RARRAY BOYS TO SAVIS MEN: THE YOUNG TOUGHS OF SIERRA LEONE

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Rarray Boys to Savis Men: The Young Toughs of Sierra Leone

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DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to the four most important people in my life.

It is for my Mom, for always dreaming with me.

It is for my Dad who inspires me and Terri for believing in me.

And finally, this thesis is dedicated to Aaron, for being my biggest hero, my biggest supporter, my best friend, and the love of my life.
Turning and turning in the widening gyre
  The falcon cannot hear the falconer;
Things fall apart; the centre cannot hold;
  Mere anarchy is loosed upon the world,
The blood-dimmed tide is loosed, and everywhere
  The ceremony of innocence is drowned;
The best lack all conviction, while the worst
  Are full of passionate intensity.

--William Butler Yeats
ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS

Rarray Boys to Savis Men: The Young Toughs of Sierra Leone
by
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The participation of the young toughs in the Sierra Leone civil war (1991-2002) presents an opportunity to better understand the complex interplay of context and agency. Young toughs are criminal, undereducated, unemployed and unemployable. They lack community and familial ties, and are void of political sophistication. As such, they are a detriment to political stability, economic prosperity and development. Their criminal existence and violent behavior are often blamed for the failure of sub-Saharan Africa. In this sense, they resemble the archetype of the African savage construct. How did the post-colonial landscape shape their status as young toughs and what trajectory does their social exclusion take, particularly in relation to the conflict? It was this group, the disenchanted youth-turned-combatant that was primarily behind the more heinous RUF attacks on non-combatants: the hacking of hands, arms, lips and ears. Why did young men pick up machetes and attack the civilians they purported to fight for? They were not fighting for religious freedom or ethnic grievances. Instead, they were fighting because they weighed their options and brutal conflict seemed more attractive than life as a young tough.
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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Most of the popular discourse on Africa has been focused on violence. Western culture is inundated with graphic images of child soldiers wielding machine guns, babies ripped from the arms of their crying mothers, and refugees wandering aimlessly, some of whom have apparently lost limbs to machetes for their perceived support of the opposition. They are the vulnerable; they are the victims. These assaults on our collective conscience have not been limited to popular media or “Save the Various Africans” campaigns. The logic that extends from their portrayal as victims is that they need saving. These violent images and descriptions of destitute and suffering Africans are used to appeal to the “international community” to step in and rescue the victims from the “savages.”

Makau Mutua, who coined the savage-victim-savior paradigm, condemns the human rights discourse as an extension of the stratified world order. The human rights community perpetuates a structure that differentiates the actors within the human rights sphere into the “savage” perpetrators of the third world, the innocent victims of the third world, and the morally superior Western savior (Mutua 2001). Once a victim is constructed through the human rights discourse and a savior is identified, then the “savage” emerges. The “savage” goes by different names in the popular and academic discourses, but overall he is the character created who carries out atrocities against noncombatants.¹

In The God’s Must Be Crazy (1980), a pre-civilized tribe is exposed to the modern concept of property. This exposure very quickly begins to tear the tribe apart. This pre-civilized man is the “savage.” When he is exposed to conflict, he becomes wild, irrational, opportunistic, and full of blood lust; he has no legitimate purpose, political grievances or even humanness in him. Most importantly, the “savage” is the “other.” “His kind” is different from “our kind,” and is therefore condemned and criminalized. The argument is that brutal

¹ The terms noncombatant and civilian are used interchangeably. Both are defined as those who do not participate in armed combat.
participants in war are “savages” who are both morally responsible for their actions and products of the inherently hostile, underdeveloped and “traditional” environment.

The savage-victim-savior paradigm is reflected even in scholarly analysis of the complicated historical, socio-economic and political contexts of conflict. Though academic analysis is meant to be objective, self-righteousness moralism often protrudes. Innocent civilians, internally displaced persons and refugees are all significant points of focus, as they should be. The movements of elites, both government and rebel, are described as though they are chess pieces in a game. However, the masses that participate are reductively portrayed as savages.

Scholars and international human rights groups reinforce the savage model by demanding the criminalization of combatants. Rights groups use their political influence, base of support in the West, and interaction with local leaders to influence the course of events in addressing combatants. Instead of trial justice as the “end of impunity” and other rhetoric, intergovernmental and regional organizations would be well served to understand the dynamic that contributes to these phenomena in the first place. As illustrated by the post-war trials in Sierra Leone, criminalization of combatants “assumes (and further propagates) a dichotomous world populated only by victims and perpetrators, combined with the flawed perception that victimhood and guilt are mutually exclusive categories – hence victims cannot be guilty” (Kalyvas 2009, 21). The savage-victim-savior paradigm imposes a false delineation between groups based on perceived moral distinction, oversimplifying complex intrastate allegiance patterns and socio-historical context. For rights organizations, this distinction helps to mobilize public opinion, as “it is virtually impossible to evoke sympathy for a victim who appears villainous, roguish, or unreceptive to a liberal reconstructionist projects” (Mutua 2001, 230).

It is easier to delineate perpetrators of violence and dismiss them as “bad guys” the way one would in a comic book or a Clint Eastwood movie. Young toughs are the lowest strata of perpetrators and are therefore the most easily dismissed. They exist in different forms around the third world. In Sierra Leone, they are primarily urban. They live on the streets by their wits, with no opportunity for civic engagement or social mobility. They are socially inferior, economically marginalized and politically excluded.
States with young tough populations often have only a minimal semblance of an education system, which is not equipped to adequately change the prospects of a young tough. Nonetheless, most youngoughs have dropped out and have no support system. Therefore, even access to a strong education system or vocational training would not significantly decrease a young tough population. For young men, social status is frequently tied to vocation. Social status guides many aspects of the youths’ future, as the likelihood of marriage is limited by economic impoverishment. And finally, there is no end to this marginalization in the foreseeable future. The young tough has no education, no significant job prospects and no political reprieve.

One choice for those with no other options is violence. Young toughs are not necessarily associated with political violence, but often make great fodder for a rebel resistance. The Sierra Leone civil war (1991-2002) is notorious for its devastating effects on noncombatants. The rebel Revolutionary United Front (RUF), who claimed to represent the very populations it violated, was most responsible for carrying out attacks on civilians. The young toughs joined the RUF en masse. It was this group, the young tough-turned-combatant, that was primarily behind machete attacks on noncombatants, including the hacking off of hands, arms, lips and ears.²

Sierra Leone is a unique case study in that it has geographical advantages over much of the rest of sub-Saharan Africa. It has arable land, moderate weather, ample coastline that lends itself to fishing and trade routes, and an abundance of minerals, particularly diamonds (Davies 2000). Sierra Leone (“Lion Mountain” in Portuguese) was settled by British philanthropists as a refuge for survivors of the slave trade. As the name of its capital Freetown implies, it was likely seen as a beacon of hope for slaves and the African Diaspora. Sierra Leone should have prospered due to its mineral wealth, but instead, even today, remains one of the poorest states in the world (Davies 2000; Truth and Reconciliation Commission [TRC/SL] 2004, vol. 3b).

² The significance of the young toughs in the war is contested, as will be discussed later in this chapter.
STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Though civil war has been the topic of numerous qualitative and quantitative studies, the conflict discourse is often laden with emotive descriptions and even moral condemnation. Civil violence has, at times, been “a subject fit less for study than for admonition” (Gurr 1968, 245). The participants in civil violence are often reduced to statistical outputs in quantitative studies and dehumanizing connotative terms in qualitative studies.

New Barbarism

Robert Kaplan exemplifies this condescending and recklessly reductive reasoning in “The Coming Anarchy” (1994). Kaplan’s conclusion is that conflict in sub-Saharan Africa is the inevitable result of environmental degradation, state failure and cultural dysfunction. In Fighting for the Rainforest (2004), Paul Richards labels Kaplan’s theory the New Barbarism thesis, an apt characterization of Kaplan’s reductive and denigrating attitude.

Disease, overpopulation, unprovoked crime, scarcity of resources, refugee migrations, the increasing erosion of nation-states and international borders, and the empowerment of private armies, security firms, and international drug cartels are now most tellingly demonstrated through a West African prism. (Kaplan 1994, 46)

Kaplan blames the prevalence of warfare and political instability on the weak African nation-state. He develops his argument along two contradictory points. First, he claims that the African nation-state is not just weak, but in a state of decline. The belief that the state is declining rests on the assumption that at one point in time the state was stronger and with legitimate, enforceable, and enforced borders. The modern African state had only existed since decolonization, roughly thirty years before the publication of Kaplan’s article. If African government institutions are “withering away” (Kaplan 1994, 48), then the colonial, or immediately post-colonial state must have been stable and legitimate. The argument also implies that once Africans were given self-rule, the state began a route of perpetual decline. Kaplan’s writing is full of claims of the inevitable failure of sub-Saharan African nation-states. When coupled with the argument that African governance has failed, Kaplan’s prejudice emerges.

The post-Westphalian theory is weak in its ignorance of the unique challenges faced by post-colonial states. The departing powers often elevated certain groups to elite status based on geographic location (center-periphery), false understandings of tribal hierarchy, and
ethnicity. Although the colonial authorities effectively created the political hierarchy, tensions between oppressed groups and elevated groups existed. In some cases, colonial authorities elevated a group that had been institutionally repressed during colonial rule. During decolonization, political power was abruptly conferred upon oppressed groups, over their compatriots who had collaborated with the colonial regime. The ensuing turmoil is hardly surprising, but not inevitable or inherent to African sovereignty.

The post-Westphalian theory is predicated on a broader theory of development: that development is a linear process that is not unique to time, history, culture or geography. Kaplan reinforces this flaw by describing Africa as pre-Westphalian (Kaplan 1994, 46). His characterization contradicts his overall argument that the African state is in decline. But more significantly, he labels Africa as primitive. When repeating another’s arguments about the primitive man, Kaplan argues that what the author “really means is re-primitivized man” (Kaplan 1994, 73). His term reinforces his perspective that the African state and the African man are in decline, and have become “re-primitivized.” It is customarily essential to avoid being overly simplistic or pejorative; however, I believe that the timeline in Kaplan’s head is perceptible: Africa was primitive, then colonized, then decolonized and now “re-primitivized.”

Similar to his characterization of the state, Kaplan alleges that African culture is pre-modern. West Africa, he claims, has only “superficial Islam and superficial Christianity. Western religion is undermined by animist belief not suitable to a moral society, because they are based on irrational spirit power” (Kaplan 1994, 46). Because of his undermining of the spiritual and moral values of African societies, Kaplan is unable to take legitimate grievances seriously. There is a difference between resorting to violence because you do not know any better, and resorting to violence because options are severely limited. Sierra Leone is not an “anarchic implosion of criminal violence” (Kaplan 1994, 49), with youth representing a threat to an insecure society and violence evidence of new Barbarism rather than provoked expression of legitimate grievances.

Kaplan’s frame of reference when analyzing African culture is illustrated by his references to those he meets on his travels to Sierra Leone. The children, he explains, “seemed as numerous as ants” (Kaplan 1994, 54). He also describes the “hordes” (Kaplan 1994, 46) of young men, which conjures images of pack animals. Kaplan’s characterization
that the Sierra Leonean interior is “again becoming, as Graham Greene once observed, ‘blank’ and ‘unexplored’” (Kaplan 1994, 48) highlights his exogenous viewpoint, which fails to acknowledges an inside perspective. A social space is not “unexplored” merely because decolonization has pushed it beyond the reach of Western powers. Furthermore, for those living in Freetown, existence is hardly “blank.”

Kaplan does not delineate any socio-economic groups from his broader generalization of Sierra Leone, but he does describe what I interpret to be a group of young toughs. At a bus terminal he frequents, he notes the “groups of young men with restless, scanning eyes” (Kaplan 1994, 46). The youths try to wrest money from him by helping him with his luggage, a task, he points out, that is unnecessary because he only has one small bag. He dismisses them, both in person and in his analysis. Kaplan reduces the young toughs to “loose molecules in a very unstable social fluid, a fluid that was clearly on the verge of igniting” (Kaplan 1994, 46). For Kaplan, these youths represent social anarchy and lack of societal sophistication. He fails to grasp the significance of what he saw: the necessity for strong, able-bodied young men to resort to the informal sector in order to attempt to make a living off of tips.

