and other war logistics. Timber and rubber resources were an important source of war finance assisted by multinationals and new business partners from Asia, especially China:

“It is true that it was a war fought along the borders jungles and we sometimes had to seek refuse with our neighbours; the Guineans. We had to take control of our own forest resources, so we can buy our own arms from local arm dealers and even from some government official channels. These weapons were smuggled across our borders with Guinea in the North-eastern part of our borders and Sierra Leone from the North-western region of the borders.”¹⁷⁷

Even long after the civil war in 2003, the illicit border trade in resources remained.

Additionally, the porosity of borders facilitated the proliferation of small arms and light weapons (SALW), as well as weapon exchanges and stockpiling during Liberia’s civil war (Global Witness, 2004). The *Human Rights Watch* Briefing Paper (November 3, 2003)

¹⁷⁷ YUK, a former commander in the *Lofa Defence Force*: a local militia group of the Lofa County

documented the arms flow to Taylor's 'NPFL'-controlled Liberia channelled through Libya, Burkina Faso and Ivory Coast. Participant Colee noted that porous borders facilitated the supply of mercenaries and arm to the warring factions, with the collaboration of foreign companies and governments.

Hegre (2009), Gershoni (1997), Kieh (2005), Richard (1999) and Boas (2005) have all argued that the uncontrolled exchange of weapons across the Liberian borders have been a constant driving force during the conflicts. According to Kieh (2005, p.95), even the *United Nation's* sanctions did not stem the flow of weapons originating from Eastern Europe, Russia, or North Korea, these helped fuel the Liberian insurgency. The border areas became rebel own territory and they took charge of the rubber plantations to buy weapons to fight against the government and other rival rebel groups.

“During the conflicts, our porous border areas were our means of survival as it provided all we needed and it is also true that those we sell to and buy arms from come to meet us here on our own soil.”¹⁷⁸

According to Orogun (2003, p. 301), “Guinea was a substantial source of illicit arms that were smuggled across the border to Liberia during the conflict despite a United Nations arms embargo on Liberia at the time.” It is, however, important to note, “There are also other official channels of supply of arm and other war logistics from official government to government pacts, such as the US cold War supplies to the Liberian government” (Ebo 2005, p. 223), This added to the activities of intermediary countries, like Ivory Coast, Burkina Faso Guinea and Libya, which were subverting the international arms embargo against Liberia.

The free movement of rebels, mercenaries, discharged or disloyal fighters and refugees also facilitated the conflict across the border areas. TS noted the Liberian borders were very

¹⁷⁸ AGER, a former rebel commander with 'LURDS'

porous with little border control, even before the conflicts; moreover, during the two civil wars, these became worst and uncontrollable. He further stated:

“We cannot understand the conflicts in Liberia without taking a closer look at the impact the border dynamics played in escalating the conflicts. The insecurity at that time ensured that rebels and fighters from the regional conflicts could move about and join other groups. This also made the nature of [the] refugee movement uncontrollable, as it becomes impossible to differentiate them from rebels.”

FVF¹⁷⁹ further stated that borders areas were the site for the recruitment of rebels and Child Soldiers:

“The rebels had enough time and space to recruit willing and jobless youths and children into their rank and file; some of these kids were kidnapped from their villages and used as war slaves and fighters. Even when the ‘NPFL’ started to disintegrate into smaller units due to disagreements, they quickly moved deeper into the jungles in the border areas to start their own insurgency and plan their strategies and recruitment there. It was also established that some of the refugees that who were looking for ways to escape to Guinea were also caught and forced to become rebels and the women [were forced to become] sex slaves and domestic workers.”

According to Hoffman (2004), there were several reported cases of refugees being captured and forced to join the rebels, as well as some of the rebels themselves pretending to be refugees in order to find their way into refugee camps. This, in itself, posed a great security threat to the host country and the militarisation of these camps. There were a series of attacks on Guinean border towns by Liberia-sponsored rebels and Taylor’s ‘NPFL,’ which posed great security challenges to Guinea, as the rebels infiltrated these camps and launched

¹⁷⁹ FVF, a female postgraduate student at the Department of Political Science.

surprise attacks in these area (Bayart *et al.*, 1999). AT¹⁸⁰ further argued that the porosity of borders was such that it allowed for the infiltration of Liberia by rebels from other countries, who were sympathetic to those rebel and militia groups with which they shared a common ancestry:

“More disturbing was that most of the child soldiers that our organisation rescued say they are from villages on the border areas; although some of them said they joined voluntarily, as they have nowhere else to go, since they have lost the entire members of their family to raids by rebels and government troops. These border towns were volatile as the refugees had mixed up with the rebels for survival, thus increasing insecurity.”¹⁸¹

Many of the local anti-‘RUF’ militias from Sierra Leone were drawn into the ‘LURD’ rebellion in Liberia, since they were already linked to Liberian dissidents through trade, refugee flows, and kinship ties across the borders (Hoffman, 2004, p. 215). Porous borders facilitated the kidnap of children from border villages and towns, and, henceforth, their use as war slaves and child soldiers. (Utas, 2003; HRW, Dec. 21, 2005).

“The ease with which rebels and militia groups could move about undetected across these borders, (the)easy access and ability to set up camps in natural resources rich area of the border and even close to the refugee camps enabled them to wage a deadly war against our people. As a young boy escaping the carnage with my family, I remember several times when fights would break out in the refugee camps with guns and machetes, people running everywhere. Nowhere was safe to hide; it was difficult to know who was a rebel or militia.”¹⁸²

¹⁸⁰ AT, is a legal practitioner and Human Rights lawyer in Liberia.

¹⁸¹ AT

¹⁸² FHE, a postgraduate student of the Department of Peace and Conflict Studies

FJE¹⁸³ agreed with the above assertion and further added that the impact of border problem on the conflict to be studied more:

“The impacts of poor border security has on the conflict have long been neglected to the background. Even until date, it is still a problem knowing exactly where one border starts or ends; thus, making security in the region an existing and on-going issue. I must, however, add that though the nature of rebel and refugee movements might not be seen as a potent security issues as other direct factors. Yet it was a dynamic that should not be over looked, as there were several cases of refugees by day and rebel by night syndrome.”

What FJE meant here is that, in several instances, many of the refugees are actually rebels: that covertly sneak sheltered in refugee camps; by night, they slip away to join their rebel groups, giving them sensitive information. AGER noted that they have informants in all the refugee camps in Guinea:

“We have our informants everywhere in government and more so in the refugee camps so they can bring us information about what is going on in Liberia and even in neighbouring camps. You will be amazed at how effective this was as refugees flowed in and out of these camps every minute of the day with current information and, sometimes, too, rumours. We get information that helps us ambush food and medical supplies and ‘ECOMOG’ movements too.”

This section examined how the porosity and insecurity pervading the border of Liberia with her neighbours, contributed to the civil war. The problem arising out of improper demarcation of colonial boundaries, and the failure of post-colonial government to pay adequate attention to border problems were at the root of problem. Liberian government attempts to seek border adjustments in 1951 to resolve borders contestation over Mount

¹⁸³ FJE, a student of the Department of International Relations.

Nimba with Guinea, the east of the Cavally River with Ivory Coast, and the province of Kailahun with Sierra Leone (Sawyer, 2004). Over the years, Liberia had constant border contestations with Guinea, especially along the Nimba County and constant border rift between Liberia and Sierra Leone. These, however, never led to full blown war, instead, it, has often led to mutual suspicion over annexations and strained the relationships among the states in the sub-region.

Poor colonial borders legacy, henceforth, created states demarcated without reference to social, political or cultural communities. This led to cross border ethnic affinity communities across the states of the sub-region, which had significant implications for the civil war and later peace. In the early days of his insurgency, Taylor, received support from the Nimba people of Ivory Coast, in support of their kin relations with Gio and Mano in Liberia (Aboagye, 2007). This increased the channels for conflict and the risk of escalating the civil war. The result was tension and hostilities between Liberia and her neighbours, especially the Ivory Coast and Guinea. In Liberia, kin relations across the borders led to refugees' integration, especially in Ivory Coast. As it transpired, the tension between the Guinean government at the time and Taylor soon resulted in the mass attacks on refugee camps by Guineans, in turn creating humanitarian crises.

The porosity of Liberia's borders brought their involvement in the conflict. In Liberia for instance, the first son of the then President of Liberia, William Tolbert, was married to the daughter of the then President of Ivory Coast. As an American-Liberian, Taylor obtained the support of the Tolbert family and, therefore, the government of Ivory Coast; this allowed him to use their territory, not only as recruitment base, but also to launch his attack on Liberia (Boas, 2005). The Nimba's, who are mainly Gio and Mano in Liberia, also joined Taylor's insurgency, because of Doe's sacking of the Gio and Mano people in his government. Gio and Mano, thereafter, retaliated by attacking the Mandingo's, supporters of Doe's government, living among them (Adekeye & Rashid, 2004). This, henceforth, sparked

a genocidal mass violence and ethnic cleansing during the civil war. Close ties existed between Taylor and the then President of Burkina Faso Blaise Campore: Campore was married to the daughter of the Ivorian president, who was formerly married to the son of former Liberian president William Tolbert (Daniel, 2000). This ensured that Burkina Faso was implicated in both Liberia's civil wars; whilst Campore was involved in Taylor's illicit diamonds and forest trade and a channel of arms supply (Global Witness, 2003). These trade and exchange dealings were channelled through the porous borders with the Ivory Coast.

Porous borders also encouraged Guinean government involvement in the Liberian conflict. President Conteh of Guinea and the leader of the 'LURD' rebel group, Sekou Conneh shared ethnic origins and long years of friendship (Milner, 2005). Conneh enjoyed close links to the Guinean president, Lasana Conte; whilst Conneh's wife, Aisha, was also close to Conteh's wife: this linked and contributed to the regionalisation of the conflicts in Liberia.

This analysis also suggests that porous borders facilitated the free movements of rebel, mercenaries and refugees. Mercenary activities and mass recruitment of fighters was significant in the border areas of Liberia and Ivory Coast, as well as the mass recruitment of child soldiers, who were forcefully conscripted to join Taylor's forces (Dunn, 1999). In addition to this, ex-soldiers, who had been sacked by Doe, and deserters also joined this mass border recruitment drive; refugees were conscripted, whilst some joined voluntarily and women were captured and used as tool of war. Rebels also took advantage of the porous borders to infiltrate refugee camps, creating instability in host states; this in turn, created instability in the border towns, exposing women and children to the violence of war.

Insecurity pervaded the borders of Liberia with her neighbours, which contributed to the intensification and duration of the conflict. It also facilitated the regionalisation of the Liberian conflict from 1999 onwards. It also facilitated the regionalisation of the Liberian conflict from 1990 onwards.

6.4 COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS: POROUS BORDERS AND INSECURITY IN LIBERIA AND SIERRA LEONE

This section develops a comparative analysis of both conflicts, by examining the differences and similarities in the role of porous borders in those civil wars in Sierra Leone and Liberia. From the analysis, it is clear that there are more similarities than differences; sometimes these variations are not so clear, but they are significant nonetheless. It is an established fact that due to the pact between Taylor and the 'RUF' leader Foday Sankoh the conflict that started from Liberia in 1989 spiralled into Sierra Leone in 1991, through their common porous borders (Kieh, 2004).

A major commonality is that both countries' colonial border was conceived of without any reference to the social, political or cultural characteristics of the communities living there. Notably, the borders of the sub-region cut across cultural, tribal and ancestral divides (Buhaug & Rod, 2006). Humphreys *et al.* (2005) argued that since the borders of the Mano River Union were loosely demarcated, it became difficult to determine clearly the jurisdiction between Sierra Leone and Liberia, on the one hand, and their neighbours.

Sierra Leone was more passive when it came to border contestation, apart from minor border disputes during the reign of Samuel Doe, when he contested the borders North of Sierra Leone with Liberia; in the end, this was settled amicably (Nugent & Asiwaju, 1996). The other case of border contestation involved a small diamonds rich area in Sierra Leone near the Guinean and Liberian borders, known as Yenga (Kieh, 2005). Unlike Sierra Leone, Liberia's leaders on occasion displayed aggression in a bid to contest their borders. Moreover, Liberia and the Ivory Coast had long disputed the ownership of the Ivorian area east of the Cavally River (Youboty, 2004).

When President Doe led Liberia in the 1980s, at one point he threatened to recapture the province of Kailahun in Sierra Leone (Sawyer, 2004). It was further noted that Charles Taylor in his warlord phase after 1989 was a more ominous threat, as he saw himself as the

historic leader of the Mano River Basin. Asiwaju (2000) and Binns & Maconachie (2005), have argued that, the dissatisfaction with the Liberian/Sierra Leone border was a factor in Taylor's support for the 'RUF' invasion of Sierra Leone; however, none of these border tensions between both states and their neighbours led to direct interstate conflict.

In both Liberia and Sierra Leone, the existence of cross-border ethnic communities contributed to escalation of their civil wars, as colonial border delineation divided tribes of the same ethnic origin in all states of the Mano River Union. For instance, the Toma, Tomamania, Guerze, Kissi, Malinke/Mandingo, Fullah and Dialonka in Guinea are to be found in Liberia and Sierra Leone; alongside the Sousou, Fullah, Temne (Poole & Mohammed, 2011). In Liberia, the Nimba people share common ancestor with the Tel, Buyo, Man and Duekoue of Ivory Coast.

