

INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT IN PEACEBUILDING AND DEMOCRATIZATION IN LIBERIA & SIERRA LEONE: DILEMMAS IN PEACE AGREEMENTS FOLLOWING CIVIL CONFLICT

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ABSTRACT

This paper addresses the role of third party actors monitoring and enforcing peace agreements, focusing on the contents of Sierra Leone's 1999 Lomé accord and Liberia's 1995-96 Abudja peace pacts, which incorporated foreign involvement to ensure commitment to the peace process. The simultaneous aims of securing peace and establishing democracy can result in dilemmas that undermine both these goals. Initially, the appearance of an outside force in a monitoring or peacekeeping capacity can help hold parties to the terms of a peace pact. However, the presence of foreign actors as accord mediators and enforcers is anti-democratic (in that they do not necessarily represent society's wishes) and their ongoing role in the course of transition can undermine a society's democratic capacity to determine their political future. The paper aims to establish a framework that supports the idea that the goals of peacebuilding and democratization can be at odds, while seeking to affirm that external actors can encourage warring parties to lay down arms. Considering the dilemmas of sovereignty, neutrality and security that arise when determining how international forces contribute to peace pacts, I contend that international intervention was a useful, even necessary component of Liberia and Sierra Leone's peace agreements, however, I argue that it can hinder the establishment of democracy.

INTRODUCTION

Negotiated peace settlements are not necessarily the best way to end wars. According to the research, civil wars that end in military victory, particularly those that end in rebel victory, tend to yield higher levels of democracy in the long-term than do wars that end in ceasefire or peace agreement (Toft 2003; Fortna 2008¹). What does this mean for peace and democracy in Sierra Leone and Liberia whose long-term conflicts were settled with peace agreements?

Sierra Leone and Liberia were the sites of lengthy civil conflicts that lasted most of the 1990s. Liberia experienced two wars (1989-1997, 1999-2003) during which there were upwards of seven different warring factions vying for control of the government. Over 14 years, 14 different peace accords were signed. Sierra Leone's war officially lasted 11 years (1991-2002)

¹ Fortna also notes that wars that end with a peace treaty still experience positive levels of democratization, but the effect is smaller than for a decisive military victory. "This suggests that while peace treaties help make peace more stable, which in turn fosters democratization, they do not, in and of themselves, foster democratization" (Fortna 2008: 62).

during which time three peace accords were ratified. Nearly all of these accords included some kind of international intervention to hold belligerents to the terms of the agreements. In fact, one of the things that makes these two countries unique is that that they were the site of the first peacebuilding missions to be undertaken by a sub-regional organization (the Economic Community of West African States), later supported by the United Nations.

This paper addresses the need for third party actors to monitor and enforce peace agreements, by focusing on the contents of peace pacts that incorporate foreign involvement as a means to ensure ongoing commitment to the peace process. The simultaneous aims of securing peace and establishing democracy can also result in dilemmas that can undermine both of these goals. Why then include ‘outsiders’ in peace pacts? Does the presence of foreign troops ensure that domestic combatants will adhere to a peace agreement? Has the presence and activities of the international community in Liberia and Sierra Leone contributed to lasting peace and democratization?

This paper aims to answer these questions by establishing a theoretical groundwork that supports the idea that the goals of peacebuilding and democratization can be at odds, while seeking to affirm that external actors can encourage warring parties to lay down arms and stop fighting. While I contend that international intervention was a useful, and even necessary component of the peace agreements in Liberia and Sierra Leone, I argue that it can also hinder the establishment of democracy.

My analysis is confined to the ‘transitional period’ of the two aforementioned nations, that murky phase that begins with the negotiation of a peace agreement and ends with the cessation of conflict and the founding of basic democratic capacities. Considering dilemmas of sovereignty, neutrality and security that arise when determining how international forces contribute to peace pacts, I will examine the contents of the 1999 Lomé Peace Agreement that eventually ended the Sierra Leonean civil war, as well as the 1995 Abuja Accord that was unable to broker a cessation to the ongoing conflict in Liberia. The emerging dilemmas will be used as a framework to assess the contents of the agreements, as the details of these documents reveal a great deal as to why the pacts held or failed.

Throughout, please note that I use the words ‘peace accord,’ ‘peace pact,’ ‘peace agreement’ and ‘peace treaty’ interchangeably. Peace is defined very minimally as the cessation of conflict. Within this paper a peacebuilding mission implies peacekeeping and is *de facto* a foreign intervention. Without examining various kinds of peacekeeping, peacemaking, or peacebuilding missions, particularly those undertaken by the United Nations, herein a mission or intervention simply means the presence of foreign personnel to monitor or enforce the terms of a peace pact, unless otherwise stated.

DILEMMAS OF PEACE AND DEMOCRACY

While conflicts are common to all societies, nonviolent conflicts are a distinguishing feature of a healthy democracy, and a violent conflict is a threat to the basic political and security of a functioning democracy (Jarstad 2008). However, the very process of peace and democratization can result in conflict. The simple act of signing a peace agreement does not ensure lasting peace. The distrust and grievances generated by war, combined with extreme poverty, lack of infrastructure and systemic corruption means that warring factions remain suspicious of each other and sceptical of their respective intents. The introduction of democratic elements into a fragile society, such as popular political participation, special interest groups and competitive multiparty elections, can increase the risk of violent conflict. Likewise,

peacebuilding can also hamper democratization. While many peace treaties include former rebels as a gambit to hasten an end to conflict, their inclusion can compromise democratic legitimacy. The reality is that while peace pacts often aspire to democracy, they are not negotiated democratically. Political and military elites come together to exchange political, territorial, military and economic favours in return for peace, often without considering the will or desires of the wider citizenry. This paradox will be explored throughout the paper.

Broadly speaking, peacebuilding refers to the political, institutional and social transformations that are necessary to bring about lasting peace (Bertram 1995). Here, I concentrate on the prevention of a relapse into conflict. Accordingly, peacebuilding begins with a peace agreement that settles one or more of the differences that contributes to a conflict and comprises the efforts to implement the agreement (Jarstad 2008).