The foundation of Kaplan’s thesis rests on the young men he encounters in his trips to Freetown: “Young unemployed men spend their time drinking beer, palm wine, and gin while gambling on pinball games constructed out of rotting wood and rusty nails. These are the same youths who rob houses in more prosperous Ivorian neighborhoods at night” (Kaplan 1994, 49). His focus on these youth and their violent tendencies is misguided in approach, though Kaplan’s focus on youth and violence is apropos. He aptly portrays the ability to find liberation in violence, but blames the phenomenon on the lack of Western Enlightenment and mass poverty (Kaplan 1994, 72). Instead, the context of Sierra Leone’s social, economic and political environment preceding the civil war must be examined with an outsider’s analytical perspective and an insider’s understanding of the convolution in which wars from below are fomented. The young toughs of Sierra Leone represent an ideal case to study the inner workings of the lower echelon of society, from which civil war was ignited.
Contribution

Some scholars argue that the extent of urbanized youths’ participation in the civil war has been overstated. Macartan Humphreys (Humphreys and Weinstein 2004; 2005) conducted interviews of ex-combatants to test the effectiveness of the post-conflict reintegration program. He argues that young toughs may have been important at different times during the conflict but the majority of RUF ex-combatants he encountered were rural and abducted (Humphreys, personal communication, April 22, 2012). Many ex-combatants may have attempted to blur the lines between victim and perpetrator by claiming abduction and pre-war social integration.

They are correct in their assumption that the distinction between victim and perpetrator is often falsely characterized as dichotomous. Therefore, while I agree with their implications that victimization by the war was not limited to non-combatants, post-conflict interviews may exhibit response bias. The fear of prosecution was a concern as well. Interviewers were taught to alleviate concerns respondents had regarding criminal prosecution. However, respondents were likely aware that the Special Court was still working in Sierra Leone at the time the survey was conducted.3

Richards emphasizes the political cohesiveness of the RUF and the ideological perspective of the youth who joined the movement, while simultaneously dismissing the contribution of young toughs. Addressing the controversy over the contribution of the young toughs, Humphreys states: “Paul Richards was roundly criticized for disputing the importance of this group, but almost everything I saw on the ground was consistent with Richards’ position” (Humphreys, personal communication, April 22, 2012).

Richards echoes Humphreys’ sentiments when arguing that the different factions in the war in Sierra Leone were tussling “for the hearts and minds of young people” (Richards 2004, 87). Richards argues that the RUF recruited mostly rural youth. Children and teenagers orphaned by the war and without means of self-support often accepted the “first offer that came along” (Richards 2004, 89). Richards’ argument parallels my own. He argues that rural

3 Despite my suspicion of response bias regarding claims of abduction, the survey of ex-combatants (Humphreys and Weinstein 2004; 2005) remains vital to DDR scholarship and helped to steer my research on post-conflict re-integration. See Chapter 9 in this work.
youth joined the insurgency due to their lack of better options. Without family, they needed food, shelter and protection. Urban young toughs on the other hand, disenfranchised and rejected by society, joined the RUF for lack of better means of economic sustenance, political expression and personal dignity.

**Purpose of the Study**

Why did these young men and boys choose machine guns and machetes over the ballot box and unleash a shocking wave of violence on their fellow Sierra Leoneans? They were not fighting for religious freedom or ethnic grievances. Even for those who fought for access to the diamond fields, that access was only part of a broader desire. They were fighting because they weighed their options and brutal conflict seemed more attractive than the status quo. Life as an RUF combatant was more appealing than life as a young tough. The purpose of this study is to understand why.

I intend to deconstruct and delineate the young toughs from the broader Sierra Leone conflict literature. It is meant to humanize the inhuman and demystify the young, disenfranchised males of Sierra Leone. I argue that the young toughs of Sierra Leone were socio-economically disadvantaged due to the post-colonial context. However, as humans, they have agency and decided to join the RUF, despite the fact that there were legitimate alternatives, including the Sierra Leone Army (SLA) and the Civil Defense force (CDF).

Civil war is a unique phenomenon within the conflict literature and has garnered a great deal of scholarly attention. As stated by Weinstein (2006), civil wars differ greatly from one another. Ethno-separatist, proxy, and center-periphery civil wars each produce different outcomes with different impacts on noncombatant populations. The participants vary greatly as well, in motives, recruitment methods, and post-conflict transition. Significantly, the level and type of violence varies greatly according to traits of the conflict and the type and character of participating factions. While some rebel groups work with noncombatant populations to gain their functional and political support, others systematically target, kill, rape, and maim civilians. I use the young toughs of Sierra Leone to illustrate my broader supposition about domestic conflict.

A civilian population affects a rebel group’s behavior in two ways. First, noncombatants may offer material support, particularly food, weapons, and shelter from
government forces. Second, noncombatants are a pool from which a rebel group can recruit. Therefore, domestic support can be a vital tool in civil conflict. Conversely, a domestic population may shun a combatant faction. I argue that rebel groups abuse civilian populations out of expedience. If civilian support is viable and there is a domestic base from which to recruit, then the rebel leadership benefits from preventing systematic abuse by its foot soldiers. More importantly, a popular rebel group can be selective and recruit ideological, disciplined, and skilled combatants. The RUF was unable to garner domestic civilian support and exacted revenge against the population they purported to represent but who had rejected them. Further, the RUF was unable to recruit ideological and disciplined fighters. The RUF leadership expediently turned to the young toughs to fill their ranks, resulting in an undisciplined motley crew of violent, disenfranchised youth. Widespread abuses followed.
Since the end of the Cold War, intrastate conflicts have significantly outnumbered interstate conflicts, and scholars have shifted a great deal of focus to these phenomena. The genocides in Rwanda in 1994 and those that occurred during the breakup of the former Yugoslavia in 1991 garnered international attention and emphasized the need for group-based analysis of civil conflict. As a result, ethnic conflict has been examined extensively. Increasingly, it has been studied in a rationalist perspective (Fearon and Laitin 2000; 2003). Similarly, women’s studies have increasingly merged with conflict studies as awareness of crimes against women in civil conflict, particularly rape as a weapon of war, has gained international attention (Buss 2009). The increase in civil conflicts around the globe has also shifted attention to resource-based violence, including the supposed resource curse (Collier and Hoeffler 2004), population growth (de Soysa 2002) and climate change (Aldhous 2009; Salehyan 2012).

The literature on culturalism and the moral superiority of the West (Kaplan 1994) has been strongly repudiated (Rashid 1997; Richards 1999) and replaced by a broad literature on the rationality of combatants in warfare (Kalyvas 2009; Richards 2004), including the Rebel’s Dilemma (Kalyvas and Kocher 2007) and broader problems of collective action (Fearon and Laitin 2003; Lichbach 1998; Mason 2004; Wood 2010).

A strong emphasis of the combatant-conflict literature has been placed on the greed versus grievance debate. Both sides agree that groups have specific and discernable motivations for joining conflict while disagreeing on what those motives are. Either conclusion is generalized from a specific study to the broader phenomenon of intrastate conflict. Combatant groups have not been differentiated by their defining characteristics, some of which will be greed, grievance, both or neither. The particular group typology is determined in part to the motivations behind the rebellion. A one-size fits all approach ought to be replaced by a more nuanced understanding of combatant rationale that is based on the particular characteristics of the conflict typology.
The political grievance school was greatly bolstered by a large-N study of political instability onset from 1995-2003 (Goldstone et al. 2010). The model developed found that political institution type was the greatest indicator of violent civil wars, rather than economic conditions, demography or geography. This finding reinforces a trend in resource curse studies: the abundance of resources is not so important as the strength and legitimacy of legal and political institutions of the state (Olsson 2006; Mehlum, Moene and Torvik 2006).

The greed school focuses almost exclusively on economics. Grossman (1999) describes civil conflict as between rival kleptocrat regimes. The incumbent regime wishes to continue the patronage of his supporters, property owners and the ruling class while the potential leader has an alternative set of clientele (Grossman 1999, 268). The peasantry does not belong to either regime, yet is instrumental in the war effort. Therefore, the connection between the elite and the peasantry is tenuous in the greed theory.

Political and intellectual elites are assumed to manipulate the peasantry into carrying out their will. Grossman explains that peasants and everyday citizens volunteer for either side if the pay schedule is recompense (Grossman 1999, 271). Grossman also assumes that the victorious side can exclude non-participants from collective benefits, making recruitment among the citizenry possible (Grossman 1999, 271). However, the “excludable benefits” that follow victory are limited to the clientele of the elite, which nonetheless excludes the peasantry. Consequently, they would not be included in the excludable benefits.

Empirically, greed theory has been applied liberally to the foot soldier in African conflicts (Collier and Hoeffler 2004). While it is generally accepted that revolutions do little to ease the hardships of peasant life, Grossman’s characterization of the peasantry having no agency is misplaced. Peasants are not simply pawns in a battle between kleptocrats. They require something more than small paycheck to risk life, limb and family. The omission of an adequate explanation for the motives of the foot soldier is the major blunder of normative greed theory.

Another causal mechanism identified and strongly supported is the youth bulge. This hypothesis focuses on two modes in which large youth populations increase the likelihood of civil war. First, youth bulges increase the opportunities for violence by supplying an endless stream of potential combatants, who have low opportunity costs and reason to be aggrieved (Urdal 2006). Second, conditions are more disastrous in states with large youth populations.
Of particular concern is unemployment (Urdal 2006). In effect, grievances are amplified, making conflict more likely. Youth bulges produce “disoriented young men” (Zakaria 2001), whose influx into a country is “bad news” (Zakaria 2001).

Young toughs are periodically referred to as the lumpen-proletariat, with a Marxist focus on the group’s socio-economic status and political marginalization. Marx describes this class as the “‘dangerous class,’ the social scum, that passively rotting mass thrown off by the lowest layers of old society” (Marx 1977, 229). Mazrui’s (1973) definition is less emotive than Marx’s: they are a “mass of disorganized workers and ghetto dwellers in the developed world.” His account, however, is also derogatory. Therefore lumpen-proletariat is not my preferred terminology. Richards (2004) uses the name *dregman dem*, or “youth struggling for their livelihood and living by their wits” (Richards 2004, 52). This portrayal describes the young men of Sierra Leone at the onset of civil war.
CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

The initial focus of this study has been a discussion of the alternate theoretical perspective that interprets and describes those who commit mass atrocities as pre-civilized actors who are intrinsically drawn to conflict and violence rather than peace and political stability. The result of this perspective is the largely discredited savage construct. However, notes of this narrative still permeate conflict literature and in the West’s relations with Africa. It can be seen in morally high-minded anecdotes about the levels of violence in African conflicts as well as post-conflict tribunals in which victors criminalize their defeated opponents.

The second focus is on deconstructing the young toughs by tracing the historical trajectory that led to their formation as a socio-economic group and the context that made membership in the RUF attractive. Four research questions analyze the characteristics of young tough participation in the war and the reasons behind their behavior.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Four research parameters will outline the participation of young toughs in the Sierra Leone civil war:

1. How did the RUF work to recruit young toughs? What methods did the RUF leadership employ, specifically targeting disillusioned young toughs?

2. What were the motivations behind the young toughs’ decisions to join the RUF? What kind of benefits did they expect to gain from participation? Were the motivations political or material? What aspects of pre-war society did they wish to alter, either through positive outcome of the war or through the act of engaging in violence?

3. How were young toughs utilized by the RUF? Why were they responsible for the majority of the war’s atrocities against civilians and why were they predisposed to such violence?

4. How effectively did young toughs transition back into society after the war’s conclusion? Were they reintegrated peacefully or criminalized? Did their communities accept or reject them? Were they integrated into the political process?
Taken together, these four parameters will formulate a cohesive typology of the young toughs of Sierra Leone, as the characteristics examined will be unique to and results of the context.

**THEORETICAL BASIS**

The driving theoretical basis to be used in this analysis is that the “savage” is a construct that has little basis in reality. Instead, the “savage” is a primordial actor who uses logical methods to achieve goals, and only exists because of the post-colonial socio-economic context of time. He goes by different names: perpetrator, barbarian. But he always represents the same mystifying figure. The flawed narrative of the civilized self and the barbaric other (Mbeoji 2006) is the foundation of this thesis. The young toughs of Sierra Leone most accurately reflect the archetype of the “savage.”

In this narrative, the third world is the natural habitat of the “savage,” and is portrayed as archaic and anarchic. The third world state is weak and political power is only semi-legitimate. Justice is often described as “traditional,” religious or “tribal,” and therefore inferior to Western rule of law. As a result, post-conflict contexts are often rife with Western policymakers’ calls for trial justice, which ostensibly requires consultation and assistance from Western states, because his world is uncivilized and pre-Westphalian. This pre-political development context in which he exists largely explains his role in conflict – that is, the perpetrator of unjust atrocities against civilians. The “savage” has dark skin, may wield an AK47 or a rusty machete, and his only allegiance is tribal, ethnic, or religious in nature. He is not loyal to the state and does not hold any real political values. Condemning and criminalizing him is purportedly paramount to solving the dilemmas of the third world. His image is reinforcing. He is both a product of, and responsible for, societal failure.

