A Tinge of Summer

Linh Do

Follow this and additional works at: http://preserve.lehigh.edu/cas-lehighreview-vol-20

Recommended Citation
http://preserve.lehigh.edu/cas-lehighreview-vol-20/40

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Lehigh Review at Lehigh Preserve. It has been accepted for inclusion in Volume 20 - 2012 by an authorized administrator of Lehigh Preserve. For more information, please contact preserve@lehigh.edu.
tralized chain of command, led to abuses against civilians during the SLCW that were high relative to counterinsurgency doctrine.

But both economic and political motivations are sometimes inadequate justifications for the RUF’s and the SLA’s simply barbaric and unnecessary level of violence. According to Human Rights Watch, 7,635 corpses were buried as a result of the January 1999 incursion into Freetown. Keen suggests that the AFCR/RUF rebels feared civilians and their militias because they stood beyond the system of collusion and therefore posed a substantial threat to their security. By passing or harboring important information, civilians can hurt or betray, particularly because civilian women and children are not usually suspected. In our perverse world, civilians are sometimes feared simply because they are representative of some unknown and therefore possibly dangerous element. The ever increasing effectiveness of the CDFs Kamajors also added to the RUF’s fear of the civilian population. Given that the Kamajors could not easily be targeted, indiscriminate and gruesome attacks against civilians became common as the Kamajors grew in strength.

Conclusions and Implications

All in all, access to Sierra Leone’s rich natural and material resources—the alluvial diamond mines and unprotected villages—enabled both sides to finance a war that was increasingly fought for economic motivations. The great wealth reaped from the vital economic centers had three primary effects. First, it enabled the fragmentation of both sides, because the individual detachments could break away from their former leadership and still fund their military campaigns with the income that they generated from mining and looting. Additionally, the diamond mines and material goods gained from theft were often used for personal enrichment thus reinforcing the economic motivation to continue the insurgency. Sadly, the fragmentation of the warring parties and economic benefits gained from criminal and extractive efforts facilitated the brutalization of the civilian population because the lower ranks within the warring parties increasingly lost interest in political control. When the primary motivation of sustaining the war is the extraction of resources for personal enrichment, then it is more likely that both sides would be less inhibited to commit atrocities against civilians. Coupled with an increasing number of criminals and thugs that constituted the armies of both sides, the civil war took a barbaric turn. When civil war is no longer framed as a political contest for control of the state, but instead devolves into an economic contest between individual, local and foreign elements, then it can be assumed that the manner in which the civil war will be fought will differ greatly from other intrastate conflict in which economic motivations play little role.

Although the focus of this report has concerned itself with only the SLCW, this analysis has similar implications for other cases in which the actors have access to valuable natural resources and real and imagined ethnic divisions are negligible. Importantly, these findings may improve our understanding of how to prevent civil war and also how to resolve them successfully. But even more importantly, if the actors in the Sierra Leone Civil War had access to economic and political advancement through other means than just civil war, then the existing conditions that invited the invasion would largely be marginalized and thus there would be little reason for conflict.