

WARID: Sierra Leone (RUF/AFRC) 1991-2000

STARDATE: 23 March 1991

ENDDATE: 10 November 2000

Related Cases: Liberia (NPFL) 1989-1996

Liberia (LURD, MODEL) 2000-2003

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Conflict overview

Sierra Leone was a state in disarray and under the autocratic rule of the only legal political party, the All Peoples Congress (APC), when, in March 1991, the Revolutionary United Front (RUF) invaded the country from Liberia. The RUF received military support from Charles Taylor – who had first been a rebel and later became president of Liberia – as well as from Burkina Faso and Libya. The rebels were led by Foday Sankoh, who had been imprisoned for seven years for supporting a coup attempt in the 1970s.

The governments of Sierra Leone that confronted the RUF were supported by the Civil Defense Force militias, by troops from Nigeria, Guinea, the United Kingdom, and by Liberian opponents of Charles Taylor. Moreover, the government hired the private military companies Gurkha Security Guards, Executive Outcomes and Sandline for battle against the RUF.

The RUF claimed to fight for a “new Sierra Leone of freedom, justice and equal opportunity for all”, for democracy, the exploitation of natural resources to the benefit of the people, and for a better status of the rural areas. RUF’s actual activities, however, indicated that its sole aim was to seize political and economic power, without striving for any programmatic objectives. According to David Keen (2005: 36), it is “hard to portray [...] the RUF convincingly as a political movement”. After initial semi-conventional warfare that nearly resulted in its defeat, RUF bolstered its strategy of looting villages and terrorizing civilians through killings and mutilations. Many RUF fighters were teenagers who had been conscripted by force. The RUF continued its armed struggle after competitive presidential elections in March 1996. On 25 May 1997, lower ranks among the military staged a successful coup against the elected president, Ahmad Tejan Kabbah; they invited the RUF to join them and established the Armed Forces Revolutionary Council (AFRC) under Johnny Paul Koroma. Foday Sankoh was declared the AFRC’s vice chairman. Even before parts of the military had colluded with

the RUF, acting as so-called ‘sobels’ – soldiers by day, rebels by night – who also attacked civilians (Abdullah 1998; Dupuy/Peters 2010; Gberie 2005; Hirsch 2001; Keen 2005).

The coup triggered an intervention by the Economic Community of West African States Monitoring Group (ECOMOG) that reinstated Kabbah in March 1998. In July 1999, the Lomé Peace Agreement was signed. It prescribed that the RUF should be granted four ministerial positions (art. V.3) and lead the Commission for the Management of Strategic Resources (art. VII.12). Nevertheless, the RUF did not abide by the agreement; it continued trying to seize power through violent means and finally marched on Freetown in May 2000. In November 2000, after the RUF had again been pushed back, the Agreement on Ceasefire (2000) – reaffirming the Lomé Peace Agreement as a framework for restoring peace – paved the way for war’s termination [**WARENDUC=1; WARENDOS=1**]. Being that conflicts continued into 2000 when the RUF started rebelling once again, other sources determine the end of the conflict to be closely linked to the political defeat (Themnér 2011: 89) and disarmament (Dowd/Raleigh 2012: 16) of the RUF, presenting advantages for the Sierra Leonean government. Ever since the Abuja Ceasefire Agreement was signed on 10 November 2000 – seen to be the supplement to the Lomé Accord –, no further fatalities were recorded in the Uppsala Conflict Data Program (UCDP) Encyclopedia. Thus, the war lasted 115 months [**WARDUR=115**]. The war was officially declared as ended only on 11 January 2002 (Gberie 2005: 2). We, however, abide by the definitions given by the UCDP.

The database’s best estimates for the death toll of one-sided violence stand at 1,482 and at 6,180 for battle-related deaths from 1991 to 2000 [**FATALUC=8000**].¹ Gberie is certain about 50,000 deaths but refers to the period from 1991 to 1999 (Gberie 2005: 6). Keen also cites the figure of 50,000 deaths, referring to the Human Rights Watch in 1999 (Keen 2005: 1). In 2002, the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI) estimated 43,000 deaths (SIPRI Yearbook 2001: 36).² In 2014, the School of Culture of Peace (ECP) stated a figure of 75,000 deaths (Yearbook Peace Processes 2014: 182) while the UNDP put forth about 70,000 casualties (UNDP 2006: 4). Overall, Keen’s and Gberie’s monographs are more reliable studies since they look at a single-case and provide more detail. We therefore consid-

1 It is essential to note that the UCDP Encyclopedia and the UCDP Dataset differ concerning conflict details in Sierra Leone. The contradiction comprises data with regard to the death toll. The Encyclopedia assumes 8,000 deaths and views the conflict as finished in 2000 whereas the Dataset presents 21,000 deaths and the conflict continuing in 2001 (battle-related death toll of 48 victims in 2001). The information from the Dataset was updated in June 2014; the Encyclopedia does not give further information concerning its updates. Since the Codebook is based on the Encyclopedia, this report refers to its data.