According to Alie (2007), the Mandingo ethnic group are found in Liberia, Sierra Leone, Guinea and Ivory Coast, alongside the fulla, Kissi, Mende, Soso and Vai; whilst the Geo and the Mano are an ethnic group, which can be found in Liberia, Sierra Leone, Guinea and Ivory Coast. Furthermore, the Mende-Mandingo in Sierra Leone are also related to the Mandingo and Mende people of Liberia, Guinea and Ivory Coast. These strong cross-border connections were fostered by intermarriage, a shared ethnicity, language and culture; this dynamic impacted upon the violence in both states.

In both states, the porosity of their borders allowed for the easy and free movement of rebels, mercenaries and refugees, meaning that it became difficult to differentiate rebels from refugees. This uncontrolled movement, henceforth, facilitated the recruitments of child soldiers. According to Sesay (2003), children within these border areas were kidnapped and forced to join the rebels, whilst women were also used as tool of war. All parties to the conflicts in both states under study use child soldiers; yet, according to the report of (HRW, December 2005), there is no conflict that uses child soldiers like the case of Liberia. The

International Crisis Group Report (January 2004.) also suggested that there is evidence that, after the first phase of the Liberian civil war, only 4,000 out of an estimated 20,000 child soldiers were completely demobilised.

6.5 CONCLUSIONS

This chapter examined how the porosity of the borders contributed to the escalation, intensified, regionalised and linked the conflicts in Liberia and Sierra Leone. For this purpose, I interrogated how colonial demarcation and post-colonial government neglect of border issues resulted into border contestation among the states within the sub-region, which developed into tension, suspicion and border skirmishes, although it never led to interstate conflict. I also examined how the above resulted in cross border ethnic communities, and these close ethnic relationships between the various ethnic groups in these states increased and multiplied conflict actors ; hence exacerbating the violence, generating regional insecurity and instability. These cross border kin-relations expressed support and alliances for warring groups, but also guaranteed the safety of refugees and their integration into these states during the conflicts. The kin-relationships made the border conflicts very elusive, as it was difficult to differentiate fighters from the people.

New War theory argues that there are sets of social relationships, entrenched by war, which have a tendency to spread across borders through refugees or organized crime or ethnic minorities (Kaldor, 2007, p. 9). It was further suggested that, although New Wars primarily emerge from intrastate factors, they may swiftly metamorphose into trans-state armed conflicts. Illustrating this point the domestic violence in Liberia, soon spread to Sierra Leone and was later to engulf Guinea and Ivory Coast.

The chapter also examined how porous borders facilitated cross-border illicit trade in natural resources, used to fund the violence and how it facilitated the free movements and flow of rebels and refugees, which combined to exacerbate the conflicts. Finally, the chapter drew

upon the comparative analysis to explore the similarities and difference in how porous borders impacted upon both conflicts.

The tri-focal analysis applied New War theory to examine how the porosity of these borders reflects the spatial structure of African political structures, which incorporated into colonial and postcolonial governance. Porous borders not only exacerbated the civil wars, it also generated a transnational conflict zone. The following concluding chapter brings together all the three elements of the tri-focal approach (identity, natural resources and borders) to provide a systematic account of both conflicts in Liberia and Sierra Leone.

CHAPTER SEVEN

THE TRI-FOCAL APPROACH: CONCLUSIONS AND LIMITATIONS

In 1997, Kofi Annan, the then Secretary-General of the United Nations, in a report noted that in 1996 alone, 14 of the 53 countries of Africa were afflicted by intrastate armed conflicts, which accounted for more than half of all war-related deaths worldwide, and resulting in more than 8 million refugees, returnees and displaced persons (Annan, 1997, p. 2)

7.0 INTRODUCTION

This concluding chapter commences with a summary of the key arguments and conclusions of this study. It reviews the value of the tri-focal approach to the study of African conflict, as well as its contribution to New War theory Literature. Finally, the chapter concludes with a discussion about the limitations of this research project and suggests potential areas of future research.

7.1 THE ARGUMENT OF STUDY

This study introduced the tri-focal approach, which, developed New War theory to understand how identity problems, the illicit exploitation of natural resources and, porous borders factored into Post-Cold War conflicts in Liberia and Sierra Leone. It argued that these factors separately and jointly had significant implications for the nature of civil wars in Liberia to that of Sierra Leone. The aim is to expand the relevance of New War theory beyond the focus on Eastern European and Middle East civil wars.

The aim of this study was not to engage directly in identifying the most potent causes of conflict; rather, it was concerned with explaining what prolonged and sustained the intensity of the conflicts in Liberia and Sierra Leone. Rather than debating causes, or potency, this study sought to explore the relevance and limitations of the tri-focal approach to understanding the dynamics of the civil wars in Sierra Leone and Liberia.

The broader aim is to contribute to the literature, by going beyond the failed state hypothesis, which only partially explains the dynamics of conflict, because it failed to consider its external dimensions. New War theory is relevant since it sought to overcome these

limitations, which even many accounts of African conflicts failed to capture in whole, the systemic dynamics of conflict. Such theories sometimes tended to over simplify African conflicts, as they more often than not, primarily focus on the African social, political and economic malaise or colonialism, neo-colonialism and imperialism.

The tri-focal approach sought to describe how these conflict variables linked and connected intrastate conflicts, and how these connections escalated the conflicts in Liberia and Sierra Leone, to stimulate the outbreak of further violence in Guinea and Ivory Coast. This, hence, turned the entire sub-region into an area of humanitarian disaster, with serious implications for the peace, security and stability of the entire region. The civil wars in Liberia and Sierra Leone caused severe humanitarian crises, for instance, out of over two million population of Liberia, over 200,000 people died and over a million displaced (Jaye, 2003). In Sierra Leone, over 50,000 were killed, and over one million people were displaced; in addition to that, half of Sierra Leone's female population had been subjected to sexual violence including rape, torture and sexual slavery (Koroma, 2004).

The tri-focal approach develops the analysis of the New War theory to explain how and why the Liberia and Sierra Leone civil wars have to be understood as Post-Cold War regional conflicts in the era of globalisation. The New War theory explains how the nature and dynamics of contemporary conflicts are characterised by new forms of political, economic and social, although non-ideological violence/crisis in Post-Cold War developing societies like Liberia and Sierra Leone. New War theorists often argue that these conflicts can be the result of identity crisis; and natural resources based stratification and struggles; these have a tendency to spread across borders (Kaldor, 2007).

The conflicts under study are examples of New Wars, because the states are weakened, and the distinction between state and non-state, public and private, external and internal, economic and political, and even war and peace had broken down Kaldor (2007). Although

critics like Newman (2004) argue that there is nothing new about the New Wars, nonetheless it is admitted that the New War literature has contributed to understandings of Post-Cold War conflicts. (Melander, Oberg and Hall, 2006). In contrast to this, Mundy (2011) and Mack (2005) critiqued the theory for being simplistic, theoretically weak and a lack of validity in that the data set does not support the assumptions. Despite these, these theorists also accepted that Applying this same understanding to Post-Cold War conflicts opens up a newer concept within which to place present and emerging conflicts all over Africa.

The key questions thus placed the tri-focal approach within the New War - Post Cold War theoretical exposition of African conflict. This made it possible to establish how identities, natural resources issues and border problems as intra-state conflict escalating factors can spiral into regional violence, involving state and non-state actors and regional neighbours. The key questions also significantly probed the issue of whether a comparative analysis of both conflicts offered a better understanding of the civil wars, to the extent that it helped to identify new answers about how the tri-focal factors, as common clustering dynamics, individually and jointly exacerbated the civil wars in Liberia and Sierra Leone.

Finally, the key questions expose the limits of the failed state analogy position of blaming African conflicts on internal dynamics alone. In addition to this, they reveal the limitations of other commonly applied theories of African conflicts in emphasising colonialism, neo-colonialism and imperialism as causes of conflicts. These key questions, however, help to explain and interpret the new and emerging conflict trends of the Post-Cold War Africa as part of the new global security challenges, with implications for peace, security and stability of the region and the civilian populace in particular.

This study argued and established that the tri-focal approach illuminates identities, natural resources and border problems as common clustering factors, linking and connecting the conflicts in Liberia and Sierra Leone, such that it offered a comparative foundation of their

civil wars. The tri-focal approach offers a convincing account of Post-Cold War sub-regional conflict in West Africa; although its escalating factors approach may come under scrutiny for not investigating causes. Apart from there not being a general agreement about causes, investigating escalating factors enables an understanding of how multiple dynamics, as a result of identity, natural resources and borders issues, can exacerbate violence, even if they are not the causes.

The argument of the tri-focal approach helped to identify the gaps in existing literatures, hence opening up a new debate about the nature of conflicts in Africa. Nonetheless, this approach could be viewed as lacking antecedential evidence in terms of past to support the tri-focal escalating factors as a holistic approach to understanding the Liberia and Sierra Leone conflicts. This is not a novel idea, given every new approach will face the same criticism. The lack of antecedential evidence, however, does not devalue the arguments put forward by this approach, which is also supported by the New War prepositions. Moreover, the application of multiple qualitative methods in data collection validates the findings of this approach.

7.2 SUMMARY OF KEY ARGUMENTS AND EVIDENCE

The literature review in chapter two investigated, analysed and located the tri-focal approach within existing literature. Past studies apply a single factor analysis in their studies and lack the kind of holistic approach, the tri-focal approach proposes. The review showed that the several socio-political, economic marginalisation and developmental issues in Liberia and Sierra Leone, which led to the conflict, are common to any failed state, with fragile social structures. The first section of the literature review chapter focuses on identity as applied to each state under study. It was perceived to be a negative consequence of the end of Cold War (Kaldor, 2007). While past studies use identity to qualify all kinds of social interest groups, this project applied identity to encompass the complex of criss-crossing and recursive ethnic

and political identity problems and how they impacted on the civil wars in Liberia and Sierra Leone.

The second section reviewed the literature on illicit natural resources exploitation in Liberia and Sierra Leone. The studies lay claims to the fact that funds from sales of diamonds in Sierra Leone, as well as timber, rubber stocks, diamonds, gold and iron-ore in Liberia, were used to fund the civil wars engulfing that sub-region. These studies placed the civil wars within the global economy of trade in natural resources to fund violence. The final section reviewed literature on porous borders, poor border delineation and insecurity as factor shaping the conflicts in Liberia and Sierra Leone. These studies recognise that porous borders were not a cause of the conflicts; it instead traces border problems to the nature of African colonial boundaries. They also trace how cross-border issues did contribute to exacerbate the civil wars in Liberia and Sierra Leone: for instance, massive inflow of refugees and rebels, rebel incursions across the borders and the activities of criminals with commercial interest operating within the border zones. However, little attention was placed on how the border dynamics significantly impacted on the civil wars under study.

The tri-focal escalating factors dynamic and the comparative analyses, applied to this study, are often lacking in other projects, which enhances the value of this research. Previous studies, in most cases, have applied a single country and single causal factor approach, which only partially make inferences to either of the conflicts.

A mixed method approach, as applied in this study, for validity and to strengthen its argument. The research applied methods, and data triangulation consisted of the following: historical comparative method, using documentary/archival primary, secondary and tertiary sources; field research of semi-structured elite interviews and focus group discussions. The individual elite interviews and focus group discussions provided coherent commendable primary evidence, allowing for a wider and diverse sampling pool of opinions. The historical

comparative method not only enables gathering of data on past and present events, it also holds the key to assessing the tri-focal conflict escalating factors in the case of Liberia and Sierra Leone. The strength of the mixed method approach as applied to this study lies in its ability to ameliorate and militate against inherent weaknesses in each of the data sources. The combination of these methods, serves to check, validate and give credibility to the drawbacks of each method.

Drawing on the tri-focal approach, chapters four through six utilised evidence from individual interviews and, focus group discussions, further validated by key literature, to develop an understanding of how the tri-focal factors contributed significantly to escalate the civil wars. The discussion also draws up a comparative analysis and examined how the conflicts were linked, as well as implications for sub-regional stability and security. The review of these arguments began with the first factor, identity.

It has been suggested that the role of identity in politics is a complicated issue varying between countries, as well as within them (Chandra, 2006; Chandra & Wilkinson, 2008; Gan, 1996; Posner, 2005). Theorists like Quinn *et al* (2003), Draman and Carment (2001), Ward and Glditsch (2002) and Kaufmann (1996) asserted that identity conflicts are a result of the failure of collective bargaining between various groups. This study established that it is the failure of this sort of collective bargaining amongst the political elite in Sierra Leone and Liberia that created the multi-complex identity problems that exacerbated their civil war, and connected them at the regional level. The tri-focal approach therefore allowed for the examination of the multi-faceted implications of identity on the conflicts, dating back to the early political development of both states.

The study established that identity issues propelled the violence, due to the various domestic interactions amongst groups in Liberia and Sierra Leone. Past studies have tended to be rather abstract in nature by grouping identity issues together to qualify all kinds of social

interest groups. In relation to the conflicts under study, this research project, discovered that identity encompassed two complexes of criss-crossing and recursive identity relations - political identity: in the form of the native-settlers relation and ethnic politics; the relations amongst the various indigenous African tribal groups, and how these contributed to escalate the conflicts.