Democratization² is a process in which “the rules and procedures of citizenship are either applied to political institutions previously governed by other principles...or expanded to include persons not previously enjoying such rights and obligations...or extended to cover issues and institutions not previously subject to citizenship participation (O’Donnell & Schmitter 1986: 8). Since the 1990s democratization has become an essential part of peacebuilding in countries emerging from civil conflict. It is commonly assumed that democracy implies peace, just as peace implies democracy. Consequently, many peace operations aim to achieve peace and democracy more or less simultaneously. Even so, researchers have noted a paradox between these two concepts: While democracy is perceived as a political system that can manage intra and inter-state conflicts peacefully, frequently, the path to democracy is encumbered with conflict.³

Initially, the appearance of an outside force in a monitoring or peacekeeping capacity can help hold parties to the terms of a peace pact. However, the ability of the international community to build peace and establish democracy hinges on how it addresses dilemmas of ownership, sovereignty and neutrality that emerge from the pursuit of these goals (Jarstad 2008, Bertram 1995, Fortna 2008), as well as the practical capacity to carry out the task.

Often, external support for peace and democracy aims to ensure stability while establishing institutions that alleviate conflict. However, this gives rise to an *ownership dilemma* because of the potential for tension between local and international parties’ desire to control the processes of democratization and peacebuilding in peace agreements. According to Jarstad⁴, while third party implication may facilitate negotiations and bring about an end to violent conflict, lasting democratization and peacebuilding are propelled and sustained by local intent and actions (Jarstad 2008). In the name of peace building, external actors sometimes take temporary control over local political and social processes. These actors are not democratically elected nor are they accountable to the nation’s citizens. Lasting and true democracy can be

² Within the parameters of this paper I do not discuss what rules and procedures hold as universally democratic. However, like Collier, for a society to be considered as minimally democratic, I contend it must institutionalize at least three attributes: universal suffrage, an autonomous legal system as well as civil liberties (Collier 1999). Interestingly, Collier denotes universal male suffrage in her definition, whereas I specify a more minimal definition (counterintuitive as it seems) by including suffrage for all functioning adults.

³ See, for example, Brass 1991; Gleditsch & Hegre 1997; Mansfield & Snyder 1995; Snyder 2000; Jarstad 2008.

⁴ What I have termed ‘ownership dilemma,’ Jarstad refers to as ‘systemic dilemma.’ I have relabeled this herein for purposes of clarity, as Jarstad’s term only makes full sense when considered alongside her horizontal, vertical and temporal dilemmas, each of which represents a trade-off between democratization and peacebuilding.

expedited by outside actors but it cannot be imposed; it must be voluntarily embraced, lest it be colonialism masquerading as benevolent autocracy.

Since the end of the Cold War, the international community (particularly the United Nations) has committed to build peace and establish democracy within countries experiencing civil conflict. One of the primary means to achieve these dual goals has been through the deployment of international personnel (military and civilian) to “oversee the transition from war to peace” (Fortna 2008: 39). This practice is usually termed ‘peacekeeping’ (although I call it peacebuilding herein) and most often is carried out by the UN, although other regional organizations have also been known to perform similar function. Typically, a peacebuilding mission is mandated to monitor or enforce a negotiated peace agreement between two or more warring parties. Most of these missions tend to incorporate the following elements: They deal with intra-state conflicts; the government that consents to the mission (the host) is one of the parties to the conflict; the aim of the third party is to oversee a political transition following military conflict, and; the establishment of basic democratic state institutions is a primary goal of the mission (Bertram 1995). The actual tasks within a mission often conform to a three-step sequence: Monitoring a ceasefire, then disarming or demobilizing the hostile groups, followed by organising or managing national elections.

The *sovereignty dilemma* arises because states believe their sovereignty to be inviolable and so resist any intrusion from other nations.⁵ Indeed, independent statehood and sovereignty comprise the backbone of the United Nations and most other regional organizations. However, analysts argue that when a state is considered as ‘failed’ it no longer has the same rights of sovereignty and international intervention is warranted “to save them from self-destruction” (Helman & Ratner 1992-93: 12). In cases of intervention where a state is not labelled as failed, foreign actors claim that national sovereignty is preserved because the international community was either asked to intervene or secured the consent of the government in power to act (Bertram 1995). However, in the midst of civil conflict, with multiple parties contending for political power, who can be said to provide legitimate consent for intervention? As Bertram notes, in most contemporary peace building missions, the government is one of the warring parties in the civil war, which means that the government’s claim to legitimate power is contested. As a result, third party actors are expected to simultaneously respect state sovereignty and challenge its lawfulness (Ibid). Either way, when outsiders enter a country as peacebuilders, national sovereignty is undermined to some extent.⁶

Traditional peacebuilding missions, particularly those undertaken by the UN, have been based on the principle of neutrality. However, Bertram states that such actions are “nothing less than the reallocation of political power” (Bertram 1995: 394). This results in the *neutrality dilemma*, whereby peacebuilding interventions are intended to be nonpartisan but often are anything but. As noted earlier, peacebuilding missions are charged with monitoring or implementing a peace agreement between hostile groups who have often been at war for years. In order to generate confidence from all parties, outsiders who come to a country to implement the terms of peace accords need to demonstrate their neutrality. However, in volatile environments “even the most limited and seemingly neutral of non-military objectives, such as

⁵ See Hellman and Ratner (1992-93) as well as Fromuth (1993) for a fuller account of sovereignty and peace building missions.

⁶ It may be argued that once a regional organization is granted Security Council approval (via Chapter VIII) to undertake enforcement action, the target nation’s sovereignty is forfeit.

providing humanitarian relief, may be perceived as sharply biased by those vying for power on the ground” (Bertram 1995: 395). Accordingly, when considering peacebuilding missions, the international community must ascertain whether the conditions for peaceful power transitions and a neutral role for outsiders exists, or face up to abandoning the principles of neutrality, which can result in compromised credibility.