Liberalism has not been immune to the barbarism narrative, and therefore fails to rectify the insecurity of the global south. The new white man’s burden is buttressed by the same foundations as the old: superior values, the drive to civilize the anarchic, and the burden of policing and fathering the barbarians. Liberal values have helped the global North to flourish. In the South, liberalism has taken the form of exogenously imposed democratization, foreign aid to warlords, and increased militarization in the name of the war on terror. Cultures and religions do not inherently conflict with liberalism. However, the
failure of liberalism to succeed in certain parts of the world is hardly shocking, as its foundation lies in the false construct of the civilized self and the barbaric other.

Therefore, the theoretical foundation of this thesis is a scholarly and human understanding of violence and conflict. It is based upon the supposition that violent humans are no less human than their victims. Violent humans have agency, but agency can only go so far when one is in chains.

**LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY**

This study is an in-depth analysis of the young toughs who participated in the RUF during the Sierra Leone civil war (1991-2002). Youths participated in all factions of the war, including the CDF and SLA. The CDFs were comprised of close-knit assemblages of families and communities. Therefore, the motivations of those who joined the CDF, to defend their communities from rebels and government forces, are more easily discernible. These youths had more social access to guidance, relationships, and family before the war than those who joined the RUF. Many CDF fighters had been uprooted from their homes because of the war, rather than purely economic mismanagement of the APC before the war. Many had become orphaned at the hands of the RUF, or seen their village destroyed by rebel and army pillaging. Because of previous community links, many youths who joined CDFs do not neatly fit into the “young toughs” label. Therefore CDF fighters will not be discussed in detail.
CHAPTER 4

SIERRA LEONE

Slave trade continue until I found myself way over in
Sierra Leone
At the foot of Lion Mountain
It was around about Christmastime

Then I stop to have a drink of palm wine
But one thing – them want the people live like swine
They gave guns and bullets to the rebels and start to
 teach them to fight each other for diamond

It was a diamond war (Yet for whom?)
And all because there was nothing to gain
I've never seen the United Nation cry peace again
So you nuh see the corruption (and I look at you)

Out of the woodland
Man a nah nuh fight none
Stretch out your hand, put it out yourself
What do you want? Long sleeve or short sleeve?

And them a take them cutlass and them chop it off
(your request now)
Long sleeve them chop you on the wrist
Short sleeve them a cut it to the arm

We have everything in paradise (my God)
Here in the West

--Culture
“War in Sierra Leone”

Freetown was founded as a beacon for freed slaves. With natural resources and ample
coastline along a major shipping route, Sierra Leone should be among the richest countries in
the world. It remained a British colony until 1961, but 30 years after gaining its
independence, political dysfunction, skewed social structure, and a flawed economy marked
the context in which the average Sierra Leone citizen found himself. Sierra Leone was a
deeply divided society, full of the potential for violence, requiring only the slightest spark for
this violence to be ignited, according to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Sierra Leone (TRC/SL 2004, 2:30).

In the years prior to the civil war, Sierra Leone was a single-party state, under the All Peoples Congress (APC). Preceding the outbreak of violence, government employees, most significantly teachers, were no longer receiving wages but were expected to continue to work. There remains a lively debate between scholars as to the primary reasons behind the economic stagnation. Richards (2004) argues that patronage networks meant that large sums of money remained in circulation but were limited to friends of President Siaka Stevens and the APC. Abdullah et al. (1997) argues this characterization is exaggerated. This debate, though important to the character of the rebel elites, is probably irrelevant to the youth participants.

When the RUF emerged in March 1991, it was quickly dismissed as a spillover of neighboring Liberia’s civil war. The struggling government in Freetown blamed Charles Taylor for orchestrating the rebellion in order to undermine Freetown and gain access to diamonds. This stripped and erroneous claim has been repeated ever since, including the TRC/SL report and scholars (Richards 2004; TRC/SL 2004, 3b:58). In 2012 Taylor was convicted by the Special Court for Sierra Leone in the Hague. The convenience in blaming local unrest on foreign incursion and ignoring national problems such as poverty, corruption and limited democracy would lead to eleven years of civil war.

The poverty associated with an unresponsive government drives citizens to search for other means of financial sustainment. While there was a large extralegal sector of the economy, this proved to be unsatisfactory in a country with an overabundance of resource wealth. The gap between the potential and the reality was so great that young men had lost all hope in the future of their nation which made them “easy prey for unscrupulous forces who exploited their disenchantment” with the state (TRC/SL 2004, 2:27). Youth comprised the bulk of those recruited by the rebels, and young toughs are summarily blamed for the most brutal of the violence.

The TRC/SL report explicitly condemns the British colonizers, who were responsible for the conditions described. The TRC/SL “holds the political elite of successive regimes in the post-independence period responsible for creating the conditions for conflict” (TRC/SL 2004, 2:27) and states that “the seeds of discontent of the late 1980s and early 1990s can be
traced to the colonial strategies of divide and rule and the subversion of traditional systems by the colonial power and successive governments” (TRC/SL 2004, 2:27). There was essentially no horizontal or vertical means of checks on the executive. This structural flaw began with the initial establishment of the government, and was continued by successive regimes of single-party rule.

Social stratification in Sierra Leone can also largely be attributed to post-colonial legacy of inequity. In the late eighteenth century, the British divided the colony into two parts, the colony and the protectorate. Freetown and the rest of the western region were considered the colony and were administered directly by the crown (TRC/SL 2004, 3a:5). The subjects of the protectorate were referred to as “natives” while the people of the colony were “non-natives” (TRC/SL 2004, 3a:7). This distinction had significant political, social and economic implications (TRC/SL 2004, 3a:7). The business and political elites were thereafter concentrated in the western region, while the rest of the country suffered in poverty and the absence of social mobility.

The limitations placed upon disenfranchised young men also stemmed from the British imposition of a falsely constructed social structure on the local level, briefly described above. Based loosely on tradition tribal structure, the British centralized local power into the hands of chiefs:

The overhaul of the structure of Chieftaincy was to have grave implications on the ways in which traditional rulers related to their subjects and on the sociopolitical organisation of the communities. The overbearing attitudes and behaviour imbibed by the Chiefs from their colonial masters led to their assuming new and overwhelming powers over their subjects. Some of these measures, such as the ability to impose fines or other punishments for errant behaviour, were retained long into the post-colonial period and permanently defined the negative perceptions of Chiefs among many of their subjects. Indeed, these negative perceptions carried over into the conflict in Sierra Leone in the 1990s as a partial explanation for the brutality of the treatment meted out to Chiefs and other figures of status or authority. (TRC/SL 2004, 3a:8)

The stratification that resulted from this exogenously imposed social structure was undemocratic and immobile in that it was totally separated from popular will and, therefore, legitimacy. Chiefs were perceived as doing “little more than the bidding of the power base in Freetown” (TRC/SL 2004, 2:31). The lack of popular oversight also resulted in arbitrary rule. Chiefs could treat people differently based on tribal or ethnic differences. While the war was not ethnic or tribal in nature, the existing cleavages could not be reconciled in the post-
colonial landscape through legitimate or democratic means. Various ethnic groups felt unfairly treated, furthering their lack of distrust in their government and social structure.

These differentiations would lay the foundation for social stratification for generations to come. The political gap between the western region and the rest of the country would later be reflected in the state’s negligence in failing to protect the populations of these areas. The creation of chiefs to administer local rule constructs a false social structure, which is not based on popular legitimacy but on colonial directives. When social status is a result of birth or geography rather than merit, the incentive structure is drastically skewed. Young men knew that there was a limit to what they were able to achieve socially and economically.

According to the Truth and Reconciliation of Sierra Leone report, at the start of the war forty-five percent of Sierra Leone’s population was between the ages of 18 and 35 (TRC/SL 2004, 2:16), constituting a youth bulge. Most combatants of the rebel RUF were under the age of 24, and of these, many were young toughs from the Sierra Leone side of the Liberian border (Abdullah et al. 1997, 183).

Before 1991, the method of participation of youth in politics was largely divided along social lines. While students began protesting in the 1970s, young toughs served as thugs for local politicians (Abdullah 1998). They effectively intimidated opposition candidates and helped to suppress political expression by strong-arming activists. During the 1962, 1967, 1973, and 1977 elections, toughs terrorized opponents of the APC (Rashid 1997, 24). They are credited with forcing the opposition Sierra Leone People’s Party (SLPP) to withdraw from elections in 1972. The broader population saw the odelay societies of the young toughs as corrupted youth versions of older hunting odelay societies and harbored some degree of sympathy for them (Rashid 1997, 24). But as their violent tendencies began affecting national politics, society’s tolerance ran out.

University students, disenfranchised with the APC’s one-party rule, started organizing groups and demonstrations, most notably at Fourah Bay College. In 1985 during the years of APC one-party rule, youths constituted the only viable opposition to the government. The 1970s and 1980s saw an emergence of radical groups and study clubs on university campuses, galvanizing students to stage demonstrations against the APC. Acts of dissent and disobedience by students at Fourah Bay College in 1985 led to the expulsion of their perceived leaders, some of whom sought to complete their studies in Ghana. Gradually, contacts and ties from both Sierra Leone and Ghana were developed with the Revolutionary
Council of Libya and a nascent movement geared towards revolutionary change in Sierra Leone took root. (TRC/SL 2004, 2:16)

For a brief period of time, students and young toughs occupied overlapping social and political spaces. Fourah Bay College was founded in 1827 as a Christian University, until it was taken over by the government in 1973 and became the official University of Sierra Leone. Around the same time, it also became the epicenter of youth frustration. Rashid (1997) emphasizes the importance of the university in fomenting the leftist discontent among the students. As a state-funded institution, the students felt the economic shortfalls firsthand. Furthermore, many of the students and faculty were from Freetown and experienced the same discontent as the concentration of young toughs in the city (Rashid 1997, 21). Despite its economic vulnerability, its location at the top of Mount Aureol provided students with “the opportunity to create a fairly protected space for political activities and for the translation of their discontent into popular urban actions” (Rashid 1997, 21). As a result, radical student groups began to flourish, advocating an agenda of populism and protecting their own entitlements, future education, and employment prospects.

Student radicals began to congregate with young toughs when students began congregating in the \textit{potes} in the 1970s and 80s. \textit{Potes} are “fixed and temporary spaces set up by this underclass for smoking marijuana, gambling and planning cultural activities” (Rashid 1997, 23). Since decolonization, \textit{potes} had been habitual hangout spots for young toughs, constituting a unique sub-culture. Bob Marley, Super-comb, Afro-National bands, Sonny Okosun, Fela Anikulapo Kuti, Osibisa, Bunny Wailer and Peter Tosh were favorites of this temporary hodgepodge of students and lumpen in Sierra Leone (Rashid 1997, 24). They also shared international pop culture preferences for bell-bottoms, mini skirts and rock and roll (Rashid 1997, 24).

With the addition of youths who were generally literate, politically aware, and socio-economically frustrated, political discourse became an important part of the \textit{pote} subaltern cultural activities. The target of their political discussion was \textit{de sistem} and President Siaka Stevens, culminating in the student protest of 1977. In response to rumors of financial malfeasance, students began taunting Stevens during a speech at the Annual University Convocation. Stevens was reportedly humiliated by the demonstration and cut his speech short (Rashid 1997, 27).
Two days after the campus demonstration, thugs from the APC Youth League were deployed to ransack the university. Students were terrorized and arrested, and campus property was destroyed. Word of the events on campus spread and students congregated at the Criminal Investigation Department, where the president of the student union was being held for arrest. The Internal Security Unit (ISU, later the Special Security Division), a pro-government paramilitary group trained in Cuba, used tear-gas on the students. Within hours, young toughs had joined the student protests, adding looting and vandalism to the mix, and resulting in the death of forty people (Rashid 1997, 28). Student and young toughs around the country started protesting in the following days, burning government property and looting private property. Again, the ISU fought back, and the convergence of disparate youths responded violently.

This politicization of violence- or the violentization of politics- would remain a defining factor of youth rebellion. These violent protests also produced some degree of success. President Stevens made two concessions to the angered youth: he agreed to May 1977 elections and lowered the voting age to eighteen. That one of the primary demands being asked of the president was to allow youth to vote is significant; it illustrates the convergence of politically active university students with urban toughs. By shifting from two separate, incoherent groups into one semi-cohesive movement with goals related to youth and democratization, youths were able to set the stage for the SLPP to gain in popularity. Though Sierra Leone held elections in June of 1977, the incumbent regime refused to recognize the opposition SLPP as legitimate candidates. With the drafting of a new constitution, one-party rule became official policy. Sierra Leone became further entrenched in the APC, and political means of grievance expression was further stifled.