The tri-focal approach agrees with Posner (2005) that the salience of identity varies from one context to the next. Liberia and Sierra Leone have a history of returned slaves, meaning that both states share a history of identity politics, involving pitching the returned slaves with the natives. This study discovered that in Liberia, political identity on its own, displayed a multiple conflict nexus. There was the antagonism amongst returned slaves themselves over superiority, which pitched the white skin American-Liberians against light and black skinned people (Appiah, 2005). Despite a history of freed returned slaves, however, this kind of interaction was not a noticeable conflict issue in Sierra Leone as the Creoles, were not divided along these lines.

Moreover, in Liberia, the study noted that the minority, America-Liberians, dominated and monopolised power, resulting in social, economic and political segregation against the ethnic indigenes (Boas, 2005). It was therefore, established that the antagonism arises out of this unequal relationship, and eventually influenced the civil war. In Sierra Leone, however, the British colonial government enshrined representative democracy early on; thus handing power over to the majority ethnic groups (Bangura, 2000). This study therefore concluded that political identity did not contribute to escalate the civil war in Sierra Leone; this is, despite the early social, economic and political influence of the freed slaves, the Creoles.

The second identity issue, which the tri-focal approach applied to the understanding of the civil wars in Liberia and Sierra Leone, is ethnic politics. This defines how the interaction amongst the various indigenous ethnic and tribal groups contributed to escalate the conflicts.

This study discovered that the civil war in Liberia was a result of deliberate ethnic polarisation by President Samuel Doe, who came to power, after a successful coup that swept away the American-Liberian hegemony. As it transpired, Doe favoured his ethnic group the Krahn, this angered other ethnic groups, Taylor thereafter capitalised on this to get the support of the Mano and Gio. This, henceforth, marked the beginning of a vicious and genocidal ethnic war.

In Sierra Leone, it was established that ethnicity was never a conflict factor, but it developed at a certain stage during the conflict. The political elites galvanised regional and ethnic support during the conflict, hence adding to the already existing political division between the two major political parties; the APC and the SLPP. Comparatively, the analysis concluded that ethnicity was a major conflict-escalating factor in Liberia, as it pitched all ethnic groups against the other, as well as in the formation of multi-ethnic rebel and militia group. In Sierra Leone however, ethnicity was not a strong conflict escalating mechanism at the start of the conflict, later on, it contributed to escalate the conflict, due to the formation of multiple traditional tribal and ethnic militias.

The third identity issue, the tri-focal approach applied to the understanding of the civil wars in Liberia and Sierra Leone, is cross-border ethnic affinity. The findings of this study suggests that the conflicts in Liberia and Sierra Leone demonstrated that transnational ties relating to ethnicity influenced the willingness of groups within the sub-region to mobilise for violent conflict. This becomes problematic when ethnic groups are not limited to a single state, but span across national boundaries (Reno, 1999). The tri-focal approach established that external interventions by neighbouring states, whether directly or indirectly was motivated by efforts to support ethnic kin in Liberia and Sierra Leone; furthermore, they played an important role in mobilising and financing insurgencies (Docking, 2002; Seyon, 1998).

Cross-border ethnic affinity contributed to escalate the civil war of both states because they share the same history of improper colonial border demarcation – this fails to take account of ethnic, tribal, linguistic and cultural similarities (Conteh, 1993). Ethnic kin were located in Guinea and Ivory Coast and this, in turn, increased the risk of escalation. It became evident from the analysis that the more ethnic groups span international boundaries, the higher the potential for external support for insurgencies – like those witnessed more in Liberia, than in Sierra Leone. The tri-focal approach established that in states, cross-border, ethnic affinity exacerbated the conflicts, with implications for regional instability and security; at the same time, however, ethnic kin accepted refugees easily into their community, and offered them shelter.

The research conducted established that in Liberia, cross border ethnic affinity was more pronounced as the Mandingo received support across the sub-region, particularly from the large Mandingo population in Guinea (Aning, 1997). According to Akinde (2004) the Model rebel groups also received support and funding from Ivory Coast, because Gio and Mano in Liberia is the ethnic kin of the Nimba's in Ivory Coast. In Sierra Leone, cross-border ethnic relations did not participate actively in the conflict, yet, more importantly, Sierra Leoneans integrated easily and were accepted by ethnic kin as refugees in Guinea, Ivory Coast and even Liberia (Alie, 2007).

The tri-focal approach also established that Liberia and Sierra Leone share a history of multi-ethnic co-habitation amongst ethnic groups within each state. This intra-ethnic cohabitation was not a conflict factor at all in Sierra Leone; instead, majority ethnic groups protected the minority tribes living amongst them (Abdullah, 1998). By contrast, in Liberia, the minority ethnic groups living within major ethnic groups faced danger of attacks; for example, the Mandingo, which were known to be scattered all over Liberia, faced massive persecution in Nimba County because they supported Doe (Boas, 2005). Moreover, Doe and Taylor

embarked on massive ethnic blood cleansing, involving four ethnic groups: the Gio and the Mano against the Krahn and Mandingo (Clapham, 1991).

The tri-focal approach therefore established that in Liberia, it was a 'bi-identity dichotomy' conflict escalating factors: political identity, meaning (the American-Liberian/African-Liberian factor); ethnic politics which was more of the antagonism amongst the various groups (African-Liberian). In the case of Sierra Leone, despite the history of returned freed slaves, political identity did not influence the conflict, as it did in the case in Liberia. Ethnicity was not viewed as a potent conflict factor in Sierra Leone; however, the political elite enshrined ethnic/regional polarisation and this had an impact on the conflict. It was established that, while intra and cross border ethnic affinity influenced both conflicts; these were more of a conflict factor in Liberia, than in Sierra Leone.

There have been heated debates about how the abundance of natural resources, such as oil, diamond, narcotic producing plantations, and other forest resources, affected the risk of civil war (Fearon & Laitin, 2004). There are also, the debates that conflicts in resource rich Africa states are usually a conflict over natural resources (Keen, 2001; Ross, 2004; Richard, 1999). It is, therefore, understandable if one classifies the Liberia and Sierra Leone conflicts as struggles over natural resources, because trends in natural resources mobilisation during the conflict were unprecedented. The tri-focal approach however, applied the New War framework to explore how the use of natural resources as a tool of violence explains the trends and dynamics of Post War conflicts in Liberia and Sierra Leone.

The tri-focal approach established that in Liberia and Sierra Leone war and peace may not exclude economic motivation, however, at the same time, according to Francis (2006), they cannot be adequately understood within a solely economic prism. It was established that the conflicts provide an example of how governments, and non-state entities, such as warlords and militias were able to sustained control over natural resources like diamonds, timber,

rubber stock, and gold and Iron-ore to the fund war. Charles Taylor, the leader of the warlord insurgency in Liberia, ran his own non-state resource trade entity and established close ties to several trading partners (Adebajo, 2008). In a similar vein, the 'RUF' leader, Foday Sankoh, ran his own personal diamond trade ring with the collaboration of Taylor, and an international precious stone market (Gberie, 2005). Such conflicts have, in fact, been referred to as a 'crime disguised as war,' at the same time, the perpetrators have been termed 'entrepreneurs or businessmen of war' (Allen, 1999).

The tri-focal approach established how insurgencies in Liberia and Sierra Leone were battling states that were also integrated into the same complex natural resources criminal networks, which have been privatised or criminalised (Bayart *et al.*, 1999). According to a New War proponent (Kaldor, 2007), this is an example of when warlords and state functionaries were exploiting natural resources to finance their war bill and for personal enrichment. It was further stated that the sources of funding such wars include participation in global illicit trade, with easily extractable natural resources. The warlords, who are beneficiaries in this relationship, are always reluctant to terminate the conflict, hence militating against a peace settlement. This was the reason why the various accords signed to end the conflicts in Liberia and Sierra Leone failed.

In Liberia and Sierra Leone, war primarily became a competition for resources to fund war. Kaldor (2013) argued that in New Wars, there are greater opportunities for extracting rents, and cover is provided for illegal economic activity to achieve set objectives. The tri-focal approach established how the availability of natural resources and its uncontrolled exploitation provided finances, which served as major contextual issues sustaining the intensity of the conflicts. The control of the exploitation of such resources and the use of the finance accrued from them was no longer centrally controlled; rather, the government, rebels and militia groups connived with multinational companies, regional and foreign governments, private security companies and mercenaries.

The findings of this study suggests that the instability in these countries and the complex structure of the natural resources trade, especially diamonds, allowed Taylor and Sankoh to succeed in developing a market for these resources in European and Asian countries, as well as other places like Burkina Faso and Cote d'Ivoire (Gberie, 2005). Taylor was responsible for a significant percentage of logging coming to France and used his knowledge and experience as the former Procurement Chief of the country to access multinational corporations (Reno, 1999). Taylor provided the 'RUF' with an outlet for Sierra Leone diamonds, thus fuelling the war and providing a safe haven for organised crime. This study henceforth, established how governments, rebels and militia groups traded with international businesses and organised criminal networks, which supplied arms and were willing to break business norms, ethics and sanctions in order to further their own geopolitical and economic goals.

The findings further established that in Sierra Leone, the two major actors in the diamonds for arms trade are the various governments in power during the war and the RUF. In Liberia, at the beginning of the conflict, it involved Doe's government, Charles Taylor's 'NPFL' and, later the various rebel and militia groups, such as MODEL, LURD, ULIMO, ULIMO-K, ULIMO-J, LUDF, LPC, LDF and I-NPFL (Ellis, 1999). This study established how the vast and rich forest resources, especially timber and rubber stock financed Taylor's and the various rebel and militia groups. Notably, Taylor solely controlled other natural resources like iron, gold and diamond (Clapham, (1991).

The tri-focal approach established how in Liberia, Charles Taylor had well organised international, local and regional networks of companies involved in the natural resources trade to finance the war. Taylor's channel of supply of arms, war logistics and mercenaries included countries like Ivory Coast, Burkina Faso, Guinea and Libya (*Global Witness*, 2005). There were also direct and indirect supplies from existing multinational companies operating in the vast resources market in the region, China, private security companies and

individuals (Kieh, 2005). At the same time, the various rebel and militia groups in Liberia relied more on existing timber and rubber multinationals companies already operating in their area of control and some new business partners from Asia, especially China (Boas, 2005).

In Sierra Leone, the 'RUF' relied on mercenaries from Russian, Australian-American Company, *Sierra Rutile*, and the local Lebanese diamond merchants (Abdullah, 2004). By contrast the various governments in Sierra Leone, had trade links with *Executive Outcomes* and *Sandline*, and a list of mercenary organisations and private security firms: the German firm, *Specialist Services International*; the British firm, *Marine Protection Services*, *Frontline Security Forces*, *Special Project Services Limited*, as well as the American outfit, *Sunshine Boule* (Global Witness, 2005).

The analysis of the approach also established how natural resources were instrumental during the various peace negotiations in Liberia and Sierra Leone. In Sierra Leone, as part of the peace negotiation, the 'RUF' leader, Sankoh, was placed in charge of diamonds ministry, this was before any peace accord was signed (Gberie, 2002). Similarly, in Liberia, natural resources were an issue in peace negotiation, to the extent that some of the major rebel groups like LURDS and MODEL were allowed to keep exploiting the vast forest resources as part of the peace negotiation (Huband, 1998). An important similarity in both conflicts however, was the sales by governments and rebel groups of what might be called 'booty futures': the right to exploit mineral resources that the seller has not yet captured (Alao, 2007).

The tri-focal approach concluded that while the relationship between natural resources and civil war onset is not clearly demonstrated, using the Liberia and Sierra Leone civil wars as examples, it could be deduced however, that natural resources did contribute significantly to escalate the civil wars, by providing the funds for weapons. If it were possible to curtail the

sales of primary commodities, financing conflicts, the prospects for peace would increase: for example, diamond exports from Sierra Leone probably account for the high incidences of conflict within that region (Collier, 2003).

Finally, the tri-focal approach established how multi-dynamic boundary issues contributed to escalate both conflicts. It refocused attention from international boundaries and conflicts, to how internal conflict can have consequence on the nature of neighbouring relations, and by doing so internationalise conflicts, with consequences for peace and stability of the entire sub-region. The study discovered that the borders of the Mano River Union are complex phenomena, and their internal instability, coupled with their geographical characteristics, militarised the border areas (Albrecht & Drew, 2011).

It was further established that states with insecure and poorly delineated borders would engage in more conflict, due to increased risk opportunities or higher interaction volumes, especially during such conflicts. The possibility for conflicts therefore, becomes pertinent, when the total volume of interactions between these proximate states have connection points (Onwuka, 2009). These proximate interactions generated multi-conflict avenues because of the opportunities provided by several shared porous border points and proximate interactions.

The relationship of proximity to conflict is one of the most robust findings in studies of war, especially where several crossing points are involved (Gleditsch & Ward, 2001; Furlong & Gleditsch, 2003; Starr, 2003; Starr & Thomas, 2005). This study notes that there are no known wars over border contestations, between Liberia and Sierra Leone; or with their neighbours. Nevertheless, the proximity factor, out of colonial and post-colonial government insensitivity to border problems had a negative consequence on the conflicts. The resultant cross border ethnic affinity mix, encouraged collaboration with kin relations across the

borders, increased the numbers of conflict actors and the involvement of neighbouring states in the conflicts.