Recalling the systemic dilemma of ownership, outside intervention can help to ensure peace following the signing of a peace agreement, but it can also hinder the development of local political institutions that are legitimate and accountable. Similarly, there are two areas where the *peacebuilding-democracy dilemma* is most apparent: Human rights and elections (Bertram 1995). Frequently, to ensure an expedient end to violent conflict, pact overseers will convince warring groups to lay down their weapons in exchange for political power and amnesty. On the other hand, peacebuilders must question the message they are sending to a nation’s citizens when war criminals are given amnesty; “What kind of groundwork will such officially sanctioned impunity lay for the new democratic order?” (Bertram 1995: 397). Fundamentally, while the people of a country ought to decide how to handle past human rights abuses, as pact mediators and implementers, the international community’s actions are not without consequence. Additionally, most theorists believe that democratic institutions, such as elections, require a peaceful and secure environment. As such, peacebuilders will often put off elections until the military terms of a peace pact (usually a ceasefire and the demobilization of warring factions) have been met. However, hostile groups may be unwilling to give up their arms unless they are convinced that they stand a chance to gain political advantage through an election. Here, peacebuilders must consider whether it is better to stage elections as quickly as possible, even if this risks a return to violent conflict, or wait until the climate is more peaceful and stable, and thereby chance sapping civic good will by allowing warring factions to manipulate the establishment of democracy for their personal gain.

Outside intervenors are further constrained by their capacity to carry out the task to which they commit, as well as the site-specific confines of missions. The effectiveness of third party peacebuilding interventions depends on whether peacebuilders have the political commitment and resources to fulfil their mandate. More often than not, interventions are cobbled together under duress, without clearly indicated mandates and with limited material or financial resources. Within short timelines, personnel are expected to perform miracles, transforming war-torn societies without infrastructure into paragons of progressive politics and economic efficiency. It is no wonder that many foreign actors stumble while trying to achieve such nearly impossible goals. Furthermore, knowledge of the various historical, military, economic, and social factors of a particular location, as well as the goals and interests of key actors is imperative to external peacebuilding personnel. The ability of international players to honestly assess the institutional and local conditions for peacebuilding and democratization at the outset of their engagement and throughout their mission is paramount.

FROM THEORY TO PEACE ACCORDS

The dilemmas between peace and democracy and their significance regarding the involvement of third parties stipulated in peace pacts establish the theoretical framework that bounds my investigation. To varying degrees, each dilemma impacts on the two cases to which I now turn. I first examine the 1995 Abuja Accord that was created to bring about a ceasefire and an end to the ongoing war in Liberia. Despite the stipulation of an international presence to monitor and enforce its terms, the pact ultimately failed and violence ensued. I subsequently

review the 1999 Lomé Peace Agreement that eventually brought about an end to the brutal civil war in Sierra Leone. This pact was implemented in less than auspicious circumstances and conflict continued sporadically for more than a year after it was signed. Nevertheless, over the last eight years, Sierra Leone is considered to have made a successful ‘war to democracy’ transition.

A comparative study of international involvement in Sierra Leone and Liberia reveals interesting similarities and disparities. Both West African nations had ‘special relationships’ with a significant world power dating back to the 19th century; Sierra Leone was colonized by the United Kingdom, while freed American slaves settled Liberia. During the course of their respective civil wars, which took place nearly simultaneously, multiple peace accords were negotiated, many with the assistance of the international community. Most failed.

Nearly all of Sierra Leone and Liberia’s peace agreements included provisions for international community involvement. However, stung by their Somalian experience and citing involvement in the Balkans, the US had no desire to engage in an African conflict. The UN was equally resistant to provide little more than moral support to African states in the region. And so, with arms and refugees spilling across porous borders, it fell to ECOWAS to develop an “African solution to an African problem.”

THE ABUJA ACCORD

The Liberia civil war began in 1989 when the National Patriotic Front of Liberia (NPFL) led by Charles Taylor infiltrated Liberia over the Côte d’Ivoire border. Within a year, with the financial support of diamond exports acquired through rebels in Sierra Leone, the NPFL controlled 90% of the country (Morgan 2006). In 1990, recognizing that its economic and political interests were being threatened by the Liberian conflict and claiming concern for the humanitarian disaster befalling Liberia’s citizens, ECOWAS decided to intervene by attempting to enforce a ceasefire between the combatants (Cleaver & Massey 2006).⁷

The legitimacy of the ECOWAS intervention was shaky; negotiations led by the organization between Taylor and Liberian government forces (led by President Samuel Doe) proved inconclusive, no real ceasefire had been implemented, and the mission lacked the support of the organization’s francophone members (Ibid). ECOWAS’ initial plan for peace in Liberia assumed an arms control component, but this was not specified in the first accord, and warring factions continued to access weapons (Aning 1999). The mission’s neutrality was also questioned from the outset, with ECOWAS’ predominantly Nigerian force seen by Doe as an ally to bolster his cause and by Taylor as an enemy intent on thwarting his conquest.

The capacity of ECOWAS to establish any kind of peace was gravely undermined when Doe was kidnapped, tortured and killed by members of the NPFL in September 1990. At this time, Nigerian troops took control over the mission and “launched a full-scale military campaign to bring more of Liberia under its control” (Cleaver & Massey 2006: 180). Instead of peacebuilding, ECOWAS now became party to the bloodshed, deliberately aiding some rebel groups against others and often participating in racketeering and looting (Moran & Pitcher 2004).

During the course of the war, up to seven different armed factions engaged in a campaign of mass destruction: up to 200,000 people were killed (1 in every 17 civilians) and more than a

⁷ The ECOWAS mission became known as the ECOWAS Ceasefire Monitoring and Observer Group (ECOMOG), but herein I simply refer to ECOWAS.

million others were displaced (Global Security 2005). When warring factions assembled in Abuja to negotiate in August 1995, it was the seventeenth time belligerents had come together to negotiate a peace agreement since the outbreak of the war.

Despite the abysmal track record of past accords, participants and moderators were hopeful that this meeting would prove an exception.⁸ For the first time, the Abuja Accord (AA) included members of the major warring factions in the collective presidency, the Council of State of the Liberian Transitional Government, which was to stand for 12 months. The establishment of a Council with one chair and five vice-chairmen of equal status allowed Charles Taylor to be part of the Liberian government for the first time (Riley & Sesay 1996). The accord also noted that while the chair could not contest the forthcoming elections scheduled for August 1996, other members could, as long as they resigned from the Council within three months of the elections (Section D, Article 16). This clause made way for competitive multiparty elections.

