

# Historiography of Sierra Leone Conflict and How It Was Resolved

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**Abstract:-** Developing countries are awash with protracted conflicts, intriguing narratives of belligerent groups fighting incumbent government. The quest for stability and sustainable governance strikes at the root of inquiry whether Sierra Leone has moved on since the war ended. This paper is retrospective and prescriptive in nature. Retrospective in the sense that, it attempts to analyze the historiography of Sierra Leone conflict, methods and tools as well as the actors who were involved in one of the prolonged conflicts in Africa. It is also prescriptive in the sense that it looks beyond the Sierra Leone crisis and appreciates the efforts put in place to end the Sierra Leone stalemate. This paper, therefore, seeks to examine the causes of the Sierra Leone conflict and the various interventions employed by the international community to secure a peaceful and durable solution to the conflict. The paper starts with a background account of the conflict, discusses the key factors that contributed to the conflict and concludes with the various measures employed by the international community to resolve the conflict.

**Key Words:** Historiography, Sierra Leone Conflict, Revolutionary United Front (RUF), National Patriotic Front of Liberia (NPFL)

## I. INTRODUCTION

Globally, multiple conflicts have been witnessed, devastating as they have occurred. Continentally, and in Africa specifically, conflict has been witnessed and experienced in alarming scales. According to Cilliers and Schunemann (2013) intractable conflicts have been the order of the day in most African countries. Cilliers *et al* (2016), further contend that power and influence in Africa tend to dictate the nature of conflict. The Sierra Leone conflict began in 1991 and ended in 2002. According to Gberie, (2005), the Sierra Leone conflict started when the Sierra Leone Revolutionary United Front (RUF), a small band of well-armed, organized and funded guerrilla rebels launched an attack from Liberia with the support of Special Forces of Liberia's, National Patriotic Front of Liberia (NPFL) of Charles Taylor). They quickly crossed into Sierra Leone from the Eastern and South Eastern side of the country on 23 March 1991.

Driven by the desire to oust the government of Sierra Leone under President Momoh Joseph, oust corrupt politicians and redistribute resources to the majority poor, they quickly gained territory (Abdullah, 2004). This was made possible partly due to the poor state of the Sierra Leone Army (SLA), which could not repulse them and also due to the brutal tactics that they employed against the civilian population to force

them to follow their instructions.

The government's underpaid, poorly trained, unprofessional, ill-equipped and much undisciplined SLA troops could not effectively stop the incursion of the RUF rebels. The rebels also used extreme terror tactics on the population as a way to instill fear on civilians and hence force them to support their cause. Children were forcefully abducted and conscripted into combatants through death threats. They also bayoneted the civilians who refused to obey their instructions; they amputated limbs of those who disobeyed them, while raping and sexually abusing women and girls of different ages (Davies, 1996).

The conflict lasted for about eleven years. According to Peters (2011), over 50,000 civilians were killed during this time, others were raped, maimed, or forced to be child soldiers and sex slaves. The country's mineral resources were looted with impunity and the economy was brought to its knees. The conflict only ended in 2002 after sustained efforts by the comity of nations, the international community and regional organizations. In particular, the West African Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), managed to resolve the conflict (Gberie, 2005).

## II. BACKGROUND TO THE SIERRA LEONE CONFLICT

Located on the West Coast of Africa, Sierra Leone is a country that covers an area of about 72,000 square kilometers. It is bordered by the Republic of Guinea to the north and northeast, the Atlantic Ocean to the West and South West and the Republic of Liberia to the east and southeast. It has a population of about seven million (World Population Prospects, 2017). The population is made up of an indigenous population of eighteen (18) ethnic groups. The largest tribes are the Temne in the north and the Mende in the South. Descendants of freed slaves who returned to Sierra Leone from Great Britain and North America, the Krios, are also about sixty thousand (60,000). There are also about one thousand Lebanese nationals in the country (Ministry of Health and Sanitation Survey, 2013).