The utilization of violence as a political weapon illustrates the power of youth mobilization. Political violence was the result of shared grievances among different factions of youth at the same time. The buildup of frustrations and the decrease in viable political and economic options for students and young toughs was a potent cocktail for civil unrest.
CHAPTER 5

YOUNG TOUGHS

Lumpen, he is free.
Though he don't have no land.
No house, no garden.
Just a room and a woman who comes and goes.

Lumpen, he don't have no steady job.
He tries his best, but it's time to go.
He tries his best and builds a wad.
Thick enough to see him from the rain to sunny climes.

Lumpen, he don't have no savings in the bank.
And his cupboard, it often too is bare.
His money gone to buy a record.
Wheezing out the magic moments on a hockshop gramophone.

Lumpen, he ain't got no cause.
But jail's a second home to him.
The screws greet him with a grin.
Brew his pride for tea and sugar it with scorn.

--Mudrooroo Narogin

Young toughs comprise a distinct social class of disaffected young boys and men, typically between the ages of fourteen and twenty-four. Despite their shared role on the fringe of “civilized” society, they do not organize themselves into coalesced, cohesive movements. Instead, they comprise a motley social class of young, male, disaffected malcontents.

Young toughs can be considered a subset of Charles Murray’s (1989) ‘Underclass.’ The differentiation of the poor made by a society is based not on the degree of poverty but rather the type of poverty (Murray 1989). Most poor people can be referred to as low-income. The low-income are not stripped of their dignity and may be legitimately employed blue-collar, or victims of an economy in turmoil. Murray’s articulation of the historical English underclass closely resembles that of the young toughs: “These poor people didn’t just lack money. They were defined by their behavior. Their homes were littered and
unkempt. The men in the family were unable to hold a job for more than a few weeks at a time. Drunkenness was common” [emphasis added] (1989, 26). The low-income are deserving of social inclusion and relationships with the broader community; the feckless are criminal and undeserving.

Murray’s distinction parallels the exclusion of young toughs, particularly when Sierra Leone is viewed through a Western lens. In the development discourse, poor Africans are dichotomized between the poor and the feckless. The poor are the victims of disease, starvation, and drought. For conflict areas, the poor are the victims of the savages. The underclass, conversely, are miscreants.

Different forms of this class exist in cities throughout Africa. Because of the space they hold outside the legitimate economy, they are often referred to in Marx’s terminology as the lumpen-proletariat. In northern Nigeria, young toughs are known as yan banga or jaguda boys (Abdullah 2004, 45). In the Yoruba areas of southern Nigeria, they are Omo Garage, or Adogbo boys, referring to the motor parks, called garages, where gangs in Yorubaland congregate. In Algeria, the Hittiste are the malcontents, because apparently they are always standing against walls. In Zambia they are known as Kaponye and in Ghana they are verandah boys (Museveni 1997, 45).

Young toughs have a prominent role in Wole Soyinka’s “The Road” ([1965] 1992). The play, set in Nigeria, follows on a gaggle of youths who attempt to make their livings as lorry drivers. The Chief-in-Town, a local politician, swings by the shack on the road looking for thugs. He approaches Samson, a driver’s companion, and asks, after hesitation, if he is “one of the boys” (Soyinka [1965] 1992, 22). Samson replies: “I won’t thug for you if that is what you mean” (Soyinka [1965] 1992, 22). The big man assures Samson that he will soon join the more deviant youths. The thugs in this play spend their days in the motor park and alongside the road, scavenging and occasionally looting. Besides thugging for politicians, their primary source of income appears to be foraging the wreckage of the abundant number of traffic accidents on the road.

The scarcity of opportunities afforded Samson and his cohorts, along with the open-ended conclusion of the play, leaves open the possibility that they may someday join the ranks of the thugs. Nonetheless, there is an important differentiation between the two types of youths in “The Road.” The primary characters consider themselves employed, though they
spend their days in a shack on the side of the road daydreaming about being successful and talented drivers. They retain a sense of personal dignity, refusing to reduce themselves to the level of the thugs.

**RARRAY BOY AND SAVIS MAN**

The young toughs of Sierra Leone were the “unemployed and unemployable youths, mostly male, who live by their wits or who have one foot in what is generally referred to as the informal or underground economy” (Abdullah 1998). The “hard core unemployed” (Zack-Williams 1995, 109), who congregate largely in the city, constituted a distinct culture, rife with unique celebrations, gathering places, dress and music. They were street wise, but with RUF training, learned to live and fight in the bush. In Sierra Leone’s post-colonial economy, there were few legitimate jobs available to youths, and many made their livings as illicit diamond miners, drug dealers, casual laborers, or as hired muscle for “big men” in society. This was all supplemented by petty theft.

In addition to their tenuous relationship with employment, they lacked strong familial ties. Those who moved to the city from their home communities had already dropped out of school. However, young toughs are distinct from the more general group of dropouts. The failing education system, which under the APC went from bad to worse, forced many youths out of university prematurely. Those with strong community and family ties, while still economically disenfranchised, did not need to abandon their homes and begin a nomadic existence. Rather than finding gainful employment or subsistence farming, many young toughs left their towns and villages and moved to the slums of Freetown. Their inability to interact positively with mainstream society, along with their penchant for drugs and alcohol, further alienated them from their families. Before they moved to the city, they typically engaged in crime in their home communities and moving to Freetown further severed their ties to their former communities.

The emergence of young toughs in Sierra Leone can be dated back to the early twentieth century when they were unsympathetically known as *rarray* boys (Abdullah 2002). The British colonists had no formal policy targeting youth, but engaged the youth in two forms: the education system and juvenile delinquency. Therefore, institutional funding for youth development was limited to schools and jails. Post-colonial urbanization contributed to
the problems of overcrowding and poverty in Freetown. The city was segregated along ethnic and class lines, but young toughs were marginalized even from this stratification.

Sierra Leone under British control was made up of a series of overlapping dichotomies. Two designations characterized the regions, resulting in a geographic, horizontal dichotomy. Freetown and the rest of the western region were considered a British colony and were administered directly by the crown. Inhabitants of the colony were referred to as “non-natives.” This distinction had significant political, social and economic implications (TRC/SL 2004, vol. 3a). The business and political elites were thereafter concentrated in the western region, while the rest of the country suffered in poverty and the absence of social mobility.

The infusion of capitalism into Freetown divided Freetown’s inhabitants into a vertical, economic dichotomy. The elites enjoyed extravagant housing, yet the slums overflowed. While young toughs were highly transitory, which contributed to their propensity for crime, they were heavily concentrated in the East End, which, even today, is notorious for its violence and crime rate.

After independence from Britain, young toughs worked as thugs for the ruling APC. Despite their role in the political machine, they remained politically weak, economically excluded and socially marginalized. Their only utilization was to intimidate political opponents, including dissenters and protestors. Rashid (1997) emphasizes the difference between the younger lumpen and older lumpen during the years preceding the war. The older worked as thugs for the APC, and worked to stifle students’ rights and political expression. The younger generation of lumpen who were the same age as the university students in the 1980s and shared many cultural preferences, protested Stevens and the APC alongside the students. However, some younger toughs were mostly interested in money and would assist the APC or the students, or both.

The harbors of Freetown were the capitalist hub under colonial rule. The ample coastline was dotted with ships bringing white administrators and supplies. Meanwhile, the harbors were rife with young toughs. In *The Heart of the Matter*, Graham Greene describes the young toughs who resided on the waterfront. The locals, writes Greene, referred to rats as pigs in order to “distinguish them from the wharf rats, who were a human breed” (Greene [1948] 2004, 27). As Greene describes, even police patrols and other authorities did not
venture into the afflicted harbor areas at night. To do so would invite robbery and, perhaps, murder.

Population shifts in the mid-1980s reflected the dire economic situation in Sierra Leone. Decreased infant mortality rates increased the overall population, but economic migration meant that population in the east stayed fairly stable while population in the west markedly increased. According to census data, the population of Freetown expanded 70% between 1974 and 1985. In Freetown East III, population increased by 126% while Freetown West II saw a 169% increase in population (National Population Census 1986, 36). Despite the income disparity and lack of real social mobility in the city, the poverty endemic to the protectorate brought hoards of young men into the city (National Population Census Secretariat 1986, 36). Expecting job opportunities, they found slums and more young men like themselves. In fact, although women outnumbered men on the whole (which the census refers to as a “point that might be of comfort”), men outnumbered women in the west and in the diamondiferous areas such as the Kono and Kenema Districts (National Population Census Secretariat 1986, 36).

It is unclear when the term rarray boys became common lexicon, but its connotations are significant. It delineates the population between core and periphery. It specifically referred to drop outs and criminals. It almost always referred to males, but would occasionally be used to reference a woman. Interestingly, when “rarray girl” is used, its definition is much more static: a rarray girl is a prostitute. The evolution of the etymology of these groups may be significant. For males, “boy” or “boys,” rather than “man” or “men” follow rarray. Although rarray boys in Sierra Leone included those in their early twenties, they were still designated as “boys” until the seventies, when the term was largely replaced locally by savis man dem (Gberie 2005).

The shift in terminology from rarray boy to savis man represents both temporal and social shifts. The new term carries new characteristics and represents a certain degree of maturity. The savis man category retains its political and social exclusion, but new connotations arise. Rarray boys were the post-colonial miscreants with no recognized agency. They were defined by what society, including Britain, thought of them. Without a society to be separate and marginalized from, rarray boys as a categorization would not have existed. This new terminology, savis man, acknowledges the street smarts of these youth.
The new term also encompasses the youth into their surroundings by describing a “sense of community, of belonging to a particular group, in this case the collective sense of oneness with youth culture” (Abdullah 1998, 210). Some Sierra Leoneans interpret a shift in the framing of this group as capturing their ability to support themselves on the streets. It also recognizes that these youth do have some degree of agency. And further, as argued by Gberie (2005), it does not necessarily signify criminality. Like many of these terms, its translation and connotations remain murky.

**YOUNG TOUGHS AT WAR**

There were three types of young toughs recruited into both sides of the war. The first is the urbanized lumpen youth. This group most precisely fits the young tough typology. Lumpen youth congregated in Freetown and heavily frequented *potes*. Because of their notorious reputations, scholars generally agree that it is from this group that the RUF actively recruited and trained in military tactics in Nigeria. However, most urban youth who joined the RUF were not trained or skilled. They were primarily local, urbanized youth.

This group, though disparate and having migrated from all parts of Sierra Leone, comprised a rich and coherent culture unto themselves. They congregated in *potes* to smoke marijuana, gamble and engage in other illicit activities. Within the *potes* they also organized *odelay* masquerades, which still take place during holidays. An *odelay* procession involves an *ode*, or decorated masquerader, and a *billah* man who guides him along in a sea of revelers (Rashid 2004).

The *san san* boys were freelance, illicit miners who flocked to diamondiferous areas in hopes of riches. Like other young toughs, they participated in the subaltern culture of drugs, gambling, and violence. They were quite different from other groups of miners, many of whom were peasants and had strong ties to their mining villages. The difference between the different types of miners is illustrated by their participation in the war, which will be discussed.

The third typology of young tough is contested in its defining characteristics. It can most concisely be defined as rural young toughs. This group is comprised of myriad youth elements, with varying degrees of marginalization. Though not as homogeneously violent as
their urban-counterparts, they joined both sides of the conflict and were responsible for atrocities on noncombatants.

All of these different groups (*rarray, savis man dem, san san boys*) can be understood as lumpen, or young toughs. Together they comprise a social class. But this social class is fluid and not strictly defined. It differs based on time (the post-colonial period versus the 1990s), and space. Different towns and regions of Sierra Leone have different forms, with different characteristics. Interpretations of young toughs as a social class vary greatly among Sierra Leoneans as well as scholars (Abdullah et al. 1997). Additionally, none of the varieties of young tough can be recognized as being entirely stabilizing or destabilizing in the war. While they comprised the majority of the rank and file of the RUF, they also joined the army and *kamjoisia* (local village and town defense militias).
CHAPTER 6

RECRUITMENT

RUF is fighting to save Sierra Leone
RUF is fighting to save our people
RUF is fighting to save our country
RUF is fighting to save Sierra Leone
Go and tell the President, Sierra Leone is my home
Go and tell my parents, they may see me no more
When fighting in the battlefield I’m fighting forever
Every Sierra Leonean is fighting for his land

--Foday Saybana Sankoh
“Footpaths to Democracy”

War is a risky and costly endeavor, and civil war is particularly risky for those challenging the incumbent regime. Recruitment into a rebel organization differs greatly from recruitment into a national force. War with a foreign force offers myriad methods of attracting foot soldiers, such as utilizing media to emphasize solidarity based on shared values. Recruitment into civil war resembles civil war itself: it is exceptionally messy. Because the battle lines in civil war are fluid, and strategic advantage can shift by the day, recruitment methods into a rebel organization is a unique phenomenon. Furthermore, the methods used by a rebel group uses is unique to the type of war in which it occurs.