However novel the aforementioned provisions appeared, the Abuja Accord was fundamentally flawed in at least two ways. First, with the repeated failure of Nigerian-led peacebuilding strategies, ECOWAS focused on finding a political solution to the conflict that embraced the country's warlords, and in so doing, the Abuja Accord transformed the Council of State into a Council of Warlords (Ikomi 2007). The accord gave the warlords power over the civilian leadership of the council, which effectively quashed any civilian dissent. The warlords' political empowerment further undermined the international community's already diminished capacities, and minimized ECOWAS to the point where the warlords sought to put the mission under their control (Ibid). In fact, the only threat to the warlords resulted from their own internal rivalries, as several sought to secure the presidency in the planned elections.

Secondly, it was clear that the many hostile parties to the Liberian conflict needed to be disarmed prior to any elections, but despite provisions for demilitarization in the accord, the parties continued to bear arms and engage in hostilities. Indeed, the Abuja agreement was based on a prior pact, the Cotonou Accord (CA), within which all parties "agree(d) and express(ed) their intent and willingness to disarm" (CA, Section E, Article 6) under the supervision of ECOWAS troops and monitored by the UN Observer Mission in Liberia (UNOMIL). Furthermore, the parties agreed to provide full lists of their combatants, their weapons and "warlike materials and their locations" to ECOWAS troops and the UN, and also consented to have their troops stationed in camps established by ECOWAS troops, again under the monitoring of the UN (CA, Section F, Article 7). Despite these provisions for international monitoring and enforcement of demobilization and disarmament in the peace agreement, none of the parties to the Cotonou or Abuja accords ever complied with the aforementioned terms. Moreover, neither ECOWAS nor the UN appeared to make demilitarization a priority. Instead, both organizations sought to end the conflict as expediently as possible. Elections were chosen as the workable means to ensure a relatively quick resolution to the conflict, as well as to give the international community an excuse to withdraw from the country.

As a means to pacify the warlords, the Abuja Accord divided state control between government forces and the two key rebel factions (the NPFL and the United Liberation Movement of Liberia for Democracy, ULIMO). However, the leader of ULIMO, Roosevelt

⁸ The fact that the UN had agreed to form a small mission (UNOMIL) to support ECOWAS and monitor the implementation of the Cotonou Accord signed (and broken) the year before was also cause for parties to be hopeful about Abuja.

Johnson, was excluded from the Council of State.⁹ Instead, Johnson was given the politically insignificant Ministry of Rural Development. Although the ULIMO was given other cabinet positions and numerous managerial positions of public corporations, Johnson's supporters remained unappeased.

In April 1996, widespread violence again erupted when the Council, influenced by Taylor, sent an elite police unit, primarily comprised of former NPFL soldiers, to arrest Johnson so he could stand trial for murder. Against the unanimous advice of the international community (including Abuja Accord moderators), Taylor was intent on making Johnson accountable for actions he himself was guilty of many times over (Riley & Sesay 1996). The Abuja Accord's ceasefire crumbled altogether as Taylor insisted that Johnson surrender or go into exile, while Johnson remained unbowed.

Shortly after, in a desperate attempt to salvage the Abuja Accord, ECOWAS convened a new summit and an extended version of the 1995 agreement (Abuja II) was signed on August 17, 1996 by all parties to the first agreement. Along with the disarmament and demobilization components of the first accord, the chairman was replaced and a new timetable for implementation was agreed. Special elections were called almost immediately, which made the election of Charles Taylor nearly inevitable since (unlike any other candidate) he had nearly unlimited access to funds, transportation and media -- fruits of the very war he had begun seven years prior (Moran & Pitcher 2004). With his democratically elected mandate, Taylor ordered ECOWAS troops out of the country and soon reneged on Abuja II. While Liberia was officially at peace from 1996 to 1999, when the second civil war broke out, violence and bloodshed were a frequent fact of life under the Taylor regime.

The Abuja Accord was made in haste and soon came to naught. Recalling each of the dilemmas outlined earlier, the clarity of hindsight suggests that ECOWAS and UNOMIL were woefully ill prepared to capably enforce the terms of the peace agreement. The ownership dilemma would have us consider whether or not the international community should intervene all at, and if so, who owns or controls the process. In many cases, peacebuilding missions can help reduce violence, while international monitors can increase trust between former foes (Fortna 2008); these efforts can nurture the conditions for democratization. These potential outcomes of international involvement were not in evidence after the ECOWAS intervention in Liberia. Moreover, by attempting to control the political processes of the country, ECOWAS undermined the principles of legitimacy and accountability that are fundamental to democracy.

In relation to the sovereignty dilemma, the ECOWAS intervention in Liberia serves as a cautionary tale for regional peace pact enforcers. In 1990, when ECOWAS sent troops into the country, there was no pre-existing peace agreement between Liberia's various warring factions, and Taylor's NPFL controlled nearly 90 percent of the territory (Stedman 2002). In fact, Taylor was so adamantly opposed to any kind of foreign intervention that the NPFL fired on ECOWAS troops as they landed at the Monrovia airport. Lacking the consent of the warlords and with no peace accord to enforce, ECOWAS soon became embroiled in its own conflict with the NPFL, thereby becoming yet another belligerent in the war (Adebajo 2002). Furthermore, ECOWAS' multiple attempts to broker peace agreements between hostile parties were foiled by political divisions within its own membership, which compromised its neutrality. Nigeria continued to

⁹ Johnson was excluded because he belonged to the Krahn ethnic group, as did two other rebel leaders, and Krahn representation on the Council was limited to two members (Riley & Sesay 1996).

favour Doe over Taylor¹⁰, whereas eventually Ghana was prepared to deal with Taylor as president and wanted ECOWAS to practice peacekeeping functions only (Ibid). After several years on the ground, it was obvious that ECOWAS troops were not neutral and the real motives of the organization regarding the intervention remained in doubt. The individuals drafting the Abuja Accord clearly did not carefully consider these dilemmas, nor did they reflect on why prior pacts failed.

Ideally, the international community can help to oversee the establishment of democratic institutions by assisting the organization and oversight of elections. Unlike the Lomé Agreement, which will be examined next, the Abuja Accord was not framed by an explicit commitment to democracy. Nevertheless, with provisions for a short-term (12 month) transitional government, an Elections Commission, as well as the allowance for competitive multiparty free and fair elections, the Abuja Accord advocated the establishment of some basic democratic institutions. Although well-crafted elections are an integral part of democratization, when these events are held too soon after a peace pact, they can have deleterious effects. This is reflected in the peacebuilding-democracy dilemma. For instance, elections are an unattractive option for groups that see themselves relegated to minority status—as was the case with ULIMO.

