



## Structural Violence and Relative Deprivation: Precursors to Collective Political Violence in Sierra Leone

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**JSOU PRESS**  
OCCASIONAL PAPER  
FEBRUARY 2018

**On the cover:** In 1999 war torn Sierra Leone, where the forces of the Revolutionary United Front (RUF) and the rebels of the Armed Forces Revolutionary Council (AFRC) oppose government troops and Civil Defense Forces also known as Kamajors, two boys fill a water bucket at a community water tap in Brookfields, a poor neighborhood in Freetown.

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ISSN 2572-9020 (print)

ISSN 2572-9039 (online)

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR



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# STRUCTURAL VIOLENCE AND RELATIVE DEPRIVATION: PRECURSORS TO COLLECTIVE POLITICAL VIOLENCE IN SIERRA LEONE

After more than five decades of independence in many Sub-Saharan African states, the widespread lack of basic human needs is still pervasive, permeative, permanent, and visible in the region. In particular, insecurities are endemic in the areas of food, health, politics, and income, among others. The objective of this analysis is to examine how the combination of structural violence and relative deprivation are associated with and/or were predictors of civil strife in Sierra Leone between 1991 and 2002. In other words, the focus is on analyzing one key question: In what ways did structural violence deepen insecurities and intensify relative deprivation in Sierra Leone and contribute to civil war? The presence of human insecurities of food, health, politics, community, environment, and individual mean that violence can be both psychological and physical, and result in not just relative deprivation but in abject poverty thereby destroying human securities that are essential for a stable national political economy.<sup>1</sup> In other words, inherent in structural violence is psychological harm, political and economic deprivation due to corrupt and insensitive political-economic and socio-cultural structures.<sup>2</sup> In other words, as is the case in many war-ravaged countries, it is frustration and anger associated with institutional policies or governmental actions that eventually contribute to the eruption of ethnic bloodletting.

## **Structural Violence: Theoretical Grounding and Conceptual Clarification**

The notion of structural violence comprises both physically violent acts/events and psychologically harmful acts. The violence is not necessarily intentional and /or visible use of force, but the violence is often “invisible,” taken for granted, or ignored.<sup>3</sup> Some examples of structural violence are: food insecurity (defined as having no access to adequate food); government oppression; living on less than \$1 a day; lack of adequate housing; or lack of access to clean water. In structural violence, there is a tendency to de-emphasize the realities of poverty, sickness, hunger, or a short life expectancy.<sup>4</sup> These ills of society are ignored, or seen as normal, and breed a tendency to blame the victim by branding the poor as lazy. In many developing countries, governments do not provide any welfare for their

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1. “Human Development Report” United Nations Development Programme, (New York: Oxford University Press for the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), 1994).

2. Johan Galtung, *Peace by Peaceful Means: Peace and Conflict Development and Civilization* (London: Prio/Sage, 1996); and J. Salvage, K. Melf, and I. Sandoy (eds), *Structural Violence and the Underlying Causes of Violent Conflict* (London: Medact, 2012).

3. Paul Farmer, “An Anthropology of Structural Violence,” *Current Anthropology* 45, no. 3 (June 2004): 305–325.

4. Nancy Scheper-Hughes, “Dangerous and Endangered Youth: Social Structures and Determinants of Violence,” *Annals of the New York Academy of Sciences* 1036, (January 2005): 13–46.

poor. This can be demoralizing, especially for the youth, who view the future as bleak and devoid of any work or educational opportunities.

Structural violence as a concept underscores the realities of the human misery associated with inequality and disability. Some premature or early deaths can be linked to systems, institutions, policies, and institutionalized socio-cultural behaviors which meet some groups or people's needs and rights but deprive others of those same needs and rights.<sup>5</sup> One of the consequences of structural violence is the creation and perpetuation of negative relationships that could eventually degenerate into rebellions, civil wars, or other forms of national destabilization or societal destruction. In fact, the effects of structural violence have been linked to terrorism, revolutions, *coups d'état*, and internal wars. These are many types of secondary violence within society that take place simultaneously with elevated crime rates, interpersonal violence, domestic violence, and rape.