According to Richards (1996), the country is endowed with large quantities of diverse natural resources. Sierra Leone has rich deposits of diamonds, gold, iron ore, bauxite, and the largest deposit of titanium in the World. It records one of the highest rainfalls in the West Coast of Africa. It has a huge variety of hard wood forests. It also has vast fertile land that is good for a variety of agricultural crops that are used for

domestic consumption and export. It has one of the best natural harbors in the World, with the potential for promoting international trade and transshipment

Having gained independence from Great Britain in 1961, the country has had a very turbulent history characterized by a repeated violent change of governments. Six out of ten leaders that have held position of head of State and Government in Sierra Leone have been democratically elected. Sir Milton Margai served between 1964-1967. Siaka Stevens served between 1968-1985. Ousted Major-General Joseph Momoh Saidu served between 1985-1992. Tejan Ahmad Kabbah served between 1996-2007 and Ernest Bai Koroma who has served since 2007 to date.

After independence a period of relative peace and stability was witnessed across the country. This, however, was short-lived. The country soon degenerated into a despotic leadership after the first post-independence general elections of 1967. The elections were won by the opposition party, the All Peoples Congress (APC) of President Siaka Stevens. Immediately he was declared the winner, the country witnessed its first military coup led by Brigadier David Lansana. The military prevented the new government from taking office. This military reign was however short-lived since they were overthrown in a counter-coup after only eight months in office (Mamdani, 1996). Euphoria and optimism of hope and prosperity characterized the rule of APC after the country returned to parliamentary government in 1968. The people expected a lot from them based on their pledges during the campaign period. However, the new government soon became unpopular and was faced with considerable unrest and violence due to the poor economic management and failure to meet most of the election pledges it had made to the people (Conteh-Morgan and Doxon-Fyle, 1999). This state of affairs is actually believed to be one of the main reasons that contributed to the birth of the Revolutionary United Front (RUF) in 1991. The RUF main objective was to seize political power from the APC regime.

The APC government was eventually overthrown in April 29th, 1992. According to Fisher (1969), this brought in, the government of former President Joseph Saidu Momoh of the National Provisional Ruling Council (NPRC). By this time, the RUF had already launched their incursion into Sierra Leone from the east and southeastern side of the border with Liberia. Since they were quickly gaining ground, the new NPRC government came in with a pledge of swiftly ending the war. The war, however, continued to spread across the country, rendering most parts of the country unsafe and ungovernable.

A democratically elected civilian government of the Sierra Leone Peoples Party (SLPP) replaced the NPRC government in March 1996. The new government was led by President Ahmad Tejan Kabbah. The RUF refused to participate in the elections and continued with their atrocities across the country. They however quickly faced some war setbacks

against a combined force of the Executive Outcomes. This involved some Sierra Leone military loyalists and the civil militias. This forced them to agree to peace negotiations to end the war in mid-1996 and in the same year they signed the Abidjan Peace Accord in November (Abdullah, 2004). One of the provisions of the agreement was to withdraw the South African Executive Outcome mercenaries from Sierra Leone.

Nohlen (1999) opined that, though this brought about temporal peace to the country, no sooner had the Executive Outcomes fighters withdrawn from the country, the RUF reneged on what they had agreed and resumed their campaign of unleashing violence and terror. The military Junta, the Armed Forces Revolutionary Council (AFRC), led by Major Johnny Paul Koroma was the armory they used to fight their way to the capital city, Freetown. This forced President Kabbah to flee to exile in neighboring Guinea in 1997.

This ushered the Sierra Leone crisis to the international radar. It prompted the regional West African Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) to take action. In 1997, the Economic Community Monitoring Group (ECOMOG), the military wing, was tasked by ECOWAS to extend its role in Sierra Leone. By early 1998, the ECOMOG troops had managed to forcefully rout out the AFRC/RUF group out of power. This led to reinstatement of the elected government of President Ahmed Tejan Kabbah after nine months in exile.

The international community, encouraged with the new developments, increased support to the reinstated government. During this time, they also pushed for the signing of the Lome Peace Agreement 1998. The ongoing development led to the deployment of United Nations Military Observer Mission in Sierra Leone (UNOMSIL), in July 1998. The United Nations deployed a peacekeeping force, in October 1999, the United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone (UNAMSIL), to help restore order and disarm all the fighting groups in the country (Collier, 2000).