Over all the other concerns registered in the peace agreement, in its haste to extricate itself from a humiliating intervention, the international community became preoccupied with overseeing elections. In fact, national elections were held less than a year after Abuja II was ratified. Like many war-torn societies, it can be argued that Liberia lacked “the political climate, social and economic stability, institutional infrastructure, and even political will to mount successful elections” (Kumar 1998: 7). Neither the signatories nor the moderators of the accord, along with ECOWAS and the UN, acknowledged the inherent problems of pushing for early post-war elections in Liberia, nor did they consider whether Liberia had the capacity to carry them out. Considering that Taylor held a near monopoly on most state institutions prior to the elections, and that the country’s citizens feared a resurgence in violence if he did not take the presidency, it was no surprise that he won with a 75% majority—finally achieving the international legitimacy that had so far eluded him. Ultimately, Liberia’s post-war elections mandated in the Abuja Accord “cemented in power essentially non-democratic elites...the same individuals who had been instrumental in the prior conflict” (Reilly 2008: 164).

In addition to falling prey to each of the aforementioned dilemmas, international intervention in Liberia was further sabotaged by the mitigating circumstances of capacity and ground knowledge. Peacebuilders typically need some evidence of peace to sustain in order to credibly mediate a war to peace and democracy transition. In Liberia, warring factions were in the midst of full-scale war when ECOWAS intervened and the organization had no foundation upon which it might have established peace. Even if it had not become embroiled in the conflict, it would have been extremely unlikely that ECOWAS would have been able to ensure domestic compliance to the Abuja peace agreement. The mission was inadequately funded, lacked planning, had logistical problems, and possessed little reliable intelligence, especially about the local dynamics of the conflict, the domestic politics of the sub-regional states and the quantity of

¹⁰ The five ECOWAS nations that supported the mission (Nigeria, Ghana, Sierra Leone, Gambia and Guinea) were governed by leaders that had come to power through military coups, or who could stay in power in perpetuity. These leaders represented an ‘old order’ that seemed threatened by the change promised by the NPFL (Sesay 1996). In particular, Nigerian military ruler, General Ibrahim Babangida, saw Taylor as a menace.

weapons in circulation (Aning 1999). Lacking the support of any world power, UNOMIL was limited to an observation role, and could not itself have halted the ongoing conflict.

Despite mandating the international community to implement the agreement, the Abuja Accord was possibly doomed from the very moment it was signed and put into effect. We now turn to another peace agreement, one that was successful, and assess its similarities and differences to the failed treaty we have just explored.

THE LOMÉ PEACE AGREEMENT

At the height of its civil war, Sierra Leone was the embodiment of state failure and societal despair. What was once a nation of promise, both in terms of governance and natural resources, had become a place of misery, drugged children touting automatic weapons, rampant disease, amputation and rape. Most of the world did not harbour much hope that the 1999 negotiations would lead to lasting peace.

What had begun as a ‘border skirmish’ by the Revolutionary United Front (RUF) in 1991, evolved into an all-out armed insurgency to overthrow the loathed and inept All Peoples Congress (APC) that had controlled government since 1968. At first, the APC perceived the RUF insurrection as mere ‘spill-over’ from the Liberian civil war.¹¹ However, the Sierra Leone Army (SLA) took advantage of the unrest to overthrow the government in 1992, establishing a military junta as government and refused to negotiate a ceasefire with the RUF. (Francis 2000)

In the following years, government forces tried repeatedly to defeat the RUF. In the course of nearly a decade, the RUF’s campaign of terror resulted in up to 100,000 deaths (Bercovitch & Jackson 1997), more than 2.5 million internally displaced persons, up to 20,000 amputees (Sierra Leone News, 10 Sept. 1999), and untold thousands of sexual assaults. Gross human rights violations and war crimes were committed by all parties to the conflict (Francis 2000).

Ultimately, Sierra Leone experienced three different international interventions, one by ECOWAS, one more by the UN, and another still by Great Britain. Despite a peace agreement that was signed by the civilian government and RUF in November 1996, the government continued to engage in battle with the RUF, even going so far as hiring external militias and private mercenaries. The government was overthrown in 1997, this time by a coalition of the SLA and RUF who established a ruling junta called the Armed Forces Revolutionary Council (AFRC). Ousted Sierra Leonean president, Ahmad Tejan Kabbah appealed to Nigerian President General Abacha, as ECOWAS Chairman, to intervene in the country to reverse the coup and instate constitutional rule (Francis 1999). Still smarting from the Liberian mission, Abacha hoped an intervention might counter his own international critics who had suspended Nigeria from the Commonwealth for executing several human rights activists. Without first acquiring Security Council permission, within a week of the coup ECOWAS launched an unplanned military intervention that failed. This time, recalling its ill-fated sortie in Liberia, ECOWAS recognized that it lacked the military capacity to resolve the country’s conflict and instead focused its efforts on finding a diplomatic solution for the reinstatement of constitutional rule.

Meanwhile, since the beginning of the war, the UN had also been involved in Sierra Leone, working closely with ECOWAS in hope that a peaceful resolution could be found to the conflict. Until the Lomé Accord, the organization’s commitment extended to providing assistance facilitating “the process of transition from civil war to civil society” and holding

¹¹ Ironically, the RUF was supported financially by Liberia and Burkina Faso, both members of ECOWAS.

democratic elections (Francis 1999, 151). In October 1997, the UN Security Council voted to back ECOWAS' peace efforts, but until 1999, it had done little more than impose travel bans on the RUF and the AFRC, branding them war criminals (Francis 2000).

The Lomé accord was the third such agreement for Sierra Leone, and after nearly a decade of protracted war, it has been suggested that sheer war weariness coupled with widespread civic support and international pressure were the stimulus for peace (Goulding 1999). Certainly, for the government, the January 6, 1999 RUF attack on Freetown that killed up to 6,000 people, while injuring, raping and maiming thousands of others, indicated that its military tactics were an utter fiasco. Recognising that the war could not be won militarily, the government was forced to comply with the Lomé negotiated settlement. That the government had not defeated the RUF in battle had important ramifications for the peace process, as the RUF considered itself to be an undefeated force with the capacity to challenge any agreement that was not to its liking (Francis 2000).