The importance of understanding the recruitment methods utilized by a rebel group is important in two respects. First, it helps us to understand the character of the group. Is recruitment based on shared values, ethnic allegiance, religious affiliation or national sovereignty? In the case of Sierra Leone, it was none of these. Therefore, the RUF leadership had to create reasons to join and construct a network of foot soldiers. Even shared disdain for the ruling regime was not enough on its own to attract a strong contingent of motivated, disciplined, and ideologically rigorous foot soldiers.

The second reason the study of recruitment methods is significant to conflict studies is because of the relationship between rebel recruitment and the character of those who are successfully recruited. The character and behavior of the foot soldiers directly reflect the recruitment method. While rebel groups typically employ guerrilla warfare, the specific
strategies employed can have devastating effects on the civilian population. The recruitment method results in a certain type of combatant. The type of combatant determines the rebel group’s likelihood of targeting non-combatants. The recruitment methodology of the RUF is the most significant explanation for the brutality of the Sierra Leone civil war. While ideological or well-trained fighters would have been the ideal candidates for membership, the unemployed, urbanized youth made easy targets for the RUF leadership (Abdullah et al. 1997, 188).

**A Rebel’s Dilemma**

Educated, intellectual, and ideological rebel elites have the motivation to fight, but they lack the means without contingents of foot soldiers. The rebel leaders have the most to gain by toppling an incumbent regime: they become the political elites, with access to natural resource-tapping infrastructure and military allegiance. Peasants, on the other hand, have less to gain. The everyday lives of peasants typically do not significantly improve with regime change. Therefore, rebel leaders must convince peasants to become foot soldiers in their cause. Of course, if this were an easy task, civil war would be far more widespread than it is currently. Citizens around the world express their discontent without organized violence every day.

Costs and benefits must be weighed in order to make a decision about whether to participate in conflict. Outcomes are distant and uncertain, information can be scarce, and intentions easily hidden. If participation is chosen, the potential costs are personal (Kalyvas and Kocher 2007). Some will suffer greatly for the benefits of the broader community. Some will be killed, maimed, and imprisoned while others do not incur such costs of participation. Therefore, the reflex is to free ride and let others incur costs. Rebel leaders must convince potential recruits that they are capable of overcoming the uncertainty and risks associated with participation.

If the outcome of civil war is successful for the rebels, benefits are distributed to the broader community that the rebels purport to represent. These benefits, such as democratization, newfound security, or ethno-nationalist sovereignty, are public in that all may experience them (Kalyvas and Kocher 2007). Benefits are distributed to free riders as much as to participants, as excluding non-participants from public rewards is unfeasible
Therefore, based solely on rationality, it is irrational to participate. This conundrum constitutes the rebel’s dilemma. How do rebel leaders entice potential recruits? In order to recruit foot soldiers, there are two types of benefits that rebel leaders can offer to noncombatants to induce participation: the short term and the long term (Weinstein 2006). In the short term, rebels may offer security to those vulnerable to government forces and to the rebel group itself. As Kalyvas and Kocher note (2007), non-participation does not exclude one from incurring the costs abundant in civil war. Indiscriminant violence by rebel forces can be an effective way of overcoming the rebel’s dilemma. By joining the rebel movement, participants are actively protected against government forces. Rebel groups, like terrorist organizations, often attack government infrastructure in order to provoke state retaliation against the non-participating civilian population. When forced to decide between a state which is indiscriminately killing civilians and a rebel group that targets its violence, citizens consistently choose the rebels (Kalyvas and Kocher 2007). Combatants also gain access to arms, military training, and shelter in the bush. Depending on the level of violence displayed by either side, becoming a combatant may actually be less costly than staying in the village.

Other short-term benefits to participation are access to resources. Resources include material goods like loot, money, and land. Resources can also include feelings of power, personal dignity, and positions of authority within the organization. In resource-rich states where income and power is disparately distributed, all of these short-term benefits can be extremely motivating. Additionally, material benefits that are granted to participants can easily be withheld from non-participants. Unlike long-term oriented participants, resource allocation is highly visible to noncombatants. Offering short-term access to material and psychological resources is a highly effective method of recruitment.

This motley crew-recruitment methodology contrasts from that of ideological movements, such as ethno-nationalist groups, which recruit based on the promise of long-term benefits, such as sovereignty or political rights. These groups use the extensive ties within social networks in affected communities. Citizens of weak states rely heavily on their

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4 The last available Gini Index for Sierra Leone is from 1989. With a score of 62.9, Sierra Leone ranks as the fifth most economically unequal state in the world (CIA 2012).
community. Their everyday lives “are embedded in already existing networks of social
relations that exist in part for the purpose of coordinating the behavior of individuals in
activities that produce mutual benefit. Social networks and community institutions have at
their disposal a variety of social incentives to induce members to participate in collective
action” (Mason 2004). Leaders can make ethnic, religious, or ideological appeals to recruit
and gain support. There exists a solidarity in ideological movements that is not present in
short-term seeking combatant groups, and the promise of something distant, but fantastic.

The incentives rebel leaders offer to potential foot soldiers “shape the profile of the
members they attract” (Weinstein 2006, 43). Short-term benefit seekers are not as dedicated
to the ultimate desired outcome as the leaders are. They are more difficult to control for two
reasons. First, the offering of resources as a method of participation replaces the importance
of the relationship between rebel leader and the recruit or foot soldier. As a result, recruits are
difficult to control and not easily punished for misdeeds. Second, the offering of resources
replaces the need for foot soldiers dedicated to the long-term goals of the war. Without the
allegiance that springs from ethnic, social, or ideological homogeneity, rebel leaders must
continue to offer enticements for short-term benefit seekers in order to retain membership.
While ideological recruits will continue to fight for long-term goals, which do not drastically
change throughout the course of the war, material benefits are temporary and must be
continuously supplied. As a result of the recruitment of combatants who pursue short-term
benefits, as seen in the civil war in Sierra Leone, mass atrocities become the norm.

**RUF Recruitment: Mutual Strangers**

To the chagrin of the RUF elite, ideological enticement proved a worthless
recruitment tool. Unlike ideological or ethno-nationalist movements, the RUF was a medley
of marginalized youth, or young tough subunits. Ethnically, the RUF was comprised of
heterogeneous sub-units (Humphreys and Weinstein 2005).⁵ Most RUF foot soldiers were
unskilled and uneducated. Furthermore, the only political experience many of these youths

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⁵ According to Humphreys and Weinstein (2005), if any ethnic dimensions of the different factions exist, they have been overstated. The CDF was comprised of ethnically homogenous sub-units, but was diverse in the aggregate. In the South the CDF sub-units were generally Mende while the sub-units located in the North and East were homogenously Temne.
had was as hired thugs for APC politicians. That young toughs worked for a corrupt regime, only to join the RUF and fight against a string of corrupt regimes, suggests that the economic grievances of youth were legitimate while their political ideologies were inconsistent.

*San san* boys, a young tough subunit, made rich targets for RUF recruiting. They were young toughs: drifters with no long-term employment opportunities, who lived precarious lives mining, gambling, drinking, and engaging in petty theft. Most significantly, they had little or no social ties to the mining villages in which they worked. They can accurately be described as opportunists. They travelled around the country; nomads who put down roots in towns for which they held no allegiance. Even those who did not engage in criminal extracurricular activities joined the RUF en masse because of their desire to overturn the existing economic order. Illicit diamond miners were on the front lines of the class imbalance. They made little, and what they did make was often spent on booze and gambling. Like other young toughs, they did not have tangible community ties, education, long-term job prospects, and consequently, the ability to start a family to support. Yet they spent their days in the mud, sifting for beautiful symbols of wealth and Western extravagance: diamonds.

Despite the apparent attractiveness the RUF may have held for *san san* boys, because they had at least a small role in the informal economy, most did not seek the RUF out for membership. Instead, *san san* boys typically joined the RUF when their mining towns and villages were taken over. In order to continue to provide for themselves in the vocation in which they were already skilled, RUF membership became attractive.

Conversely, peasants and stable miners who had families, land, and subsistence farms, fled during RUF attacks. Many then returned and regrouped to form *kamjoiisa* (Abdullah et al. 1997, 172-82). While the *kamjoiisa*, or local defense militias, are not going to be discussed at length here, their existence shows that other opportunities to participate in the civil war were available. There are reports of them setting up security checkpoints, and even engaging in some looting of their own. Nonetheless, they were an important counterforce to the RUF. *Kamjoiisa* were respected and held the kind of power that often comes with instrumentalizing the means of violence. Yet *san san* boys flocked to the RUF when they were threatened, whereas legitimate farmers formed local community protection units.
*Njiahungbia gornesia*, loosely translated as marginalized village youth, were recruited into both sides of the conflict. The classification of this group is highly contested, in part due to translation difficulties. In Mende, “*Korngeisia*” refers to village youth more generally. When “*njiahungbia*” is added as an adjective, the connotations shift to those of defiance, mischievousness, self-imposed marginalization and criminality (Abdullah et al. 1997). Many of this group, contemptuous of rural authority and institutions, saw the war as an opportunity to settle local scores. But some of these youths held community ties and joined the national army or helped to form local defense militias (*kamjoisia*). It is contested whether or not the lumpen (*njiahungbia gornesia*) elements of the military were responsible for the majority of the atrocities committed by the state.

Recruitment into the RUF was a function of both the rebel elite and the foot soldiers. It was the foot soldiers who entered villages and demanded support. When noncombatants refused, they were threatened with harm or death. If they still refused to join the RUF cause, they were often gunned down on the spot. Though there are many accounts of rebels destroying villages because of lack of civilian support and assistance, the vast majority (85%) of those recruited by the RUF were done so by a stranger (Humphreys and Weinstein 2004, 24). Very few claimed to have joined the RUF on their own accord (Humphreys and Weinstein 2004, 24). Therefore, RUF recruitment was successful.

There are two ways the RUF recruited new members of young toughs. The first, not surprisingly, was force. Ex-RUF combatants overwhelmingly reported being recruited by force (Humphreys and Weinstein 2004, 24). There is great prudence, during demobilization and reintegration interviews, in exaggerating the lack of one’s agency in participating in mass atrocities. Nonetheless, it is likely that many were forced into the rebel faction. Without the ability to attract youth through ideological allegiance, RUF leaders had to ensure that the ties between their recruits and wider society would never be repaired. Abhorrent violence effectively accomplished this severance. Some new conscripts were reportedly forced to kill their family or other members of their village upon joining the RUF, thereby making future escape difficult. But escape was not impossible. In fact, most who were forcibly recruited chose to remain with the RUF, rather than fleeing.

The second method of recruitment of young toughs into the RUF was incentivization. Recruits were promised food, access to sex and wives, drugs, and loot. As one CDF
commander pointed out, “In war, you eat very well” (Hoffman 2011, 109). For youth on the margins of society, the promise of access to commodities previously only attained sporadically and at risk of incarceration was enticing. The promises of material of benefits helps to explain why the RUF was so undisciplined and violent, and engaged in widespread looting of civilian populations they claimed to be protecting.

Benefits after the RUF’s victory were promised as well. Some recruits reported that they had been told they would gain high government positions after the war (Abdullah et al. 1997, 191). Dropouts believed the RUF fully intended to repair the dilapidated education system and find them a place within it, which proved a successful recruitment promise (Humphreys and Weinstein 2004, 26).

Those who joined the RUF in response to offers of protection or access to resource benefits were explicitly signifying their level of commitment to the leadership. RUF leaders must have been aware of the type of recruit they were attracting. In classical liberation movements, rebel organizations have three methods of vetting potential recruits (Weinstein 2006, 104). First, they can actively gather information on recruits to be able to evaluate both the level of dedication to the cause and overall disposition. Information gathering allows the leadership to assess the anticipated contribution of potential recruits. The RUF leadership did not gather information on recruits, and instead forced large numbers of noncombatants to choose between joining and death.