As time elapsed, a great majority of the combatants had surrendered their arsenals to the UN peacekeepers. As a landmark event, the Sierra Leone government and the rebel groups declared the end of the war on the 28th January 2002. This historic event led to the holding of new democratic elections in May 2002 and President Kabbah was re-elected for the second time as the President of Sierra Leone (Bell, 2005).

### III. ROOT CAUSES OF THE SIERRA LEONE CONFLICT

Adekanye (2003:13-17), mooted that, the root cause of conflicts in Africa can be categorized into "background/structural cumulative disposition conditions". In this regard, history is replete with such conditions that provoke and sustain conflicts in Africa. They range from inter-ethnic rivalry based conflict in Rwanda to the inter-religious conflict in Mali and the resource-based conflict in South Sudan and DR Congo, among others.

Like all conflicts in Africa, the Sierra Leone conflict was as a result of intricate, complex internal and external factors that sustained it for over a decade, until the international community was forced to intervene. Among the root causes of the Sierra Leone conflict include; historical factors plunder of natural resources, weak state conditions, corruption and poor economic conditions, negative ethnicity, arms availability and regional interlocking conflicts among others. Each of these factors will be examined in detail in subsequent paragraphs.

#### *a. Historical factors*

According to Davies (1996), the conflict in Sierra Leone can be traced to its historical past and colonial era. Before independence, that is, 1961, it existed as a British Colony of former slaves and a British Protectorate of Africans in the hinterland. This created some rivalry between the two groups. Whereas the colony was under the watch of British laws, the protectorate was governed under native customary laws with paramount chieftaincy rule (Mamdani, 1996).

This dual administrative and legal system in the governance of the same country seemed to be asymmetrical. The colony was governed with much favor compared to the protectorate as far as the provision of basic social amenities and access to critical services including healthcare, education, electricity, and water supply were concerned. According to Bell (2005) this had far-reaching ramifications on the development of the two regions. The inhabitants of the Protectorate considered themselves neglected in favor of those in the colony. This was more exemplified when the hut tax was introduced. This state of affairs stirred serious resentment and fomented acrimony among the peoples of the protectorate. They, therefore, were the majority who supported the RUF cause. This is due to the fact that they were poor, uneducated, unemployed and considered themselves marginalized.

#### *b. Weak State Conditions*

Prior to the civil war in 1990, Sierra Leone was faced by a number of political and governance challenges. It was short of a true democratic, accountable and transparent government even before the attainment of independence. Even with the advent of independence the political situation did not improve. Violent change of governments started almost after independence with the overthrow of President Siaka Stevens after the 1967 elections. Successive governments continued to pervade the ills of parlous governance left behind by their predecessors. Most of the politicians were sometimes accused of squandering of public resources with impunity at the expense of public welfare. This punitive and blatant squander brewed up mistrust and suspicion from the civilians and consequently triggering the conflicts (Reno, 1995). This is the situation that was prevailing during the years preceding the outbreak of the conflict in 1991. With such weak governance structures and eminent state collapse, the RUF rebels were able to launch their attacks and advance to Capital Freetown with little resistance.

#### *c. Corruption and Poor Economic Conditions*

Despite Sierra Leone possessing huge mineral deposits and good agricultural land, the economic status of the country was very weak. This state of affairs was largely prompted by corruption that was pervasive across all facets of society in the pre-conflict years. By 1990, corruption pushed the entire economy almost to the doldrums. Most institutions became moribund. The repercussion of such a status precluded services from reaching the population. With an economy on the free fall, law and order broke down in all sectors of the country. Life expectancy dropped to an average of a mere 37 years. Additionally, few people had more than a 5th-grade education. The Gross National Income (GNI) had also dropped to about \$1,400 annually (Reno, 1995). These conditions left Sierra Leone vulnerable to war. In this regard, within just a month the deprived and marginalized majority readily took up arms and joined the RUF rebels as they could easily identify with their cause. The government was unable to put up a significant defense and so was easily overrun by the rebel fighters (Pratt, 1999).