The study has established how porous borders facilitated the illicit border war trade in natural resources, especially diamonds, which encouraged the involvement of multinational companies and foreign governments in conflicts — existing as a rouged business partnership with government and rebel groups — to finance the war and provided the small arms and light weapons across the borders. The research discovers that this type of New War conflicts, easily spread across borders through rebel groups, refugees, organised crime or ethnic minorities (Kaldor, 2007; Duffield, 2001). The tri-focal approach is not in any way suggesting that porous and poor border delineation and insecurity are a cause of the civil wars, far from it; rather, the study applied the nature of borders to explain how issues arising from border porosity facilitated conflict dynamics, which contributed significantly to escalate the civil wars.

This study established how border community's involvement, includes assisting and helping the rebels in the following ways: hiding fighters and their weapons, providing training grounds and assisting to recruit fighters from the local community due to shared ancestry. Moreover, the refugee camps were also turned into recruiting grounds for new fighters, causing instability in the host country. The positive aspect of this was that their kin in neighbouring countries sheltered displaced people and refugees. The approach established how transnational linkages and proximity attributes exerted substantial impact and risk of conflict on the countries of the MANO River States through their common borders.

It was established that despite a long history of minor border contestation in the sub-region, none of them led to war. Liberia and the Ivory Coast had long disputed the ownership of the Ivorian area east of the Cavelly River (Dolo, 2007). During Doe's regime in the 1980's, he contested the province of Kailahun in Sierra Leone (Sawyer, 2004). Notably, Sierra Leone

was less involved in border contestation, although it is still contesting a small diamonds rich area, known as Yenga, which is in Sierra Leone near the Guinean and Liberian borders; with Guinea (Kieh, 2005). The strong cross-border connections, fostered by shared ethnicity, linguistic and culture, affected the violence in both conflict states.

Despite this, it was established that the differences in the way the porous border facilitated the involvement of other regional government in the conflict in Liberia and Sierra Leone. In Liberia, the relationship was primarily predicated upon family ties of the Tolbert family to the then head of state of Ivory Coast, Félix Houphouet-Boigny (Egwu, 2006); the son of Tolbert was married to the daughter of Houphouet-Boigny; the same woman was later to marry the then president of Bukina Faso, Blaise Campore. This intricately connected Taylor to the Ivorian government and Bukina Faso government, which greatly influenced the massive support he got from both states. Also in Liberia, the tribal and friendship relation between President Lasana Conteh of Guinea and the leader of the 'LURD' rebel group, Sekou Conneh, did influence the involvement of Guinea in the conflicts (Mbembe, 2002).

The research conducted applied this relationship to explain the multi-dimensional and intricate web, which linked the conflicts in Liberia to Ivory Coast and Guinea. In Sierra Leone, however, the only kind of relationship that influenced the nature of violence was that of Taylor, and the 'RUF' Leader, Foday Sankoh, for they both had received training in Libya and it was more a business partnership. The study also established how the uncontrolled movement across the borders of both states facilitated the recruitments of child soldiers. According to (HRW, December 2005), there is no other conflict using child soldiers like the case of Liberia with an estimated 20,000 child soldiers. The analysis of the tri-focal approach concludes that porous border and insecurity dynamics contributed to escalate, and facilitated other escalating factors to sustain the intensity of the civil wars.

The analysis of the tri-focal approach therefore, established that the three identifiable escalating conflict factors had consequences on the civil wars and the sub-region as a whole. It also established that, although these factors are not the causes of the civil violence, they are at the base of long historical contradictions, which later influenced that pattern of violence. The tri-focal approach also established the similarities and minor variations in the way the conflict factors influenced the civil war in each country. The tri-focal approach established how these two conflicts are linked, as well as how the tri-focal conflicts escalating factors are interwoven and influenced each other.

7.3 THE TRI-FOCAL APPROACH: AN ASSESSMENT OF THE INTERWOVEN CONFLICTS

This section evaluates the utility and validity of the tri-focal approach, at a systematic and holistic, rather than single factor level of analysis; additionally it assesses also its strengths and weaknesses. In order to test the utility of the tri-focal approach, this research project applied its arguments to cases of civil wars that erupted in Liberia and Sierra Leone, with grave implication for sub-regional peace and security. The tri-focal approach applied the three common internal conflict escalating factors of (identity, natural resources and border issues), to explain and illuminate how these factors are common clustering variables linking to connect the civil wars in both states, as well as how these factors influence each other.

The tri-focal approach established that upon further examination of the Liberia and Sierra Leone civil wars, several variables impacted on the conflicts; for instance, ethnic population overhang, availability of economic resources, and domestic instability are conflict catalysts within states sharing common borders in the sub-region. The intricate connection and linkage of both conflicts was due to the proximity of both states to each other, results suggesting that transnational linkages and attributes of surrounding countries did exert substantial impact on the conflicts in both states under study.

The strength of the tri-focal approach is that, it applied the New War theory to enhance our understanding of the social, political and economic dynamics of civil war in Liberia and Sierra Leone. It also enhances our understanding of participants in civil war and their motives. The civil wars under study specifically reflect, how Post-Cold War intrastate conflicts; examined and historically validates the global relevance of the New War thesis. In addition to this, they also reflect the nuances of specific instances of civil war, showing that conflicts and countries can be unique, similar or different, but can still draw upon a comparative analysis. This is why the approach develops the uniqueness of each conflict, before applying identified common variables to draw a comparative analysis. It is important to state here that this comparative analysis may not be flawless, but it elucidates future debates on the application of a tri-focal escalating factor approach to African conflict studies.

The New War theory argues that today's conflicts are different, mainly due to the process of globalisation influencing contemporary politics and economy. These kind of violent civil conflicts takes place in areas where authoritarian states are weakened; meaning, distinctions between state and non-state, public and private, external and internal, economic and political, and even war and peace have broken down Kaldor (2007). These conflicts are usually non-ideological conflicts, resulting from a history of identity politics, religious, tribal or resources based stratification and struggles, which have a tendency to spread across borders through rebel groups, refugees, organised crime or ethnic minorities (Duffield, 2001; Kaldor, 2007).

The tri-focal approach analysis, point to the fact that Charles Taylor's NPFL had no ideological base and the RUF in Sierra Leone present any strong ideological program (Appiah, 2005; Gberie, 2005). The aims of these groups are henceforth, to take over political power, due to perceived differences with the ruling authority. According to my findings, I can conclude that Taylor and the 'RUF' are reactionary elite response to long standing power tussle among various identity groups, which are exacerbated by weak state structures. Kaldor (2009) suggests that this internal violence, invoked by irregular paramilitary troops, which

has tendencies for population expulsion rather than traditional field battles between armies, is the elements, characterising the New Wars thesis. In Liberia and Sierra Leone; the entire state structure collapsed completely, and this break down soon led to the civil wars, involving several local and foreign fighting groups; this later turned into a sub-regional war; involving Ivory Coast and Guinea (Aboagye, 2007).

The tri-focal approach established that the civil wars under study are contemporary form of violent conflict, based on fragmentative, exclusive and backward looking identity politics, stimulated by personal or group interest, and on “movements which mobilize around ethnic, racial or religious identity for the purpose of claiming state power (Kaldor, 2007). Consequently, political leaders in Liberia and Sierra Leone applied non-ideological identities politics to justify authoritarian policies and to mobilize political support by increasing fear and insecurity. “The greater the sense of insecurity, the greater the polarization of society, the less is the space for alternative integrative political values” (Kaldor, 2007, p. 77). Duffield (2005) argued that this new barbaric, anarchic and destructive power of traditional feelings and antagonisms usually unleashed in times of change created overarching political or economic systems that leads to state failure or collapse.

The tri-focal approach establishes how the varying objectives of armed factions reinforce the decentralized structure and nature of violence. This relates to what, Coulter (2009, p. 51-3) referred to the Liberia and Sierra Leone civil wars as “the most brutal and vicious” conflicts “in the late twentieth century,” due to the widespread use of “amputations, rape, random killings”. The tri-focal approach established that the civil wars under study are intra-state conflicts, involving states and non-state actors, and international agents enmeshed with varied interests (Kaldor, 2007, p. 17). In both civil wars, legitimate violence was no longer a state’s monopoly (Kaldor, 2007). Snow (1996) argued that New Wars are characterised by multiplicity of types of fighting units, public and private, state and non-state, paramilitary groups and foreign mercenaries, all of these lacking military order and discipline.

In Liberia, Charles Taylor's 'NPFL' started the insurgency against Doe's government. After his death, Doe's supporters formed the 'United Liberian Movement for Democracy' (ULIMO), an alliance between ethnic Krahn, mainly former 'Armed Forces of Liberia' (AFL) members loyal to Doe, and the Mandingo ethnic group. As it transpired, 'ULIMO' was to split into 'ULIMO-J,' whilst another split created 'ULIMO-K (Ellis, 1999). Other rebel and militia groups included; the 'Liberian United Defence Front' (LUDF), the 'Liberian Peace Council' (LPC), Lofa Defence Force (LDF) in Lofa County, 'Liberians United for Reconciliation and Democracy' (LURD) and MODEL (Pham, 2005). Moreover, Taylor's 'NPFL' later split to create the 'Independent National Patriotic Front of Liberia' (I-NPFL). Identity rivalry created these multi conflict groupings between only four ethnic groups, the Gio and Mano against the Krahn and Mandingo.

In Sierra Leone, the conflict started with the 'RUF' and the Sierra Leone army, therefore, they were soon joined by ethnic/tribal militia groups like the Kamajors, representing the Mende dominated Southern and Eastern Sierra Leone (Abdullah, 2004). Other tribal militia groups soon emerged; the kapras, (a civilian militia of the Temne ethnic group in the north, particularly in the Tonkolili District), the Tamaboros in the Northeast; the Donsos from Kono district in the East (Aning, 1997). These self-defence units, established on tribal/ethnic bases were composed mainly of volunteers trying to defend their localities; they committed severe atrocities, using light weapons (such as machetes) rather than heavy artillery (Kaldor, 2006). Other participants included; the regional involvement of Guinea, Bukina Faso, Ivory Coast, and Libya, and the intervention of Nigeria and later ECOMOG (Adekeye, 2007). According to Gray (1997), there was also the global participation in the war economy by international multi-national companies, foreign mercenaries and governments and private security firms.

The analysis of the tri-focal approach highlights how massive ethnic cleansing and genocidal tactics resulted in over 300,000 refugees during the first Liberian civil war alone (Allen,

1999, p. 57). The widespread violence resulted in, as many as 700,000 of the 2.5 million Liberians becoming refugees in other West African states by 1992 (Lowenkopf, 1995, p. 94). In addition to this, the *United Nations Security Council* report (2003) estimated that over 200,000 people died. According to the *United States Agency for International Development* (USIAD) report (2005) on Liberia, the Liberian civil war had horrific consequences for its people, with over 10 percent of the population, (mostly innocent civilians), being murdered. According to Koroma (2004) the Sierra Leone Civil War left over 50,000 dead, with over one million people displaced and half of Sierra Leone's female population subjected to sexual violence including rape, torture and sexual slavery.

The tri-focal approach increased our understanding of how women and children were used as tools of war, which blurs the distinction between civilians and combatants, during the conflicts under study. The 'Carnegie Commission on Preventing Deadly Conflict' (1997: xvii, 11) claims, "In today's contemporary wars, 90 per cent of those killed in conflict are non-combatants, compared with less than 15 per cent when the century began". The *UN Security Council Report*' (2004, p. 276) state "In the Post-Cold War period, civil wars and communal conflicts have involved wide-scale, deliberate targeting of civilian populations, and that the refugee movements are no longer side effects of conflict, but in many cases are central to the objectives and tactics of war." In Liberia, out of the 60,000 rebel fighters recruited by the warlords, about 60 percent were child soldiers; most of them are now suffering from drug addiction and post-traumatic stress syndrome (Egwu, 2006, p. 93). According to UNHCR (May 2, 2004) on Sierra Leone, the report estimated that by 1997, 6,800 child soldiers were registered in UNICEF fact sheet.

The tri-focal approach draws upon the argument of economists at the *World Bank* in the late 1990s and early 2000, which argues that the New Wars of the Post-Cold War era typified massive illicit use of economic resources to fund violence (Berdal & Malone, 2000; Collier & Hoeffler, 2004). New Wars are financed through a globalised war economy, consisting of

the following: plunder and the black market, external assistance, siphoning of humanitarian assistance, and through illicit trade in arms, drugs, diamonds and forest resources (Rice, 1988). In Liberia and Sierra Leone, the governments and rebel groups exploited the resources of the state to fund the war as well as for personal enrichment.

Kaldor (2007, p. 17) argues that “New War occur in situations when state revenue decline, there are spread of criminality, corruption, emergence of paramilitary groups and dwindling political legitimacy.” Furthermore, in New Wars environment, when the states are disintegrated, markets are shut down as a result of fighting or blockades imposed by outside powers. The result of this is that the production is physically destroyed or economically collapsed, hence, both governments and rebel groups have to find another sources of funding their activity. They have several options, the most common of which are the looting of the resources of the state, extortion, smuggling and levying of taxation and tribute.