In structural violence, the narratives surrounding human insecurities of food, health, politics, the environment, the individual, the community, and income are reframed into issues of violence that can destroy a nation-state. Such violence can debilitate a society resulting in higher levels of self-destruction manifested in alcohol abuse, drug abuse, suicide and depression, among others. Structural violence produces secondary violence at three levels: self-destruction at the individual personal level manifested in drug abuse, alcohol abuse, depression and even suicide; community destruction such as higher levels of crime and interpersonal violence; and national destruction as in riots, civil wars, or terrorism.<sup>6</sup> One could even argue that widespread and intense structural violence could result in international destruction such as wars among states, or the spillover of civil wars to neighboring states. Stated differently, this means that structural violence which is associated with civil wars has an ascending order of scope of violence beginning with the individual, to the community, and then national or even international levels.

Structural violence emphasizes social exclusion, poverty, and marginalization of the poor. Historically, structural violence could be traced to development changes inherent in socio-economic, political, and cultural domains.<sup>7</sup> Industrialization resulted in the marginalization, exclusion, and political oppression of many groups, countries, and communities, and the destruction of many environments. Modernization or industrialization has produced two contradictory outcomes: elevated lifestyles of many while also destroying, or putting at risk the security of many others. In some societies basic human needs such as food and healthcare and adequate housing are not considered a human right. Some societies by their institutions, policies, or cultural systems perpetuate structural violence. One of the key reasons, if not the main one, is governmental corruption in state institutions which satisfy needs of some groups at the expense of the needs of other groups. Over time, corruption in public life becomes a way of life. Since an integral aspect of national governments is to craft development plans and policies, some policies by their very nature produce winners and losers, which add to the pool of the marginalized, hungry, poor, or those without access to adequate food, income,

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5. John P. Lederach, *Preparing for Peace: Conflict Transformation across Cultures* (New York: Syracuse University Press, 1996).

6. Lisa Schrich, *The Little Book of Strategic Peacebuilding* (Intercourse, PA: Good Books, 2004).

7. G. Kitching, *Development and Underdevelopment in Historical Perspective* (London: Routledge, 1989).

or health care.<sup>8</sup> Policies in many countries may result in increased insecurity for some individuals or groups instead of alleviating the effects of structural violence. In conclusion, all states pursue development as a goal. The problem is many aspects of development produce structural violence which in turn generate physical violence or civil strife because they produce intolerable inequalities that intensify and become pervasive. Inequalities become unbearable when basic human needs are out of reach for most members of society. When access to food in particular is difficult, it breeds intense misery which in turn could produce revolt. This condition quickly can become a powder keg for national stability, when coupled with a government incapable of managing its infrastructure by easing the problems of transportation, healthcare, access to education, and the delivery of other essential services, such as electricity, garbage collection, and water supply.

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***Inequalities become unbearable when basic human needs are out of reach for most members of society.***

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## **From Structural Violence to Relative Deprivation**

There is a strong connection between the negative effects (structural violence) of state institutions in many developing countries and feelings of relative deprivation in individuals, and groups in society. The various patterns of relative deprivation—decremental, aspirational, and progressive—for Gurr<sup>9</sup> determine the magnitude of frustration and anger throughout a populace and serve to generate violence in society. Generally, relative deprivation is comprised of:

1. A standard of comparison. It is this standard of comparison that governs individual action.
2. Standards of comparison range from the perceived state of some social unit or group.
3. Involves the group's view of a specific reference group perceived as either rivals, similar to their group, or based on some other value.<sup>10</sup>
4. The standard for comparison lies strictly within the group's or individual's state of mind or psychic world.
5. The fact that relative deprivation also has a temporal dimension – that is the level of relative deprivation (want-get gap) changes with time and in relation to some level of expectation.<sup>11</sup>

In Decremental Relative Deprivation (DRD) individuals are angered because of the loss of what they previously had or thought they could have. Such a situation arises when wants stagnate while means or capabilities are perceived to decline. People then experience relative deprivation in relation to their past condition.

Factors responsible for DRD are:

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8. J. Seabrook, *Victims of Development: Resistance and Alternatives* (London: Verso, 1993).

9. T.R. Gurr, *Why Men Rebel* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1970); T.R. Gurr, *Why Men Rebel* (Paradigm Publishers/Routledge, 2011).