2 Besides that, the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI) cites the following figures in the Yearbook for 2000: 100,000 deaths (December 1999), 75,000 deaths (January 2000) and 60,000 deaths (August 2000). The death toll seems to be qualified.

er Gberie and Keen to be the most reliable sources and take their estimate of 6,250 deaths per year to be a realistic one. The UCDP Encyclopedia's estimate is 2,107 deaths while the Dataset assumes 4,793 deaths from 1999 to 2001. The average value of the figures from the ECP and SIPRI, including the UNDP data, is about 60,000³ [FATALOS=60000]. In 1990, the World Bank estimated the country's population to be 4,042,678 [PREWARPO=4000000].⁴ According to the Encyclopedia, the conflict claimed the lives of 0.2% of the population in Sierra Leone whereas the combination of other sources suggests 1.5% [INTENSUC=0.2; INTENSOS=1.5].

The military balance at the end of the war

Although the peace and ceasefire agreements were signed by both warring parties, the Sierra Leonean Government is considered as the superior party considering that its partners – the UN, UK and Guinean forces – “broke the back of the RUF insurgency” (Thomson 2007: 8). The defeat of the RUF was not a military one: the RUF were still in control of several thousand fighters and important territories, especially in diamond-mining areas. The ceasefire agreement acknowledged that there had not been a military victor [VICTORY=0].

The territorial expansion of the RUF during the war must also be underlined, though the scope of these areas varied, as the rebels advanced and retreated several times. Before Kabbah was reinstated in March 1998, the RUF controlled about 70% of the country (Gberie 2005: 122). In May 2000, it encompassed about 50% (Keen 2005: 265). By the end of the conflict, the rebels were still in control of important territories such as diamond-mining areas from which they extracted resources (Cook 2003: 27; SIPRI Yearbook 2001: 30). The International Crisis Group (ICG) estimates the area controlled by the rebels in Sierra Leone to be about 50% in early 2001 (ICG 2001c: 5). In his more detailed analysis that we consider more reliable, Hirsch speaks of centers of the rebels' territories in early 2001 (Hirsch 2001: 148-149). This analysis illustrates that the RUF controlled 90% of the diamond-rich areas but also that they lost the larger portion of the territory they once controlled [REBTERR= -1; MORETERR= -1]. Cunningham et al. are also certain of rebel control in important territories by the end of the war. Control may refer to any RUF presence that resulted in the further recruitment of combatants and the extraction of resources (Amnesty International 2001). Even if the rebels

3 The UCDP Encyclopedia considers more than one quarter of its assumed victims to be killed in the last two years. Furthermore, the arithmetic mean of 6,250 deaths per year suggests 12,500 additional deaths in two missing years. Bearing this in mind, the figure of 50,000 deaths in the entire Sierra Leonean conflict may be judged as unrealistic. Taking these estimations into account, the most reasonable figure in the discourse is 60,000 deaths.

4 <http://data.worldbank.org/country/sierra-leone> (10 Feb 2015).

controlled important areas, they agreed to the DDR process and the presence of the peace-keeping forces. They were pressured from two sides: the forces of Guinea and the UK – who were strong-willed to defeat the RUF (ICG 2001c: Appendix C) – and the UN, which intended to implement the DDR procedure as soon as possible (Cook 2003: 27). Thus, even if they were able to further extract resources, they were losing their civilian influence and military predominance.⁵

As case-specific literature suggests, Cunningham et al (2009) judge the rebels' fighting capacity as 'moderate' [**REBFIGHT=0**]. Although the RUF was repelled in 2000, it still had enough combatants to continue fighting in more than a sporadic manner. About a quarter of RUF combatants were disarmed in 2000 (Keen 2005: 257). Thus, the RUF was still able to continue fighting due to the size of its fighting force. In addition, the rebels seized weapons, food and equipment from ECOMOG and United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone (UNAMSIL) forces, implying an intention to prepare for further clashes (Binningsbø/Dupuy 2009: 98). Considering the rebels' capacities, on the one hand, and well-trained British forces combined with broad support for the government, on the other, it is reasonable that both warring parties would have been able to continue fighting [**CONFIGHT=0**].⁶

Sankoh was arrested in 2000 and died in custody before being tried at the Special Court for Sierra Leone established by the UN Security Council [**LEADER= -1**].⁷

Hence, the military balance at the end of the war favored the Sierra Leonean Government [**WARBAL= -0.5**].