The tri-focal approach established how the governments and rebel/militia groups became involved in the war economy of natural resources to fund their violence. The vast forest resources became a beehive of illicit exploitation by all the fighting groups in Liberia, whilst Taylor controlled the diamonds, gold and iron-ore deposit (Keen, 1998). In addition to this, in Sierra Leone, Taylor, the RUF leadership, and the various governments in power during the conflict financed the war with funds from diamonds trade (Bangura, 2000). Auty (2004) observed that the various networks of illicit resources traded, through the connivance of the governments and rebel groups with multinational companies, foreign governments, private security companies and mercenary organisations, financed the civil wars. As Duffield (2001, p. 45) put it, “in New War there are greater opportunities for extracting rents, and cover is provided for illegal economic activity.

The tri-focal approach as applied to the Liberia and Sierra Leone civil wars places great importance upon how border issues escalated and linked the conflicts. The approach establishes how intrastate civil conflict can influence conflicts in other states. Kaldor (2007,

p. 9) argues that this “retrograde set of social relationships, which is entrenched by Post-Cold War intrastate civil wars, has a tendency to spread across borders through refugees or organized crime or ethnic minorities”. It is also suggested that, although New Wars primarily emerge from intrastate factors, they may swiftly metamorphose into trans-state armed conflicts. The internal violence that started in Liberia, soon spread to Sierra Leone, and was later to engulf Guinea and Ivory Coast.

The tri-focal approach, developed important linkage points, connecting the conflict in Liberia to that of Sierra Leone. Taylor and Sankoh, the RUF rebel leader in Sierra Leone, had link to the then Libyan leader, Ghadaffi; hence, this was how both actors were able to later strike a business partnership (Abdullah, 1998). Notably, Taylor helped with the insurgency in Sierra Leone, and in return, controlled the diamond trade of the ‘RUF’, and this made him a major actor in the diamonds trade of the sub-region (Gberie, 2005; Koroma, 2004). The Liberia and Sierra Leone situation meant that the ‘RUF’ in Sierra Leone, with the support of Charles Taylor and his ‘National Patriotic Front of Liberia’ exported relatively large quantities of diamonds every year (Silberfein, 2004; Hirsch, 2000). To clarify, Taylor was recently indicted by The Hague for being the chief sponsor of ‘RUF’ rebels and for his involvement in the diamond for arms trade in Sierra Leone.

This established that the illicit exploitation of natural resources was one of the factors, linking and spreading the conflicts in Liberia with Sierra Leone; through their common but porous borders. The insecurity at the border areas facilitated smuggling and the illicit trade of natural resources. It is also clear that the illicit exploitation of natural resources creates a climate of violence and offers economic opportunities for organised crime networks to connive for violence in Liberia and Sierra Leone (Kaufman, 2001). This also increases insecurity complexes, involving armed groups that sought sanctuary or anonymity across sympathetic borders. The border areas between Guinea, Liberia and Sierra Leone on the one hand, and Guinea, Liberia and Côte d’Ivoire on the other have often been the focus of

fighting, resulting in heavy impact on the civilian population and local infrastructures (Aboagye, 2007).

The tri-focal approach also established that the activities of roving mercenaries, trans-border criminal networks and the circulation of arms were a result of the porous nature of West African borders (Owunka, 2009). This is in agreement with the viewpoints of Gleditsch, (2007); Gartzke & Gleditsch, (2006); Gleditsch & Salehyan, (2007) and Starr (2002 & 2003) that many contemporary civil wars display a transnational character, where actors can span national boundaries — this was the case in Liberia and Sierra Leone. This, therefore, proves that the civil war in Liberia and Sierra Leone is not determined solely by each country's internal or domestic characteristics alone; it also depends on their linkages to other states within the region.

The approach also gave credibility to, the argument linking natural resources trade to the proliferation of weapons in the sub-region. This validates the argument that, money from natural resources trade funded the proliferation of weapons in the sub-region. This is because the porous borders facilitated natural resources trade and this in turn provided funds to acquire the weapons of war. The tri-focal approach established that conflicts ensuing in the region became heavily connected and intertwined as communities and governments in the region have hosted and financed neighbouring insurgent forces — and sometimes they fought side by side. To clarify, Liberians fought along-side the 'Revolutionary United Front' ('RUF'), as it advanced into Sierra Leone in 1991; during the 11-year conflict in Sierra Leone, the 'RUF' received financial support from the then Liberian President Charles Taylor (Stewart & Amman, 2007; Gberie, 2000).

Notably, Liberia's own rebel groups received significant cross-border support from Guinea, given its government, at that time, harboured and financed the 'Liberians United for Reconciliation and Democracy (LURD) (Hirsch, 2000; Vogt & Aminu, 1996; Albrecht &

Drew, 2011). This supports the argument of the tri-focal approach that porous border dynamics exacerbated the conflicts and linked them at a regional level.

Evidence from the study established that identity problems, natural resources exploitation and porous border issues individually and jointly contributed to escalate and exacerbate both civil wars. It is important to clearly state, that whether any of the escalating factors were key factors in sustaining the civil wars, is not the concern of this research; in spite of this, the analysis of the tri-focal approach established that porous borders linked the conflict dynamics. The comparative analysis also made it possible to find out which escalating variables had the greatest influence upon the conflict in each country.

The tri-focal approach suggests that these common escalating factors are not the cause of war, even if identity seems to be at the base of the civil war, and the massive exploitation of natural resources funded the violence. The tri-focal approach as applied to this research project, confirms that, identity cleavages increased the risk of conflict, whilst illicit exploitation, pillaging and looting of natural resources provided the funds, which sustained and intensified the violence. A final point is that transnational linkage factor made prominent by porous border delineation and border insecurity between Liberia, Sierra Leone, and their neighbours, exacerbated the conflicts.

A noticeable weakness of the approach may be that there may be difficulties applying it to all conflict situations, because either they do not all share similar conflict dynamics or these escalating factors may all not be present in all conflict situations. In contrast to this, there are constant commonalities in conflict dynamics in wars that have ravaged Africa for centuries, more so in Post-Cold War New War conflicts. Identity seems to be a common conflict factor resulting from tribal, cultural, ethnic and religious differences. Moreover, resources allocation, distribution and mismanagement are constant conflict indicators. The use of these resources to finance violence, even in cases where there are no natural resources;

alongside looting of the rich and forced taxation have been sources of funding. The porosity of borders also has been a constant threat to regional peace, due to the high refugee flow and movement of fighters and smugglers across insecure borders.

Drawing from the above argument, the tri-focal approach, and its analysis is useful to understanding the conflicts prevalent in the Horn of African (Ethiopia and Eritrea), East Africa (Sudan, Somalia, Kenya and Uganda) and also Rwanda, Burundi, Congo DR. and Republic of Congo. These conflicts were exacerbated by both long-standing and unsettled identity problems, grievances over resources allocation and its use to fund the violence, as well as the perennial border problem as a source of conflict or a facilitator of conflict.

7.4 CONTRIBUTION OF TRI-FOCAL APPROACH TO NEW WAR THEORY OF AFRICAN CONFLICT STUDIES

This section explicates the contribution of this piece of work to the New War theory of African conflict studies. The aim is to examine the application of the New War theory of African conflict, to assess if it offers new knowledge contributing to understanding of the conflicts in Liberia and Sierra Leone, as well as sources of future conflicts in Africa. According to Kaldor (2007, p. 45), elucidating the logic of contemporary war can offer both a research strategy and a guide to policy, as it not only addresses whether New Wars are 'new' or 'post-Clausewitzian' but also if New Wars are war or crime.

In order to fully understand Africa's contemporary state of affairs and therefore construct proper analysis, it is important to note the context within which, such conflicts are taking place. Kaldor (2007) argued that the African context of New War brings into consideration, the fact that African states have to deal with the disillusion of post-independence hopes and problems of internal security, such as rapid urbanisation, poverty and inequality. Furthermore, it maintained that political elites, as well as declining sense of legitimacy and a growing inability to cope with problematic issues caused the violence. Kaplan (2000) takes similar stance, indicating that demographic shifts, urbanisation and environmental

degradation, alongside easy access to arms lead to violence and refugee problem in several parts of Africa.

Contemporary conflict in Africa is often based on identity politics, “movements which mobilize around ethnic, racial or religious identity for the purpose of claiming state power, and these can be fragmentative, exclusive and backward-looking (Kaldor, 2007). The New War theory, thus establishes how political leaders apply identities to justify authoritarian policies and to mobilize political support by increasing fear and insecurity. It has been argued that the greater the sense of insecurity, the greater the polarisation of society, meaning the less space there is for alternative integrative political values (Kaldor, 2005).

The tri-focal approach applied the New War thesis because it has significant implications for scholarship endeavours, and policy into the study of African conflicts. In terms of scholarship, the application of the New War theory has significant implications for the choice of methodology of conflict analysis, encouraging the use of historical narrative in conflict analysis. In terms of policy, it made possible for new insights into the security discourse, via the incorporation of concepts such as “as socio-economic inequality, divided societies, human rights abuse, poverty, migration, economic disruptions, diaspora communities, and international commodity markets” (Newman 2004, p. 186). This has introduced the development of a multidisciplinary approach to conflict analysis in Africa, and at the same time same the kind of Post conflict policy response, recommendation and implementation by the international community.

The application of New War theory to conflict study has been criticised for over emphasis on the utility of historical narrative. According to Newman (2004, p. 86), historical narrative does not always provide objective quantifiable data; however, it offers a fundamental viewpoint on the nature of conflict. The perceived lack of objectivity and quantification of historical material do not outweigh the benefits of employing historical narrative in conflict

analysis (Kaldor, 2007). In fact, contemporary data from modern violent conflicts is not always verifiable or precise; however, it is incorporated into academic research (Kaufman, 2001). Furthermore, employing historical data is essential when arguing that there is an inherent change in the nature of warfare (Kaldor, 2007). Overall, the use of historical narrative in the broad field of conflict analysis enhances the validity of a number of claims about the nature, trends and the patterns of violent conflicts in Post-Cold War Africa. The New War theory provides a robust empirical framework for analysing the network of qualitative variables shaping contemporary violent conflicts in Africa. The New Wars thesis, therefore, contributes to the field of conflict analysis by enhancing scholars definition and understanding of the social, political and economic dynamics of civil war (Kaldor, 2009, p. 67).

Again, in terms of policy, the New Wars debate to African conflicts has significant implications for the shift of focus to unconventional security threats and belligerents, policy design, post-conflict peace building, strong international and local policing, international law, and poverty reduction (Kaldor, 2013). The New Wars thesis has challenged the conventional conception of security, and has provided new insights for the security discourse of African conflicts. Instead of focusing solely on weapons, military threats and national territory, the New Wars literature has turned its attention to the social and economic aspects of civil war. A significant implication of the New Wars debate is, therefore, that scholars cannot afford to limit their research solely to the military dimension of war (Newman, 2009). This thesis posits that the study of civil wars in Africa needs to incorporate the political, societal, economic and environmental dimensions of civil violence for proper conceptualisation and analysis of such conflicts.

The tri-focal approach, further emphasise the New War focus on human security; in its broad sense encompasses discourses from environmental disasters, global warming, climate change, to human right, extreme poverty, low or negative economic growth and high

dependency on natural resources economic security, food security and health security. Civil wars in Liberia and Sierra Leone impacted on environmental security, personal security, community security and political security; it also includes social, political, economic and cultural dislocations. This has led to the emergence of global civil society pressing for disarmament and demobilisation armed groups and reintegrate ex-combatants into society, treaties on land mines, international criminal court, the Kimberly accord or even restricting diaspora funding of violence.

Post-Cold War conflicts in Africa has had negative impact on infrastructure and millions of lives lost and displaced over the past decades in Rwanda, Burundi, Congo, Algeria, Ethiopia, Liberia and Sierra Leone. These civil conflicts are still on going in Congo, Somalia, Sudan, Kenya and Nigeria. An international and regional policy shift that encompasses the New War theoretical framework is necessary in terms of research and response to the management of this civil violence to stem future occurrence and reduce human rights violation and mass murder of innocent women and children. The cases for the protection of civilian population, women and children during conflicts in Sudan, Somalia and other part of conflict Africa is at the forefront of security agenda for regional and international organisations. The research agenda of the New Wars literature addresses such issues.

Another very important implication of the New Wars debate to African conflicts is the idea that it allows scholars and policy makers to gain insights into the nature and dimensions of conflicts, and so identify potential problems and possible solutions (Shaw, 1990). This is important because African identity conflicts can be horizontal as in the case of Liberia and Sierra Leone, where variations in identity classification is noticeable or vertical as in the case of Rwanda and Sudan, where identity is a question of individual perception of who they are. The position of this study is that even if political identity of the perpetrators and victims of civil wars may not be the key reason for outbreak of violence, yet, this can escalate violence. According to Mueller (2000, p. 62) political identity proves “to be simply the characteristic

around which the perpetrators and the politicians who recruited and encouraged them happened to array themselves.”