The second method of vetting potential recruits is vouching, which is an important tool is enforcing membership standards (Weinstein 2006, 105). Vouching is analogous to country club membership in that a current member must recommend a potential recruit to the leadership in order to be considered. This method is even more rigorous than information gathering. A potential recruit must have gained the trust and confidence of an existing member. If the recruit deviates from the organization’s principles, then both the new recruit and the current member can be held accountable. This facilitates an expectation of trust that is otherwise difficult to establish in a rebel organization that does not benefit from a shared ideology. As a result, an organization can protect its reputation and ensure coherent and restrained behavior. Like information gathering, the RUF did not employ this method of recruitment. There is no evidence that the RUF leadership tried to attract vouched recruits,
and as a result, was in effect made up of “mutual strangers” (Humphreys and Weinstein 2004, 2).

CDF fighters were often recruited through vouching. Defense forces were more successful than the RUF in garnering voluntary recruitment due to relationships with existing members. In fact, over three-quarters of CDF fighters recalled being recruited through a preexisting relationship with a family member, friend, or community leader (Humphreys and Weinstein 2004, 24). Because the CDF then resembled a community structure, its combatants were more disciplined and not known for mass atrocities.

The third method of vetting recruits is what Weinstein (2006, 105) calls “costly induction.” There are a number of ways in which this can be done, each with distinct outcomes. Ideological movements may prescribe a period of indoctrination, in which the recruit must study the history and political message of the movement. Other movements may require a recruit to join a battle without a weapon. This tests the resolve and commitment of the recruit by making induction more costly.

The RUF employed a skewed version of costly induction. Like conflicts in Uganda and Mozambique (and directly and strongly contributing to the prevalence of the “savage” label), new recruits were often required to kill their own family and other members in their village. This was not a test, but rather an imposition of commitment because the recruit would never be able to return home again. This changed the risk-benefit analysis of the recruit, as the alternatives to joining the RUF became itinerancy and isolation.

Of those who voluntarily joined the RUF, about half claimed to have done so out of fear (Humphreys and Weinstein 2004, 25), perhaps anticipating their own abduction and inevitable participation. However, it is telling that RUF recruitment was at its highest during the first two years of the conflict (Humphreys and Weinstein 2004, 22). Word of RUF atrocities spread throughout the villages as the war dragged on, but this may mean that many combatants joined due to the push factors of Sierra Leone’s socio-economic climate rather than alternative explanations such as fear and force.

Paul Richards (2004) argues that new recruits were inducted into the ranks by exposure and utilization of Western media, specifically the first Rambo film, First Blood (1982). Richards claims the RUF screened the film repeatedly for their young recruits. A Vietnam War veteran, Rambo was abandoned by his government and rejected by the society
he served. His only refuge is the forest. The youth could relate to Rambo’s reliance on his wits and his fighting skills. He stalks the local police, who are clumsy and hapless in their attempts to tame him. His rage and his survival become intertwined, and the ensuing violence is almost inevitable. As an audience, we root for Rambo despite his rejection of law and order. For young men in Sierra Leone, Richards argues, Rambo’s savagery justifies and explains their own turn to unconstrained violence as legitimate means of expression.

In order for the RUF to expose these youth to *First Blood*, they had to have already been recruited. Therefore, while Richards seems to exaggerate the efficacy of the movie on their decision to commit to violence and war, it may have helped them to make the transition from angry rabble rousers to more functional violence.
CHAPTER 7

MOTIVATIONS AND ANTICIPATED REWARDS

If you are the big, big tree
We are the small axe
Ready to cut you down (well sharp)
To cut you down
If you are the big, big tree, let me tell you that
We are the small axe
Ready to cut you down (well sharp)
To cut you down

-- Bob Marley
“Small Axe”

To understand the decisions made by young toughs one must understand the decision-making process that fueled these violent outcomes. Within the context of a weakening state, collapsing economy, collapsing education system, and demographic urbanization, the options available to youths must be examined. However, it is important to differentiate between young toughs and other youth participants in the war.

Rebel foot soldiers can be understood within a typological paradigm. The first type is the ideologue. The ideologue is the foot soldier who joins a rebel movement with a specific and articulated goal. This goal is either success in the form of sovereignty or partition, or in broader struggles, with creating awareness and increasing support among the population the group claims to represent or international recognition of a perceived grievance.

The second type of foot soldier is the opportunist. The opportunist theory is a common theme in third world literature, particularly sub-Saharan Africa conflict literature. This theory presents itself as the “greed” camp in the greed versus grievance debate. The greed camp argues that participants in wars like Sierra Leone’s are motivated by access to resources like diamonds. It is usually framed one-dimensionally, with the willingness of the group to kill and die being based solely on gaining riches. Therefore, greed and grievance are presented as mutually exclusive.
**GREED**

Blood diamonds have gained international attention. A legacy of the war in Sierra Leone is the Kimberley Process, a voluntary adherence by states and private organizations to refrain from trade in diamonds mined from conflict. Sierra Leone represents the archetypal resource-cursed state. It should be extremely prosperous, and indeed some individuals found the diamond mines to be extremely lucrative. But who, if anyone, profited from diamonds during the war?

It is popularly maintained that the Sierra Leone civil war can be explained by diamonds. While anyone could pick up a sifter and search rivers for the precious stone, the ability to organize and control large amounts of diamonds was where the real money was. In April of 2012, the president of neighboring Liberia, Charles Taylor, was convicted of aiding and abetting the RUF. Although Taylor did supply arms in exchange for diamonds, the overwhelming focus on him takes away from proper analysis of the context in which he was able to operate. His conviction is said to have ended the chapter of the civil war. However, his criminal trial, and all post-conflict trials carried out by the Sierra Leone Criminal Court (SLCC), has done nothing to address the lack of economic mobility for the lowest social stratum.

In an attempt to stifle the rebel war effort the state outlawed civilian diamond mining in 1999, spurring illicit mining operations throughout the diamondiferous areas. Government forces subsequently blocked the diamond fields that were not already under RUF control. *San san* boys, youngoughs who specialized in illicit mining, could only continue to work the mines by joining the RUF. The war-weakened government was unable to adequately police the diamond mines, thereby making illicit mining ostensibly easier. Not surprisingly, the RUF routinely attacked diamond towns. Therefore, the only way to continue to mine was to fight off the RUF or join. And join they did.

The greed versus grievance literature is predominant in explaining foot soldier participation. However, I argue that “opportunist” is distinct and separate from “greed.” The motivations to join the RUF are a combination of push and pull factors. A solely greed-motivated combatant would only be affected by the pull factors that a rebel group could offer (Humphreys and Weinstein 2004; Kalyvas and Kocher 2007). But the socio-economic climate in Sierra Leone, and the resulting push towards armed rebellion, means that many
young toughs chose the better opportunity afforded them. It is therefore important to understand that “opportunist” does not necessarily refer to the opportunity to loot and plunder, but rather the coherence to choose to take advantage of an opportunity that presents itself.

The greed versus grievance discussion is flawed because it ignores the necessity of both for comprehensive civil war. In the economic, social and political context in which young men in Sierra Leone found themselves, participation in war became attractive. If they had had better opportunities and stronger community and familial ties, and legitimate means of expressing political frustration, then participation would not have been as preferable. Without grievance, the civil war would not have been as inclusive, protracted and violent, but instead would have been limited to Liberian proxy forces and domestic opposition elites.

If joining the illegitimate side of the war effort did not offer material benefits in stark contrast to the few opportunities on the streets of Sierra Leone, young toughs would not have joined the RUF en masse. Civil war presented an opportunity to choose between two lifestyles: the status quo and conflict. Young toughs had little to lose and everything to gain from participation.

Direct participation in war may be a high-risk venture for those who benefit from the pre-war order, but it is low risk activity for those who gain little or nothing from that order. 

Rarray youth are more likely to be attracted to the war project than are more socially integrated youth. It is easier for the former to make the transition from petty rarray boy criminal activities to heavy duty acts of horrific violence than the latter group- especially when horrific violence brings resources, status and bonding with a wider set of comrades, which they may not have enjoyed in the pre-existing order. Indeed, Foday Sankoh of the RUF understood this logic: he showered his young fighters with stolen goods they had not enjoyed in the wider society (Abdullah et al. 1997, 185).

**Masculinity**

There are two important and universal aspects to manhood. The first is making a living through some sort of vocation. Self-support, along with supporting a family, is paramount to being a man and not a boy. For young toughs, both before and during the war,
the only feasible opportunity for economic sustenance was in the extralegal sector. Many young toughs worked in brothels and illicit mining while others were limited to theft.

The second important aspect of manhood is establishing a family unit. Of course, the second is intrinsically linked to the first. Without means of support, a man cannot begin to build a family of his own. This lack of financial stability combined with a total absence of social status made young toughs unattractive partners. As a result, they could hope for little more than occasional encounters or time at a local brothel. The high level of violence attributed to the RUF has contextual dimensions rooted in shared political and socio-economic grievances. However, “it also has a psychic connection to individual combatants’ sense of humiliation and shame” (Hoffman 2011, 105). The rejection that they experienced on a societal and individual level would materialize later into mass atrocities at the hands of young toughs.

Like many colonial powers in Africa, the British granted local power to chiefs they had appointed (TRC/SL 2004, vol. 3a). Lack of financial stability combined with the concentration of social power in the hands of chieftains meant that access to women was limited. These chiefs had the first pick of wives and could “give” women to their friends, family, and associates. Without these connections, young toughs were unable to make a respectable living or start a family. Freetown saw a marked increase in population during the first few decades of the twentieth century as young men made their way to urban areas in hopes of finding opportunities and women of their own, without the assistance of local chieftains. Instead, they found more young toughs like themselves and few women suitable for marriage.

As a result of post-colonial social conditions and a faltering economy made worse by patronage politics, young toughs were frustrated, emasculated, and lonely. In order to replace the psychological and social benefits not available to them, they searched for manhood in different forms. In this sense, joining the RUF was less a process of political revolution and more a revolution of social status and machismo. In interviews, many youths told researchers that handling a gun made them feel empowered (Abdullah et al. 1997, 183). Before the war, a young tough with a knife was feared (“ee go chuk yu”–“he will stab you”). However, as Bangura notes (Abdullah et al. 1997), a knife will not help a marginalized youth impose his
version of order upon the society that rejects him. He is limited to petty violence. But when he is given a gun, suddenly the entire society fears him.

**YOUNG TOUGHS AND THE RUF**

The legitimate political grievances of RUF foot soldiers have been overshadowed by their methods of war. In post-war interviews, ex-RUF combatants cited corruption, political grievance, and autocracy as their reasons for joining the rebel side (Humphreys and Weinstein 2004). Even those who joined without political motives found that membership addressed and in some ways rectified their social exclusion (Richards 2004, 52). Participation in the fight for the future of Sierra Leone and membership in the RUF represents “the potential of male youth to seize power when the existing order denies them recognized forms of authority. They invent, sometimes violently and sometimes tragically, a different future. The way these various discourses come together in the mobilization of male youth for political engagement is a recurrent theme” (Hoffman 2011, 67).

While the ethnic and tribal dimensions in African conflicts are strongly emphasized by scholars (Eck 2009; Fearon and Laitin 2000; 2003), the Sierra Leone civil war was not characterized by ethnic rivalry. Both the RUF and CDF were comprised of 50-60% Mende and 20% Temne (Humphreys and Weinstein 2004, 18). The ethnic makeup of the SLA and AFRC were more diverse than the rebel factions. They were more evenly distributed between Mende and Tembe, with Temne actually outnumbering Mende in Humphreys and Weinstein’s survey sample (2004, 18). Notably, the SLA (Sierra Leone Army) had more Limba participants than the rebel factions (Humphreys and Weinstein 2004, 18). Therefore, the war cannot be interpreted as based on ethnic division, and ethnic grievance was not a motivating factor for those, including young toughs, who joined the RUF.

Though most of Kaplan’s new Barbarism thesis has been sufficiently debunked, he does grasp an important facet of participation in violence. He asserts that “a large number of people on this planet, to whom the comfort and stability of a middle-class life is utterly unknown, find war and a barracks existence a step up rather than a step down” (Kaplan 1994, 72). Kaplan is probably referring to the bulk of the southern hemisphere. His characterization should be limited to a minority. Young toughs, who have never known a middle class existence and almost certainly never will, may be better off fighting a brutal civil war than
drifting along in the status quo. In this sense, “fighting in many ways is not a means but an end” (Kaplan 1994, 72). This aptly describes the young tough experience, and their motivations for joining the RUF.
CHAPTER 8

UTILIZATION

I saw them come in and just then the drunkard on the chair with me commenced to shout Ayee! Ayee! Ayee! and pushed his head forward so I could not see and then he shouted Kill them! Kill them! Club them! Kill them! and he pushed me aside with his two arms and I could see nothing…

But he just kept shaking his hands and arms against the bars and shouting Kill them! Club them! Club them! that’s it. Club them! Kill them!