The military balance in the post-war period

The post-conflict period was characterized by the DDR program, which aimed at reintegrating ex-combatants into civilian life. Its progression was arranged in three phases – the first two were poorly organized but the third attempt is deemed to be the most significant one (Bangura 2013: 48; Licklider 2014: 207). Most AFRC soldiers reintegrated more easily than other paramilitary combatants – ex-junta soldiers almost exclusively joined the new Sierra Leonean army (Themnér 2011: 89). In 2010, the Uppsala University assumes, that “the core of the RSLAF today still consists of former ex-combatants and ex-army soldiers” (Kovacs 2010: 15). Being they had the professional background of qualified soldiers, they also had access to better job opportunities. In line with this, the ex-combatants from the CDF and RUF hardly had the opportunity to incorporate into the army. In 2005, about 6,000 former combatants of

5 The domination referred to a combination of control by violence and economic enrichment.

6 ICG 2001c: Appendix C; Kargbo 2006: 310.

7 Keen 2005: 264-265.

the AFRC were in the ranks of the RSLAF (Kovacs 2010: 123), amounting to 46.15% to 50% of the total armed forces.⁸

When the SLPP was reinstated in 1998, many of the former AFRC soldiers were already part of the RSLAF⁹ (Themnér 2011: 89). They jointly fought with the de facto security force of the SLPP, the CDF. In 2000, the government allied with them as well as with the entire AFRC.¹⁰ Most of the army units reverted to government control (Peters 2011: 22). Thus, we do not consider that AFRC and CDF rebels substantially influenced the state's forces.

The main conflict arose between the government and the RUF, whose former combatants were given the option to seek entry in the new army after the conflict 2002 (Bangura 2013: 46). 3,000 of the 72,000 ex-combatants registered for the necessary DDR program: 2,350 of them were posted in the RSLAF, a third of them had belonged to the CDF, and the others were part of the RUF (Kovacs 2010: 12). The 1,500 to 1,700 former RUF soldiers do not amount to more than 13% of the RSLAF in 2002.¹¹ Due to the DDR program, most former RUF participants are considered civilians who were unlikely to rearm.¹² We therefore do not consider the post-conflict period to be characterized by significant participation of rebels in the state's forces [**STATEFOR 2001-2012= -1**].

The Abuja Ceasefire Agreement initiated the transformation of the RUF into a political party and was a third attempt to organize the DDR process. The disarmament forced the RUF to hand over its arms and combatants as well as important territories it had held, such as diamond-mining regions. In September 2001, disarmament centers were established by the UN in four of twelve districts; by December, ten districts were able to disarm combatants, and the process was finished by January 2002 (Cook 2003: 30). Thus, by early 2002, state power in Sierra Leone was in favor of the government, implying that the RUF was powerful in the first half of 2001. The elections in May 2002 consolidated Kabbah's government.

As a result of the DDR process, the RUF did not have separate armed forces after 2002 [**SEPFORCE 2001=0, SEPFORCE 2002-2012= -1**]. As such, the amount of troops and their equipment cannot be assessed for this period [**TROOPS 2002-2012=n.r.; ARMS 2002-2012=n.r.**]. The CDF is not listed in the IISS yearbooks for 2000 or 2001 (IISS 2000/2001:

8 IISS Yearbook 2006: Total armed forces in 2005: 12,000-13,000 men.

9 Since a reform in 2002, the SLA was united with the air force and the navy; this constellation is called the 'Republic of Sierra Leonean Armed Forces' (RSLAF). The RSLAF faced several problems concerning logistics, communication, transportation and accommodation (Lezhnev 2006: 41).

10 In addition, not only did the CDF operate as pro-governmental force but also assumed the AFRC's former governmental background, implying the likeliness that it may again fight for the country.