The New War theory provides an understanding of how the nature and dynamics of civil war is essential for policy analysis, as well as for the prediction, prevention and resolution of armed conflict. Contemporary African security problems such as terrorism and civil wars in Darfur, Somalia, the Democratic Republic of Congo, and now Mali and South Sudan, hence, requires developing in-depth knowledge of the nature of violent conflict and constructing strategies for political reform, economic stability and poverty reduction.

The New War theory has significant implications for a kind of pre-conflict international engagement through regional and sub-regional organisations, under the auspices of the United Nations. This will not only reduce the nature of violence, if eventually conflict breaks out, but will also make post conflict peacekeeping and peacebuilding easy. The New War theory has drawn significant attention to the security of individuals and communities during and after conflicts. The International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty (ICRP) was established to strengthen its capability of the international community to tackle the victimisation of civilians, which is a trademark of contemporary conflicts.

According to Keen (1998), the end of the Cold War and the victory of capitalism over communism have elevated economic self-interest to “a position of ideological hegemony, which have created a fertile climate for the world’s most genuinely aggressive entrepreneurs”. The civil wars in Sierra Leone, Liberia and the Democratic Republic of Congo are quintessential examples of the importance of economic derivatives and incentives in contemporary conflicts. New War theory stresses the importance for international policy makers to become aware of this phenomenon of modern warfare and start “freezing the bank accounts and seizing the assets of those suspected of involvement” in violent conflict (Rupesinghe & Anderlini 1998, p. 140).

Berdal, (2003) and, Francis (2006) argued that African conflicts may not be understood within a resources or greed factor analysis. According to Pernice (2013) and Pham (2005), the Liberian and Sierra Leonean cases seem to deny the validity of this axiom. It was, however, further argued that of course, the direct administration (often loot) of the state's assets and raw materials did play a role, as warring factions were keen to exploit the rentable state's markets in order to increase their personal and group's capabilities. What critics failed to understand is that the New War theory posited that the funds from illicit natural resources exploitation are used to fund violence, and, in the process, become sources of personal aggrandisement. The case of Charles Taylor in Liberia and the Leader of RUF, Foday Sankoh are vivid examples. Malesevic (2008) uses the Rwanda and Darfur conflicts as ideal examples of when resources were not an issue in their conflicts. It was, however added that in both cases, rich people were murdered, and their valuables were stolen, as militiamen raided the cattle and livestock to fund the violence.

New War key debate enables an understanding of the behaviours, objectives and tools of violence of unconventional belligerents in order to prevent the escalation of violence and the victimization of civilians. It also improves the understanding of the tools and methods of violence employed by rebel groups. The New Wars debate instigates practitioners in the fields of security and humanitarian intervention to think about civil wars in terms of guerrilla wars or insurgencies (Fearon *et al*, 2007, p. 75). A number of scholars have suggested that insurgency tactics are viable and often successful in violent conflicts due to inconsistent counterinsurgency practices and lack of local and international policing (Muller & Weede, 1990, p. 63; Fearon & Laitin 2004, p. 76).

The New War theory has implications for scholars and international organisations engaged in conflict prediction, prevention, resolution and peace building. This is extremely important because security to personal safety, threats to starvation, lack of clean drinking water, lack of medical care and violation of human rights are important issues in Post-Cold war conflicts in

Africa. Interestingly, all these characteristics of human insecurity have been featured in war torn states such as Burundi, Rwanda, Congo, Liberia, Sierra Leone, Somalia, Ethiopia, Eritrea and Sudan. The strong influence of the New War thesis has permeated through the UN policy agenda Millennium Development Goals framework (Moore & Shellman, 2004). The specific goals outlined by the *UN* show how the New Wars debate has impacted on policy, it has shifted the focus from national security to human security, showing that upgrading the security of the nation state is very different from upgrading the security of poor civilians.

New Wars' theories contribute to the analysis of modern conflicts in Sub-Saharan Africa on a large scale; they not only describe patterns of war environment but also aim to explain phenomena taking place in globalised wars, altered causes, goals and strategies implemented during these conflicts. This corresponds remarkably with the reality of the Liberia and Sierra Leone civil wars. Rightfully, 'New Wars' theorists depict human rights abuses and population displacement as defining features of contemporary conflicts; however, the reasons for such atrocities provided by these theories help to understand why these processes took place during the civil wars in Liberia and Sierra Leone. An important part of the analysis is the breakdown of the monopoly of legitimate violence and multiplicity of types of fighting units, such as ethnic militias or private armies. The New War theory gave prominence to the role of identity, natural resources and porous borders as factors that can exacerbate civil war; these tri-focal factors are symptoms or tools that intensify the scale of atrocities in Africa.

7.5 ORIGINAL CONTRIBUTION TO KNOWLEDGE

This research introduced the tri-focal approach to the study of the Liberia and Sierra Leone civil wars, by applying the New War theory to justify its arguments; by so doing contributing to knowledge about the nature of these conflicts and other conflicts in Africa. The introduction of tri-focal approach as a holistic approach to the study of the Liberia and Sierra

Leone civil wars; this kind of approach is lacking from past studies, which have tended to apply single causal factor in analysing the civil wars. Introducing three conflict escalating variable/mechanisms within a single research, gives the study of the Liberia and Sierra Leone civil wars a wider scope of analysis into the dynamics that significantly exacerbated the conflicts.

The discovery of three conflict dynamics that are common to both civil wars in Liberia and Sierra Leone; this research project identified identity problem, the illicit use of funds from natural resources and porous border problems as common conflict escalating factors, which contributed to exacerbate their civil wars.

The identification of the inter-connectivity of both civil wars; that these three identified conflict escalating factors intricately webbed both conflicts, such that it is difficult to discuss one conflict without the other.

To strengthen and validate the research, the thesis applied methods triangulation (multiple empirical materials, combined with individual interviews and focus group discussions); it also applied two theories (failed states analogy and New war theory). This was to overcome the weakness or intrinsic biases and the problems arising from single method, single-observer and single-theory studies.

In all, this research project is a pioneer comparative study of both civil wars; using the tri-focal approach.

7.6 LIMITATIONS OF STUDY

The Liberia and Sierra Leone civil wars are compared, because they share common borders, and similar tri-focal escalating factors. Again, it was the conflict starting in Liberia, that later spread to Sierra Leone, thus making a case for a comparative analysis more imperative. This research however, bears in mind, the fact that not all conflicts are comparable, especially if they do not share similar characterisation, space and time. The research here is not concerned

about the causes or potency of any causal factor, because there are no general agreements about the causes of the civil wars or potency of any of the conflict factors. Despite this, the analysis was able to draw a comparative analysis of how these factors impacts on the conflict in each of the state under study.

A major limitation, which this study needs to consider is that qualitative empirical methodologies are not absolutely reliable in terms of explaining the nature of civil wars, and even less so in terms of predicting it (Ackermann, 2003). This is why this study applied and combined several methodological approaches to validate and crosscheck the data, and thus made it easily verifiable and results reliable. The study combined the comparative historical method drawing on the evidence of the interviews and focus group discussions.

One of the methodological challenges associated with two country approaches to conflict analysis according is that their findings do not always have cross-country relevance, and it cannot be used effectively in cross-country analysis, because conflicts are unique to a country (Newman, 2009, p. 259). The analysis of this study, however, is not limited to a specific incidence of civil war, as it applied three conflict indices that are similar dynamics in both states under study. Again, the conflicts in Liberia and Sierra Leone shared similar escalating factors and historical antecedents; hence, meaning the identification and evaluation of variables across each conflict was possible due to similarities in political, economic and geographic contexts.

A limitation of two country approach according to (Becker, 1996), is the objectivity of the researcher in the selection and analysis of each case. Newman (2004) however, argues that a two country analysis is reliable, as it facilitates a more detailed analysis of ordinary and idiosyncratic examples of violent conflicts in two societies. Added to this, is the fact that the interest of the researcher as an outsider is a genuine academic interest, after noticing the existing gap in the study of the conflicts. Again, these two countries typify New War Post-

Cold conflicts, with multiple causal factors and attendant layers of dynamics. These kinds of conflicts, with high human causalities are a veritable example for a comparative study.

Again, the generalisability of the results is also subject to certain limitations, because limited samples were used for the individual interviews and focus group discussions. A wider sample representation would have generated more data and probably a wider breath of views and opinions. As it transpired, this was limited by finance and time; moreover, there might have been too many repetitions and overlaps in findings, especially when selected samples are based on wider ethnic and political orientation criteria. Questionnaires were not used because getting the needed sample representation with questionnaires will be a difficult task to accomplish, as I was restricted to Monrovia the capital city due to safety issues. This kind of representation would have been difficult to accomplish, with the use of individual elite interview and focus group discussion from wider sampling in Monrovia.

There is a limitation in the application of historical method, given such narratives, more often than not, does not always provide objective quantifiable data. The perceived lack of objectivity and quantification of historical material, however, does do not outweigh the benefits of employing historical narrative in conflict analysis, because it offers a fundamental viewpoint on the nature of conflict. Moreover, contemporary data from modern violent conflicts is not always verifiable or precise, though still incorporated to academic research (Newman 2004, p. 186).

The limitation of comparative analysis of conflicts is that it is very difficult to clearly compare conflict events in different societies. It may be questioned how can we successfully compare issues like identity, natural resources as a means to fund war, and border issues? According to Newman (2009, p. 259), even if the same factors are present in a number of different conflicts, it does not mean that their relative importance and the nature of their interactions are the same. In the comparative analysis of the Liberia and Sierra Leone civil

wars, however, it systematically highlighted the importance or level of impact of the escalating variables on each country's conflict; this was achieved by clarifying, similarities, and levels of variations within space and time.

The study limits its theoretical framework to the New War theory, because the limits of the failed state analogies focus on internal conflict dynamics. Other familiar African conflict theories were briefly examined, for their potential, yet, these also failed to place the tri-focal approach within contemporary form of Post-Cold War conflict. The New War framework was applied because it not only explain and gave meaning to the tri-focal approach, but at the same time placed the Liberia and Sierra Leone civil wars within the argument of the tri-focal approach, as a new form of political violence.

Another limitation is that the scope selected only examines Liberia and Sierra Leone, yet fails to examine the multiple and reciprocal spill over into remaining two Mano River Union states of Guinea and Ivory Coast. These two neighbouring states were also embodied in the conflict, with similar dynamics, due to proximity. It, therefore, means that a transfer of knowledge from the Liberia and Sierra Leone conflicts could fit the purpose of research on the Guinean and Ivorian conflicts.

I recommend that separate research is conducted into the Guinean and Ivorian conflicts and, in the future, a comparison of the entire regional conflicts in one single research — this is with the aim of creating a more holistic picture about the conflicts in the sub-region. Notwithstanding these limitations, the study successfully explored the evidence of respondents and literatures to understand how the tri-focal approach can be applied to analyse African conflicts.

7.7 FUTURE RESEARCH

The New War debate emphasises the transformation of contemporary war, and in doing so brings together strands of research from political theory, sociology, history, international

relations and political economy, and African conflict research. As a new research agenda, the New War proposition has successfully drawn attention to salient issues in African politics and introduced aspects of security studies to a wider audience within and outside of academia. This will move African researchers beyond the initial question of a transformation, to how this transformation affects the prevalent theoretical models of war, international law, humanitarian interventions and war conventions.

This study has established the need for a new approach to African conflict study, which can be applied beyond the Liberia and Sierra Leone civil wars. This approach can also be applied to other sub-regional conflicts in Africa as it draws attention to how intrastate conflict can spread to influence an inter-state conflict with regional and international implications.

A very important area of future research could be to examine how the conflicts in Liberia and Sierra Leone influenced and connected conflicts, which later engulfed Guinea and Ivory Coast. Although the Guinea and Ivory Coast conflicts are not as ferocious as the Liberian and Sierra Leonean conflicts, they still resulted in constant instability within these countries and did have implications for the sub-region. This particular research project will complete the holistic approach, which this study has already introduced with the Liberia, and Sierra Leone civil wars.

An area of future research, which arose during the field trip to Liberia and Sierra Leone, is to look at post conflict reconciliation and amnesty: the victims-perpetrators dilemma, with a focus on Liberia and Sierra Leone. My interest here lies in the fact that post conflict amnesty seems to favour the perpetrators of war crimes, for they were re-integrated with all sort of incentives. They are well rehabilitated and assisted to settle into the community, whilst the victim is assistance to the barest minimum. Victim of war, especially woman and children are left to suffer the scar of war forever. I would want to find out why this had been a

common trend in the nature of post conflict reconciliation in Africa, especially Liberia and Sierra Leone and what can be done to remedy this situation.

An area of research is to apply the New War theory to analyse years of intra/interstate conflicts in the Horn of Africa. In the Horn of Africa, years of intra/interstate conflicts between Ethiopia, Eritrea and Djibouti, have had consequences for the stability of that region; the Ethiopia-Eritrea conflict plays a central role in war between Eritrea and Djibouti. These conflicts are a result of long years of unsettled identity, religious, border and resources issues.

In East Africa, Burundi, Rwanda, Kenya also are constantly embroiled in intrastate conflicts, which has implication for sub-regional peace and security. The New War framework will apply it's analyse to the nature and trends in this regional conflicts. The conflict in Congo DR has connected all the states within the sub-region, especially Rwanda to the long drawn battle over identity-based stratifications, natural resources issues and territory. The efficacy of the New War theory to these conflicts will offer a new research outlook to the various conflicts in Africa and a better regional pre and post conflict response.