--Ernest Hemingway
For Whom the Bell Tolls

The most defining characteristic of the civil war in Sierra Leone was the widespread abuses of civilians. Throughout the eleven year-long war, the world was shocked by the images that poured out of the war zone: young men with no hands, women’s bodies burned in hollowed out villages, and children missing feet. The terms “long sleeves” and “short sleeves” took on new meaning. No longer a benign description of shirt style, a “sleeve” in Sierra Leone referred to the length of the stump left after the RUF cut off your arm.

During RUF attacks, young toughs were sometimes used as recruiters. They would enter towns, then line up the men and offer them membership in the RUF. They would proselytize what they had been taught by their commanders about the future of Sierra Leone and the prospect of democracy. However, “From rural villages to the cities, civilians learn quickly how the rebels are behaving” (Weinstein 2006, 206). When civilians expect to be abused by rebels, “they often choose to resist or flee when rebels arrive. This sets into motion a cycle of resistance followed by increasing coercion that leads violence to spiral out of control” (Weinstein 2006, 206).

As is typical to violent rebellions, new recruits are quickly and forcefully desensitized through violence and drug use. Recruits, whether voluntary or forced, were often made to kill their families or neighbors. This guaranteed that they could not simply change their mind, or escape, and return home. They were then supplied drugs, which would numb the psychological pain. The results of desensitization were two-fold: combatants became hardened to violence and were effectively able to attack government installations and be
attacked themselves without fleeing. But they were also able to attack civilians, wipe out entire villages and kill anyone who did not actively support them.

As seen in rebel movements (and some governments) in Mozambique, Uganda, and the DRC, the RUF enacted violent and bloody revenge against the populations they were ostensibly representing. Young toughs had lived the bulk of their lives rebelling and trying to undermine the social fabric of mainstream society. Upon joining the RUF, they convinced themselves that they were now sacrificing, potentially even their lives, for that society. However, as RUF, they were still being rejected by the society they fought for. This provoked anger. It also provoked a remedy, a method of altering the balance and lowering the rest of society to the lumpen level: violence as both the means and the end.

Opportunistic rebellions are largely unable to reverse patterns of indiscriminate violence, for two reasons. Because they are held together by short-term material incentives, combatants’ access to material rewards must continue if an organizational collapse is to be prevented. Groups are thus permissive, if not encouraging, of attacks on civilian populations in order to maintain their membership. And since reputations form early in conflict, these groups are unable to retreat from high-violence strategies precisely because they employ them (Weinstein 2006, 206).

Young toughs are not skilled soldiers. Although they received training from their RUF commanders, they remained unskilled. They contributed to the war in the only capacity that they could: uninhibited violence. The group historically had a penchant for violence, as seen by their willingness to fight each other and to murder during petty robbery (Abdullah 2002). But none of their crimes were particularly crafty or skillful. Instead, their violence was haphazard and somewhat random. Their utilization by the RUF reflects these characteristics.

Ugandan President Yoweri Kaguta Museveni describes Ugandan young toughs, or what he refers to as bayaaaye, in his autobiography (Museveni 1997). While his particular recollection of events in his past is questionable, his understanding of these marginalized young men, and their utilization during conflict, is accurate. He employed bayaaaye during his rise and overthrow of Idi Amin and claims to have interacted with them in two regards.

The first way Museveni used his bayaaaye was strategic. He sent the boys into villages, unarmed and without uniforms so that they could not be identified as rebels. They
were able to set up bases without arousing suspicion of village inhabitants. These makeshift garrisons would later be used to launch attacks on government forces. This method played to the strengths of this group, because they were to blend in and appear to be average rabble-rousers, of which there were plenty.

Museveni glosses over his second form of interaction with these boys. He describes the bayaaaye as “undisciplined” (Museveni 1997, 90) and claims to have enforced strict discipline into the ranks, even going so far as to arrest and jail wayward boys (Museveni 1997, 90). But he refuses to connect the undisciplined nature of his recruits to his strategy of sending them into villages. What did these young men do when they were not setting up bases or blending in? How many atrocities have not been made public because Museveni’s side won the conflict and he has been president ever since?

The RUF failed to attract popular support because of widespread atrocities against civilians. As word of its atrocities spread, civilian support continued to plummet. Many noncombatants opposed to the governing regime, and like the RUF claimed, wished for democratization. As the rejection young toughs experienced continued to increase due to atrocities against civilians, atrocities increased. But what happened at the start of the war? In other words, why did atrocities begin in the first place? Why did the RUF fail to gain popular support?

In Sierra Leone, young toughs were the group most predominantly responsible for the atrocities of the conflict. This is the result of two characteristics of the RUF. The first is the indiscipline described by Museveni. “If you give arms, drugs and a poorly developed ideology to marginal youth in a country with rich resources but massively eroded mainstream institutions, you are likely to get the kinds of violence that we have seen [in Sierra Leone]” (Abdullah et al. 1997, 186). The combination of anger, drugs and the lack of clearly perceived goals resulted in gangs of armed youth with almost complete impunity in a country that was scared of them.

The first goal of the RUF should have been to earn popular support among the citizens of Sierra Leone. The primary benefit of support from noncombatants is protection. The RUF and the peasantry could have exchanged mutual offers of protection from government forces. When domestic populations assist rebel factions, government forces often retaliate against civilians, even if the support is just perceived and not actual. Armed rebels
can work to prevent government atrocities by shielding communities. In turn, communities can hide small contingencies of rebels, offering shelter, food, and supplies in exchange for protection.

Popular support for the RUF would have changed the arc of the war. In theory, the RUF’s ideology was sound. Because the political landscape was dominated by a one party regime, with most sectors of the economy damaged by widespread corruption and patrimonialism, wide swaths of civilians would have benefited from unlocking the political process, making it more accessible and representative. In theory, both students and peasants should have supported the rebels’ goals, even if not its methods of armed incursion. As it was, Sierra Leone achieved some degree of democratization by 2002, but the RUF was excluded from political discourse. So the minimal benefits of the war were shared by the collective population but not the RUF. Had they forced more concessions from the government or been outright victorious, the war would have not been protracted for eleven years and the RUF leadership may have achieved political power. In these respects, they failed. And they failed because they failed to attract popular support.

The second characteristic of the RUF, which precluded its downfall, follows the first. Indiscipline within the ranks of unskilled, frustrated, and angry young men began to show consequences, specifically the moral condemnation and outrage of the society they claimed to fight for. They had chosen revolution of status over the status quo, and the result was even more derision and rejection. Young toughs were “perpetually denigrated, marginal young men [who had] joined the rebels and were further humiliated by the failure of their rebellion and by the opprobrium of civilians. They responded by violently asserting themselves against a public that did not give them the respect they felt they deserved” (Hoffman 2011, 105). The rejection they encountered preceded worsening atrocities against civilians. As Weinstein states: “groups will exhibit behavior akin to indiscriminate violence, interspersing killing, looting, and pillaging with more traditional military operations. The resistance such behavior generates among civilians tends to exacerbate coercive behavior over time, leading opportunistic groups to commit much higher levels of violence” (2006, 207).
CHAPTER 9

POST-CONFLICT TRANSITION

Under the gallows, his memory played him the last trick; he was “elated” and he forgot that this was his own funeral. It was as though in those last minutes he was summing up the lesson that this long course in human wickedness had taught us – the lesson of the fearsome, word-and-thought-defying *banality of evil*.

--Hannah Arendt

_Eichmann in Jerusalem_

Post-conflict transition is a nebulous concept that is difficult to reduce to a narrow explanation. It can most succinctly be defined as the “conception of justice associated with periods of political change” (Tallgren 2002, 69). Wrapped within this conception are the complex processes and objectives of the post-conflict period. The first objective of transition is temporal. It symbolizes the period of time between the supposedly mutually exclusive concepts of war and peace. The assumption that the transition process is a distinct buffer between war and peace is troubling in that it assumes that war itself has a clear and definable end. Peace is often blurred by bouts of fighting and continued political exclusion of specified groups. The war-transition-peace model is the foundation of post-conflict trials, which are often limited by temporal jurisdiction. Only war crimes committed during a specified period may be prosecuted. Crimes committed during times not specified are ignored and crimes committed during “peace” are neglected. The Special Court for Sierra Leone (SCSL) was limited to only prosecuting crimes that had occurred between September 1st, 1996 and January 18th, 2002, when President Ahmed Tejan Kabbah declared that the war was over. The imposition of definitive boundaries on criminal acts of war attempts to further elucidate the indefinite.

The SCSL was also temporally limited in that it was set to operate for a specified period of time. At what point does peace emerge from this process? Once trials have concluded? The SCSL has just recently sentenced Charles Taylor for his role in the Sierra Leone civil war. Does peace have to wait for retribution through legal mechanisms? Because the punitive arm of post-conflict transition is so far removed from peace building, the term
“restorative justice” may better describe this process. “Restorative justice” refers to a process and not a transition period neatly bookended by war and peace. The temporal component of “transition” assumes that once the transition ends, peace suddenly materializes. For some victims of war, retribution is an important component of justice. Restoration describes the way in which “society as a whole must find a way to move on, to recreate a livable space of national peace, build some form of reconciliation between former enemies, and secure these events in the past” (Hayner 2002, 4).

The second function of the post-conflict transition process is reconciliation between victims and perpetrators. Reconciliation can broadly be defined as forgiveness. It does not require forgetting, as illustrated by the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission, on which the TRC/SL was modeled. The goals of the TRC/SL are to acknowledge and expand national knowledge of the atrocities that occurred in an open and honest forum. Both perpetrators and victims come together before the community to tell their stories. In order to bring to light the details of mass slaughter, complete honesty, and therefore amnesty, is required. The TRC/SL hoped to heal Sierra Leone by allowing victims to tell their stories while extending amnesty to combatants so that they could do the same. The amnesty did include the provision that those who had committed crimes against humanity, genocide, or war crimes would still be prosecuted.

The division between perpetrator and victim is problematic because it often forces a differentiation among overlapping and convoluted groups. Legal isolation of combatants ignores the moral complexities of social upheaval and group behavior. Child soldiers are often considered to be victims. In civil war, many who choose to join a rebel group do so without any other concrete options. Therefore, the only way to adequately distinguish between those who were coerced and those who are “evil” (and deserving of retribution) is to isolate each combatant and analyze his motivations, history, behavior and remorse. During times of peace, analyzing the psyche of deviance on an individual level is challenging; in a post-conflict setting, it is impossible. Therefore, a large-scale conflict such as Sierra Leone’s will inevitably produce a large contingent of combatants who cannot neatly be classified as either perpetrator or victim.

The third function of post-conflict transition is reintegration of former-combatants. The United Nations describes reintegration as “the process which allows ex-combatants and
their families to adapt, economically and socially, to productive civilian life” (United Nations [UN] 2000). The methods of achieving this could be the most complex facet of the process, as this is where the interests of victims, former combatants, national unity and legal justice compete. Although it is difficult and sometimes inaccurate to label an ex-combatant as a perpetrator, ex-combatants often have more structural support than their victims during the transition period.

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Sierra Leone (TRC/SL) report, written by seven Sierra Leonean citizens, is a multi-volume work on the causes and effects of the war. It was established in Article XXVI of the Lomé Peace Agreement (TRC/SL 2004, 2:3). Though the citizens of the Commission were political and economic elites, they purported to have no political motives. While no ulterior motives are apparent, it is difficult to imagine that the report is completely apolitical. For example, the Commission places primary responsibility for the conflict on outside forces, including Charles Taylor’s Liberia (TRC/SL 2004, 3b:58). Whether biased and drenched in nationalism or not, it is important to evaluate the report’s conclusions. Within its borders, the TRC/SL condemns the institutional failures of the state. According to the report, “the central cause of the war was endemic greed, corruption and nepotism that deprived the nation of its dignity and reduced most people to a state of poverty” (TRC/SL 2004, 2:27).

The demobilization process began in 1998 by attempting to disarm belligerents and incorporate rebel factions into a power-sharing government. Less than 5,000 ex-combatants registered for demobilization (Humphreys and Weinstein 2005, 9). Despite the Lomé Peace Accord in July 1999, along with offers of amnesty and a second round of demobilization, the RUF refused to end hostilities and continued to attack civilians. In August 2001, the West Side Boys, an RUF breakaway in Freetown, took peacekeepers from United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone (UNAMSIL) hostage. In response, the government reevaluated blanket amnesty. In July 2001, the UN Security Council and the government of Sierra Leone approved the establishment of the Special Court for Sierra Leone (SCSL), which would work contemporaneously with the TRC/SL.