#### *d. Negative Ethnicity*

Recurrent inter-ethnic conflicts have been a great threat to the stability of many countries' in today's world. Even countries like South Sudan have been labelled "ellipse of instability". In this context, ethnicity features conflicting intergroup interests, sometimes resulting in ethnic violence. This happened to be the case in Sierra Leone. Ethnic relations served as an undercurrent factor in the Sierra Leone conflict. The Sierra Leone Peoples Party (SLPP), which ruled the country after independence drew its support mainly from the eastern and southeastern regions of the country. Most of its support came from the largest ethnic group, the Mendes, and other tribes from the same region. They were therefore perceived to have received preferential treatment during the rule of the SLPP government. When later the political power switched to the All Peoples Congress Party (APC), which enjoyed support from the northern regions dominated by the 'Theme' and 'Limba' ethnic groups, they argued that it was their turn to benefit also. They hence used this argument to favor northerners in the recruitment to public employments especially the military and the police forces and thus engage in primordial exercises. This created inter-ethnic and regional tensions in the country (Peters, 2011). Being aware of this fact, the RUF used the propaganda that thrived on fighting to bring back the Sierra Leone Peoples Party to power. This also explains the reason for their launching their attacks from the eastern and southeastern side of the country. They were assured of support from the dominant ethnic groups in those regions and so they were able to recruit many combatants from those parts of the country.

#### *e. Availability of Arms*

The other major factor that contributed in fueling and sustaining the Sierra Leone conflict was the availability of arms to the RUF rebels. When they captured and annexed the

diamond-rich districts of Kono and Kailahun in Eastern Sierra Leone, they were able to freely mine the diamonds. This provided them with the much-needed resources to support the war effort. The revenue they obtained from the dividends of the diamonds was utilized to procure arms and ammunition to propagate the war further. Mostly they got the weapons and ammunition from neighboring Liberia and other countries in Europe like Belgium. With such vast resources, availability of arms and international recognition, the RUF were sure that they could sustain their war effort for as long as they wanted.

#### *f. Regional Interlocking Conflicts*

The other factor that contributed to the Sierra Leone war was the numerous conflicts in the region. The prevailing security situation in the Mano River region had a direct influence on the Sierra Leone conflict. This region comprised the countries of Guinea, Liberia and Sierra Leone. They were all experiencing security challenges in the 1990s, which spread across borders and engulfed the whole region leading to a severe humanitarian crisis. According to Abdulla (2004), it all started with Charles Taylor, a protégée of Libyan dictator, Col. Mu'ammar al-Qadhafi, seizing power in Liberia and spreading terror to Sierra Leone, Ivory Coast and Guinea. In December 1989, Charles Taylor invaded Liberia from Ivory Coast, with a small band of Libyan-trained rebels. As he was consolidating power in Liberia, neighboring Sierra Leone fell to a Taylor-backed armed rebel group calling itself the Revolutionary United Front (RUF) in 1991. It was backed by Taylor's National Patriotic Front of Liberia (NPFL) forces. Under the generalship of Corporal Foday Sankoh, another of the Libyan-trained revolutionaries, the RUF prospered. Corporal Foday Sankoh, had fought alongside Taylor in Liberia. By this time in history, the RUF had consolidated control of the diamond-rich areas of Sierra Leone. Concurrently, a Taylor-backed armed junta also flared up in neighboring Guinea in 1992.

It is therefore evident that the Sierra Leone crisis was a product of the interlocking conflicts in the Mano River region and especially in Liberia at the time. It helped to fan the flame of brutality in Sierra Leone. Lujala (2005), averred that the provision for arms, training of rebels and giving of cash was orchestrated by Charles Taylor. For sustenance of the war, he continued to offer his support due to the rewards he got from sales of diamonds.

#### *g. The absence of the Independent Civil Society Sector*

The Civil Society Sector is known as the "third sector" of society, along with the government and business. It provides 'watchdog role' to the other two in the promotion of good governance and development in society. It is essential in development because the task of governance and development, particularly in developing nations, is too important and perhaps too complex to be left to government alone. The civil society sector, therefore, exists to provide checks and balances and ensure that the government delivers on its mandate.