The Lomé Peace Agreement (LPA) was signed between the government of Sierra Leone and the RUF on July 7, 1999. The pact officially ended the civil war by providing for a transitional, constitutionally based power sharing agreement as well as blanket amnesty for all combatants' actions since the start of the war. A neutral peacekeeping force, made up of troops from ECOWAS and the UN, was named responsible for the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration of former combatants.

The international community's implementation of the Lomé agreement was not an immediate success. Seven months after the accord was signed, nearly all ECOWAS troops had left Sierra Leone, many returning to the Liberian front. While UN forces were working to disarm and demobilize the rebels in the Eastern part of the country, the RUF attacked several UN camps and kidnapped 500 UN troops. On May 6, 2000 Great Britain launched Operation Palliser, ostensibly to rescue the beleaguered UN soldiers, and evacuate British citizens still in Sierra Leone. Two weeks into the deployment, in an attempt to salvage the accord, establish democracy and bolster the UN's waning credibility, the United Kingdom chose to expand its mission to support the UN by providing security until other troops arrived and the immediate crisis was assuaged. The operation terminated on June 15, but the UK continued to maintain a significant presence in the country¹² (Williams 2001, Durch 2006). There are many assessments as to the import and legitimacy of the British intervention in Sierra Leone, but all underline its short-term effectiveness in assisting the UN to get the Lomé accord back on track.

Each of the dilemmas outlined earlier in the paper resonate in the Sierra Leonean case. The sovereignty dilemma is recalled with ECOWAS' use of force prior to UN Security Council authorization. Unsurprisingly, the AFRC labelled ECOWAS' attack as "a naked act of Nigerian aggression and a violation of the state's political sovereignty" (Francis 1999: 153). However, this claim is debatable since there was no legitimate government in power in Sierra Leone at the time. The AFRC junta was not recognized domestically or abroad and thus could not claim sovereignty. Nor did the AFRC have any sizable control over Sierra Leone territory; the RUF had far more command in this regard. Internationally, ousted president Kabbah was still recognized as Sierra Leone's legitimate head of state, as demonstrated by his attendance at a summer summit of the Organization of African Unity (Ibid). Considering the remaining international credibility of Kabbah as well as the fact that Sierra Leone was defined as a

¹² In August, the British further supported the UN when UK special forces killed 25 members of the West Side Boys (an offshoot of the AFRC) and captured the group's leader (Durch 2006).

collapsed state at the time, neither ECOWAS nor the subsequent UN intervention could be said to have breached the nation's sovereignty.

The basis on which the UK intervention was carried out is somewhat more problematic, particularly in regards to the dilemma of neutrality. British intervention was justified in various ways over time; initially, the mission was intended to simply protect British nationals. Subsequently, the UK claimed that both the Secretary General of the UN and the government of Sierra Leone supported its involvement (Samuels 2003). By October 2000, the United Kingdom was using the language of democracy to support its endeavours in the country, claiming that its work to train former members of the Sierra Leonean army was to "build new, democratically accountable, and effective armed forces in Sierra Leone" (UK Foreign Secretary Robin Cook quoted in Samuels 2003: 331) Either way, there is something disingenuous about the UK's claim that it was "backing the government" (BBC News, World Edition, 10 Sept 2000) and thereby not compromising the neutrality of the UN. The fact is that the UK's justification for intervention, especially on the moral claim of advancing democracy, can be seen as compromising its neutrality. Additionally, Britain's choice to act unilaterally, outside the parameters of the UN, to which it belongs, is also questionable.

The peace provided through the Lomé accord was tenuous; the document is preoccupied with short-term goals and does not adequately address the grievances that caused the war. Like the peace accords of Liberia, the treaty was negotiated by two political and military elites, the RUF and the Sierra Leone government, with the external input of ECOWAS, the OAU and the UN, and did not include the input of the people of Sierra Leone. Consequently, the Lomé Peace Agreement can be criticized for subverting the democratic will of the people, whose wishes did not factor into the accord.

This deficiency plays directly to the ownership dilemma; where third party actors are involved in peace negotiations, they recognize and include certain groups and ostracize others. When international peacebuilders included the RUF in negotiations, they endorsed their legitimacy as a political entity. However, the agreement clearly states its democratic intent in its preface, where the signatories articulate their commitment "promoting popular participation in the governance of the country and the advancement of democracy in a socio-political framework free of inequality, nepotism and corruption" (LPA, preamble). Indeed, the agreement asserts that it is guided by the outcome of a recent ECOWAS ministerial conference, in which participants "stressed the importance of democracy as a factor of regional peace and security..." (LPA, preamble).¹³ The document also notes its commitment to "promoting full respect for human rights and humanitarian law" and reaffirms "the conviction that sovereignty belongs to the people, and that the Government derives all of its powers, authority and legitimacy from the people" (LPA, preamble). When contrasted with these words, we can see that the actual Lomé peace negotiation process was anything but democratic. This too factors into the ownership dilemma. When external parties are involved in peace negotiations, who retains possession of the process: rebel factions who are accused of committing war crimes, domestic civil society, or various members of the international community? In the trade-off between international and

¹³ The same conference had all members "reaffirming the need for all Member States to consolidate their democratic base, observe the principles of good governance and good economic management in order to ensure the emergence and development of a democratic culture which takes into account the interests of the peoples of West Africa." Declaration in the Final Communiqué of the Meeting in Lomé of the Ministers of Foreign Affairs of ECOWAS, 25 May 1999.

local ownership of the Sierra Leonean war to democracy transition, the opinions and desires of the population ought to be reflected in any peacebuilding and democratization endeavour.

Quite simply, despite lip service to a ‘government for the people by the people,’ the voices of Sierra Leonean citizens are decidedly absent from the contents of the Lomé Peace Agreement. Some civil groups were present at the National Consultative Conference that took place three months before Lomé was signed, at which they clearly stated that there should be no governmental power sharing with the RUF. Obviously, this is not reflected in the final text of the agreement.