10. Gurr, *Why Men Rebel*.

11. J.C. Davis, "Towards a Theory of Revolution," *American Sociological Review* 27, (1962): 5–19; Gurr, *Why Men Rebel*; and W.G. Runciman, *Relative Deprivation and Social Justice* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1969).

1. Declining production of material goods in society
2. Deteriorating security or value system in a society
3. Disproportionate tax burdens on one class in relation to others
4. Declining employment opportunities for a particular group in society
5. Psychic displacement of people who migrate from rural to urban settings.<sup>12</sup>

Aspirational Relative Deprivation (ARD) means or capabilities remain relatively constant while expectations (wants, aspirations) increase. Groups or individuals may be simply expecting or demanding more material goods, a better political order and system of justice, or new values (e.g. political participation, or equality with other groups) already enjoyed by others.

Progressive Relative Deprivation (PRD) refers to “a substantial and simultaneous increase in expectations and decrease in capabilities.”<sup>13</sup> In other words, collective political violence is more likely to erupt when a prolonged period of actual economic and social development is followed by a short period of abrupt economic decline.

PRD is:

1. A special case of ARD because the long improvement in an individual’s condition produces expectations of continued improvement.
2. When people are afraid that what they have accumulated over the years will be lost overnight.
3. Due to economic depression in a growing booming economy.
4. Occurs in a society experiencing modernization within a context of rigid political and economic structures.

These psychological theories are commonplace arguments that simply say, “When people are pushed too far, they revolt,” or, “Misery breeds revolt,” or, “People strike back when trampled upon.” Relative deprivation theories argue that the rise of popular protest is an inevitable outcome or response to unfulfilled expectations and unfair treatment.

However, for frustration and anger stemming from relative deprivation to be transformed into rebellion it has to be politicized.

## **The Sierra Leone Civil War**

The author argues in this analysis that Sierra Leone was plagued by structural violence and it was this condition that then contributed to a severe case of relative deprivation which in turn sparked the civil war that lasted from 1991 to 2002. First, since the early post-colonial regime of Prime Minister Milton Margai and later his brother Albert Margai, in the 1960s corrupt practices by the political elite focused

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12. T.R. Gurr, *Why Men Rebel*, 2011, 53.

13. William Reno, *Corruption and State Politics in Sierra Leone* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1995).

on self-enrichment had begun.<sup>14</sup> By the 1970s the Siaka Stevens regime institutionalized these corrupt practices and introduced political co-optation of the opposition enhanced by an alliance of a one-party regime where the ruling party and the army were in active cooperation. At the same time there was a surge in the informal market economy due to smuggling, corruption, and embezzlement of state resources. This became the principal instrument for extracting resources, organizing production, and distributing access to politicians for economic opportunity. It became the perennial effort by the elite to maintain the loyalties of supporters and co-opt any opposition.<sup>15</sup> The result was that formal state institutions that should directly be involved in development were starved of resources necessary for national development. For instance, the diamond industry which is the greatest source of national revenue, was transformed into an integral part of the informal economy. This accelerated the smuggling of diamonds thereby contributing to the worsening of economic conditions despite increased extraction of diamonds. In the agricultural sector, the state and farmers lost further revenue from the falling producer prices in the 1970s and 1980s. The corruption within state institutions translated into redistribution of resources mostly to political supporters. Jobs were often selectively provided thereby marginalizing many citizens who were not well-connected to the incumbent All Peoples Congress (APC) regime.

As a result of the widespread corruption in government, by 1973 the budgets of the public sector strained to meet current expenses, as well as debts incurred by past governments. By the early 1980s, the great expectations that accompanied the early years of the APC regime had been transformed into disenchantment.<sup>16</sup> Complaints about government corruption and increasing misery within society were pervasive. Moreover, by this time, bribery, nepotism, financial speculation (embezzlement) had become institutionalized and contributed greatly to the underdevelopment of the state and intensified the level of personal and group insecurities especially in the areas of food and healthcare. The pervasive corrupt practices in state and society contributed directly to the deterioration of state institutions like the judiciary, civil service, labor unions, chieftaincy, among other things. All this constituted remote factors that contributed to Sierra Leone's downward spiral into severe relative deprivation.