Unfortunately for Sierra Leone, it lacked an independent well-informed Civil Society Sector. This is because the political elite of successive governments in Sierra Leone had managed to exclude them from participating in decision-making processes on issues that affected civilian livelihood. The students, youths and local groups that were key stakeholders in the societal development were marginalized. It was these groups that played a critical role in initiating and fueling the armed conflict when it started. They easily identified themselves with the cause of the RUF rebels and joined in large numbers (Fearson, 2005).

#### *h. Land Disputes*

Though this was not a key factor in the crisis in Sierra Leone, it played some role. The land distribution and arbitration question in Sierra Leone played some part in fueling the conflict. When the war broke up, various groups in the provinces supported the RUF as a way of retaliation against the group(s) that they perceived to have taken their land unjustifiably (Prat, 1999). This was occasioned by the fact that some land wrangles were considered to have been wrongly arbitrated, upon by the traditional leaders. The onset of the civil war, therefore, provided such people with an easy avenue of venting their grievances and personal vendettas against their perceived enemies who had taken their land illegally.

#### *i. Unprofessional Military Force*

When the RUF rebels initiated their incursion from the eastern and southern borders of the country on 23 March 1991, the Sierra Leone Army (SLA) was not able to adequately carry out its constitutional responsibility of defending the citizens. This was occasioned by the fact that the army was unprepared, incompetent, and highly indisciplined (UNDP, 2010). This state of affairs was blamed on the endemic corrupt practices in government. The government not able to meet the basic needs of the military. Besides it was only keen on improving the operational readiness of the paramilitary force that was involved in internal security activities. This paramilitary force was being prepared to maintain the ruling class in clout. The soaring corrupt attitude of senior army officers aggravated the situation of the SLA who were also involved in diverting logistical support intended for the execution of the war into their own use. This greatly undermined the defense of the country and it bred a lot of malaise and disaffection within the rank and file of the army (Reno, 1995).

### IV. EFFORTS TAKEN TO RESOLVE THE SIERRA LEONE CONFLICT

The Sierra Leone conflict broke out in 1991 but was insignificant on the radar of the international community at the initial stages of the civil war. It came into the international limelight in 1997, when the RUF rebels managed to capture the capital city of Freetown, driving the legally elected government of President Kabbah to exile in Guinea. However, a number of interventions had been tried internally by successive regimes in the country to quell the crisis, but

with little success. Externally, a number of stakeholders also adopted several measures to assist resolve the conflict in Sierra Leone. They include individual neighboring states like Guinea, foreign governments like the United Kingdom, France and the United States, Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), and the international community including the African Union and the United Nations (diplomatshandbook.org). They all contributed in different ways to bring the conflict to an end. A detailed account of the role played by the various stakeholders will be covered in the subsequent paragraphs.

#### *a. Efforts by ECOWAS*

Within the African Peace and Security Architecture (APSA), Regional Economic Communities (RECs) and Regional Mechanisms (RMs) in Africa are responsible for the prevention, management and resolution of conflicts in their regions. The Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) is therefore responsible for addressing conflicts in the West Africa region. Originally formed as a regional organization to promote economic integration of the fifteen Member States (El –Agraa,1997),it however later transformed into an organization responsible for finding solutions to armed conflicts and other political crisis undermining peace and security within the community. It was established in 1975. It was therefore in the forefront of finding ways of resolving the conflict in Sierra Leone. In 1996, a contingent of the Economic Community of West African States Monitoring Group (ECOMOG) was deployed to Sierra Leone to normalize the situation. In February 1998, it deployed a force of about 12,000 troops led by Nigeria to fight the RUF rebels out of capital city, Freetown (Gberie, 2005). The battle took away many lives but the rebels were eventually driven out of the capital. Correspondingly, President Ahmad TejanKabbah was restored in office and key rebel leaders including FodaySankoh, the overall commander of RUF, were arrested. They were charged, and convicted of treason and other offences (Richards, 1996).