We can only imagine how the majority of citizens felt considering the blanket amnesty that was provided to the RUF and other warring parties in the pact. In addition to the political power sharing provisions cited above, Article IX not only grants RUF leader Foday Sankoh complete pardon, it also grants “absolute and free pardon and reprieve to all combatants and collaborators” including members of the RUF, the SLA and the AFRC for their actions “in pursuit of their objectives” from March 1991 to the implementation of the agreement (LPA, Article IX).

The amnesty provisions in the Lomé accord directly address the peace-democracy dilemma. From a democratic point of view, blanket immunity sidesteps the rule of law and the principles of human rights, and risks encouraging a culture of impunity (Söderberg Kovacs 2008). It seems distasteful to consider that the Lomé Accord exchanged gross human rights violations and war crimes for peace. And indeed, the power sharing and amnesty compromise of Lomé provided an unjust peace, but it can also be argued that the only other option was the continuation of a horrific war in which there were no clear winners, only victims.

For all this, the Lomé treaty does include some indication of real democratic intent. Article XII states that an independent National Electoral Commission must be established within 90 days, in consultation with all political parties (including the RUF) and includes a request for international community assistance in the next presidential and parliamentary elections (LPA, Article XII). A cynical analyst might note that implementing elections does not a democracy make. But while elections are only one condition for the establishment of democracy, as a marker of the beginning of the democratic process, they can certainly be seen as progress. The transformation of the RUF into a viable political party (where it could compete within a multiparty system) can also be seen as evidence of democratic intent. Elite habituation is considered to be one of the first prerequisites of democracy (Higley & Gunther 1995), and in Sierra Leone the decision to power share by ratifying the RUF as a political party, as well as including RUF individuals in cabinet, resulted from elites bargaining between the government, the armed opposition and international mediators. This one circumstance does not prove the entrenchment of elite habituation in Sierra Leone but it does demonstrate at least some commitment to the procedures and outcomes of formal democracy by the signatories of the treaty. While the lack of societal inclusion in the Lomé accord can be assessed as anti-democratic, the document’s commitment to aspects of democracy, including multiparty representation as well as elections cannot be denied.

Reflecting a democratic respect of human rights and humanitarian law, the Lomé pact provides for the establishment within 90 days of a Human Rights Commission as well as a Truth and Reconciliation Commission. However, in light of the amnesty offered to former combatants, the establishment of institutional bodies that “strengthen the existing machinery for addressing grievances of the people in respect of alleged violations of their basic human rights” (Article XXV) and “address impunity, break the cycle of violence, provide a forum for both the victims

and perpetrators of human rights violations to tell their story...in order to facilitate genuine healing and reconciliation” (Article XXVI) seems decidedly unjust. A negotiated peace may result in the absence of war, but that does not mean that citizens’ pain and trauma disappears, nor does it eradicate physical destruction of property and infrastructure. Similarly, stating truths does not equate justice, nor is it any guarantee of reconciliation.

The negotiation of amnesty for the sake of peace remains a troubling trade-off. Provided that warring parties comply to the terms of the pact, not only are they guaranteed inclusion in the government, they are also unlikely to be indicted for past human rights abuses. Nonetheless, there is a loophole wherein justice may be found. If former rebels break the terms of a peace accord, they can still be held accountable for past crimes. The Lomé agreement stated that former combatants were immune from prosecution. However, the UN (one of the mediators in the negotiations) issued a disclaimer when the accord was signed, stating that amnesty would not hold to “international crimes of genocide, crimes against humanity, war crimes and other serious violations of international humanitarian law” (Francis 2000, 366). When the RUF abducted hundreds of UN peacekeepers, thereby jeopardizing the peace process, they broke the terms of Lomé. Subsequently, the Sierra Leonean government requested UN assistance to establish a court to prosecute members of the RUF for crimes carried out in conflict (ICG 2003). In 2003, the Court started legal proceedings against most of the RUF’s command. In this case, the blanket amnesty of the Lomé pact, which may have assuaged rebel concerns over prosecution, was circumvented by the UN disclaimer.

As in the Liberian case, the mitigating factor of capacity helped to determine the benefits and relative successes of the three international interventions in Sierra Leone. As outlined, third party interveners need the necessary economic, military and political capacities to effectively deter rebels from reneging on their promises and must be prepared to use force (Walter 2002). Soon after responding to requests for assistance, ECOWAS recognized its military limitations in Sierra Leone and tried to steer the conflict toward a peaceful negotiated solution. While the organization’s intervention lacked foresight, at least it did not make the same mistakes it had in Liberia. Over time, the organization became a key negotiator in the mediation and implementation of the Lomé agreement. Through the peace agreement, the UN mission in Sierra Leone was given the authority to fulfil basic governing functions following the signing of the peace agreement. Yet, when the RUF attacked its camps several months into the implementation, it lacked the capacity to achieve its various military, civilian and administrative responsibilities. The mission was hamstrung because it lacked a clearly defined mandate, resources, and the political will of its members (Chesterman 2004)—all things that crippled ECOWAS in Liberia. Whatever its reasons for acting unilaterally, the UK recognized the UN’s limitations and expanded its initial mission to provide much-needed support to the UN, quite possibly becoming the linchpin that made the Lomé agreement hold. The fact that the UK was unafraid to use force and take casualties if necessary made it a much more formidable opponent than the UN, whose use of force was limited to extreme cases of self-defence and whose members were reluctant to tolerate the loss of any troops.

Despite repeated outbreaks of violence during the implementation period, by January 2002 international peacekeeping forces had demobilized and disarmed warring belligerents throughout the country. The transition period was deemed over with the first post-conflict elections, held in May 2002, in which the political arm of the RUF received only 1.7 per cent of the public vote. Without any real public support, no guaranteed seats in cabinet, and a greatly diminished military capacity, it was not long before the RUF disappeared as a political and

military force in Sierra Leone (Jarstad 2008, Söderberg Kovacs 2007). There has been no widespread return to conflict since 2002 and the second presidential elections held in September 2007 were considered to be fair and peaceful.

Ultimately, former adversaries emerging from civil conflict need to resolve longstanding complex problems before peace can last and democratization can take root. The international community can help reduce violence and build trust between former combatants, while also fostering the initial implementation of democratic institutions. Third party intervention can be greatly effective during the short-term implementation of a peace agreement, since democracy is handicapped in the presence of ongoing violence. Evidence suggests that stable peace serves the establishment of democracy and peacekeeping helps maintain peace (Fortna 2008). The risk of renewed conflict is much lower when outside peacebuilders are present in a country than when belligerents are left to resolve their conflicts alone (Fortna 2004, 2008).