## **Intermediate Factors of Civil War**

The immediate or intermediate factors that contributed to the country's descent into civil and state collapse were the further economic dislocation of the country directly related to the excessive national expenditure and debt incurred as a result of the 1980 hosting of the Organization of African Unity (OAU) Summit, which consumed almost all the state resources that should have been used for national development.<sup>17</sup> The hosting of the Summit did not in any way contribute to the country's national development. In fact, poor African countries that host such summits often suffer a loss of valuable

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14. Sahr J. Kpundeh, *Politics and Corruption in Africa: A Case Study of Sierra Leone* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1995).

15. Christopher Clapham (ed.), *Private Patronage and Public Power* (London: Frances Pinter, 1982).

16. A.B. Zack-Williams, "Sierra Leone: Crisis and Despair," *Review of African Political Economy* 49, (1990): 23–33.

17. Gorge O. Roberts, *The Anguish of Third World Independence: The Sierra Leone Experience* (Washington, D.C.: University Press of America, 1982).

resources for national development. This is contrary to the argument that it improves a country's potential for national development. In reality enormous sums of money are often expended to the detriment of the national budget. In the end such expenditures translate into a big sacrifice that the majority of citizens make to satisfy the desires of less than one percent of the population. However, in Sierra Leone, the political elite, especially President Siaka Stevens, defended the decision to host the meeting as one that would benefit the country because projects and infrastructure associated with the meeting would be permanent and therefore an addition to national development.<sup>18</sup> The OAU village of 60 modern and well-equipped bungalows, the newly built hotels and the renovated ones, the new electric power units, as well as the conference center at the Bintumani Hotel, among many other so-called development projects did not in any way contribute to an increase in the gross national product of the country or add to the long-term growth to the national economy.<sup>19</sup> Instead, the foreign participants and a few indigenous citizens benefited and reaped the financial gains of constructing the OAU projects.

Immediately following the summit, the masses continued to be hard hit by economic scarcity and escalating prices of basic commodities. Two years later in 1982, the APC regime was confronted with a serious lack of revenue. Infrastructure and public services were further affected. Roads became dilapidated, electricity was in short supply, garbage collection suffered, water supply was no longer regular, schools lacked facilities and supplies, hospitals and clinics suffered heavily, and salaries of public workers and officials were not paid regularly, among other problems associated with state failure and impending collapse.<sup>20</sup> The result of these negative developments was that more public officials were forced into deeper corruption such as the use of public equipment or resources for private profit. The consequence was unrestrained private enrichment by the powerful, further deterioration of the formal economy (because of the booming informal economy), the mounting debt burden and virtual collapse of many state institutions.

## **Precipitating Factors of Civil War**

The very serious economic condition in the country impelled the APC government to turn to the International Monetary Fund (IMF) for help. But, because of the often negative effects of austerity measures required by the IMF, President Stevens did not go all the way with implementing the requirements called for by the IMF. He feared the IMF measures were so severe on human security that implementing them was tantamount to committing political suicide. When Joseph Momoh assumed the presidency in 1985, he announced sweeping reforms under the labels of "New Order" and "Constructive Nationalism."<sup>21</sup> Unlike his predecessor, Momoh showed the political will to implement

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18. Rashid Koroma, "Siaka Stevens; The Good, the Bad and the Ugly: How Much Did He Destroy Sierra Leone Politically and Economically?" [www.thissierraleone.com/](http://www.thissierraleone.com/).

19. Abdul K. Koroma, *Sierra Leone: Agony of a Nation* (Freetown: Andromeda Press, 1996).

20. C. Magbaily Fyle, "The State and the Provision of Social Services in Sierra Leone Since Independence, 1961–91," *Dakar: Codesria*, 1993.

21. David Fasholé Luke, "Continuity in Sierra Leone: From Stevens to Momoh," *Third World Quarterly* 10, no. 1 (1988): 67–78.

IMF austerity measures that were supposed to include privatization of industries and government-controlled investments, an open market to attract foreign investments, and more state willingness to collect domestic revenue. In particular, IMF prescriptions for Sierra Leone included removal of subsidies on essentials like rice—the staple food crop of Sierra Leone—as well as petroleum products. The IMF austerity measures went hand in hand with the determination by the Momoh regime to combat the underground economy based largely on diamond smuggling.