The legitimacy of the SCSL is based on the foundation of one important assumption: that there is a clear and recognizable line between the victims and the perpetrators. The victims were predominantly assumed to be women and young children. Ex-combatants who
were abducted, particularly youth, were interpreted as having been abducted and then freed, with nothing occurring in the interim. The atrocities that the child soldiers committed are part and parcel of their role as victims. During eleven years of atrocities, many of those children grew up.

**THE SIERRA LEONE EXPERIMENT**

The post-conflict setting in Sierra Leone can be described as a kind of international experiment (Shaw 2010). As prescribed by the Lomé Accord, and under the direction of UNAMSIL, conflict justice would be served through a mixture of traditional customs and international legal norms. The two methodologies of the Sierra Leone post-conflict experiment were to confront the truth (TRC) and to redress violence through disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration (DDR). Ultimately, the goals of this approach were reconciliation and reintegration. The Sierra Leone case is the first time that this two-pronged approach has been implemented, with questionable results. While Humphreys and Weinstein’s (2005) study confirms the program’s overall success, individual experiences vary.

The TRC/SL was a national body, adopted in 2000 and established in 2002, which sought to “address impunity, break the cycle of violence, provide a forum for both the victims and perpetrators of human rights violations to tell their story, [and to] get a clear picture of the past in order to facilitate genuine healing and reconciliation” (TRC/SL 2004, 1:24). In order to “restore human dignity” (TRC/SL 2004, 1:25) the Commission would investigate the causes and contexts that sparked the war (TRC/SL 2004, 1:25). This national process would be buttressed by various local reconciliation ceremonies.

The SCSL was sponsored by the UN, and therefore relied upon international standards for legal justice. Ostensibly, it was established as a substitute for the deteriorated national judicial system and its alleged inability to enact unbiased trials (Tejan-Cole 2003). More likely, it was to serve as an experimental model upon which later tribunals might be based (Shaw 2010, 119). In addition to gross human rights violations, the court’s jurisdiction includes “those that bear the greatest responsibility” (TRC/SL 2004, 1:79) for violations of Sierra Leonean law. The language of the mandate allows considerable prosecutorial discretion, as it does not define those who bear the “greatest” responsibility. Nor does it limit
the scope to political leaders and military commanders. While the court had limited finances and temporal jurisdiction, the TRC/SL was described as being for everyone not covered by the SCSL.

The biggest dilemma faced by the TRC/SL was its perception by Sierra Leonean citizens. Many ex-combatants suspected collusion between the Commission and the Special Court. Ex-combatants feared that TRC/SL investigators would turn evidence over to the court for prosecution and there were rumors of underground tunnels connecting the two (Shaw 2010, 120). Trust was therefore a hurdle the Commission would have to overcome to be effective. However, approximately 76,000 combatants transitioned using the DDR (Humphreys and Weinstein 2007, 539).

**DISARMAMENT, DEMOBILIZATION, AND REINTEGRATION**

Ex-combatants who wished to receive amnesty and post-conflict assistance were required to undergo five phases in order to complete the reintegration process. They had to assemble, provide their personal and indentifying information, pass verification of ex-combatant status including the relinquishment of their weapons, become certified as eligible for benefits, and finally be transported to a demobilization center. Many of those who received registration cards, which included personal and identifying information, feared subsequent imprisonment. The initial location of the TRC/SL, near a prison, enhanced their suspicions. As a result many did not even complete these first two steps.

Those who were successfully registered returned their weapons. The design of this step is vulnerable to criticism. Once they had turned over their weapons they were certified as eligible for benefits and subsequently transported to a demobilization center. However, only automatic weapons were accepted for registration (Shaw 2010, 116). Therefore, those who only had crude weapons, like knives, were excluded from the DDR process.

Not surprisingly, among ex-combatants former RUF had the most difficult time finding employment. In a study conducted in 2003, twenty-one percent of former RUF combatants claimed to be unemployed after completing the reintegration process (Humphreys and Weinstein 2007, 542). Ex-RUF foot soldiers also struggled the most with feeling accepted into society. Fourteen percent reported difficulty being socially reintegrated versus the study’s average of seven percent (Humphreys and Weinstein 2007, 542). As a
result, being former RUF was the strongest individual predictor of reintegration (lack of) success (Humphreys and Weinstein 2007, 533).

**YOUNG TOUGHS**

What makes the post-conflict experience of the young tough particularly important can be seen in the phrasing of the language used in the reconciliation process. “Reconciliation” refers to the reestablishment of a relationship after temporary estrangement. “Reintegration” assumes ex-combatants were integrated into the community and the economy to begin with. Before the war, young toughs were not integrated into any meaningful community and were excluded from the legitimate economy. Therefore, I hypothesize that young toughs had a particularly difficult time being incorporated into society after the war. Beyond the hypothesis, it is difficult to demarcate the experience of young toughs from the rest of the RUF ex-combatants during the post-conflict transition process,

Because all aspects of the reconciliation process were facilitated by the TRC/SL and INGOs, many young toughs were likely excluded from post-war reconciliation and reintegration. Public hearings, in which ex-combatants and victims recounted their experiences at school meeting rooms and town halls, were organized by the TRC. Reportedly, of those who chose to come forward and recount their stories, “the Commission staff then selected a small number of those willing [to appear publicly], who were then transported to the site of the hearing” (Millar 2011, 520). Both victims and perpetrators were handpicked for the hearings by Commission staff. The Commission did not publish the rubric for who was chosen for participation. Because the point of the public hearings was community forgiveness, the Commission may have focused on more sympathetic perpetrators, such as those who had been abducted as children or had strong community or family ties.

For young toughs, the reconciliation process reinforced pre-existing social structures and stratification. They once again were expected to ask for society’s acceptance and humble themselves to their inferior status. The TRC/SL, in an effort to incorporate localized transitional justice, encouraged “the offender to take responsibility for his actions” (Park 2010, 110). Public ceremonies were held throughout the country, with spectator-victims in
the audience and perpetrators on a stage. Expressed remorse was a requirement for the community to accept the offender into society (Park 2010, 113). Once an ex-combatant joined a community, he had to learn his place, show humility and subordination to civilian authority (Shaw 2010). This process, which requires humbleness and begging forgiveness at the feet of the society at large, likely prevented many young toughs from participating in local reconciliation ceremonies.

Reportedly, many former RUF combatants, possibly fearing vigilantism, chose to remain in the “relative anonymity of large towns after the war” (Park 2010, 109). As a result of this fear of reprisals along with other demographic factors, urbanization continues unabated in Sierra Leone (CIA 2012). But the question remains: what about those who lived in the “relative anonymity” of urban Freetown towns before the war? Due to time and budgetary constraints, investigators often missed more remote towns when taking statements (Humphreys and Weinstein 2005). Because young toughs tended to reside in urban areas, they may have been more readily available to investigators than their more remote countrymen.

INGOs assisted in “traditional” ceremonies, meant to facilitate the acceptance of a perpetrator back into the community. Local reintegration ceremonies often involved ritualized cleansing of the perpetrator, along with appeasement of the gods, which required nominal gifts be provided by the parents of the offender. These offerings included rice, oil, chicken, tobacco or money (Park 2010, 109). Since young toughs typically had limited familial ties, it is worrying that they may have automatically been excluded from such ceremonies. Their lack of family support before the war implies a lack of support after the war. And a lack of community ties before the war probably did not translate to community ties after participating in the RUF. There were significant challenges that had to be overcome in order to reintegrate. Humphreys and Weinstein’s (2005) captured some trends to support this assertion.

Surprisingly, pre-war income and post-war employment were found to be inversely related (Humphreys and Weinstein 2005, 17). Among all ex-fighters in the study, including former Sierra Leone Army and CDF, those who had higher income and education before the war reported a more difficult time reintegrating into society. One of the most important factors in measuring ex-combatant success was his or her attitude toward democracy and
faith in the new government. In the study, those who lacked education or pre-war income were more likely to accept the democratic process (Humphreys and Weinstein 2005, 17).

Studies involving states with limited written records present unique challenges to researchers. In order to measure poverty, the authors used a dummy variable: whether the ex-combatant’s prewar home was constructed of mud and sticks (Humphreys and Weinstein 2007, 546). Because the majority of young toughs were urban, they may not have been counted as those under the poverty line. Though many urban slum dwellings are made of mud and wood, corrugated metal is available to those who can buy—or steal—it. Other factors, like number of rooms, legality of inhabitance, and sanitation were not considered. The authors’ use of a dummy variable is understandable in this case, but may have excluded a large number of young toughs from being considered under the poverty line before the war. Therefore, the ability of young toughs to accept the values shared by the rest of the country may have been over-reported.

A strong relationship exists between the abusiveness of a particular rebel unit and the likelihood of acceptance by the community (Humphreys and Weinstein 2005, 16). The more abusive a fighter’s unit was during the war, the more likely that the individual would have a difficult time reintegrating. Predictably, ex-combatants from the RUF had the most difficult time reintegrating into local communities (Humphreys and Weinstein 2005). Again, this finding shows the young toughs’ great challenges of establishing meaningful social ties after the war.
CHAPTER 10

PLAUSIBLE EXTENSION OF ANALYSIS

Young toughs exist throughout the Third World and have participated in numerous violent rebellions (e.g., RENAMO in Mozambique, National Patriotic Front in Liberia). These groups all share socio-economic context, political marginalization and social exclusion. Therefore, a comparative case study of two different groups of young toughs, perhaps comparing and contrasting between two sub-Saharan African or two Latin American groups, would be beneficial in advancing the understanding of this important phenomenon.

The civil war in Sierra Leone was similar in nature and characteristics to other conflicts, most conspicuously the Mozambican civil war (Weinstein 2006). The notorious violence, along with the participation of large swaths of the population, makes the Mozambican and Sierra Leone civil wars analogous in many respects. Therefore, a comparative case study between participants of the two conflicts would create meaningful insight.

The literature on young tough (lumpen) youth in Sierra Leone has been confined to the war. It is unclear where ex-combatant young toughs are today. It is also unclear if there is a new generation of young toughs. It is known, however, that the slums of Freetown continue to overflow with humans and refuse. Political violence is not inevitable in any group of people and the democratic landscape in Sierra Leone has improved in the last decade. But the economic burdens on poor, young, disenfranchised males continue. According the CIA World Factbook (2012) the urban population in Sierra Leone in 2010\(^6\) comprised 38% of the total population with an annual growth rate of 3.3%. The literacy rate for males over fifteen is less than 50%. Income distribution remains highly unequal, as just over 50% of GDP is agrarian.

Therefore, international human rights organizations and the government of Sierra Leone would be well advised to trace the trajectory young toughs have taken since the war.

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\(^6\) Latest data available.
Though often misguided in their underlying theoretical approaches, human rights groups continue to play a significant role in international justice. While many proponents argue that the focus of human rights should shift from the global to the local, I argue that the opposite should occur. To focus on the local is to sponsor an African child, donate Bibles, send delegates to consult on exogenously imposed conceptions of justice, and give military assistance. Instead, Western and international human rights organizations need to expand their range of vision and recognize how Western economic and military policies affect the daily lives of Africans.

Western governments are meant to serve the will of their citizens. Therefore, rights groups must advocate the impacts that Western national policies have on communities in the Third World. The target of their advocacy must be the First World, not the Third. Instead of selling colored wristbands and t-shirts, rights groups must disambiguate the role the average Western citizen plays in harming the people of Africa through the purchase of oil, diamonds, and minerals used in cell phones and other electronics. Once Western citizens are able to minimize the harmful effects of their own government, then they can begin to reach out to offer assistance.

The government of Sierra Leone is still loaded with corruption and the citizens are still burdened by rampant poverty. It is easy to blame outside forces, but the attention needs to be paid inward. Government programs aimed at education and vocational training need to be targeted towards the young males of Freetown. Indeed, it is cheaper to train young men the skills needed to prosper socio-economically than it is to attempt to reintegrate ex-combatants. Further, preventing mass violence is more effective than recovering from it.

The conclusion and underlying theoretical foundation of this thesis is that humans are capable of extreme levels of violence. At the nexus of structure and agency is humanity. The gross abuses of humanity, by humanity, have never been absent. Violence is deviance, but it is only social deviance. Violence is not a deviation from what makes us human.
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