#### *b. Efforts by the Organization of the Africa Unity (OAU)*

To rid the continent of colonization and apartheid; to promote unity and solidarity among African States; to safeguard the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Member States ;to coordinate and intensify cooperation for development; and to promote international cooperation within the framework of the United Nations,were the main reason why OAU was established (Gberie,2005). The Organization of African Unity (OAU) was established in 1963. The OAU, as the continental body in Africa and concerned with the situation in one of its members, was therefore among the first organizations to unequivocally condemn the May 1997 coup in Sierra Leone by Johnny Paul Koroma.OAU called for the unconditional return of the country to constitutional order. It also further requested the leaders of the regional Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) to assist the people of Sierra Leone in returning the country to civilian rule. By June 2000,

the OAU Secretary-General appointed a Special Envoy to Sierra Leone in the person of Ambassador Jeremiah N.K. Mamabolo, the Ambassador of South Africa to the Federal Republic of Ethiopia and Permanent Representative to the OAU. Mamabolo was tasked with the mandate of enhancing efforts, which the OAU was employing in finding a solution to end conflict in Sierra Leone. Additionally, representatives of OAU more often than not, attended meetings held with Sierra Leone parties to the conflict in trying to reach a negotiated settlement. OAU was also one of the moral guarantors (witness) to the Lome Peace Agreement (Abdullah, 2004), which provided the basis for lasting peace and security in the country. Later, there was a renaissance of OAU and OAU transformed to African Union (AU) in 2002 with a specific mandate of promoting peace, security, and stability on the continent, it continued to support efforts of promoting peace and stability in Sierra Leone. In accordance with article 8 of the African Charter on Democracy, Elections and Governance, AU also sent an observer mission during the 2002 elections in Sierra Leone. This mission proved pivotal in restoring order in Sierra Leone.

#### *c. Peace Negotiation Efforts by various Stakeholders*

During the eleven years of Sierra Leone crisis, various stakeholders made efforts to facilitate peace negotiations and mediation between the parties to the conflict. In 1996, peace talks were initiated byNational Provisional Ruling Council under President Julius Maada Bio with the Revolutionary United Front in Abidjan. The negotiations continued afterwards. This culminated to the signing of the Abidjan Peace Accord in November 1996. However, this agreement did not hold because RUF rebels quickly reneged on its provisions and continued attacking the civilian population. In 1999, another peace effort to resolving the conflict took place between the government of President TejanKabbah and the Revolutionary United Front in Lome, Togo. The then President of the Republic of Togo and who was also the chairman of ECOWAS, was the chief negotiator. With the assistance of the international community including the United Nations, the Commonwealth of Nations, the African Union, Britain and the United States, the government and RUF leadership signed the Lome Peace Agreement. This agreement facilitated the deployment of the United Nations Mission In Sierra Leone (UNAMSIL) in December 1999, under United Nations Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 1270V (Gberie, 2005). The mission assisted to disarm and demobilize all the fighters, assisted in conducting of elections in 2002 and only left after the country after it had stabilized.

#### *d. Negotiated settlement -Efforts by the United Nations*

The United Nations was established in 1945 with the prime role of maintaining international peace and security. It takes the lead in determining the existence of threat to international peace and security internationally and calls upon the parties to a dispute to settle it by peaceful means. Exceptionally, it can resort to imposing sanctions or even authorizing the use of

force to maintain or restore international peace and security. That is putting into effect carrot and stick principle. In the case of Sierra Leone, the United Nations was not directly and actively engaged during the initial stages of the Sierra Leone conflict, though its development and humanitarian agencies were active in the country all those years. It only became involved in 1994 when the Head of State of the country at the time, Captain Valentine Strasser, requested the United Nations Security Council to assist in bringing about a negotiated settlement between the government and the RUF rebels.