The New War debate elucidated scholarship and public debate issues such as international policing, the rule of law, justice mechanisms and institution building at local, national and global levels. This also opens up avenues for future research into how pre-conflict and conflict international policing, rule of law, human right violation and justice mechanisms through regional and international organisations can stop or reduce the kind of carnage witnessed during the conflicts under study. The application of New War framework will be a useful tool to analysing future pre-conflict, conflict and post conflict issues in African.

7.8 CONCLUSIONS

The tri-focal approach draws upon the New War theory to enhance the analysis of modern conflicts in Sub-Saharan Africa and possibly applied to other regions in Africa in general.

The study does not just describe patterns of war; it also explains how the phenomena taking place in globalised world can alter the goals, strategies and invariably outcome of such conflicts. According to Keen (2001), “nowadays war is not only simply a breakdown in a particular system, but a way of creating an alternative system of profit, power and even protection”. The tri-focal approach agrees with the New Wars theorists depicting human rights abuses and population displacement as defining features of contemporary conflicts; this is due to the breakdown of the monopoly of legitimate violence and, hence, the rise of multiplicity of types of fighting units, such as ethnic militias or private armies.

There has been a rise of New Wars, where actors are not distinct; violence is irregular, and arguably more brutal than ever before (Coulter 2009). Sierra Leone and Liberia are an excellent example of multiple actors, seeking non-ideological but selfish aim, and this resulting in mass violence. The use of child soldiers, although not a new concept, was widely publicised and subjected to cosmopolitan condemnation during these civil wars.

The debate about New Wars has helped to refine and reformulate the argument about the nature and dynamics of contemporary African civil wars. The one thing the critics tend to agree with is that the New War thesis has opened up further scholarly analysis and new policy perspectives (Newman, 2004; Henderson & Singer 2002). It has contributed to the burgeoning field of conflict studies that have influenced intensive policy debates taking place especially within international organisations – the debates about human security in Africa. This research project has argued that the shift in the nature of warfare calls for a change in the way scholars analyse and theorise about conflicts in Africa.

The approach developed by this research project suggests that the analysis of contemporary conflict provided by the New Wars literature is valuable, innovative and contributes to the analysis of African conflicts. It will further enhance the understanding of scholars and

politicians about the dynamics of war and the social and economic aspect of civil war in particular, which will have implication for academics and future policy in Africa.

Applying the tri-focal approach to Identify conflict escalating factors, rather than causes is important, if we have to predict, prevent and resolve violent conflicts more efficiently on a local and global level. As the Kant concept of “perpetual peace”¹⁸⁴ – is unachievable, the international system must then guard against Kaplan’s (2000) “coming anarchy” which looks like a more possible reality. According to (Kaldor 2007, p. 186), the erosion of legitimate state authority, the loss of control over the monopoly of violence, the growing incapacity of international organisations and the increasing power of brutal paramilitary groups and terrorists might lead to more violent, destructive and uncontrollable wars in the future. Conflict studies should be careful of becoming naive, ensuring researchers analyse not only the context of the conflicts, but also the context in which epistemic distinctions around the subjects of analysis are built (Cornell & Hartmann, 1998).

Regional and international responses to conflict and post conflict peacebuilding remain salient issues in international relations. Whatever one thinks about the issue, it is clear that the distinctions between formal and informal forms of violence is become increasingly blurred. This calls for a renewed effort to match prevalent theoretical models with the empirical reality of contemporary wars and violent conflict.

The tri-focal approach gives an overarching picture of the complexity of the conflicts under study, whose nexus can be used in the study of other African conflicts. It highlights the various ways which conflicts become intractable and the inability of the international community to grasp or understand the conflict dynamics in Africa. But as this study demonstrates, the intersectionality of the factors considered in the tri-focal approach explicitly show how conflict spread among nations in Africa, which is not necessarily borne

¹⁸⁴ Immanuel Kant essay of 1795 proposed a state of perpetual peace in the international system

out of a competition from resources, ethnic allegiance or even direct confrontation over borders. Rather, it is the dubious use of ethnicity by the political elite to ferment violence, the use of funds generated out of illicit natural resources exploitation to fund violence, and the multiple cross border problem that negatively impact on the outcome of conflicts.

The tri-focal approach applies the New War theory to expose the objectives of African war belligerents that seek to control the population, through ethnic cleansing. Their strategic goals includes population expulsion, mass killing, forcible resettlement, as well as a range of political, psychological, and economic techniques of intimidation. It also exposes how warring groups are enmeshed into the illicit global war economy of trade to fund the violence and for selfish aggrandisement. Finally, the approach examines how porous border issues can connect conflicts, to the extent that they generate regional instability and consequence for peace in Africa. Examples are the Hutu–Tutsi distinction in Rwanda and Burundi, Nigeria, Liberia, Sierra Leone, Sudan, Somalia, Uganda, Kenya, Ethiopia and Eritrea, Algeria, Morocco and the Western Sahara conflict, Algeria, Egypt, Libya, Guinea-Bissau, Mali, Guinea, Ivory Coast, Congo D.R.C., Chad, Djibouti, Uganda, Kenya, Republic of Congo, Mozambique, Malawi and Chad (Hoffman, 2004, p. 221).

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX ONE: INTERVIEW AND FOCUS GROUP QUESTIONS

Question A: ethnicity/political identity and the conflicts

- To what extent can ethnic politics/political identity be identified as a catalyst that led to escalate and intensify the conflicts in Liberia and Sierra Leone?
- To what extent are ethnic politics/political identity a root/remote cause of conflicts and civil wars in Liberia and Sierra Leone?
- How true is the assertion that political elites in Liberia and Sierra Leone used the issue of ethnic politics/political identity to perpetuate ethnic violence/crisis?
- What are the impacts of inter/cross border ethnic affinity on the conflicts in Liberia and Sierra Leone?

Question B: natural resources and the conflicts

- Can we rightly say that natural resources issues are the root or remote causes of conflict in Liberia and Sierra Leone or are they just escalating catalysts?
- How has the economic interest of the political elite and rebels profiteering in the natural resources of these states contributed to escalate, inflame and intensify the conflicts?

Question C: poor border delineation, insecurity and small arms

- How has poor border delineation and porous border insecurity issues contributed to escalate and spread the conflicts across the borders of both states?
- To what extent has the proliferation (free and illegal movement) of small arms and light weapons by local and international arm dealers, local rebels and international mercenaries within these states and their borders contributed to escalate the crises?

Focus group discussion questions

Question A: ethnic politics/political identity

- To what extent are ethnic politics/political identity a root/remote cause of conflicts and civil wars in Liberia and Sierra Leone?
- Was there a time during the conflicts that political elites in Liberia and Sierra Leone used the excuse of ethnic politics/political identity to perpetuate ethnic violence/crisis?

Question B: natural resources and the conflicts

- Can we then rightly say that natural resources issues are the root or remote causes of conflict and how has natural resources issues contributed to escalate, inflame and intensify the conflicts in Liberia and Sierra Leone?

Question C: Porous border delineation border insecurity

- How has poor border delineation and poor border security contributed to escalate and spread the conflicts across the borders of both states?
- To what extent has the proliferation (free and illegal movement) of small arms and light weapons by local and international arm dealers, local rebels and international mercenaries within these states and their borders contributed to escalate the crises?

APPENDIX TWO: TABLE OF INTERVIEW

TABLE 6. The table represents the 69 elite interviews conducted.

Locations	Past/present political and military actors	Rebels/militias/child soldier	Traditional chiefs/paramount rulers	Governmental/Non-governmental agencies/civil society	Researchers/authors and academia's/students	Others
Liberia	4	2	2	5	4	2
Sierra Leone	6	5	2	6	4	3
Nigeria	2	-	-	4	5	2
United Kingdom				2	2	2
Others	-	-	-	2	2	2
Total	11	7	4	19	17	7

APPENDIX THREE: ETHICAL AND SAFETY PRECAUTIONS

A very important process to go through before travelling for fieldwork was that of the University Ethics Committee's. I carefully went through the requirements with the guidance of my supervisors, completed the forms and submitted them to the departmental ethics committee. As it transpired, this form was returned to me several times, due to issues regarding my safety on the field. After careful considerations by the departmental committee, the form was passed onto the University's Ethics committee. After this was approved, the University issued a travel insurance certificate. The United Kingdom's *Home Office* website was the first channel I relied on for continued advice and updates regarding the safety of travelling to Nigeria, especially Liberia and Sierra Leone. The site warned against all but essential travel outside Monrovia, the capital city of Liberia. Nonetheless, it was safe to travel to Western Area of Sierra Leone, including Freetown, as sites there were usually trouble-free with a low crime rate, save common reports of petty crime. Moreover, *U.N.* Peacekeeper forces are stationed in both countries and they have the ability to deploy any part of the countries in response to any public order incidents or other threats to security. The *Home Office* also advised receiving vaccinations for tropical diseases, like malaria, Rabies, Lassa and yellow fever, water-borne and other tropical ones common to Sierra Leone; I had all the necessary vaccinations.

APPENDIX FOUR: PREPARATIONS BEFORE FIELDWORK

I undertook over a year of extensive reviewing of relevant literature about the conflicts in both countries to understand the nature of the conflicts and, more importantly, the written material, researchers, scholars, political actors, institutions (both local and international), directly or indirectly involved in the conflicts. The next stage was to make contact with these individuals, organisations and institutions via emails and telephone calls. Contacts were established with past and recent scholars, authors and researcher who have researched various aspects of the conflicts, local and international governmental, non-profit making organisations, and civil societies in and around the United Kingdom, Africa, Nigeria, Liberia and Sierra Leone. These contacts served as very important channels in gaining access to: elite political and military actors, rebels and militias leaders, and child soldiers in Liberia and Sierra Leone. In the United Kingdom, I made contact with *Global Witness*: an organisation, which has been in the forefront of research about natural resources and conflicts around the world. For several years, *Global Witness* has been on the ground in Liberia and Sierra Leone, prior to, during and after the conflicts. Members of this organisation have been working closely with communities, government and civil societies in these countries on the issue of the exploration and exploitation of natural resources. Other contacts made similar to *Global Witness* are *Global Timber* and *Resources Trend*, both of which are based in the United Kingdom. Contact was also established with the United Kingdom's *International Society of the Red Cross*, an organisation that also provided useful contacts in Liberia and Sierra Leone, advice and safety tips.

International and local scholars/authors who had conducted studies about the themes of this research project were contacted:

- Donald L. Horowitz, a James B. Duke Professor of Law and Political Science at *Duke University*;
- Stefan Wolff, a Professor of Political Science and Director of the 'Centre for International Crisis Management and Conflict Resolution' at the *University of Birmingham*;
- Dr Peter Krijn of *Swansea University*'s 'School of Environment and Society', who is probably one of the most respected scholars on Sierra Leone and has researched almost all area of Sierra Leone, the 'RUF' and youths;
- Professor David Francis, a Professor of 'African Peace and Conflict Studies' at the *University of Bradford*. He is an expert on African peace and conflict studies, African regional security studies and international politics and security studies;
- Dr Adekeye Adebayo, an executive director at the 'Centre for Conflict Resolution' ('CCR') in Cape Town, South Africa. His research covers conflicts, security and peace in West Africa;
- Joseph Smaldone, an adjunct Professor of the *Georgetown University*, Washington, D.C. He teaches graduate courses on war, peace, U.S. defence policy, and Third World security and development. He is currently researching relationships about arms transfers, conflict, and arms control in Africa; and the role of arms control in conflict prevention, management, and resolution.

These mentioned scholars were contacted by email and telephone for advice, informal discussions/interviews and sources to contact. They all referred to their own books and other publications, providing opinions about the themes of this research project and added credence to other sources of data.

To deepen my knowledge, I also attended several conferences and seminars within the *University of Strathclyde* and other universities within the United Kingdom and America:

- ‘Conflicts and Integration in West Africa: Lessons from the Liberian Civil War’, held by the *International Studies Association’s* Annual Convention, San Diego, USA, 2012;
- The ‘Economic Community of West African States Monitoring Group’ (‘ECOMOG’);
- The ‘Challenges of Conflict Intervention and Resolution: Reflection on Liberia and Sierra Leone. Postgraduate Conference’, *University of Liberia*, 2010;
- The ‘Dynamics of Natural Resources and conflicts in Liberia and Sierra Leone’, *International Studies Association’s* Annual Convention, Montreal, Canada, 2010;
- The ‘Impact of Political Identity and Ethnicity on the Conflicts in Liberia. Postgraduate Conference’ at the *University of Edinburgh*, 2011;
- The ‘Dilemmas of Border Insecurity in West Africa: Case Study of the Liberian and Sierra Leonean Conflicts’, *International Studies Association’s* Annual Convention, Canada, 2009;
- The ‘United Nation Special Court and Post Conflict Peace in Sierra Leone: integrating Mediation and Education with Justice’, Furahbay College, *University of Sierra Leone*, Sierra Leone, 2010;
- ‘Conflicts and Security in the West African Sub-Region; A Critique of the Interwoven Conflicts: Liberia and Sierra Leone’, at the ‘Nottingham Centre for International Crises Management’, *University of Nottingham*; 2009.
- PhD Workshop on ‘Migration and Citizenship’, *University of Edinburgh*, 27th November 2009; ‘Beyond the ethics form: a debate on institutional ethics review procedures and the politics of ethics’, *University of Edinburgh*, 2012;
- ‘Identity Research: Past, Present and Future, Postgraduate Conference 2011,’ ‘School of Sociology and Social Policy’, *University of Nottingham*;
- ‘Ethics in Research’, at the ‘School of Oriental and African Studies’, *University of London*, 2010.