One detrimental effect of the IMF austerity measures was that by 1989-90, the end of subsidies caused the price of gasoline to jump to 300 percent and that of rice to 180 percent.<sup>22</sup> These effects, when coupled with the increasing inability of the state to pay wages and salaries, produced intense deprivation and suffering for those not well connected to President Momoh or the APC regime. While the IMF provided the funds needed for Momoh to continue running the state, there was not enough money or resources for political rewards, subsidies, or payment of salaries on a regular basis. Rewards were the instrument used to control dissent and check rebellion toward the president. This loss of state monopoly on wealth redistribution resulted in anarchy over competition and self-help for resources. The author believes that the political elite were preoccupied with extracting resources for their benefit and that of their families, and their immediate political supporters.

Sierra Leone as a weak political economy was very susceptible to the negative effects of IMF Structural Adjustment Policies (SAPs) demanded by the World Bank and the IMF as solutions to the dislocated national economy. It may not have been so much the austerity measures that had the harmful effects on society, but the manner in which they were implemented. The measures had the effect of “shock therapy,” jolting society into intense relative deprivation.<sup>23</sup> Sierra Leoneans lost their entitlements overnight, they experienced a sudden and sharp reversal of fortunes, and they had no means of achieving new “wants.” All these experiences became associated with the galvanization of Sierra Leone society into violent action as a result of the politicization of frustration which became manifest in organized rebellion against the APC. The IMF made sure the underground economy in diamond mining was dismantled by calling for the privatizing of the mining industry. Designating a single private investor to manage the industry, it was argued, would eliminate the underground economy of smuggling. Complying with this IMF condition, the APC government authorized the Sierra Leone Army (SLA) to remove an estimated 30,000 illicit miners and traders from mining areas. This was significant because many Sierra Leoneans had flocked to mining areas in search of work.

The disruption of this large underground economy, combined with the displacement of miners, emboldened some to take action against the government and the SLA. Many of these displaced miners would later join forces with the Revolutionary United Front (RUF) rebel force in its war against the Sierra Leone government.<sup>24</sup> The ripple effect of dismantling the underground economy within the mining sector was significant because it was the country’s largest and most lucrative source of economic activity. This meant that more people became deprived of economic sustenance, especially

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22. *For Di People*, 5 November 1990, 1.

23. John Weeks, *Development Strategy of the Economy of Sierra Leone* (London: Macmillan, 1993).

24. “Momoh’s New World,” *Africa Report* (July–August 1986): 32.

those dependent on the displaced illicit miners. Second, another significant external precipitating factor was the regional one—the spillover of the Liberian civil war into Sierra Leone. The Liberian warlord Charles Taylor deliberately made it part of his policy objective to secure some of Sierra Leone’s diamonds by joining forces with, and even financing the RUF, with the aim of taking over the diamond mines in Sierra Leone.<sup>25</sup> Together with the RUF, Taylor and his National Patriotic Front of Liberia (NPFL) would use Sierra Leone’s diamonds as a source of financing for their insurgency.

In Sierra Leone in the 1980s, open economic comparison was widespread among groups such as between college graduates, politicians without college degrees, civil service workers who were not being paid for months, and the average laborer working on temporary jobs, among others. Graduates from the university, for instance, were angered at the fact that their higher level of education did not provide them any greater advantage or economic benefits compared to the ordinary laborer or petty trader. Instead, what they saw were the advantages of being well-connected to the ruling APC regime. The level of frustration among college graduates intensified as they saw individuals similar in educational levels doing far better economically because of their strong connections to the neo-patrimonial system of the APC regime.<sup>26</sup> The level of grumbling, anger, frustration, occasional protests by student groups, and strikes by high school teachers, increased as the level of relative deprivation and economic misery became widespread among students, teachers, laborers, and college lecturers.

In the Sierra Leone political economy in general, the situation became increasingly desperate with the drastic decline or non-production of material goods, or the lack of access to them. Existential insecurity in food and healthcare in particular worsened, and with it the increase in crime, including banditry—organized bands of robbers targeting homes at night. In Sierra Leone during the 1960s and 1970s, it was not a problem to secure a high school or primary school teaching position, and the civil service still employed some college graduates. But, by the mid-1980s, such positions became very hard to find. Securing a public sector position also meant working for months without payment. In other words, employment opportunities plummeted in Sierra Leone prior to the civil war.<sup>27</sup> There were no doubt that the combination of an economy that had been in decline for a long time, and the implementation of IMF austerity measures by President Momoh, was the equivalent to experiencing a near depression in an economy that was already very sluggish.