In this light, in February 1995, the United Nations Secretary General appointed a Special Envoy in the person of Mr. Berhanu Dinka, an Ethiopian to work in collaboration with the OAU and ECOWAS to come up with a negotiated settlement of the Sierra Leone conflict and ensure the country returns to civilian rule. In 1998, the United Nations Secretary General replaced Mr. Berhanu Dinka as the UN Special envoy with Mr Francis Okelo from Uganda and upgraded the position of the Special Envoy to Special Representative of the Secretary General (SRSG) so that he could have more clout to deal with the parties in the country and also head the UN entities operating in Sierra Leone. The United Nations Security Council further established the United Nations Observer Mission in Sierra Leone (UNOMSIL). With a 6,000 strong force to help the government and parties to the conflict to carry out the provisions of the Lome Peace Agreement, in Oct 1999, the United Nations Security Council established, the United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone (UNAMSIL) (Kamara, 2000). Additionally, the Security Council under subsequent resolutions continued to revise the mandate of UNAMSIL to meet new tasks with an increase in the number of peacekeepers that reached a record high of over 17,500 troops by March 2001. With this force UNAMSIL was able to disarm thousands of ex-combatants. It also assisted in the conduct of national elections in 2002, helped to rebuild the country's police force and contributed towards rehabilitating the infrastructure and bringing government services to local communities. In early 2002, UNAMSIL completed the disarmament and demobilization of over 75,000, ex-combatants. This led to the government of Sierra Leone and all other parties officially declaring the end of the Sierra Leone conflict in 2002 (UNDP, 2006).

#### *e. Efforts by United Kingdom*

A long and historical relationship exists between the United Kingdom and Sierra Leone. Sierra Leone was colonized in 1787 by freed slaves arriving from England and other groups followed from Nova Scotia (1792) and Jamaica (1800). They were sponsored and governed by the private Sierra Leone Company until 1808, when Britain made Sierra Leone a crown colony. This historical relationship made the United Kingdom to be one of the main external actors in the Sierra Leone crisis. The United Kingdom supported the democratically elected government of President Kabbah even when it was in exile in Conakry, Guinea. The United Kingdom was also very instrumental in bringing the conflict

parties to the negotiating table at Lome, Togo. It also acted as one of the moral guarantors of the Lome Peace Agreement and was largely involved in providing military equipment to ECOMOG and the government of Sierra Leone. In early May 2000, when the security situation plummeted in Sierra Leone with the rebels annexing Freetown and abducting several peacekeepers, the United Kingdom sent a contingent of about 900 troops to evacuate British and other European nationals. They also helped in defending the capital Freetown in the process. The British forces were also involved in neutralizing the menace posed by the rogue soldiers who were abducting women and children. When finally the British troops were withdrawn after the assignment, some were left to assist the government of Sierra Leone in restructuring and retraining the Sierra Leone army, as well as providing military and security advice to the government. They also continued to assist with emergency and relief funding for governance and civil society activities. They also provided support and advice during the demobilization, disarmament and reintegration (DDR) process (Bell, 2005).

#### *f. Support by other stakeholders*

As already explained, during the early stages of the conflict, Sierra Leone conflict was essentially not on the radar of the international community. Most of them just got involved in Sierra Leone in the late 1990s and provided varied support that contributed to the resolution of the conflict.

**i. The Commonwealth of Nations** got involved in the situation in Sierra Leone after the 1997 coup. It focused its support in the area of promoting peace and democracy. It provided substantial recourse to the transition of the country to civilian democratic governance and its consolidation and the pursuit of durable peace (Lahneman, 2001). The organization provided support to the country in its tasks of national reconstruction and reconciliation. Commonwealth further encouraged non-governmental groups and associations within the commonwealth family to lend their valuable experience and moxie of governance, civil society and humanitarian relief to Sierra Leone.

**ii. The United States of America (USA)** played a pivotal role in intervening into the Sierra Leone conflict at a time when a lot of havoc had been done by the RUF. The US only started taking the conflict more seriously after the fighting late in 1998 which forced the evacuation of staff from its embassy and other missions in Freetown. Though their focus was in the conflict in Liberia, Mr Holbrooke, the US Ambassador to the United Nations (1999-2001), was advocating for much stronger American participation in peacekeeping in Africa and pressed the US government to exert greater pressure on the RUF (diplomats handbook.org). The US further played a preponderant role in the peace negotiations that brought about lasting peace to Sierra Leone by sending a special envoy in the person of Rev. Jesse Jackson to press on President Ahmad Tejan Kabbah, to sit on the negotiating table with the RUF team. The US Ambassador in Sierra Leone also took an active

observer role during the peace negotiations in Lome, Togo and played a key role in realizing some of the provisions of the Agreement. Besides, USA was instrumental in the establishment of the United Nations backed Special Court for Sierra Leone, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission and in providing support to the holding of elections in 2002.