11 IISS Yearbook 2003: 13,000 to 14,000 men actively participated in the Sierra Leonean army.

12 The United Nations Development Programme Evaluation Office mentions lessons to be learnt concerning DDR programs such as the Sierra Leonean one (2006: 31-32). However, Banholzer (2014: 15) judges the DDR process in Sierra Leone as a success story.

281 and 2001/2002: 276). Consequently, the ratios of troops and arms cannot be ascertained [TROOPS 2001=n.d.; ARMS 2001=n.d.].

Throughout 2001, the RUF controlled territory and continued the large-scale mining of diamonds in the Kono district (Gberie 2005: 189). However, the RUF lost the control of the diamond mines and all territory they once held on account of the DDR process [TERRCON 2001=0, TERRCON 2002-2012= -1; TERRWIN 2001-2012= -1]. Since the RUF lost control over its territories in the post-war period, it is considered the more vulnerable party [VULNERAB 2001-2012= -1]. Acting as the supervisor for the DDR process, the peacekeeping mission UNAMSIL – which replaced the observing UNOMSIL (UN Observer Mission in Sierra Leone)– left the country on 30 December 2005 and was not followed by another UN mission [PEACKEEP 2001-2005=0, PEACKEEP 2006-2012=n.r.].¹³ From June 2000 to July 2002, UK troops were also present to support the government of Kabbah (Human Rights Watch 2002) and were followed by an UK-led mission until early 2013 aimed at restructuring the military and strengthening the government (Dorman 2013: 4). On 1 January 2001, the UK declared that British troops remain in Sierra Leone “until the RUF has been defeated by war or diplomacy” [P5ALLY 2001-2012= -1].¹⁴

Subsequently, the post-war military balance slightly favors the government in 2001 [POSTBAL 2001= -0.57] and strongly favors the government in the following years [POSTBAL 2002-2005= -0.83, POSTBAL 2006-2012= -1]. In sum, the military balance was consistently in favor of the government [BALANCE 2001= -0.54, BALANCE 2002-2005= -0.67, BALANCE 2006-2012= -0.75].

Economy

According to the World Bank, the gross domestic product (GDP) per capita constantly grew from 2001 to 2008, doubling from 2001 to 2011. Sierra Leone still remained one of the poorest countries in the world.¹⁵

Table 1: GDP per capita in current USD

Year	Population (total)	GDP per capita
2002	4,493,047	276
2003	4,712,763	291
2004	4,928,175	290
2005	5,119,895	318
2006	5,280,909	357

13 <http://www.un.org/en/peacekeeping/operations/> (14 Oct 14).
 14 ICG 2001c: Appendix C.
 15 <http://data.worldbank.org/country/sierra-leone> (10 Feb 2015).

2007	5,416,015	399
2008	5,532,139	453
2009	5,641,182	435
2010	5,751,976	448
2011	5,865,491	500
2012	5,978,727	633

The scale of compromise after the war

Presidential and parliamentary elections were supposed to be held in early 2001 but Kabbah and the parliament exceptionally decided to extend the legislative period, initially for 6 and then for another 12 months (Cook 2003: 31). Several opponents, including the RUF, sought to prevent this but were not empowered to do so; this entailed an advantage for the government. Another drawback for the RUF was its lack of a consistent political agenda and the poorly organized political wing (ibid: 21). Nonetheless, the Lomé Accord implied that the RUF was part of the power-sharing agreement (Lomé Accord 1999: art. V) that guaranteed it several cabinet posts and control of the diamond mines.¹⁶ Thus, it participated in the government until the power-sharing deal collapsed due to tensions with the RUF during the implementation process. Governmental participation by the rebels lasted a few months and was followed by a ceasefire agreement (Binningsbø/Dupuy 2009: 97-98). In 2002, the RUF Party did not win any seats in parliament and its presidential candidate received less than 2% of the votes (Kandeh 2003: 191). Former AFRC leader Jonny Paul Koroma received around 3% though his party, the Peace and Liberation Party (PLP), won two seats.¹⁷ In 2007 and 2012, RUF and PLP failed in the parliamentary and presidential elections [**GOVERN 2001-2012= -1**].¹⁸ Neither the constitution nor the peace agreement implies veto rights for the warring parties [**VETO 2001-2012= -1**]. In 2002, Kabbah won the national elections while the RUF Party lost and did not become part of the Parliament.¹⁹ Decisions were made by a simple or a two-thirds majority [**VETOSAT 2001-2012=n.r.**]. By postponing the national elections in 2001, the government underlined its advantage during its term of office [**ELECT 2001= -1**]. In 2002, 2007 and 2012, the RUF participated in basically free and fair elections. Since its political wing dissolved on account of ex-RUF fighters working for other parties and because