The level of frustration in Sierra Leone was responsible for the eruption of violence against the APC in March 1991. Situations involving frustration, anger, and even intense deprivation, do not always follow with violence against the incumbent regime. In order for violence to be triggered, the frustration and anger has to be politicized and transformed into open rebellion. This therefore means that there should be political activists to spearhead the frustrated and angry citizens into rebellion against the incumbent regime. In the case of the Sierra Leone civil war, three individuals,

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25. Earl Conteh-Morgan and Shireen Khadivar, “Sierra Leone’s Response to ECOMOG: The Imperative of Geographic Proximity,” in *Peacekeeping in Africa*, eds. Karl P. Magyar and Earl Conteh-Morgan (London: Macmillan, 1997).

26. Earl Conteh-Morgan and Mac Dixon-Fyle, *Sierra Leone at the End of the Twentieth Century: History, Politics, and Society* (New York: Peter Lang).

27. D. Keen, “Greedy Elites, Dwindling Resources, Alienated Youths: The Anatomy of Protracted Violence in Sierra Leone,” *Internationale Politik und Gesellschaft* 2.

Foday Sankoh, Abu Kanu, and Rashid Mansaray, spearheaded the rebel RUF war against the APC government.<sup>28</sup> All three of them received insurgency training in Libya in 1987-1988. Following their return from Libya, the three worked hard recruiting, training, and politicizing other Sierra Leoneans who became the nucleus of the RUF. In addition, they also recruited combatants from neighboring Liberia and developed close ties with Liberia's rebel leader, Charles Taylor, and his NPFL. By 1989, the RUF and NPFL agreed to assist each other with fighters and military assistance, especially arms supplies.

## Conclusion

In sum, the downward spiral of Sierra Leone's political economy and society from a stable political entity to state failure and collapse from the 1960s to the 1990s was due to a combination of factors. First was the corrupt practices by the political elite who were focused since the early days of independence on self-enrichment. This self-enrichment was strengthened by a massive increase in the informal economy based on smuggling, corruption, and embezzlement of state resources. In particular, the diamond industry was transformed into an integral part of the informal economy. The consequence was that formal state institutions that should be directly involved in development were starved of resources necessary for national development. The smuggling of diamonds contributed to the worsening of economic conditions despite increased extraction of diamonds and other minerals. The state and farmers lost further revenue from the fall in produce prices in the 1970s and 1980s. By 1973, the budgets of the public sector strained to meet current expenses, due largely to debts incurred by past governments.<sup>29</sup> Accordingly, by early 1980s the great expectations and aspirations that accompanied the early years of the APC regime had been transformed into disenchantment. By this time, the 1980s, bribery, nepotism, financial speculation had become institutionalized and systemic, and contributed greatly to the underdevelopment of the state. In fact, state institutions established by the government were used for the purpose of redistribution of resources to political supporters or party stalwarts. Jobs were selectively provided, thereby marginalizing many Sierra Leoneans. These corrupt practices directly led to the rapid deterioration of state institutions like the judiciary, the civil service, the police force, labor unions, chieftaincy, among many others.

It was an internal and external structural problem which intensified political grievances, deprivations, widespread misery, and eventually led to the implosion of Sierra Leone into full scale civil war. All classes of people experienced existential insecurity in the areas of food, health, transportation, and income. Both educated youth and the marginalized ones were affected. Many civil service workers lost their jobs as a result of the implementation of IMF austerity measures. Those who maintained their jobs were employed only in name because they would work for months without remuneration. School teachers were especially hard hit because they were not only poorly paid but they also went several months without any pay. It is not surprising that with all these frustrated and marginalized

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28. E.G. Berman, "Arming of the Revolutionary United Front," *African Security Review* 10, no. 1 (2001).