Having examined the Abuja and Lomé peace accords within the context of third party involvement, why did the first fail while the second succeeded? First, the accords and international community intervention cannot be viewed in a vacuum. Both are the products of the political history that preceded them. The Abuja Accord was hastily contrived as a means for ECOWAS and the UN to extricate themselves from a botched intervention in Liberia. In addition to a preoccupation with elections, the military components of the agreement are vague and do not address how to disarm and mobilize the rebel factions who were not part of the peace pact. As a result, participants' suspicions and security concerns were not alleviated and compliance was a risk none felt prepared to undertake without the guarantee that others also would follow suit. The document essentially prevented the international community from making any real change, leaving the warlords, helmed by Taylor, in charge of the country's future.

Conversely, the Lomé Peace Agreement satisfactorily addressed the concerns of the RUF; of course, unlike the Liberian conflict, which was comprised of multiple rebel parties, the Sierra Leone government only had to compromise with one group. The Lomé accord legitimized the RUF as a political party, and gave former rebel leaders political power in the interim government, while also promising amnesty to those who might be accused of committing crimes against humanity during the course of the war. Even so, all these concessions were insufficient to prevent the RUF from breaking the terms of the pact, after which it was in large part due to the unilateral intervention of the UK that the UN was able to steer the negotiation process back to successful implementation.

The systemic dilemma is in evidence in both countries. The external moderators did not consider the input of civil groups in either accord. This omission was especially egregious in the case of Sierra Leone, where civil groups had made clear their displeasure over the political inclusion of the RUF in the interim government, as well as their dissatisfaction with the blanket amnesty being offered to former combatants. The sovereignty dilemma is particularly apparent in Liberia, where warring factions (most notably Taylor, who was winning the conflict) did not embrace ECOWAS' proffered intervention. However, like Sierra Leone, Liberia was considered to be a failed state at the time, and as such, its claims to sovereignty was perhaps limited. The neutrality dilemma is most conspicuous in Liberia through the ongoing actions of ECOWAS. Led by a Nigerian force that clearly favoured Doe over Taylor, the organization regularly acted in ways that can only be described as partisan. ECOWAS troops also became involved in

looting, which further compromised its legitimacy, particularly among the country's citizens. In Sierra Leone, the UK's neutrality must be questioned, but it is evident that its mission was both necessary and effective. The issues that arise from the peacebuilding-democracy dilemma are discernable in both Liberia and Sierra Leone. The pursuit of rushed elections in Liberia over demobilization and disarmament fated the country to endure several more years of government oppression. In Sierra Leone, accord moderators determined that amnesty provisions were essential to get warring parties to lay down their arms, but their decision contravened the will of the country's citizens. Here, it was only as a result of the UN's disclaimer that the nation's war criminals were brought to justice.

Fundamentally, the international community's ability to bring about peace and establish the foundations for democracy depends on a real and lasting commitment to enforce the terms of the accord they pledge to support. The two case examples are proof of this. The failure of ECOWAS to broker peace in Liberia does not mean that international intervention was not an appropriate choice here, simply that the conditions under which ECOWAS intervened meant that it could not achieve any kind of success. In this regard, Great Britain's intervention in Sierra Leone serves as a stark contrast to ECOWAS' ineptness and the UN's weaknesses in both nations. Within a short time, the UK developed a clearly defined mission and then committed to 'do what it took' to ensure that the terms of the Lomé accord were going to hold. The country's willingness to use force, as well as its acceptance of possible casualties, gave its troops considerable battlefield legitimacy. Arguably, its actions are the linchpin that helped secure lasting peace and democracy for Sierra Leone.

Furthermore, the democratic principles that frame an accord are relevant. The Abuja Accord made no direct reference to democracy, but its contents endorsed aspects of democratization, most notably, elections. On the other hand, the Lomé pact carefully elucidated a commitment to democratic principles in its preface and wrote in the provision of democratic institutions beyond elections. It is true that actions make the words of peace pacts come alive, but actions stemming from the implementation of a peace pact are based on the ideas that are entrenched therein. Consequently, if a peace pact seeks to simultaneously pursue democratization, it should state as much. Later, if there are dilemmas that emerge between the dual goals of peacebuilding and democratization, they can be ascertained and addressed.

It is evident that clarity of language, intent, and detailed implementation is essential to the contents of such agreements. Even the most cursory reading of the Abuja Accord reveals it to be extremely vague and, at little more than a page in length, it is too abridged to adequately tackle the issues. While the Lomé Peace Agreement is far from perfect, it is much more carefully structured, its intent made evident at the outset, and systematic details for all aspects of implementation contained both in the actual agreement, as well as in five attached annexes. A hefty 14 pages allows for this kind of detail.

As a result of the two cases discussed thus far, the international community (namely ECOWAS and the UN) made certain reforms to their intervention policies, which they had the opportunity to implement again in Liberia in 2003. After his election, Taylor was adamant that ECOWAS withdraw its troops from the country, leaving behind a small UN observer mission that was poorly resourced and understaffed. Less than a full year after the election, the country slid back into civil war. By Spring 2003, Taylor was losing ground to the opposition, when ECOWAS persuaded warring parties to attend peace talks in Accra. Where in the first war Taylor was violently against any form of intervention, throughout these negotiations (even after he had to hastily depart from the talks after being indicted for war crimes in Sierra Leone) he

refused to resign unless there was some kind of international intervention, preferably by the US or the UN. Again, the US was resistant to committing troops, but this time, ECOWAS acted with unanimity. After talks had dragged on for more than three months, on August 4th 2003, ECOWAS deployed 3,500 troops from Mali, Nigeria and Senegal to Liberia. A week later Taylor resigned and left for exile in Nigeria. Within two months of the ratification of the peace agreement, the United Nations Mission in Liberia took over the peacekeeping role from ECOWAS, whose troops were 'rehabbed' under the UN. This mission is ongoing; there are more than 10,000 UN troops still in Liberia, many of them from ECOWAS member states.

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