16 The Lomé Accord also implied amnesty and pardon for Sankoh and all combatants of the RUF, several ministerial posts and the status of a vice-presidency for Sankoh by supervising the diamond trade. The warring parties did not keep these agreements, as demonstrated by Sankoh's imprisonment of, Kabbah's different choice of cabinet posts for the rebels by, and his enlarged cabinet (Binningsbø /Dupuy 2009: 96-98).

17 ICG 2002: 1; http://africanelections.tripod.com/sl_detail.html#2002_House_of_Representatives_Election (14 Oct 2014).

18 ICG 2001a: 18-19; ICG 2001b: 2-3; Results provided by the National Electoral Commission: <http://www.nec-sierraleone.org/index.html> (14 Oct 2014).

19 The RUF merged with the All People's Congress Party in 2007 (Themnér 2011: 178; Kandeh 2008: 605). Despite this, the RUF performed as an independent party in 2012.

leader Sesay, Kallon and Gbao were convicted of war crimes in February 2009, “the RUF was not able to establish itself as a viable political party” (Themnér 2011: 96, 129) As Freedom House rated the political rights from 2001 to 2007 with a ‘4’ and from 2008 to 2012 with a ‘3’, we assess all elections as basically free and fair [**ELECT 2002-2012=0**].²⁰

The warring parties fought over the question of national resources and power but they did not question the internal or external borders [**EXBORDER 2001-2012=n.r.**; **INBORDER 2001-2012=n.r.**]. Even if the rebels claimed the right to rule Sierra Leone, they did not want to re-arrange competences among the political levels [**COMPETEN 2001-2012=n.r.**]. The anthem of the RUF emphasizes the desire to enrich oneself economically but it does not urge a fundamental change of economic order²¹ [**ECONOMY 2001-2012=n.r.**]. Overall, the war was not based on ideology, ethnicity or religion (Gberie 2005: 180), even if it was possibly caused by ethnic conflicts [**SPECPRO 2001-2012=n.r.**].²² It is problematic to identify programmatic demands by the RUF for two reasons: first, it presented political aims only in very vague terms. The most concrete claim was democracy. However, the rebels continued fighting even after competitive elections. This leads to the second reason: the vague demands served only to mask the sole motivation of seizing political and economic power.

The central issue concerned the control over the diamond mines. According to Gberie (2005: 7, 14, 181), diamonds did not cause the war but fuelled the war and turned out as the principal motivation for the RUF. As the UN report writes: “Estimates of the volume of diamonds mined by the RUF vary widely, from as little as \$25 million per annum to as much as \$125 million” (Report of the Panel of Experts 2000: para. 78). In 2001, the SLPP was not able to prevent national resources from being extracted by the RUF. During their marginalization, the rebels had to hand over these territories [**ISSUE 2001=1**, **ISSUE 2002-2012= -1**; **ISSUE2 2001-2012=n.r.**]. No central issue emerged in the post-war period [**NEWCON 2001-2012=n.r.**]. Thus, there were no compromises on conflict objects [**BENEFIT 2001-2012=n.r.**; **BENEFIT2 2001-2012=n.r.**].

In conclusion, the post-war order always favored the government [**COMPROM 2001= -0.5**, **COMPROM 2002-2012= -0.75**].

20 The best possible rating is ‘1’ and the worst ‘7’. URL: <http://www.freedomhouse.org/sites/default/files/Country%20Ratings%20and%20Status%2C%201973-2014%20%28FINAL%29.xls> (10 Oct 14).

21 The anthem of the RUF and further statements are available at: <http://www.sierra-leone.org/AFRC-RUF/RUF-051199c.html> (14 Oct 2014).

22 Ndumbe 2003: 1.

Stability of peace

According to the UCDP Encyclopedia, neither the terminated civil war nor any other civil war resurfaced in Sierra Leone [**SAMEWAR 2001-2012=0; DATESAME=n.r.; ANYWAR 2001-2012=0; DATEANY=n.r.**]. Subsequently, we conclude the situation remained peaceful until the end of the period under investigation [**PEACMON1=146; PEACMON2=146**].

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