**iii. The Inter Religious Council of Sierra Leone** is a multi-religious group that advocated for peace in Sierra Leone. Apart from taking part in the Lome, Togo negotiations, the council also undertook a crucial role of encouraging reconciliation and creating an elastic culture of peace for the people of Sierra Leone. It continues with this noble role to date (Prat, 1999).

**iv. The Sierra Leone Women Groups** also played a crucial role in promoting peace and security in the country. Albeit the conflict brought untold suffering and negative impact on their lives, the Sierra Leone Women Congress and many other women associations decided to undertake activities that could assist to bridge the gap between parties to the conflict and the civilian population at large and build back better Sierra Leone (Luyala, 2005).

## V. CONCLUSION

Historiographies of pre and post-cold war conflicts are awash with intermittent and consistent proxies that have aided the propagation of violence. From Vietnam war, Yugoslavia and Rwandan genocide to South Sudan infamies, it is axiomatic that conflict does not occur in vacuum. The Sierra Leone conflict began in 1991 when a small band of well-armed, organized and funded guerrilla rebels of the Sierra Leone Revolutionary United Front (RUF), invaded the country from the east, with the support of rebel forces allied to Liberia's warlord, Charles Taylor. It took the concerted efforts of the international community to resolve the conflict and put in place a framework that would promote sustainable peace and security in the country.

This paper has ascertained that the country's historical underpinnings were to a greater extent root causes of the Sierra Leone conflict. This was witnessed since independence in 1961 up to the time the conflict started in 1991. At independence, the country started well with a democratically elected government. This rapidly paved way to a prolonged period of bad governance and poor accountability of public resources. Successive governments proved a failure in addressing the many fundamental and endemic problems that underpinned the conflict. Some of the problems included poor economic conditions leading to high levels of unemployment, negative ethnicity, negative party politics, easy availability of arms, lack of accountability in public office, failure of those in authority to properly manage the country's huge economic and natural resources for the benefit of all. This led to indefensible rebel attacks. The research has further established that the conflict lasted about eleven years leaving in its wake over 50,000 people dead, others maimed and many forced to be child soldiers and sex slaves.

Historically, a number of peace agreements were brokered and concluded between the government and the RUF rebels in an effort to bring the conflict to an end. These included the Abidjan Peace Accord, the Conakry Peace Plan and the Lome Peace Agreement. Though most of these agreements were reneged upon by the RUF rebels within a very short period of their implementation, the only agreement that stood the test of time was the Lome Peace Agreement. It was by far the most comprehensive and sustainable among all of the agreements. It provided for a cessation of hostilities. It also vouched for transformation of the RUF into a political party. Besides it voiced for the creation of a broad based government of national unity and holding of General elections. This agreement also had a proviso for disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR) of all combatants.

This paper has also established that the Sierra Leone crisis was in oblivion on the international community radar in the early stages of the conflict. This paper has established that the response of the international community came a little late after a lot of havoc had been inflicted on the country by the rebels. However, the involvement of multiple international actors in the peace process, including the Organization of the African Unity (OAU), the United Nations, the United Kingdom, the United States and the Commonwealth of Nations streamlined coordination efforts with the Economic Community of West African States to resolve the conflict. This coordination eventually paid off and the country was once again set on a peaceful trajectory among the community of nations and the rebels jettison their weaponry.

The paper has finally demonstrated that a dual-track approach combining dialogue and negotiation on the one hand and credible military intervention on the other hand, was successful stratagem in resolving the Sierra Leone conflict involved. This paper has therefore heralded an underpinning historiography in Sierra Leone's case. The authorized strong United Nations peacekeeping force that was able to deploy in all parts of the country gave concrete meaning to the concept of robust peacekeeping thereby sending a message that the use of force is no longer viable option in international relations. It worked well against the stubborn RUF rebels. This forced them to the negotiation table. They also later joined the disarmament and demobilization program, thereby bringing the conflict to a positive end.

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