These conferences related to the themes of this research project and provided opportunities to present aspects of my project. The feedback I received was very important, providing both praise for strengths of my project and useful criticisms of it. It enabled my thesis to be related to other research in the field of conflict. Moreover, the contacts made were used to connect to other useful ones in Liberia and Sierra Leone.

APPENDIX FIVE: FIELD TRIP: RISK OF TRAVEL AND CONFLICT RESEARCH IN LIBERIA AND SIERRA LEONE

My field trip to Nigeria, Liberia and Sierra Leone was extensive and complex, because of: difficult travel arrangements, poor connecting flights between these countries and safety issues whilst in the field for the duration of four months. In this section, I will examine the ethical research challenges of physical and psychological harm, some of them due to inexperience during my fieldwork. Junior researchers and PhD students like me are the main recipients of such harm; these are mainly caused by inexperience, bad judgement, inadequate and poor preparation, and a lack of knowledge. This kind of risk is more prevalent in less developed societies, with no structural, systematic or methodological support from institutions within these societies. Researching these two countries was particularly dangerous in terms of the risk of physical harm, because, despite them being post conflict states, they lasted over 14 years and centred around the issues of mineral resources, diamonds and other forest resources. The conflicts also involved pockets of rebels and ethnic militia groups; although they were disbanded and pardoned under the *Truth and Reconciliation Commission*, some of their leaders are still facing trial at the *United Nation's* Special Court in Sierra Leone and *The Hague*. Moreover, there are rumours of rebels still operating in the deep jungle of each country, whilst their leaders still hold secret meetings. The risk of conflict was still high, for most issues that led to the conflicts remain unresolved; although they are both participating in fragile democracy, with the close observation of the *United Nation's* peace keeping forces stations in both states. During fieldwork, both countries were preparing for another round of democratic elections, with there being intense political activities, rallies and campaigns; this hence created a high possibility of election violence. There were also no institutional structures, which could help and assist researchers on fieldwork like those found in developed societies. Furthermore, researchers are still viewed with a lot of suspicion by state institutions and those researched in these countries under study.

According to Lee (1995, p.34), researchers are exposed to ambient dangers due to inadequate preparation prior to fieldwork; inexperience and a lack of understanding about the kind of imminent risks which may occur; a lack of adequate knowledge about the project as a whole, which could easily lead to bad judgement. Other potential dangers may arise from: a lack of understanding about the nature of imminent dangers in the country of research, due to a lack of reliable insider and outsider contacts; an inadequate understanding of the culture of the participants and country of research; a lack of adequate financial and material resources, all of these may result in the researcher's inability to anticipate consequences of unexpected actions/inactions.

The first imminent risk was on arrival at the *Lungi Airport* in Free Town Sierra Leone. The entry officer was not sure of my mission in Sierra Leone despite the entire letter I had on me explicating this. He instead seemed more concerned that I had a camera and voice recorder on me. After a thorough search of my person, I was detained for about an hour before I was introduced to a superior officer who demanded I give him some money before he could clear me; despite the fact that I carried an 'ECOWAS' passport permitting travel across West Africa. As this was going on, my senior military officer contact noted what was going on and cleared me. After my field trip to Sierra Leone, I realised there were no direct flight from Freetown to Monrovia in Liberia. If I had to fly, then I was required to travel back to Nigeria and then take another flight to Liberia; however, I had not budgeted for this and had no time for this. Instead, I had to travel along the treacherous roads from Freetown to Monrovia, a journey that took 36 hours and involved travelling day and night in the torrential rain of the African jungle in an old vehicle. The vehicle broke down twice due to mechanical faults; it also sank in the muddy road four times and had to disembark to push it out of the mud. There

were fears that we could be attacked by robbers or local militia men; and, the jungle was crawling with snakes and scorpions. There were several border check points — some of which were illegal, I am told by fellow commuters — and the driver and passengers were forced to give money to cross each of them.

Although I was fortunate enough not to fall ill during my field trip, I experienced other self-imposed. For instance, I took a trip out of Freetown to remote villages with the *United Nation's* 'Special Court of Sierra Leone Outreach Team', which was educating victims about its work and progress being made in prosecuting the perpetrators of war crimes. It must be stated here that they only allowed me to accompany them only after I went through their own internal risk assessment programme; however, the trip I went on was still risky, for we had to travel for hours through treacherous terrain, past the old diamond fields and contested territories. The riskiest experience was the several covert late night meetings with former rebel leaders, traditional militias and former child soldiers for interviews. In most cases, I had to attend their meetings and rallies; moreover, to meet up with them individually, I had to travel at night using transportation, deemed to be unsafe. Notably, this is the only way I could get the kind of information and data needed for this research project. Experiences, which were traumatising involved visiting the victims of the conflicts in their special community, as well as various orphanages and the crisis centres of rape victims. These left me psychologically and emotionally upset as there was little I could do to help. Further adding to this was the social and geographical isolation, with there being no family or friends close by to talk to at this most difficult time.

APPENDIX SIX: IMMEDIATE PREPARATION BEFORE INTERVIEW

The language of teaching and business in both countries is English, as Liberia was colonised by the Americans and Sierra Leone by the British and those that cannot speak good English can communicate in the local Pidgin English: this is a mixture of English with local slangs that have developed since the return of freed slaves. To capture the interviews, I obtained a good research recorder with long life batteries. It was a semi-structured interview, meaning some probing questions were prepared. The interviews were designed to avoid offending, especially since they involved face-to-face interviews in potentially risky countries, communities or sites — I was cautious in interviews taking place in private places or homes. I followed a time schedule, due to the risks of conducting intensive fieldwork in unfamiliar areas and where they view visitors suspiciously; I always thought out ahead of interviews escape routes in case of trouble. There have been cases of armed robbery in and around the major cities in Liberia, Sierra Leone and Nigeria, so I had to use convenient public transport and sometime had to hire private car and also from reputable taxi firm. The routes were properly planned in advance and I always took a map of the local area. Moreover, equipment and valuable items was kept out of sight when travelling to avoid attracting attention. Since both countries shared some cultural similarities with me, I was able to take account of cultural norms and values of the people being researched. These norms include: respect for the views and opinions of elderly people, salutations, bowing whilst saying hello, and using respectful terms like ‘sir’ when addressing people. This is very important, for issues of culture, tribe, race and gender may impact significantly on my safety of researchers. I did encounter some challenges in accessing respondents in Liberia and Sierra Leone. Sometimes I get lost in the city, because people have actually misdirected me to where I was going. On other occasions when I had to take public buses, I had taken the wrong bus or routes, and so turned up late to interviews. I have had to call my contacts on several occasions to get directions to where they are.

APPENDIX SEVEN: DATA STORAGE, ORGANISATION AND ANALYSIS

The raw data obtained was from transcripts of the individual interviews and focus group discussion conducted, and documentary evidences gathered. As detailed in my ethical approval form, all information, including contact information, diary entries, notes and recordings, were stored away in a separate and secured cabinet. All my interviews were recorded on a voice-recorder; although I gave respondents the option to opt out of this. After ensuring the confidentiality and security of data obtained, I analysed the findings by categorising, tabulating, and recombining facts to answer research objectives. To achieve this, I adopted Miles & Huberman (1994) framework of data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing/verifying. The purpose of data reduction is to condense the data in such a way that does not amount to information loss.

Immediately after my return from fieldwork, I transcribed all the interviews and then transferred the transcripts into the *Nvivo9* qualitative software application. Doing this created a platform where I could edit, segment and summarise the data gathered. My coding pattern involved the use of direct quotes from the interviews, and connecting patterns and themes. Coding is an essential part of analysis at different stages as it enabled me to label portions of data, thereby attaching meaning to them, this also served a dual function of storage, retrieval, and summarising of data by pulling together themes and identifying patterns. After this, the themes generated at this stage were categorised into major themes and subthemes. The major themes were an umbrella under which the subthemes were categorised and discussed. This made the sub-theme within each tri-focal conflict factors easily identifiable and analysable.

The *Nvivo9* software in a way afforded me the opportunity to store large chunks of data that was easily accessible and could be analysed systematically without the loss of information that could have resulted with the use of manual coding. The *Nvivo9* platform also allowed me to store the project and materials as a single portable and accessible file. It also gave me the opportunity to see all the information available on a particular theme or category and the respondents' summaries. To back up my coding, I was able to export the results and the transcripts into word documents using *Nvivo's* export feature. Unfortunately, a difficulty occurred while transcribing the focus group discussions as the software broke down and the university engineers could not fix it on time. Luckily, I did not lose the work already transcribed and already 80% of them had been transcribed. I had to listen to these interviews and manually transcribed them.

APPENDIX EIGHT: PARTICIPANT SHEET AND CONSENT SHEET

Participant Information Sheet

SCHOOL OF APPLIED SOCIAL SCIENCES



Name of department: *Geography and Sociology.*

Title of study: *Conflicts and Security in the West African Sub-Region: a critique of the Interwoven Conflicts; Liberia and Sierra Leone.*

Introduction

My name is Joseph Idegwu and I am a PhD student sponsored by the University Of Strathclyde, Glasgow, Scotland. United Kingdom.

Purpose of this Investigation

The aim of this PhD research is to uses the case of the Liberian and Sierra Leonean civil wars to examine the extent to which: 1) political identity and ethnic politics, 2) natural resources issues, and 3) porous border delineation/insecurity, combine as catalysts, to escalate, sustain the intensify or prolong conflict. The study will concentrate on what it refers to as three primary conflict escalating mechanism/relationship or ‘tri-focal conflict escalating factors,’ because it use these factors to analyse and compare both conflicts, hence elucidating their linkages and interconnectivity.

How you can help

It is my belief that your participation in this project will greatly help my understanding of the issues at stake. I humbly request that you participate as an interviewee/focus group discussion/source of reference and/or source of primary and secondary data. Your

participation is of great importance and is very relevant to this research. I would assure you that all information provided will be treated confidentially and you are free to withdraw from participation at any time without giving a reason.

What will you do in the project?

You will be involved in an interview/focus group discussion, which will take between 30-45 minutes. I expect you to express your opinion as freely and plainly as you can on questions that I will be asking you. Do not hesitate to take a break if you want and clarify any question(s) that you do not understand.

Why have you been invited to take part?

You have been chosen to take part in this study because you are an adult who I believe can contribute meaningfully to this project.

What happens to the information in the project?

Information will be stored on voice recorder and notes. I will be getting a personal safe to secure all personal information and data gathered to ensure the confidentiality of the participants and data that might be of a sensitive nature. Upon final transcription and completion of research, all data will be destroyed by deletion of the voice recorder and shredding of notes.

The University of Strathclyde is registered with the Information Commissioner's Office who implements the Data Protection Act 1998. All personal data on participants will be processed in accordance with the provisions of the Data Protection Act 1998.

Thank you for reading this information – please ask any questions if you are unsure about what is written here.

What happens next?

Do you wish to participate in this study? Yes/no (delete as appropriate)

If yes, I would be providing you with a consent form to sign to show your acceptance of participation in the study.

If no, thank you for your time and attention.

If you do wish to receive feedback after the final conduct of the investigation, kindly contact me at joseph.c.idegwu@strath.ac.uk.

This investigation was granted ethical approval by the University of Strathclyde ethics committee.

If you have any questions/concerns, during or after the investigation, or wish to contact an independent person to whom any questions may be directed or further information may be sought from, please contact:

Secretary to the University Ethics Committee

University of Strathclyde

McCance Building

16 Richmond Street Glasgow

G1 1XQ

Telephone: 0141 548 2752; Email: ethics@strath.ac.uk

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0141-848-3538

Consent Form

Name of department: Geography and Sociology

Title of study: *Conflicts and Security in the West African Sub-Region: a critique of the Interwoven Conflicts; Liberia and Sierra Leone.*

My name is Joseph Idegwu and I am a PhD student, sponsored by the University of Strathclyde, Glasgow, Scotland. United Kingdom. I hereby seek your consent and authority for you, and your establishment, to participate in my research as an interviewee/focus group discussion/source of reference and/or source of primary and secondary data.

- I confirm that I have read and understood the information sheet for the above Project and the researcher have answered any queries to my satisfaction.
- I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw from the project at any time, without having to give a reason and without any consequences.
- I understand that I can withdraw my data from the study at any time.
- I understand that any information recorded in the investigation will remain confidential and no information that identifies me will be made publicly available.
- I consent to being a participant in the project
- I consent to being audio and video recorded as part of the project [delete which is not being used]
Yes/ No

I (PRINT NAME)	Hereby agree to take part in the above project
Signature of Participant:	Date

APPENDIX NINE: UN COUNCIL RESOLUTIONS OF SANCTIONS AND ARMS
EMBARGO

APPENDIX TEN: ASSET FREEZE

APPENDIX ELEVEN: TRAVEL BAN