29. Sierra Leone: Ministry of Finance, *The Budget of Sierra Leone* (Freetown, Sierra Leone: Ministry of Finance, 1994).

citizens, it was easy for the RUF to recruit many Sierra Leoneans into its rebellion.<sup>30</sup> In addition to the child soldiers that were forcibly recruited into the movement, there were also many participants that were law-abiding members of society, who either joined the RUF or gave them moral support. Finally, it is easy to focus on the RUF as the main source of the violence perpetrated on civilians during the war, but the SLA also carried out a great deal of violence. This was because, with the collapse of the patrimonial system and the lack of money to satisfy the army, the SLA became a predatory force on ordinary Sierra Leoneans. Soldiers, as well as RUF rebels, looted houses, engaged in extra-judicial killings, and terrorized society. During this time no institution existed to ensure personal security in Sierra Leone. Soldiers became so unprofessional they were referred to as *sobel*s—meaning they were soldiers during the day and rebels at night looting houses and engaging in unnecessary violence.

In the 1990s in countries like Liberia and Sierra Leone, economic stagnation resulted in reduced levels of per capita income. This, coupled with the external imposition of the IMFs, SAPs became risk factors for civil strife. Population groups experienced deep poverty and widespread decremental deprivation. They were angry at their increased misery or the loss of the comfortable life they once had. That produced anger against the incumbent regimes which resulted in violence. Citizens became angry at the APC regime because of the loss of the economic quality of life they once had. The imposition in Sierra Leone of SAPs was viewed as sudden and resulted in a profound change in people's expectations. Individuals and groups were also deprived of new "wants" because of a decline or stagnation in resources or capabilities (means) to acquire them.

The Sierra Leone state in broad terms was weak because it:

1. Lacked the capacity to extract resources from its citizens.
2. There was a lack in government's effectiveness in provision of services (water, electricity, transportation, garbage collection, etc.)
3. Lack of effective control over the territory, or effective implementation of national policies through the Sierra Leone territory.

In sub-Saharan Africa in general, there was widespread and deep internal economic instability which became a crisis of regime legitimacy. There was a drastic fall in government revenues along with a disruption in the provision of public services.<sup>31</sup> These developments, especially economic deprivation because of the government's inability to pay the salaries of civil servants and other public sector workers, led to food insecurity and a lack of access to basic human needs. The deprivation suffered by public sector workers exacerbated structural violence because it intensified the corrupt practices within government institutions, which in turn affected the well-being of those dependent on the supply of public services. The precursor to civil strife began with an increase in petty crime, and escalated into robberies, and banditry. As the social contract, and expectations of citizens ceased to exist the likelihood of violent conflict increased.

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30. K. Peters, *War and the Crisis of Youth in Sierra Leone* (Cambridge: University Press, 2011).

31. C. Magbaily Fyle, "The State and the Provision of Social Services in Sierra Leone Since Independence, 1961–1991," Senegal: Codesria, 1993.

Sierra Leone was impelled by increasing economic difficulties to turn to the IMF. Dismal economic failure was strongly associated with political crisis.

Severe economic weakness were due to:

1. An overvalued currency which worsens balance of payments problems;
2. Over-expenditure by the government accelerating the inflation rate; and
3. Intervention in agricultural markets which dampens the incentives for and resulted in low agricultural productivity and diminished exports farmers.

Finally, what made the situation of relative deprivation increasingly intolerable was the fact that the national economy of Sierra Leone, like those of most African states, is characterized by production for export, or focus on cash crops rather than for domestic consumption or emphasis on food crops. This situation is coupled with a government or regime that blatantly provides “wants” or luxuries for the few at the expense of the basic needs of the vast number of citizens, many of whom experience grinding poverty as a way of life. A contrast in society exists between conspicuous consumption (luxury cars, modern well-equipped homes, or latest electronic gadgets, etc.) and abject poverty, chronic unemployment, and a bleak future for the youth, exacerbated frustration, anger, and hostility toward the APC regime. Among African states during the late 1980s and the early 1990s, Sierra Leone had descended to the level of the least of developed states. Death rates were the highest in the world and life expectancy the lowest. Sierra Leone’s economic woes, like those of other African states, were a combination of both internal and external systemic conditions. There were the negative effects of adverse terms of trade, the enormous economic burden of rising oil prices for cash-strapped and weak oil-importing nation, and the ever downward fluctuating value of raw materials for export, as well.



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